

# SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 11. March 1986. 70p

## ● WITCH HUNT



● PRINT  
● WRP

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# About Socialist Viewpoint

THIS March issue of *Socialist Viewpoint* takes up a number of familiar themes from different angles.

● The crisis of social democracy and the need for a clear political alternative to Kinnock is discussed with an article on the expulsions of *Militant* supporters and an extended look at the current fashionable 'left' responses to Kinnock's economics — Andrew Glyn's pamphlet *A Million Jobs a Year*.

● The battles in the Print industry are reflected in articles reprinted from our Print Strike special bulletin.

● The overthrow of Philippines President Marcos, and the political complexion of the Aquino government is examined. Other international coverage includes the first of two articles after a visit to Nicaragua by Bill MacKeith, and coverage of Poland and Bolivia.

● The fight against women's oppression is highlighted in articles on the 'trial' of obstetrician Wendy Savage; the need for a campaign on cervical cancer; and an account of the oppression of women in what some on the left still regard as 'revolutionary' Iran.

● The history of the Trotskyist movement is discussed by Tony Richards in a review of the new book *Against the Stream*.

● The continuing crisis of the Workers' Revolutionary Party — whose paper has now published the Open Letter printed in last December's *SV* — is analysed in an article by JOHN LISTER.

*Socialist Viewpoint* is a magazine committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through banner-waving ultimatums, introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, or as simply trailing behind this or that 'Left' talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary. Rather it must be a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate with policy and programme.

We are sure our readers will welcome the fact that this magazine is the third to be expanded to include more authors and wider coverage. If you feel — as we do — that it offers excellent value, and politics which represent a break from sectarian posturing and a serious contribution to the class struggle, why not help us sustain and improve it further?

Take a few copies to sell in your workplace, trade union, Labour Party or campaign work. Send us your news and information, articles, cartoons, photos, and letters. Ensure your local activities are publicised on our pages. Check with your local seller or drop us a line for further details.

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# Feathering their nests

**PULL the other one — it's got bells on!**

Who believes Tory government ministers any more? Even those who swallowed Thatcher's fanciful line on the sinking of the *Belgrano* have balked at her obvious lying over the Westland saga, the sudden embarrassing revelation of plans to flog off BL truck and bus, Land Rover and even Austin Rover cars production, and the latest pathetic attempt to fiddle the unemployment figures downwards by another 55,000.

Ministerial statements have begun to carry as much credibility as a Philippines election. And Thatcher herself seems to have embarked upon a deliberate course of antagonising as many sections of her former supporters as possible prior to the next election. The insults and attacks have come increasingly thick and fast:

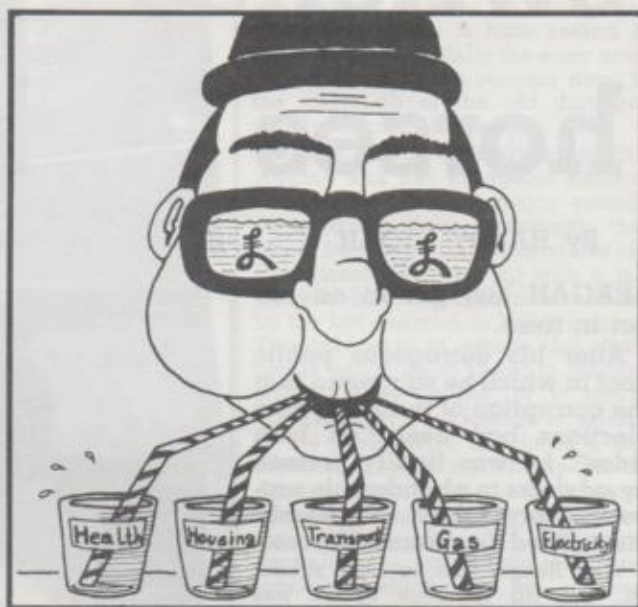
- Norman Fowler's social security plans will leave almost every person in the country worse off;
- Students have been hit by new DHSS regulations;
- The elderly and claimants have been denied extra heating allowances in the second coldest February this century;
- Pensioners have been insulted by a miserable 40p increase that will not buy a loaf of bread;
- Child allowance has been raised by only 10p — leaving it way below its level two years ago;
- 400,000 teachers have been ignored in their long-running if half-cock campaign over pay;
- 500,000 nurses and another 600,000 health workers have been warned that any real pay increase this year would mean even more NHS cuts;
- The new planned poll tax to replace rates will fall heaviest on the worse off and offer a bonanza cut in rates for businesses and the stinking rich;
- The proposed sale of BL to "foreign" bidders has raised nationalist hackles inside as well as outside the Tory Party — over and above the scandal of the asset-stripping exercise that would inevitably follow.

So how does Thatcher plan to fight and win another election? Though profits are still rising, the pound strong, and the Stock Market is running riot with takeover fever, the prospects are of little change in the record levels of unemployment.

Having failed to deliver the promised economic goods, Thatcher, like any shady street trader seeing an enraged punter returning to demand a refund, must work on the basis of "take the money and run."

Hence the haste to complete a range of projects including hell-for-leather privatisation of even more lucrative assets, further steps to demolish the welfare state, signing the commitment to the Channel Tunnel, and handing out more tax cuts.

But Thatcher has not entirely lost hope. Her trump card, despite the obvious and growing unpopularity of her government, is the emergence of the Alliance as a lever to split the former Labour vote and prevent a clear electoral showdown. And the Joker in the



pack is the weakness of the Kinnock leadership, which has above all set itself the task of ditching Labour's policies, witch-hunting and expelling the left, and moving closer to the SDP programme.

A combination of a split anti-Tory vote, an unconvincing Labour "alternative" based on the old, discredited formulae, and a vicious, swash-buckling, red-baiting "law and order" election campaign in the style of Tebbit and Archer might yet offer Thatcher the chance of a third term. Clearly some Tories quail at this prospect: many fear for their own seats. Hence the succession of timid "revolts" by handfuls of backbench dissidents.

But the Tory "wets" face an acute crisis of leadership: none has emerged with a coherent alternative to Thatcher or the backbone to mount a serious challenge in what remains the most undemocratic of parties.

Strangely enough, a similar weakness confronts Labour's beleaguered hard left. All agree that Kinnock is leading the way to what would at best be a grotesque re-run of the failed policies of the 1964 and 1974 Labour governments. All agree that his witch-hunt must be opposed. Yet none of the hard left MPs has shown a willingness to challenge Kinnock/Hattersley for the leadership: and few outside the Parliamentary Labour Party have even suggested that they should. Kinnock has not been slow to exploit this weakness, increasingly compounded with pre-election "unity" fever.

Could it be, however, that the hard left are playing a shrewd tactical game, simply biding their time for the right moment to mount their challenge to Kinnock, some time *after* the next election?

Pull the other one, comrade, it's got bells on!

# Reagan switches horses

By HARRY SLOAN

REAGAN just got in on the act in time.

After his outrageous public goof in which he suggested that the corruption of the Philippine elections had been "on both sides", he was finally pressed by advisors to abandon his support for the hopelessly discredited Ferdinand Marcos.

With Reagan having been silenced, the US fall-back option was swung into action. It worked like magic:

- The information produced by the US-funded and Church-backed electoral monitoring organisation 'Namfrel' was relentlessly pushed in the international mass media;

- US military aid to Marcos was publicly cut off;

- Leading pro-US figures in the Marcos military establishment — Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and army chief Fidel Ramos — began their "rebellion", calling for public support to help force Marcos to hand over power to Cory Aquino whose majority in the election had been rigged into a claimed Marcos victory.

- The US-backed "rebellion" was warmly supported by Manila's Archbishop, Cardinal Jaime Sin, urging people into the streets to defend the rebel stronghold.

- As the realities of the situation began to break upon the Philippines' military — with the recognition that the Pentagon cash subsidies would only be available once Aquino was installed — more and more army units followed Ramos in opposing the ailing, discredited old dictator.

The whole process, using a mixed language of pacifism and bourgeois democracy, succeeded brilliantly in achieving a political revolution in the Philippines, with the entire capitalist state machinery, including the armed forces, intact; with the position of the capitalist opposition parties strengthened; with the influence of



(Above) Discredited Marcos ousted by (below) second-choice Aquino.



## Aquino no answer for workers

the Church increased; and with the militant guerrilla opposition led by the New Peoples Army, and with the working class and its trade unions pushed temporarily out of the picture.

In this sense, it is possible to see a grain of truth in the apparently bizarre statements from Moscow and Eastern Europe insisting that the whole Aquino challenge to Marcos was a CIA plot. Following their habitual stance of being the very last to oppose tottering and hated dictatorships (remember Cambodia 1975 and Iran), the Kremlin leaders focussed their opposition on Aquino and their support on Ferdinand Marcos! They rushed to congratulate the

old anti-communist on his election "victory" and complained of "evident and open political interference from Washington."

The Soviet response is clearly not simply based on the evident pro-US sentiment shown by Cory Aquino, her reactionary running mate (now Prime Minister) Salvador Laurel, and the upwardly-mobile new General Fidel Ramos. It is also an attempt to toady up to Marcos' own projected image as a Philippine "nationalist" leader; Marcos even made a point of using anti-American slogans in his election campaign.

Marcos had swaggeringly threatened to force renegotiations with the USA over the giant military

# PHILIPPINES

bases at Subic Bay and Clark Field — while knowing all too well that his main credential in maintaining dictatorial control in the Philippines was that he was Washington's man driving the military and gravy train.

Interestingly Marcos is not by any means the first reactionary anti-communist leader to be grovelled to as a "nationalist" by Moscow: one early infamous example was Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in the late 1930s; since the war a similar stance has been taken to a succession of Arab, African and Latin American leaders.

So what is the significance of the change of government in the Philippines? Is it simply a hands-down victory for the imperialists, repolishing the facade of "democracy" after the battering it received from Marcos?

Clearly not: Reagan and the US establishment would much have preferred the old dictator they knew and loved to continue to keep the lid on Philippines politics. But if he was to lose control they had to have an adequate alternative capitalist government to take his place: Washington has learned hard and bitter lessons from its iiasco following the abrupt collapse of sponsored regimes:

- in Cuba where Batista abdicated on the last night of 1958;
- in Iran, with the collapse of the Shah;
- in Nicaragua with the defeat of Somoza;

- and Grenada with the abrupt ousting of the Gairy regime in 1979.

Aquino's candidacy offered the US the chance to prepare a fall-back option with genuine mass support, enlisting the entire radicalised middle class for an anti-communist, reformist campaign for bourgeois democracy.

Aquino's political inexperience is a positive advantage for the USA — as is her family background, as owners of one of the world's largest private sugar plantations and central figure in the Marcos system of "crony capitalism".

Her cousin is a key monopoly operator in the lucrative coconut, cement and brewing industries. Cory Aquino, the "53-year old housewife" is not so much pro-capitalist as a capitalist herself. Her courage in the face of Marcos' intimidation was however reinforced by a genuine swell of popular support for a democratic alternative, as shown by her mass election rallies.

But she is no radical. Backed up by the unsavoury Salvador Laurel, who has boasted that he would run the show as Prime Minister, and by a mixed bag of 50 "liberal" and not-so-liberal advisors, Aquino from early in the campaign hedged on her initial pledges to remove the US bases; offered an economic programme little different from that of Marcos; and



General Ramos and Defence Minister Enrile — quick to change sides.

angled for a foothold among "reforming" army officers by promising to ditch some of Marcos' old guard of generals. She has also suggested she might lift Marcos' vicious anti-union laws and even seek a ceasefire in the guerrilla struggle.

But there is little prospect of any drastic changes. The reasons are clear enough:

- The economy is wrecked, \$24 billion in debt to the IMF and Western bankers and having actually shrunk by 10% in the past two years. Aquino will see only capitalist solutions to this crisis — and they will be impossible to achieve if trade unions are allowed freely to defend their members.

- The military machine — Marcos' power base — is intact — with Ramos and Enrile still in charge. They want increased US aid, and are using the civil war against the NPA as the excuse for demanding it. A ceasefire is therefore unlikely — unless the NPA take the lead in surrendering.

- The Communist Party, the most militant unions and the guerrillas were not drawn into the Aquino campaign, though they did not vigorously fight for their own line of an electoral boycott. This political independence

was not entirely of their making. Repeated advances to Aquino and offers of assistance in exchange for ministers were firmly rebuffed.

But in the absence of serious concessions to the demands of Philippine workers and peasants, these forces will continue to gain ground and pose a real threat to the new government.

One reason for US concern at the corruption of the Marcos regime was its evident inability to defeat the guerrillas. There is little reason to believe that essentially the same army will have any more success now, in the aftermath of the old dictator's widely welcomed downfall.

- Even in the unlikely event that Aquino and her bourgeois advisors did decide to make major concessions to the mass movement, they would be faced with the obstacles of a Parliament still sewn up with a majority of Marcos supporters installed by the last exercise in ballot rigging. The only ways to escape this strait-jacket would be to resort to Marcos-style rule by decree, or to invoke mass support to challenge to validity of the Parliament, and force a new election. It seems more likely that the Aquino government — which has no interest in fundamentally challenging the status quo of Philippines capitalism — will simply take those measures which can be achieved within the existing constraints.

- Most importantly, we must remember that however cynically they have since been used, the events in the Philippines were not simply stage-managed from Washington: they were the outcome of a worsening balance of forces which had increasingly threatened Marcos since 1983. The rising strength of the trade union struggle in the cities, the guerrilla offensive in the countryside, and the growing groundswell of democratic opposition was making it impossible for the USA's first choice to hold the line.

All these forces will be strengthened by Marcos' downfall: they will press forward with their demands, and will now be opposed by the opposition of yesterday, by the Church and by US imperialism.

The key issue for Philippines workers and peasants is therefore the extent to which they can build fighting organisations politically independent of the bourgeoisie, capable of taking up the fight for jobs, land reform, housing, wages, democratic rights and for an end to the US military bases.

Learning the lessons of the 1986 "February Revolution", explaining the reasons why it will not achieve the demands of the masses, and fighting to organise the fighting strength of the workers will be vital to the construction of a revolutionary Marxist leadership in the Philippines.



*NPA guerrillas patrolling: they are the real opposition.*

## Collapse of a strongman Holding a bloody nose

By BOB HURST

THERE is a doctrine of American Foreign Policy called the "Hold your Nose Doctrine". This says that the US will support any "Authoritarian", i.e. Right Wing, regime against "Communism", especially "International Communism" no matter how noxious and bloody that regime may be.

The problem for such a doctrine is that people of the countries concerned will not tolerate their gangster regimes for ever.

About a year ago the US realised that the Godfather of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, was heading the same way as their previous clients in Iran and Nicaragua. Marcos had been a loyal ally of imperialism for many years and the US has two vital bases in the Philippines, Subic Bay naval base and Clark Field air base.

Though the US was prepared to put up with the Marcos regime's vote rigging, graft and political terror in return for the use of these bases, opposition to Marcos was growing. This opposition was com-



*Marcos — taking the Somoza road.*

pounded by the effects of the world capitalist crisis on a third world agrarian national like the Philippines. As in many such countries there has been no land reform, which has meant that this crisis has ruined many peasant and small farmers.

Many of the sugar estates are also closed, with the workers destitute. This is compounded by the corruption of the regime which has given three of Marcos' cronies a

The result of this has been the development of an insurgency which the regime has tried to repress with typical "Authoritarian" measures, i.e. murder and terror. Union organisers in the sugar industry have been murdered and imprisoned.

What worried the US was the feeling that the Marcos regime can not win this war that is developing. Their response was to put pressure on Marcos to clean up his act by holding an early election.

This was more a gesture than a real threat. There is a Filipino saying that "It is not the voting that counts, it is the counting that counts." Everyone knew that the election would be rigged by Marcos, that didn't matter to the US. The point was that Marcos would appear to have the support of the Filipino people, making US support against the insurgency more respectable.

In addition there were no real opponents to Marcos. In a system dependent on graft, the "opposition politicians" or "political leaders" are frequently unsuccessful competitors in the business of government. In the Philippines they were mutually suspicious, each putting forward their own claim as the per-

## BOLIVIA

Veteran Trotskyist arrested

# Free Guillermo Lora!

ON January 29, 1986, the security police in Bolivia arrested and imprisoned *Guillermo Lora*, leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party (POR) and author of the Bolivian Trade Union's "Pulacayo Thesis" (1946). Lora was also the author of the basic programme for the 1971 People's Assembly in Bolivia.

The rightist government in Bolivia has returned to the political and economic plan against the working class and the trade unions which was used during the period of military dictatorship 1971-78.

The present rightist government of President Paz Estenssoro has even established an open and close co-operation with the fascist party which was in power after the military coup in 1971.

The brutal economic policies conducted by the rightist government mean nothing but increased misery to the majority of the Bolivian people. Since the installation of this govern-

ment in July 1985, the inflation rate in Bolivia has reached 8,000% (as of February 1986), while wages have stood at the same level as July 1985.

The trade unions answered with a general strike. The government hit back with a state of emergency and arrested and deported more than 1,500 trade union leaders.

The imprisonment of Guillermo Lora is a direct continuation and new height in these anti-worker and anti-trade union policies. The government is arguing that his crime is not paying the fine (US\$9,000) which, according to an anti-democratic electoral law, the POR should pay for receiving less than 50,000 votes in the July elections.

Bolivian workers need the support and solidarity of their comrades in this hard and difficult situation. What they need is:

- Financial support for the campaign to pay the fine and free Guillermo Lora.

- Help in spreading information, for example in trade union or other publications.

- Other acts of solidarity, such as sending telegrams to President Victor Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia demanding the release of Guillermo Lora and other trade union leaders still imprisoned.

Messages and donations should be sent to:

Martin Alm,  
Arbyg. 3A, 6tr.  
633 45 Eskilstuna  
Sweden.

son who could unite the country against the threat of "communism", which Marcos could not do.

The complication to this system was the emergence of Corazon Aquino as the one politician who had a national appeal and hence the one politician who could realistically challenge Marcos. Corazon is the widow of the politician Benigno Aquino who was murdered at the instigation of Marcos in 1983.

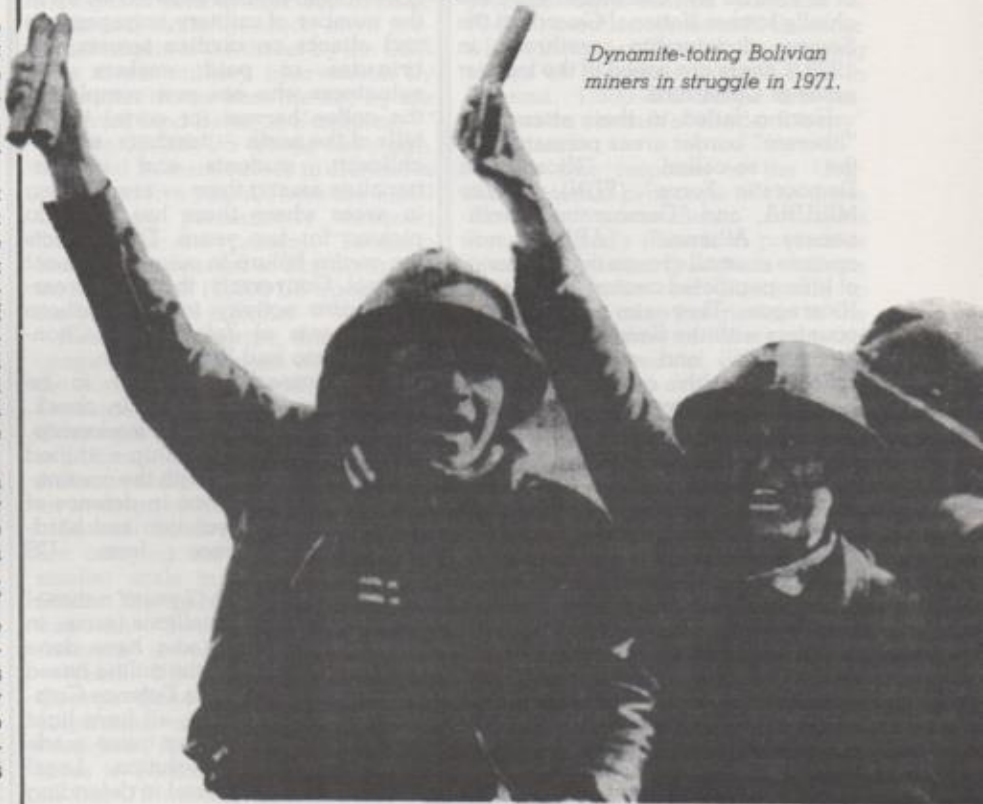
Until his death Benigno was another opposition politician who had fallen out with the regime after being one of the youngest provincial governors and senators. He went into exile in the US and it was on his return in 1983 that he was murdered at Manila Airport. At this point he ceased to be another opposition politician and became a political martyr. Corazon was able to take on this mantle of martyrdom and the status of a widow seeking vengeance. In the months leading up to the election Aquino became a realistic challenger to Marcos, even thought the election was going to be rigged and Marcos was planned to win. It was and he did: but not convincingly enough to persuade his US sponsors he could survive.

It is important to remember that this was a contest between bourgeois politicians in a bourgeois arena. It represents a split within the bourgeoisie as to how best to defeat the insurgency and how capitalism can survive in the Philippines. It is this that has presented such a problem to the US.

The election was not designed to replace Marcos but to give him a veneer of respectability. Aquino was not the main opponent; the insurgents are. As Reagan has said, the bases are more important than everything else.

Recognising the situation as a split in the ruling class Reagan at first proposed that the two settle their differences and work together, a prospect that was actually absurd. Aquino's threat of civil disobedience was also worrying to the US, since it seemed unlikely her ramshackle political movement could control prolonged mass action, however limited be their objectives.

All this explains the confusion in US reactions to the situation. For the working class it must recognise that it has nothing in common with bourgeois politicians like Aquino, for all her heroism and Marcos' repulsiveness. Any general strike must be directed against the "opposition" as well as the regime. It is unfortunate that the insurgency can not provide the leadership which such a strike needs. Otherwise - at least for now - Marcos may lose but capitalism will win.



*Dynamite-toting Bolivian miners in struggle in 1971.*

# NICARAGUA



## \$100m aid request for Contras Is Reagan going for broke?

By BILL MACKETH, recently returned from a month-long trip to Nicaragua

THE sheer scale of the US Government's offensive against Central America should alert all internationalists. If Congress agrees President Reagan's \$100m aid package to the Honduran-based Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries, this will equal the total official US aid to the *contras* authorised in the years 1981-85.

The Nicaraguan government estimates that in addition in 1983-5 ten times as much (\$1 billion) has been donated through private sources in the form of military equipment, intelligence aid, logistical support and military infrastructure for the *contras*. If this is the case, it seems likely that at least some of the total is "laundered" US government aid.

The *contra* forces comprise only some 7,000-10,000, based mainly in the bordering Honduran departments of El Paraiso and Choluteca. They are chiefly former National Guards of the Somoza dictatorship overthrown in 1979. Others are based in the frontier areas of Costa Rica.

Having failed in their attempt to "liberate" border areas permanently, the so-called "Nicaraguan Democratic Force" (FDN), Miskite MISURA, and "Democratic Revolutionary Alliance" (ARDE) now operate in small groups in the interior of little-populated central and eastern Nicaragua. They aim to avoid encounters with the Sandinista People's Army (EPS) and attack civilians, schools, health centres, bridges, ports, co-operative and other farms, and warehouse and processing plants for agricultural produce.

From 1981 to mid 1985, the Nicaraguan government estimates there have been 8,662 victims of *contra* aggression in roughly equal numbers of dead, wounded and kidnapped. (150,000 would be a proportionate figure in the UK). More than 150,000 Nicaraguans, mainly in border areas in the north have been displaced by attacks by the forces armed, trained, equipped and advised by the US Government in Honduras and the USA.

The Nicaraguan government



Reagan: pressure on governments.

claims over 9,000 casualties on the *contras* in the same period. Although government figures show no let-up in the number of military engagements and attacks on civilian targets, the brigades of paid workers and volunteers who are now completing the coffee harvest (or *corte*) in the hills of the north — teachers, schoolchildren, students and internationalists among them — are working in areas where there has been no picking for two years. This reflects the *contra* failure to seize permanent control. Conversely, there is increased *contra* activity in the southern departments of Zelaya Sur, Chontales, Boaco and Rio San Juan.

The Nicaraguans appear to be holding the *contra* threat in check. The disunity of the *contra* leadership, despite US efforts to set up a unified command, contrasts with the continuing broad mobilisation in defence of the democratic revolution and hard-won independence from US domination.

As well as the EPs (2 years' national service), reserve battalions (some, in the cities, of those who have done their two years) and the militia based on the local Sandinista Defence Committees or workplaces, all have light weapons to defend the gains made since the 1979 revolution. Local militias are instrumental in defending

villages against *contra* attacks.

Workplaces such as state cotton farms, co-operatives and factories have their own militia detachments of workers. The Sandinista unions have representatives responsible for recruitment into the militia.

Another aspect of CIA/*contra* strategy to overthrow the Sandinista government (elected by a large majority in 1984) is the attempt to open an FDN "internal front" of sabotage, bombing and assassinations in the cities.

In January, a group of five people, arrested in possession of explosives and arms, was presented at a press conference in Managua. Four admitted involvement with such a plan: the fifth, a CTN union leader, denied involvement. (The small, divided CTN is affiliated to the anti-communist World Confederation of Labour). Economic sabotage on a grand scale is part of US government strategy.

The price paid by the Nicaraguans for their determined resistance of the

### YOU CAN HELP MA OR YOU CAN



WE'RE  
FINANC  
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# NICARAGUA



*Sandinista militia member defends Jinotega border area.*

US aggression is very high. Over 45% of the budget now goes on defence. In addition to the *contras*' campaign of burning schools and health centres, the soaring expenditure on defence threatens the maintenance of improved health and education services. "Survival" rather than any further improvement is the policy they have been forced into.

The *contras*' campaign of destruction and terror links up with the US government's aggressive trade embargo (no spare parts for US-made vehicles, for example; veto of loans and other interference) to threaten a

major dislocation of Nicaragua's flimsy economy. In this way Reagan hopes to create conditions for disaffection and a real "internal front" of opposition to the Sandinistas.

However in a January visit (restricted to the more heavily populated Pacific zones) I could see no signs of serious shortage of basic foods and clothing. Much more prominent again is the threat by the USA of a direct military intervention by American troops from the air, by sea and from land bases in Honduras.

Over 70,000 US troops have participated in manoeuvres in Honduras in the last five years. There are 2,500 US troops permanently stationed there, and the present "Terencio Sierra" manoeuvres in Honduras will involve at least 10,000 US troops over the coming 4-5 months.

New bases, airstrips, army depots, camps and major road works to link the north coast ports with the capital Tecucigalpa and areas bordering Nicaragua have turned Honduras into a US military stronghold in Central America and possible staging post for an invasion of Nicaragua.

Several hundred more US troops are carrying out preparations on a smaller scale in Costa Rica to the South. The de-neutralisation of what was the "Switzerland of Central America" is well advanced.

When US Secretary of State George Schultz attended the inauguration of the new Honduran President Azcona in January, air lanes to Tecucigalpa were closed to all but US military aircraft: and US

helicopters patrolled the capital. US armed forces chief Admiral Rowe earlier in the month visited the Honduran military and the *contra* leaders.

Further symptoms of the US arrogance in the region came on January 8, when a US warship unprecedentedly shelled positions of FMLN liberation forces in El Salvador where the guerrillas were threatening troops of President Duarte. And in Panama, 1,500 US troops are embarked on a month's "Kinder Liberty" exercises.

With this response to the Contadora peace proposals of the Latin American governments, President Reagan clearly intends to pressurise the newly-elected Presidents of Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala to take an even more hostile line to the Sandinista leaders in Nicaragua and step up the threat of direct US intervention hinted at during his four-hour victory visit to recolonised Grenada.

But the government and people of Nicaragua are in a much stronger position both militarily and politically than was Grenada prior to the US invasion.

Neither does the USA have a local alternative leadership in Nicaragua with any credibility. The leading political role being played on an international level by Archbishop Obando of Managua in support to the *contras* merely serves to expose this gaping hole in Reagan's strategy to oust the Sandinistas.

*To be continued next issue.*

## THE ROSITA AN ORPHAN, TURN THE PAGE.

THE CONTRAS, AND WE NEED YOUR HELP. HELP. YOU SEE, SINCE CONGRESS CUT OUT MILITARY FUNDING WE'VE BEEN GETTING MONEY FROM PRIVATE SOURCES. WE BUY GUNS, AND GRENADES, AND MINES. WE'VE ALREADY KILLED MANY PEOPLE. WE'VE FORMED VILLAGE MILITIAS, WHO SUPPORT A GOVERNMENT WE DON'T LIKE. PEOPLE LIKE ROSITA'S MOTHER. WOULDN'T IT BE A SHAME TO STOP NOW?

NEED YOUR HELP! I WANT THE WEAPONS THE GOVERNMENT PAYS FOR TO CREATE A:

BOY ORPHAN

GIRL ORPHAN  USE MY DONATION WHERE ITS NEEDED LEAST

# Health chiefs produce strikebreakers' checklist

**RUPERT Murdoch may have made the headlines with his strikebreaking plans at the Sun: but health authorities are increasingly keen on preparing to confront trade union action.**

A confidential battle plan drawn up last autumn by general managers in the North West region (covering Manchester and Lancashire) sums up the new thinking among NHS chiefs.

Entitled "Responses to the threat or actuality of industrial action", the document sets out an objective of coordinated "region-wide consistency" in the face of strikes. Managers are urged to prepare for "propaganda battles" by establishing reliable media contacts and the appointment of firms of public relations consultants.

The managers gloat over their assessment of the aftermath of the miners strike "management firmness pays off"; they rejoice in the fact that with mass unemployment "job losses are feared"; and they believe that among health workers there is "no support for grand strategies or widespread industrial action".

While it is certainly true that some leaders in health unions have shied away from industrial action since the miners' strike began, last summer did see a massive campaign of rolling strike action involving thousands of hospital workers in the North East score a major victory over privatisation in Sunderland.

The managers are equally pleased at the enlarged role of management:

"Introduction of general management



function has favoured a firm, decisive management stance, both towards privatisation and industrial action."

The new get-tough policy is summed up under the heading "general measures against staff taking industrial action". These include:

- **Written and verbal warnings to staff on "the personal consequences of industrial action".**

- **Threats to sack workers who refuse to give written assurances of normal working.**

- **Seeking damages from unions through the courts "where losses to NHS property or goods occurs".**

- **Calling in private contractors "Exclusively with non-NHS staff" to break strikes where staff are in dispute over competitive tendering.**

- **Suspending the contracts of suppliers whose drivers refuse to cross picket lines.**

Plans to undermine industrial action include discouraging district-wide joint union meetings; direct management communication with staff, better briefing of

junior management, and discouraging meetings with unions that cover more than one issue.

Meanwhile, the general objective is to prepare a strike breaking force (or, as the document puts it, "alternative labour"). "It is essential that senior management are seen to participate" in the scabbing. However managers are urged not to get carried away with their enthusiasm for strikebreaking:

"Managerial willingness to carry out non-managerial tasks could possibly be counter-productive: some staff will be more willing to take part in industrial action if they are secure in the knowledge that someone else will maintain essential services."

No shortage of scabs is expected: "Other staff may almost welcome the challenge of devising ways to keep the service going (!)"

Chillingly the document states that in the event of strike action, use of the armed forces is "possible".

Management are advised to respond to occupations by seeking court orders rather than attempting to eject occupiers: this can be seen as the pattern in hospital occupations at St Leonards, South London Hospital for Women and most recently Neasden Hospital.

The document also casts a useful sidelight on the realities of competitive tendering and the old technique of "divide and rule". It admits that:

**"Unions see little reason to cooperate in competitive tendering procedures because either NHS staff will lose the contract, or to win it they will have to accept pay reductions and job losses. The net result is the same (!)"**

To ensure that section managers hold the line for competitive tendering rather than opting to join with their workforce in defending existing standards, the report insists that management jobs be protected:

**"Ensure that managers of services which may be the subject of a successful outside tender have an assured management task, including the maintaining of standards of service provision."**

So while ancillary jobs are axed by the dozen, managers will feel sure they and their salaries are quite safe.

The managers also supply an interesting list in order of importance of the services "most at risk" through industrial action. It is worth remembering that they consider telephone services, delivery of food, catering, laundry and movement of patients to be more important than cleaning, urgent repairs, sterilising in central departments or supplies of drugs.

The hard line of the NW region report is no exception. It is based on an elaboration of the guidelines sent out to all DHAs in 1979, taking into account the current situation.

Hospital workers should be warned: management are linking forces — if unions do not do the same, they face serious danger of defeat.



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# Soft left cracks up as Kinnock cracks down

By KEVIN FLACK

THE Labour Party National Executive Committee has declared open warfare on socialists within its own ranks;

Its recent decision to proceed with disciplinary action against 15 *Militant* supporters from Liverpool comes as part of a mounting — though admittedly unco-ordinated — series of witch hunts against socialists across the country. The 16 accused are to be called before an NEC "hearing" — but anyone who thought the Liverpool inquiry was anything but a kangaroo court is rather naive to say the least.

As Eric Heffer pointed out after the NEC meeting on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme, when the Enquiry was set up, it was going to investigate alleged improprieties from unconstitutional behaviour to corruption and even criminal offences: with this kind of motivation, securing the backing of the soft left was easier. As Eric Heffer pointed out, if the disciplinary action has been proposed because of the minor constitutional irregularities that were found, why is it proposed to take this action against only some of the District Party officers?

That Michael Meacher and Audrey Wise voted for the inquiry but against the hearing shows an incredible lack of understanding of the way the right wing operates. No one should have any illusions that the "hearing" will lead to expulsions — including those of elected Councillors.

*Militant* have a strong enough base in Liverpool to make the expulsions meaningless and incapable of implementation. They also have the chance to build a broad-based campaign against the witch-hunt nationally with other organisations and individual socialists within the Party.

It is likely, however, that they will prefer to use the capitalist courts — like they are doing in Stevenage and Cardiff — to block the expulsions. Any temporary success through the Courts (remember it failed at the time of the expulsion of their Editorial Board) is no victory in the labour movement. High Court battles between highly paid lawyers are no substitute for mobilisation within the Party and the Unions.

To call on the Tory Courts to settle a dispute within the movement is like calling in management to settle a recruitment dispute between two unions in a workplace. We should be exposing the total failure of British Courts to uphold any real justice for the working class as we did during the miners' strike, rather than appealing to them for help.

It would be easy, however, to denounce the use of the courts and then sit



back and watch the witch-hunt gather pace. We must not do that. Working through the umbrella group of the left, Labour Left Co-ordination, and its publication *Witch Hunt News*, *Socialist Viewpoint* is helping to raise awareness of the extent of the witch hunt (see SV10) and the fightback against it.

The NEC under Kinnock's guidance have shut down the Liverpool District Labour Party until after the May Council elections. On top of the recent Old Swan Liverpool by-election defeat, and the proposed expulsion of such leading Council figures as Derek Hatton, this shows that Kinnock is working to ensure Labour loses control of the Council to the Liberal-Tory coalition that put it in its present mess!

The last thing he wants to see elected is either a Labour Council committed to fighting the Tories or a Labour Council committed to defending *Militant*. A widespread purge of *Militant* supporters will be much easier once they have lost the influence that comes with holding leading positions on Liverpool Council.

The tactics to be adopted by the left in Liverpool are quite clear:

- \*any expelled Councillor or Council candidate standing in May should remain the official Labour candidate;
- \*expelled Councillors should remain part of the Labour Group (as Amir Khan has in Birmingham);
- \*the election campaign — particularly the policies it is run on — should be determined by either the District Labour Party continuing to meet, or by a committee elected from each of the branches;

- \*the full time organisers that are to be brought in to replace the District Labour Party should not be allowed any control over the publicity put out during the elections;

- \*no expulsions of individual members should be recognised by their branches or CLP.

Attacks on Liverpool's GMBU and TGWU union branches — merely because *Militant* have won a majority in most of them — should be resisted throughout those unions and not be allowed to remain just a Liverpool matter. Underlying the attempts to restructure the Liverpool District Labour Party is the attempt to reduce the influence of the trade unions — in many cases, the very people who are working to implement the Council's policies (so much for workers' control!).

The same style of District Labour Party — where trade unions have a direct say in the policy making of the Party — is of course not confined to Liverpool but is common especially in the North of England; it is based on the same principle as the composition of Constituency-based General Committees.

It is no coincidence that the attacks on the trade union input into the District Labour Party formed a major part of the dossier on Liverpool produced by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (a grouping itself facing splits since the ILP left amidst denunciations in its paper *Labour Leader* that the LCC was supporting a "witch-hunt").

Having lost the arguments within the existing structure, it is only through a drastically altered District Labour Party

that the one-time "left" of the LCC and the forces of the right and centre can hope to gain control of the leadership of the Party in Liverpool.

It is worth restating that the main reason why Kinnock is stepping up the witch-hunt at this time (it is, after all, 3 years since the *Militant* Editorial Board were expelled) is to silence internal opposition in the run up to the General Election.

That, they hope, will provide room for a peaceful ditching of socialist policies and the real possibility of an alliance with the SDP/Liberals after the Election. Kinnock's statement that Labour will not alter the Tory anti-union laws in any major way and his Wilsonesque outburst last summer that whatever the Party Conference decided over the NUM, he would decide what went in the manifesto, both point to this conclusion.

But already the right face the possibility that the witch-hunt might be getting out of control. The response of the press after the inquiry report to the NEC was: what about the rest? What about *Militant's* other 7,000+ members? What about Dave Nellist MP and Terry Fields MP? What about other Councillors who are "just as bad" as Liverpool, like the Manchester Labour Group?

Neil Kinnock may yet find that in trying to satisfy the demands of the press and the local government "old guard" who want to cling to power that he has bitten off more than he can chew.

## NUM militant victimised

PAUL Whetton, a militant Nottinghamshire miner throughout the 1988/4/5 strike has been sacked by the NCB.

Whetton is secretary of the Beavercotes branch of the NUM which has continued to function strongly despite a majority of the scab UDM in the pit.

The pit struck in his support — including many members of the UDM.

The sacking marks a departure even for the NCB's hard line policy. In a panic move to prop up the declining UDM, Whetton was sacked for putting a notice on the board advertising the next meeting of the NUM branch. He was



given the choice of resigning as branch secretary or being sacked.

# The creation of a new right wing leadership

By BILL PETERS

THE swing to the right which has taken place since the defeat of the miners' strike has affected most parts of the labour movement. The TUC has dropped its opposition to the anti-union laws and shrunk from disciplining the EETPU over its role in Wapping. Many of the individual unions have swung to the right and in the Labour Party Kinnockism has grown and strengthened and the witch-hunt against *Militant* is in full swing.

Although the willingness to fight is still present amongst rank and file workers, and strikes are still taking place, this situation is having an effect at shop floor level, particularly amongst local leaderships where the argument that "strike action always fails" — a line handed down from top levels in almost every union — has had an effect.

## Marcos-style elections come to Cowley

This process has expressed itself in a particularly virulent way in the Austin Rover Assembly Plant in Cowley, which has for decades been a bastion of militant trade unionism and political struggle.

Two years ago there was an important change in the leadership of the TGWU in the plant. Bob Fryer, who had been the convenor for almost 25 years, was defeated by Ivor Braggins — a militant left wing shop steward. Fryer had been seen by most of the left as running out of steam. He in any case had only three years to retirement and the matter of an adequate replacement had to be confronted.

Ivor Braggins had been a shop steward on the assembly tracks for almost 20 years, had an excellent

record and was a part of the far left in the plant.

Moreover it was possible for a challenger to defeat the existing convenor since a tradition had been established in the plant of meticulously conducted democratic ballot procedures. This was in marked contrast to the usual situation in the unions where those who control the balloting procedures almost always win.

Braggins' election was seen as a victory for the left. Not because Bob Fryer had been right wing, far from it, but because the result continued the traditions of militancy which had been established in the plant in the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

Two years later, Ivor Braggins has



Cowley strike 1983: Braggins (inset) has switched from "left" to "right" in 2 years.

gone completely over to the right wing. The results have been dramatic. Last year was hailed by management as the first strike-free year in the Cowley Assembly Plant for 30 years. Braggins has gone to the local media to tell workers that management attitudes were improving, and that they are now "talking to us and not at us."

Nor has it stopped there. As soon as opposition emerged to his new line of collaboration, Braggins launched a witch-hunt on the left. Two militant left wingers, Alan Thornett and Bob Cullen, both victimised and sacked by management over the past three years, are being driven out of the TGWU branch for daring to call a right winger a right winger.

The details of this evolution have

some implications for the movement as a whole.

After Braggins was elected there was general agreement amongst the left on immediate priorities. The shop floor movement had been almost destroyed by repeated and sustained attacks on it from both the TGWU officials and the management, particularly during the Michael Edwardes era. The emphasis had to be on strengthening the trade union structures in the plant and rebuilding the shop stewards movement.

Agreement at that level, however, meant very little since in practice it could be interpreted as meaning almost anything. Indeed it soon emerged that the way Braggins saw rebuilding the movement was to avoid strikes or any other form of action at all costs.

The first clear expression of this was when Braggins conspired with management to break an overtime

ban imposed by the membership over low bonus earnings.

Braggins had not wanted the overtime ban anyway, but it had been imposed by two militant mass meetings. Production was disrupted because of the lack of essential overtime in the Paint Shop. Braggins called a shop stewards meeting and pushed through a resolution to exclude those particular people from the ban and therefore allowing the plant to run. The resolution was to be recommended to a recall mass meeting.

At the mass meeting the resolution was defeated, overwhelmingly and the ban continued. Braggins then went into the paint shop and persuaded the group concerned to defy the mass meeting decision!

The activists were shocked. But most of them shrank from drawing the conclusion that Braggins had changed his spots. They preferred to give him the benefit of the doubt and hoped that it was a one-off mistake.

What we were seeing was the collapse of a militant trade unionist once he was elevated to a position of pressure and responsibility without either adequate political equipment himself or a disciplined marxist movement to give direction or act as a counterweight to that development.

His attitude was better over the wage claim in February 1985. But it was a comparatively safe issue being dealt with by national officials and much easier to support.

In November 1984 management had sacked Bob Cullen, a left wing activist and a TGWU deputy senior shop steward. Even by Austin Rover standards the sacking was outrageous. He was sacked for an alleged picketing offence which happened when he was not even there. Management eventually had to accept that it was a case of mistaken identity, although they still refused to reinstate him.

Braggins was determined right from the start that there would be no fight over it. His attitude was "keep it quiet and rely on the discipline procedure machinery". He refused to meet the membership or even have contact with them over it. In the months during which the case proceeded, he never made a single public statement about the case. If Bob Cullen had not eventually publicised it himself, no one would ever have known about it. Right up to the present day not one union statement has ever been issued defending Bob Cullen. The only statements issued, by the Trades Council and Bob himself, were *condemned* by Ivor Braggins.

The only public statement Braggins made — after the procedure was finally exhausted — was that he thought Bob Cullen would be going to an Industrial Tribunal. And that was *before* Braggins had discussed the issue with the membership.

When he eventually met the membership, 3 months after Bob

Cullen was sacked, he did not even meet Bob's own shift, but the *opposite* shift. There was a shop stewards meeting after the procedure was exhausted. But the resolution to it, agreed with Bob Cullen on the telephone the night before, and calling for an immediate meeting with Bob's own section the next day, was altered by Ivor Braggins. He made it less specific, and delayed the meeting for a further week. In this way it forewarned management of exactly what was going to happen and gave them a chance to organise.

Throughout Braggins' first year of office none of the measures which were needed to rebuild the trade union movement were taken. There was no information to the membership and hardly any shop stewards meetings — except when management wanted something.

When the left pushed for any form of activity they were met by increasing hostility from Braggins. Militants were browbeaten and accused of being "agents of outside groups". All of these bureaucratic methods of operation were copied from Reg Parsons, the extreme right wing convenor installed by TGWU officials in the mid 1970s, with the mission to "smash the left in the plant". Braggins himself had been persecuted in those days, as a left winger.

Meanwhile the Braggins leadership refused seriously to challenge to management on anything. Workers were sacked in increasing numbers for not being able to keep up with the pace management demanded on the tracks.

By the second half of 1985 it had become extremely difficult to see Ivor Braggins as anything other than a right winger who was getting worse all the time.

The situation came to a head at the end of the year when the TGWU two year period of office came to an end. Elections were due for all positions; shop stewards and convenors in the plant and delegates to the higher bodies of the union — the Regional and National Committees and the General Executive Council.

At the October meeting of the TGWU Branch Ivor Braggins and Andy Brown, the Branch Secretary, proposed an electoral pact with the right wing in the Body Plant next door. They would divide up the positions and campaign jointly for them. With a single candidate they should defeat the Coventry candidates who are in the same electoral division. Ivor Braggins was chosen as the candidate for the national executive.

The left could not be bound by such an arrangement. No sooner had all this been fixed up than the new right wing bloc discovered that there was a second candidate from Oxford for the General Executive — Tony Richardson — a left wing shop steward from the Body Plant. The reaction was strong from both Ivor

Braggins and Andy Brown. They branded it as a direct challenge to Ivor Braggins which would be regarded as an act of "total war". Left wingers replied that since it was now clear that Ivor Braggins was now a right winger, candidate from the left was needed.

The Braggins' response came at the November branch meeting. Alan Thornett and Bob Cullen were barred at the door. Brown announced that they were in *arrears of contributions*. Both had had special arrangements for the payment of their union dues started on the initiative of Andy Brown since they had been victimised. Brown had now cancelled these arrangements *retrospectively*, without their knowledge and used this to declare them in arrears! They were both 50p in arrears: Brown refused to take the money.

At the same time Braggins and Brown began moves to disaffiliate the TGWU branch from the Oxford Trades Council and all other "outside bodies".

They used the involvement of the Trades Council in Irish solidarity work to justify their moves. (The people change but the issues and manoeuvres remain the same). They set up an inquiry into the "activities" of the former delegates.

The response of the left was to stand a candidate, Perry Cullen, against Braggins as convenor. He faced a difficult task but a stand needed to be made.

As the series of elections have taken place for all the various positions this has led to a systematic erosion of the democratic balloting procedures established in the plant.

In the first balloting for the General Executive Council and other constitutional Committees, the previous practice of having scrutineers reflecting both candidates in the election was abandoned. The scrutineers and all those administering the election were supporters of Ivor Braggins. "Roving" ballot boxes were introduced in order that pressure for voting could be increased in areas that had most support for Braggins. Not even the TGWU's wholly inadequate balloting rules were carried out. Membership cards were not checked or stamped, and no record was kept of who voted. Braggins got a huge vote and is now on the national Executive of the union.

Complaints about ballot rigging were at first ignored by the union on the basis that individuals do not have the right to complain — only branches! Some kind of an investigation is now taking place — which has all the hallmarks of a whitewash.

When it came to the balloting for convenor it was not so bad. People feel more strongly about it since it affects them directly and ballot rigging would be noticed more. Some measures, such as limited "roving"



Bob Cullen (beard) with pickets outside the plant in

boxes were introduced to give Braggins an advantage — but those who cast votes were recorded — which does give some safeguard.

Braggins won the election, but the voting figures were significant. There were over 700 votes less cast in the convenors elections than the totals claimed in the one for the constitutional committees! Since people feel strongly about who is convenor and have little interest in who is on the constitutional committees the difference must lie in the balloting procedure.

It was in the final round of balloting for the 6 deputy convenors where the most outrageous moves were made. A personal letter attacking one of the candidates — Perry Cullen, who had stood against Braggins for both convenor and first deputy — was handed to people as they voted by those administering the election. It was on official TGWU Region 5 headed notepaper, and said the following:

"On Thursday February 20, day and night shift will have the opportunity to determine by ballot from a list of 11 shop stewards our choice for 6 of them to become my deputies for the 1986/87 electoral period.

As you the membership in the recent elections for Senior and First Deputy senior shop steward, so decisively rejected the alternative candidate I feel it is crucially important that I recommend for your consideration six stewards who are dedicated, sincere and experienc-



last, short-lived, pay strike.

ed in all aspects of trade union work.

It is therefore essential that the deputies who are elected are committed to fulfilling their legitimate role. The candidate in this election who has already been rejected by you in the election for Senior Shop Steward and Deputy Senior Shop Steward is standing for Deputy Senior Shop Steward.

This raises the following obvious question: is he seeking election to undermine the recently established unity within the TGWU in this plant? Or is it to represent the views of the non TGWU members who issued the recent unrepresentative and grossly inaccurate leaflets at the factory gates?"

Nothing could be more clearly corrupt and against all democratic norms than attacking a candidate in the name of the union, although on past record it will be hard for anyone to get a complaint upheld.

There is an obvious reason why the right wing are prepared to go to such excesses. On recent experience they are entitled to assume that they will be protected from above as long as they are attacking the left. While the right wing at Regional level are welcoming these new "converts" into the fold with open arms, they are going to be very reluctant to criticise them.

The problem in the TGWU is that rules covering balloting procedures appear designed to allow this kind of



thing. Bulk consignments of unmarked, unnumbered ballot papers are sent to Branch Secretaries with a form on which to record the result and send it in. Ballot-rigging is endemic in the union. To their shame the left has never taken the problem seriously, and many left wing candidates cynically fit in with this aspect of the "system".

This has changed to some extent in the most recent balloting for Trade Group representatives on the Executive, which is taking place at the moment. Unfortunately this change comes not through pressure from the rank and file — which has always been ignored on the matter — but from reactionary Tory legislation! Even then there are no signs that there will be any significant ongoing change.

The Andy Brown/Ivor Braggins syndrome of one-time militants collapsing to the right when being elevated to positions of influence is unfortunately nothing new for the Marxist movement.

The problems of constructing a consistently revolutionary tradition in the British labour movement with any real influence in sections of the working class, and trying to give leadership under the difficult conditions of the capitalist crisis are enormous. The extent to which the still small and isolated forces of Trotskyism can provide support and enforce discipline is necessarily limited. It is true that there will always be renegades from the Marxist tradition. There are the adverse conditions faced by the Trotskyist movement. The pressures from the employers and the labour movement right wing exploit every

weakness of the individual.

At the same time renegade ex-militants are consciously used by the right wing. You have to look no further than Jock Haston who became an "education" officer for the EETPU. Or Jimmy Reid, one-time leader of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders "work-in", who left the Stalinists and who is now used regularly by the media to witch-hunt the left. Or the way Reg Parsons was used and manipulated by T&G officials in Oxford and the Midlands.

That there have been so many renegades, however, is connected to the political crisis of the Trotskyist movement in the post war period. Outside of a prerevolutionary situation and real development in the working class requires the consistent application of Marxist programme and principle over a prolonged period of time. The movement has not been able to provide this. Where attempts have been made they have been frustrated by opportunist adaptations to the mentality of the militants (theorised as "rank and filism" by the SWP, or the "follow your leader" politics of *Socialist Action*) or stangled by sectarianism as with the SLL/WRP.

The resolution of the political crisis of Marxism has an immediate everyday relevance. A new development of Marxism has to take place which can confront the betrayals of Stalinism and Social Democracy. A leadership is needed which can base itself in the working class and arm militants with the political confidence, analysis and support to enable them to give leadership under the most difficult conditions.

# Women against the medical hierarchy

## WHY WENDY SAVAGE MUST WIN

By a Special Correspondent

**OBSTETRICIAN Wendy Savage** faced her accusers and her judges in full view of the press and media on the morning of February 3rd. It was billed as an inquiry, but the chair of the "three wise men" summed it up when he said in reply to a comment from Tower Hamlets Health Authority's counsel "Wendy Savage is the only person on trial here today."

Wendy Savage was attempting to make the NHS a bit more responsive to the users, in this case women; she was fighting for better services and for a decrease in the use of high technology in births where the women did not particularly want it (when they *did*, they got it) and that is what choice is all about. She is also the only consultant at the London Hospital who does not have any private practice.

She is not a radical left wing socialist. But she is a strong and vocal campaigner for women's rights in health care. In his opening remarks the DHA barrister said this case is not about "a male establishment and a women orientated movement." But, that is exactly what it is about.

Wendy Savage's case is by now fairly well known. It revolves around five chosen cases where the health authority, the puppet for the powerful Prof. Grudzinkas, charged Wendy Savage with incompetence. Her supporters, including some eminent obstetricians, say that any doctor could be charged similarly with five specifically chosen cases.

The way in which this case has been handled highlights the gross deficiencies in the way the medical side of the NHS is run and administered. It is the result of the worst of the web of the "old boys" network which Consultants are so good at weaving.

The row is really not about Wendy Savage; it is about Community Obstetrics and giving women a choice in birth methods. Before Wendy Savage, Peter Huntingford fought the same battle arguing for and practicing community obstetrics. He was not suspended or sacked — he resigned. Savage took up the fight and is now in the ring defending both her own professional reputation and also a service which Tower Hamlets women are demanding is kept and expanded.

Tower Hamlets is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country. Housing conditions are bad, unemployment is about 16%. The health services have suffered severe cuts administered by the usual group of white males who either live in the leafy glades of Essex or in the posh new developments in Docklands. They do not bear the consequences of the cuts they make. The infant mor-



Wendy Savage

ality rate is high because of the deprivation of social conditions.

In contrast, local support for Wendy Savage is high. Mothers have attended lobbies of the trial and the DHA, with children carrying "I'm a Wendy Savage baby" placards. Local health campaigners have only to stand outside local supermarkets with placards saying "Wendy Savage petition" for women to come and queue up to sign.

Wendy Savage is on trial. But the trial is obscenely twisted. Her accusers have chosen cases that they think they can make fit in with their evidence. They have rifled through women's notes and details and have used the information against the will of the patients and, until it became public, without their knowledge. Then they tried to keep the inquiry private for the sake of confidentiality!

Wendy is facing three white men, all bastions of the very establishment

## Why no cervical cancer

**WHY** have women's organisations not combined to build a campaign demanding adequate provision of cervical cancer screening services under the NHS?

This question arises yet again with the revelation that even under present arrangements in which only a small percentage of the women most at risk are given cervical smear tests. NHS hospitals have accumulated a huge backlog of work.

Some tests are now being sent to private laboratories — where the quality of work has been seriously challenged by consultants.

One hospital conducted a quality control exercise which showed an 80% error rate at one private laboratory. Such errors could easily put women's

lives at risk by failing to detect malignant cells.

Other private labs — which charge £2-£6 per slide — have been known to lose samples altogether.

Error rates in NHS labs average no more than 5% because they recheck smears two or three times each. But some overloaded, understaffed NHS hospitals now have as much as 5 months' backlog of work.

The DHSS has urged health authorities to check the standards of work at the private labs they use; but DHAs do not have sufficient resources to do this, and there are no safeguards over the staff employed or levels of training given in private labs.

Meanwhile the failure of Hampstead DHA to pay up its £40,000 share of a computerised call and recall system for cervical screening, jeopardising a joint project involving Bloomsbury and Isl-



which she is challenging. She has had to find up to £100,000 for her own defence because even the Medical Defence Union will not pay her costs.

The DHA — which is cutting back on patients' services every month — is spending probably close to a quarter of a million pounds to get her out. Even if Wendy wins she will not be able to claim back her costs!

Wendy Savage is indeed on trial — but with no jury, or even an "independent" magistrate. The inquiry is more like the Inquisition when women were tried for being witches when all they were doing was fighting for women's rights and treating pregnancies and birth as a perfectly normal function.

If she loses then the cause of community obstetrics will be set back, and women in Tower Hamlets will lose one of their strongest allies.

Wendy Savage has always been a strong campaigner in defence of local health services, and the DHA has forged ahead with cuts and closures during her "well timed" absence. In a District where outpatient gynaecological appointments could take forty weeks, the Maternity Unit at the Mile End Hospital — "Wendy's" hospital — has been "amalgamated" with that at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, with a number of beds lost on the way. The future of the Day Care Abortion Service within this move — a service Wendy always stoutly defended — is unclear.

Having initially taken no steps to cover Wendy's suspension, the DHA eventually managed to appoint a locum — who has recently had to resign. Local health campaigners are asking themselves the question: will Wendy win reinstatement in time to still have a job to come back to?



## Brutal oppression of women

An article from the Iranian Women's Association (c/o Migrants Services Unit, LVSC, 68, Chalton St. London NW1).

**IN all societies where private ownership of land, labour, and materials exists and where a minority owns the majority of resources, women are oppressed as workers and as women. They are oppressed as workers because most of them sell their labour very cheaply, more often than ever, child care provisions are minimal, they do very long shifts and work in very poor conditions. They are deprived of good maternity care and suffer from poor medical services, if any.**

Women are oppressed as women because men are considered to be and are dominant in society and household. House work, cooking, and looking after children are women's duties at home, even when they work outside the home. When they are wage earners, they are often

required to hand over their wage packets to men who are, ultimately, heads of households. Even in some homes where domestic affairs are shared and women have a say in decision making, men's help in housework is considered to be "doing women a favour".

In Iran, like in many backward capitalist countries, women's oppression in both spheres takes a very brutal form. Women from birth till death, are considered to be men's property. As young girls they are disciplined and heavily protected by their parents. They must remain a virgin so sex before marriage is forbidden and discouraged. If there is a situation where a girl is suspected of not being a virgin, she could become a public disgrace if she is of a lower class family: among the upper classes there are always ways of evading the issue!

The common desire of parents is to bring up their girls "pure" and "inno-

## er campaign?

ington, serves to highlight the absence of any organised campaign or lobby for screening services. The relatively small amount of money involved would surely have been made available (even if at the expense of a cut elsewhere) if local women had got together to pressurise DHA members.

Experts argue that the annual death toll of 2,000 women from cervical cancer could be halved if this kind of relatively cheap and simple system of computerised call and recall for tests were introduced across the country, backed up by an expanded laboratory service. At present only seven DHAs nationwide operate such a scheme.

The possibilities of establishing a campaign around this issue will be one of the matters under discussion at the Conference called by London Health Emergency on March 15 at Camden Town Hall.

cent" and ready to take up their roles as wives and mothers. Women are taught to obey men and to serve them and their children. Even when they are fortunate enough to receive education and, particularly higher education, the aim is to broaden their scope in choosing their future husbands. On the other hand, they could marry at the age of 9, which is the legal minimum age of marriage for girls.

Social rules have always reinforced women's inferiority in society with or without State intervention. During the Shah's reign when the legal minimum age of marriage for a girl was 16, there were a lot of girls who married at the age of 9. The father (or a male guardian, in his absence) has to agree to a woman's marriage, regardless of her age. Selection of spouses for women is, purely, the decision of fathers or male guardians.

Women who do not conform to the dominant institutions are severely punished by their parents, the community and now by the State. The Islamic republic's dominant ideology is that a woman's place is at home with her children. The State only praises women who are childbearers.

Marriage is considered to be a religious duty of all Muslims. The Law of Retribution has a brutal punishment for those women who do not respect the "sanctity" of marriage. "Adulterous" women and prostitutes are stoned to death; lesbians are executed. The State, however, is in favour of State-controlled prostitution in the form of temporary marriage, which could last as little as a few minutes!

Women are economically dependent on men. Economic and emotional dependency forces women to accept cruelty and hardship from men. During the Shah's time when women were given the right to divorce and to oppose polygamy, a large number of women found it extremely difficult to do so. Nowadays, the Law does not permit a woman to divorce, nor to oppose polygamy.

A woman can only divorce her husband in very special circumstances. Women can not oppose polygamy at all! Women are forced to reproduce. The State has taken full control over women's lives and their bodies. Abortion is illegal and contraceptives are restricted to those whom the State approves.

Women are not accepted as legal guardians of their children. In the event of the death of their husbands, the immediate male relatives will be children's guardians. Women could not have custody of their children after divorce, they can only look after them for a specified period of time, namely 7 years for a girl and 2 for a boy.

Women are forced to cover their hair with scarves, the colour of which

is, even, determined by the State. They have to wear long and loose gowns with trousers or thick stockings. The State's punishment for an unveiled woman is lashing (75 lashes) or imprisonment, and if it is repeated for a specified number of times, execution.

The Islamic mob injures women who are not veiled or who are showing bits of hair, but cutting their faces with knives or razor blades, throwing acid at their faces, etc. Sex segregation in offices, universities, schools, etc., is also used as a tool to remove women from active participation in decision making.

Women workers have been sacked in great numbers as the economy, through bad management, is in deep crisis and unemployment is biting the hardest ever. This is the usual theme of capitalist economies where women are used as a reserve army of workers. During recession they are first to lose their jobs and during expansion of production they are brought in to fill unskilled and poorly paid jobs which men don't want to do.

Sacking women from their jobs has been justified by the Islamic republic as an act to put women in their "natural" place (i.e. home). Married women are forced to do part time jobs, while a handful of nurseries in workplaces, which were not even sufficient to meet all needs, are closed down.

Before the Islamic Republic, backward practices which reinforced women's submission to men and their position as men's property existed and the state did not sufficiently intervene to change anything. Although the Shah introduced some reforms to involve women in produc-

tion, they did not change women's social position fundamentally.

The Islamic republic, however, as its name suggests, enforces Islamic ideology. Religion is no longer a private affair but an ideology on which the State bases its activities. Therefore, the call for separation of religion from the State is very important.

Women from Iran's national and religious minorities are heavily oppressed by virtue of their belonging to a specific national or religious minority, e.g. Kurdish, Bahai, Jewish, Zoroastrian or Christian women. The wholesale murder of Bahais in Iran and their persecution is a great concern.

Also the war that the regime has imposed on Kurdistan has had a devastating effect on women in Kurdish towns and villages. Women who are active in opposition to the regime face brutal torture in prisons. Young girls are raped before their execution because Islamic ideology places a dead virgin in "heaven".

Mothers are tortured in front of their children or vice versa. Pregnant women are brutally raped and tortured. Islamic ideology allows all that to happen as it considers women political prisoners as spoils of war who are, ultimately, subject to their captors.

**We feel that we have to expose this brutal regime to everyone who has the slightest illusion about it.**

**As the media is silent about all that brutality which goes on in Iran, as part of an imperialist plot, and as Britain continues its silent support of the Islamic republic in Iran we must fill the gap!**

More valuable  
than  
gold



by Striking Miners'  
Children

A new booklet of poems, prose and drawings by miners' children about the Great Strike of 1984-5 is now available: proceeds from sales go to Women Against Pit Closures. The booklet is £1.50 plus postage from MUTG, 10, West Bank, London N16 5DG. (Cheques payable to "More Valuable Than Gold").

# SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Print strike special

End "Scabby Doc's"  
reign of terror!  
IT'S NOW  
OR  
NEVER!

PERHAPS his "Tontons Macoutes" wear colour-coded overalls rather than dark sunglasses: but the brutal regime of "Scabby Doc" Murdoch in Fort Wapping reduces trade unionism to persecuted, clandestine status.

The chips are down for the Fleet Street unions. If the NGA, SOGAT and the NUJ do not fight now for an escalation of action to defeat Murdoch's union-busting, they will not fight any of the growing queue of newspaper bosses waiting to tear up hard-won agreements and slash jobs by the thousand.

The signs from the print union leaders are very negative.

- Leaders of SOGAT — its assets sequestered — persist in regarding mass pickets and outside supporters as a bigger threat than Murdoch, and have organised nothing to combat the brazen class "justice" of sequestration.

- NGA leaders have been equally low-key, holding back from blacking action on Murdoch's titles: both unions have held back from action against members still scabbing for Murdoch.

- The NUJ has failed even to call out its News International chapels in defence of the journalists victimised and sacked for carrying out the union's limp policy of refusing to move to Wapping.

- While rail unions have boycotted Murdoch's titles, their members have been angry that the papers have been carried by TGWU-organised lorries!

- The TUC has ducked out of any fight to ostracise and expel the EETPU whose scab workforce at Wapping is the key to Murdoch's union-busting exercise. The TUC demands on the EETPU were so weak-

kneed and ineffectual even Eric Hammond has accepted them!

Yet the printworkers' fight has struck a chord with millions of trade unionists. Thousands have taken up the call to defend the 5,000 sacked print workers. The displays of solidarity outside Wapping — despite the print unions' leadership determination against violating the TUC's timid picketing guidelines — have demonstrated the willingness of printers, miners, engineers, even militant electricians to fight back.

All those workers realise that this is a fight for survival. It is not only Fleet Street that is at stake. Every employer in the land

will be rubbing their hands at the savoury prospects Murdoch is opening up over the dead bodies of the sacked printers:

- No more closed shop;
- No more strikes;
- No disruption;
- Union representatives to be vetted by management and sacked at will;
- Total unfettered "right to manage";
- And legally binding agreements, with the right to bankrupt trade unionists and union alike if they step out of line!

Murdoch has drawn lessons from the defeat of the miners' strike and the treacherous role of the TUC. He already  
Cont'd Back Page



## All-out action needed

# Build the picket: stop the lorries!

ON THE first night of the Wapping picket about 300 people turned up, most of them either sacked printers or local people. There were some arrests but the police presence was discrete.

Three weeks later over 5,000 people turned up spontaneously — since neither SOGAT nor the NGA will officially call for mass picketing. The police were this time highly visible with horses and the Special Patrol Group out on the streets.

The move towards larger numbers on Saturday night had started on the second weekend with the call from SOGAT for a Women's picket. The union leadership gave only three days notice of the march and it was clear that they did not want it to be a "mass event". But the turnout was very good without about 1,500 women on the march and 1,500 to 2,000 men waiting at the main entrance of the plant.

The police were not prepared for this. But obviously the SOGAT leaders had promised the police that they would contain the march and would ensure that things did not get "out of hand".

From the main entrance we could see the coaches carrying the scabs home and some lorries going out. But they were going out the back entrance about four blocks from where we were. Women were shouting at them but were given no direction about where to go to stop them.

At the front of the march at the very time when scabs and scab papers were coming out, Anne Field a SOGAT official was using the Metropolitan Police Public Address system to tell the women and the men who by now had joined them in blocking the road to *disperse* and to go to the Square behind to listen to Brenda Dean and Anne



Scargill speak!

Most people just ignored the call and followed the people going down to the Wapping Lane exit. Within fifteen minutes a crowd of over a thousand forced a scab coach to turn back and kept it in the plant for an extra two hours.

Not since Jack Dromey led the mass picket away from the gates of Grunwick has there been such a concerted move by bureaucrats to diffuse a picket line.

Apparently it is not only the print bosses and their courts which regard trade union

## What the NUJ could do

MURDOCH'S union-busting operation still heavily depends on the willingness of journalists to write, sub and compose on direct input computers. A little bribe and a tough word were all that was needed to bludgeon them into submission. But even now NUJ journalists at News International have the power to stop-Murdoch in his tracks. If only they refused to cross those picket lines!

The Sun and the News of the World chapels were, not surprisingly, bought off — with a £2,000 a year pay rise. But journalists on the Times and Sunday Times agonised for days before voting 2-1 (Times) and 68-60 (Sunday Times) to submit.

From then on the NUJ leadership wrung their hands in despair at the thought of 500 scab members helping Murdoch dig the grave of the print unions — but offered little coherent strategy to fight back. Instead they

held nervously to the tail of the print unions, settling for an uneasy status quo, while taking a cynical comfort from the fact that some 30 NI journalists, who refused to move to Wapping, are salvaging the pride of the Union. At two successive meetings of the NUJ National Executive, resolutions laying out steps to advance the dispute were narrowly lost.

The demands in these resolutions still remain the only way to start making a dent in Murdoch's success:

● It is essential that NUJ members working at Wapping be instructed to *withdraw their labour* not only in solidarity with the printers, but in defence of victimised NUJ members. At present, the four week old instruction is that they remain at their old place of work in Fleet Street.

● The NUJ must call on all its members to *black News International*. This call should be fought for in Chapel and Branch meetings throughout the union. If the vast potential of these members, whether freelancers or PR, broadcasters or members of the Press Association and other press agencies, were properly

tapped, Murdoch could be starved of news.

● Those NUJ members at Wapping who refuse to heed the call to strike, should be expelled from the union. The argument that if they are kept in membership they could be pressured to come out has proved useless.

A strong official NUJ picket, with a call by the executive for a mass picket, and coupled with the threat to expel those who refuse to abide by the instruction, would swing many of the waverers, who went into Wapping under duress while hoping to leave and gain employment elsewhere.

● In the face of generalised attacks by all Fleet Street bosses against NUJ as well as printers' jobs, it is essential that the union prepare for an all-out strike in Fleet Street. The bosses are already spoiling for a fight.

Redundancies are looming on the Express, and the Mirror Group (again); even the "liberal" Guardian has issued a Murdoch-style ultimatum, while the Telegraph prepares a major shake-up. If the Murdoch fight is not pursued now, there will be no second chance: the NUJ's boasted Fleet Street "bastions" will crumble like houses of Lords.



solidarity as a crime. The unholy alliance of right wing and Communist Party-influenced bureaucrats who run SOGAT and the NGA see outside support and class struggle politics as a greater threat than the scabs getting through. SOGAT instructions actually suggest that stewards should ask *police* to remove left wing paper sellers from picket lines!

On February 15 a print union official Mike Hicks, along with Brian Nicholson of the TGWU announced in clear hearing of the police that "anyone who supports the print workers should now march back to the main entrance of the plant." That meant away from the exits where the lorries come out. The angry crowd shouted no. He replied "anyone who refused to do this does not support us." This gave the police the signal to move in with their riot gear and horses — with the blessing of SOGAT and the NGA!

Many print workers are disgusted by this attitude from their leaders and welcome supporters from other unions. It is vital that the picket lines are strengthened and set about the task of sealing off the Wapping plant.

# Don't let TUC off the hook!

**THE refusal of the TUC to implement its own policies for defence of unions attacked under Tory legislation should surprise nobody.**

In April 1982 a Special Conference of the TUC in Wembley decided to call for strike action to defend unions penalised by the courts. But when this was invoked by the NGA in December 1983 when its assets were sequestered during the fight with Eddy Shah at Warrington, the TUC opted for betrayal. 1984 saw the deliberate isolation of the miners and the conscious refusal to call action to challenge the sequestration of the NUM.

**Now, with SOGAT sequestered, the NGA under threat and writs flying like confetti from Murdoch's solicitors against a range of unions, the TUC has once again refused to offer the slightest assistance — even to the extent of calling on the EETPU to stop its scab members crossing the Wapping picket**

line.

The attempt to make strike action a sacking offence in the print and wipe out two major unions should be the signal for a call for immediate general strike action. But the wretched stance of print union leaders combined with that of the TUC means that the call for action must first be taken into Fleet Street and the unions directly involved with News International.

But those who claim that a TUC decision could not produce significant action should remember the massive nationwide stoppage of work (including Fleet St) which followed Len Murray's short-notice call for solidarity with union members at GCHQ early in 1984. The printers are now fighting a similar fight for basic union rights: an official TUC call for action in their support would be more effective than two dozen mass pickets.

**Demands for the TUC to kick out the EETPU and call supporting action should be raised in every union branch and Labour Party.**

## Union buster's shopping list

**Murdoch's agreement, presented to the unions on November 21, demanded:**

1. *No recognition of chapels or branches, and no negotiations at local level.*
2. *No strikes "or other industrial action for any reason whatever." The union must promptly repudiate any industrial action*

3. *taken by members. Immediate dismissal for anyone taking part in a strike or industrial action — with no right of appeal.*
4. *Union officials have "a special duty to enforce this section" of this agreement!*
5. *No closed shop — employees who are members of a union can leave it at any time.*
6. *Union representatives can be removed from office by the management issuing a written warning.*
7. *No union recognition for supervisors and management grades.*
8. *Complete flexibility of working with no demarcation lines.*
9. *No job security — complete freedom for management to change methods of working.*
10. *No minimum staffing levels — either by agreement or understanding. Management freedom to alter starting and finishing times at short notice.*
11. *Management's "exclusive right to manage"... to select people for jobs, "classify and reclassify" people, "hire, promote, demote and transfer employees as required". They will also "suspend, discipline, dismiss, lay off employees from work" as they see fit.*
12. *Legally binding contracts, leaving the unions and individual members open to court action.*

## Women must play key role

**600 of the 5,500 sacked workers are women. And, as the miners' strike proved, the strength and resolve of women is an essential component of a solid fight.**

Of course there are problems. The general sexism of print workers is legendary. Women are usually confined to the clerical jobs and the 'real' jobs are kept for the men. The attitude of print workers to women is very patronising. Brenda Dean as a woman general secretary of a male dominated union could lead the way in changing this.

Instead, she said in an interview "If I was militant they'd regard me as a neurotic temperamental woman". This attitude is an insult to the thousands of women militants

in unions throughout the country who are fighting for their rights as workers.

Brenda Dean cynically used women on the demonstration, leading them down the road behind a banner proclaiming "my dad made Murdoch's money" and then when she was finished with her "show of strength" urged them all to go away and not start any trouble.

**But the extinction of print jobs and the print unions will do nothing to liberate women.**

**The only hopes of battering down the conservatism and sexism in the print unions is through maximum common struggles against the employers, showing in practice — as the miners learned — that militant women have much to teach the male-dominated unions.**

**THE Sun**

Sam's assets insured for £.1m

Members of all The Sun production chapels refused to handle the Arthur Scargill picture and major headline on our lead story. The Sun has decided, reluctantly, to print the paper without either.

"What have they ever done for us?" is a favourite crack against solidarity with the print unions. But in the sphere of trade union solidarity the print unions have a record that compares well with others. They have repeatedly taken political action:

- In 1969 against Labour's anti-union laws
- In 1971-72 against Heath's anti-union laws
- In 1972 in defence of jailed dockers
- In 1980 against the Prior Bill
- In 1982 in support of Healthworkers
- In 1984 in support of GCHQ unions
- In 1984 in support of the miners.

Now the print workers need support from the labour movement!

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From front page



Murdoch (above), NGA's Dubbins and Sogat's Dean



knew that, unlike Scargill, the print union leaders who had buckled before his arch-rival Maxwell would beg for money rather than build solid picket lines. He had seen the TUC at Warrington and in the miners' strike refuse to defend unions sequestered by the courts. He knew that the NUJ members were too greedy or too frightened to use their powers against him, while the EETPU had helped him recruit a hardened gang of scabs at Wapping.

Murdoch gathered a closely knit circle of conspirators to hatch up the final plans. They included Christopher Pole Crew, sheriff of Nottingham, taken on last April for his invaluable knowledge of union-busting in his days running the Nottingham Evening Post; and Lord Harris of Greenwich, lately of the Labour Party, a director of Shah's new company and trouble shooter for the EETPU.

Against this mighty conspiracy, print union leaders did little to prepare. Until January 24, they pretended nothing was happening. Finally when Murdoch threw down the gauntlet, they made concession after concession — hoping to placate him — but to no avail. Among the unions' proposals was "a common commitment to profitability, harmonious relations, productivity and flexibility, and job security;" They were further prepared to agree a procedure which would include "provision in its final stage for conciliation by ACAS, and ultimately, binding arbitration."

But Murdoch did not want a deal. They were forced to fight. But from the outset Dubbins (NGA) and Dean (SOGAT) lacked any strategy to win. Instead of galvanising their industrial strength, and using this as the basis for an appeal for full-scale support from other unions, they concentrated on impotent appeals for consumer boycotts of News International and a futile bid to win the "hearts and minds" of the general public.

SOGAT instructions to its members to disrupt distribution fell on deaf ears; it became quickly apparent that most SOGAT members have been bureaucratically demobilised for too long to be in a fighting trim. In the few areas where distribution has been successfully disrupted, this was due more to the action of militants in strong chapels or strong branches than to a general response by a united membership willing to fight for the survival of their union.

The print unions are indeed fighting for their very existence at the heart of the British newspaper industry — a keystone of their power in the whole printing trade. It is a scandal that Dubbins and Dean have ensured that their Fleet Street members remain at work as if nothing is happening — leaving each employer to pick and choose their time for fresh attacks on jobs and conditions.

But the fight is just starting. The print workers of Fleet Street with the backing of thousands of workers in other industries can roll back the barbed wire.

- Firstly, the mass pickets have become a focus for workers and strikers to mobilise. While they are not sufficient in themselves to win the strike, they will mobilise thousands of workers and give confidence to the sacked printers that they are not alone in this fight. Print workers should demand that their executives call and build for mass pickets.
- Secondly, sacked printers should call for a general strike in Fleet Street. If the print bosses are not defeated, and the sequestration of SOGAT is not challenged by the union as a whole, it will be open season on all print workers. Such a call should be built for in chapels where union leaders must explain what is at stake and galvanise members into action.
- At the same time print union branches should sponsor the building of support groups up and down the country — where possible in liaison with existing miners' support committees — to take the fight within their own communities to break the old craftist traditions.
- Finally, if the printers are seen to be seriously fighting back, solidarity action could prove crucial to the dispute. Postal workers must defy their leaders' advice to distribute Sun bingo cards. Railway workers must maintain the blacking on transport of Murdoch papers while stepping up the pressure on the TGWU to stop the scabbing by its lorry drivers. Only when the labour movement is mobilised to help in whatever they can, can the print bosses be defeated. This will not happen spontaneously. It needs a fight by militants at the rank and file level coupled with demands on leaders for a clear and serious strategy to win.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

NOW it is Mirror Group newspapers, owned by "socialist" Robert Maxwell, that has decided to make strike action a sacking offence and dismissed the Daily Record workforce.

If the national newspaper bosses get away with these attacks, the new regime will soon hit print unions and the NUJ on local papers across the country. The outrageous anti-union bias, sexism and racism of much of the press can only be worsened by the smashing of union organisation.

# Workers reduced to supporting role

## The pipe-dream of planning agreements

By HARRY SLOAN

**"I participate, you participate, he participates: they profit!"**

The old, cynical motto, thrown up in the revolutionary struggles of students and workers which rocked France in 1968, applies with particular relevance to the question of production under capitalism.

"Production" in itself as an abstraction appears a neutral term — but its actual meaning varies according to the social class of the person using it.

For a capitalist, "production" is the process whereby the fixed investment of plant and raw materials is transformed, via the exploitation of living human labour, into a source of profit.

For a worker, "production" is a source of a weekly wage packet enabling the purchase of useful goods and services which enable her or him to exist from week to week. For the unemployed, "production" appears to be a dwindling activity of a minority which might offer some escape from enforced idleness and dire poverty.

The objective interests of the capitalists demand that the lowest possible wage is paid for the maximum possible effort by the workforce employed. The workers who sell their labour power, on the other hand, have no stake in the workplace or the finished product: their only relationship with the production process is as a source of livelihood — and their interests lie in maximising wages in relation to physical effort.

Behind the bland term "production" is therefore a daily battle of wills on the shop floor, a conflict of interest, a class conflict which runs right through capitalist society. It is not sufficient to say "produce" — it is necessary to take sides between exploiter and exploited in order to define the basis on which production will take place.

But Neil Kinnock, like generations of Labour leaders before him, rejects this class perspective. He sees in the

capitalist crisis not a conflict of class interests but merely "bad management" on the part of the Tory government and sections of the capitalist class they represent. And he sees the solution in terms of parliamentary action to ensure that the capitalist system is "managed" better under Labour than under Thatcher.

Kinnock set these views out very clearly in his speech at last year's Bournemouth Party conference, (where most on the left heard only his few witch-hunting asides against Liverpool city council's attempts to defy Tory spending cuts).

The theme was set out then which has been endlessly recycled in Labour Party political broadcasts ever since, and the speech has now been published in pamphlet form:

**"To rescue and rebuild this country, we must be the Party of production."**

**"We have to meet new**



Kinnock — stuck in Wilson mould.

Kinnock doesn't entirely dismiss the potential of the British working class even while placing his main emphasis on the role of managers and technicians in the regeneration of British capitalism. On the contrary, he believes that still more effort can

**A MILLION  
A YEAR JOBS**  
THE CASE FOR PLANNING  
FULL EMPLOYMENT

challenges in our determination that our country shall produce its way out of a slump... Through our *Jobs and Industry* campaign, in all our policies, we in this Party say to the British people: 'Britain has made it, Britain can make it, Britain will make it' — provided that the people of Britain, the managers of Britain, the technicians, the workers of Britain have the means to make it."

("It can be done, It must be done, p. 6)

be screwed out of the workforce at the point of production:

"To all those defeatists — the real moaning minnies and ministers — who say: 'That's all very well, but British workers won't respond, British managers can't cope,' I say: Go to the industries in Britain where the Japanese and the Americans and the Swiss and the Swedes have established themselves; go to those industries in Britain which have committed resources to modernisation; and see how they hold their own with

anybody in the world."

And if anyone in the world can force even more effort out of the workforce, the drift of the argument goes, it must be Neil Kinnock and a future Labour government committed not to socialism but to modelling itself on "successful" capitalist governments. His Bournemouth speech declared:

"We've got to have a government that, like the government of Japan, of Germany, of Sweden, of France, of Italy, puts the real interests of its country first."

The reaction to this of Japanese, German and other workers would be interesting to hear.

None of Kinnock's confused line of argument is new. It is so traditional a line of social democratic politics it is now being equally trotted out by both the two Davids of the Alliance, by Harold Wilson, Jim Callaghan: it could equally be echoed by the infamous Ramsay MacDonald himself if only he could be resuscitated.

Kinnock's eager attempts to embrace "frontier technology" and bolster capitalist investment are a product of the same cliché farm which spawned Harold Wilson's 1964 reformist utopia of a (capitalist) economy reformed in "the white heat of the technological revolution".

Wilson secured election in 1964 and 1966 and again in 1974. He stayed in office for long enough each time to expose the hollow fraud of his claims that capitalism can be "planned" by establishing new-fangled agencies of the capitalist state.

Instead Wilson presided on both occasions over the wholesale rationalisation of industry which drove unemployment sharply upwards and brought speed-up and even attempts at anti-union legislation in 1969. Wilson imposed wage controls which cut living standards and even went through pointless charades of "price controls" which left inflation spiralling.

The 1974 Labour government:

- funnelled vast sums of money into bankrupt private firms through the National Enterprise Board;
- sapped the independence of shop stewards through class collaborationist "workers' participation" schemes (before eventually switching tack with the appointment in 1978 of Michael Edwardes to carve up British Leyland);
- used Tory legislation and then TUC collaboration to hold down pay settlements;
- again faced runaway inflation and by 1976 had completely capitulated to the international bankers, imposing the first wave of monetarist policies including heavy cuts in the NHS and social services;
- its fourth phase of controls in 1978 were backed up by an undeclared coalition with the Liberals, and finally triggered a massive wave of strikes during the "winter of discontent" of



"What's yours, Roy?" - "I'd like the same again, old boy!"

1978-9, which paved the way for Thatcher.

Kinnock's present-day commitment to an expansion of capitalist production can only set a future Labour government on a similar course of seeking to maximise profitability and maintain the cooperation of the big employers at the expense of the workforce. Miners, council workers and printers have already seen which side of the class barricades Kinnock stands on when the chips are down even under Thatcher: how much less sympathetic will he be when it is his government's policies of rationalisation and speed-up which are being opposed!

Kinnock's whole scheme rests on increasing capitalist production and capitalist profitability. Even while loudly insisting that a Labour government would halt the outflow of capital and "bring the funds back home", he hastens to assure the bankers that

"We will ensure that the return paid on those funds is equal to what they can earn elsewhere."

How? By raising levels of exploitation in Britain to the levels experienced elsewhere! There can be no other way! But while workers can expect a hard time at the point of production, Kinnock wants to reward the managers and entrepreneurs "for their effort and their enterprise."

None of this is any great surprise, except perhaps to those who really believed that Kinnock somehow represented a new "radical" face of Labour politics. In fact Kinnock's forthright statements of right wing social democratic views have left Roy Hattersley in the shade and Denis Healey all but redundant. Not for nothing did the AUEW right wingers join with other union bureaucrats in backing Kinnock as part of a "dream ticket" for the leadership.

But understanding the content of Kinnock's cross-class approach to the capitalist crisis is important for the workers' movement: we need to warn

and prepare workers at every level of the dangers of trusting their fate to the tender mercies of a Kinnock Labour government rather than organising themselves independently to place demands and wage struggles which challenge the logic of capitalist exploitation.

Unfortunately the latest fad in "left" social democratic politics — an alternative "alternative economic strategy" summed up in the booklet by Andrew Glyn "A Million Jobs a Year" — does nothing to challenge Kinnock's basic assumptions. Instead — complete with a forward by Tony Benn and tacit support from the Campaign Group of MPs — the pamphlet embraces some of the most dangerous illusions peddled by Kinnock and is all but devoid of the politics of class struggle.

In its whole frame of reference, the explicit or implicit line of the pamphlet:

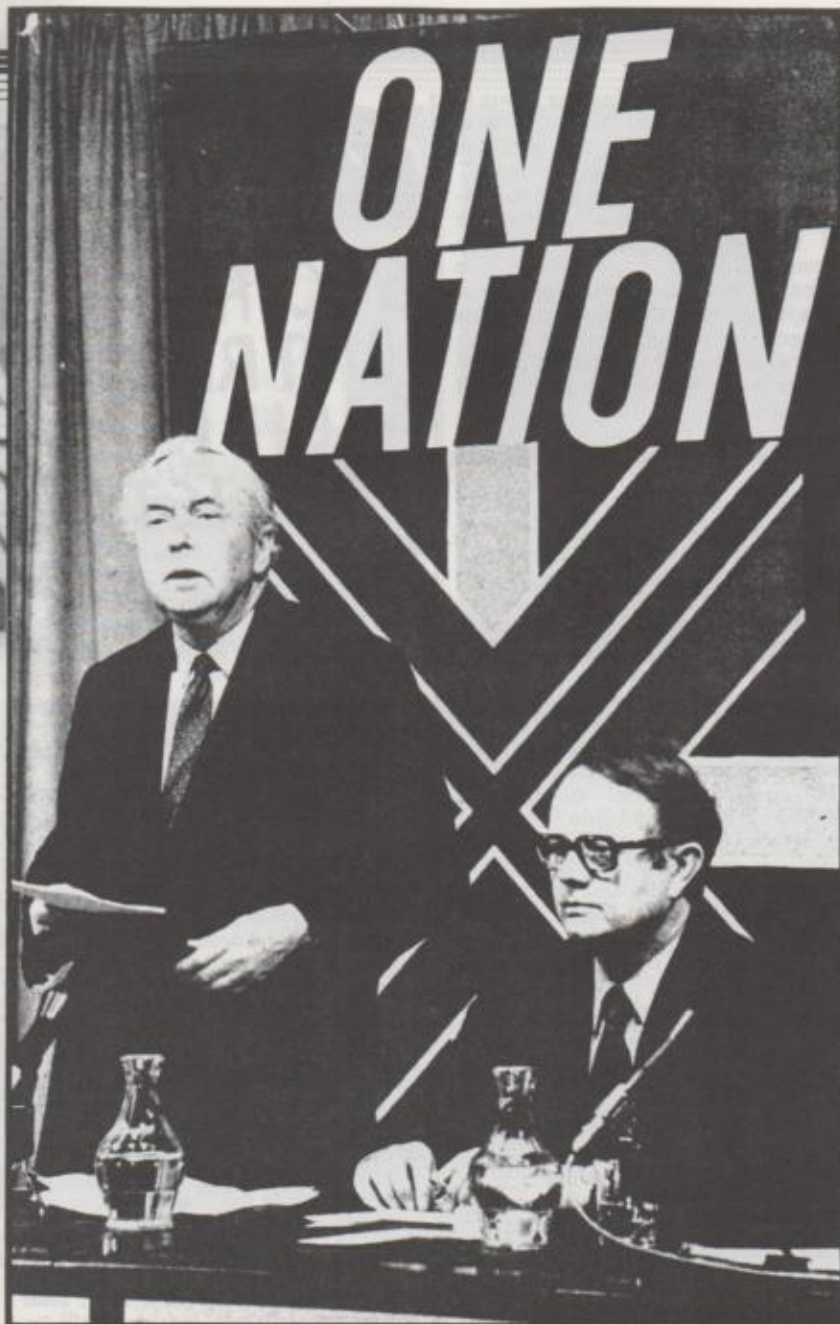
- Accepts the Kinnock/Wilson notions of a "planned capitalism", being forcibly expanded to create new jobs;

- Accepts Kinnock's reactionary notion of an "enabling state" — the capitalist state machinery being utilised somehow against the interests of big capital (ignoring the catastrophic lessons of Chile under the Allende government, whose Popular Front reforms came to a grisly end in the Pinochet coup of 1973).

- Accepts the related Wilson/Kinnock concept of "planning agreements" somehow compelling multinationals and major industries to comply with government plans. Taken to its logical conclusion, it would be — if successful — little other than legally compelling private employers to expand their capital and accept bigger profits!

- Adapts to the traditional reformist view of achieving "socialism" not by the mass working class revolutionary overthrow of the





Wilson's manifesto pledged price controls — but he wound up cutting wages.

capitalist state, but by legislation adopted by that state and imposed through its machinery "upon behalf of" the workers. This approach is of course not restricted to TUC leaders, Labour's right wing parliamentarians within the Campaign Group, and the Stalinist politicians of the Communist Party. It has also been embraced by the "Marxists" of the "Militant" tendency, whose annual calls at Labour Party conference for an Enabling Act which would open the door to nationalisation of the top 250 monopolies reflect the same naïve faith in Parliamentary socialism, and the same separation of parliamentary politics from the mobilisation of class struggle action in the workplaces.

• Just as the traditional politics of reformism as displayed by the big social democratic parties rest on the basis of collaboration with their

"own" capitalist class, and lead to grotesque cross-class nationalist alliances against "foreign" competitors, so the line of the Glyn pamphlet leans towards subsidies to "British" employers and protection for "British" capitalist firms while pulling deliberately back from calls for nationalisation or a full-scale monopoly of foreign trade. These concessions to nationalist pressures are dangerous for the hard left in the Labour Party and in the unions.

There is no denying that Glyn's pamphlet, with the radical tone of its title and its critique of the rapid rightward evolution of the Kinnock-Hattersley policy on jobs and the economy represents a healthy counterblast to those who argue that unemployment — like some vast natural disaster — has to be accepted as a fact of life for the foreseeable future.

It is useful too to counterpose the interests of the working classes — who need the jobs, improved living standards, housing, social services, which can only be produced by an expanding economy — to those of the ruling capitalist class, which has chosen to use a large reserve army of unemployed and the harsh disciplines of capitalism in slump to drive up their rate of profit and line their own pockets.

Glyn is right to press for a wholesale rethink of the economy rather than the timid tinkering promised by Hattersley if the necessary 5 million jobs are to be created. But he leaves a vast question unasked: if a new Labour government were, somehow, to come to office and carry out the "full programme" mapped out in the pamphlet, nationalising the banks and finance houses, imposing exchange controls, import controls, price controls, breaking with the EEC, and enforcing compulsory planning agreements on major production industries: why should it not complete the job, nationalise all of the major monopolies, and establish workers' control of a planned, socialist economy?

Perhaps this perspective is missing because Glyn is drafting a text for the Campaign Group, many of whom really do believe that the kind of sweeping reforms it proposes can be implemented through Parliament: perhaps he has an eye to those timid left MPs who want an alternative policy of sorts but don't want to be branded by Kinnock as "extremists", "dogmatists" or makers of "impossible promises."

Whatever the reason for soft-peddling the full sweep of a socialist programme, it is clear that this weakness undermines the whole line of argument of the pamphlet.

It is implausible enough to imagine Kinnock and Hattersley, having won an election, agreeing to attempt to implement the far-reaching reforms called for in "A Million Jobs a Year". (We should note in passing that there is no organised lobby within the Campaign Group pressing for a challenge to the Kinnockersley leadership at the 1986 Party Conference, so the pamphlet should not by any means be seen as a manifesto for a new would-be Labour leadership in the foreseeable future.)

It is even more implausible to imagine bankers, the City, the boards of directors, the USA and the EEC chiefs sitting back and tamely watching their influence be whittled away by legislation without resorting to their well-established levers of control and destabilisation.

It is almost inconceivable that whole sections of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy would throw themselves wholeheartedly into campaigning for these reforms. (They know that

however marginal is the role of working class involvement to the policies mapped out in Glyn's pamphlet, a fight even for such policies would almost certainly generate substantial favourable echoes and rank and file movements within the working class which could well develop politically well beyond the original demands.)

*But it is absolutely impossible to achieve socialism in Britain without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist rule, the smashing of the state machinery of the present ruling class, and the establishment of a new, workers' state apparatus to defend the class interests of the new ruling majority.*

This of course does not trouble Kinnock — he has no intention of challenging — let alone overturning — capitalism. But the fact that the establishment of socialism is not even discussed as an issue in *A Million Jobs a Year* is a telling indication of the limited objectives of Glyn's economic plan.

Another question therefore must be asked. If *A Million Jobs a Year* is not the basis of a challenge to the Hattersnock leadership; if it is not an outright socialist alternative to Kinnock's cross-class Keynesian economics; and since it contains not even a passing reference to struggles in the present period to defend existing jobs — what is the function of this pamphlet?

Pulling short of an outright confrontation with Kinnock's politics, it can only be an attempt to argue within the Parliamentary Labour Party, the unions, and the labour movement generally for a more radical, more intellectually satisfying schema — *knowing it will not be implemented!* The PLP right wing and much of the union bureaucracy are way past any point where a convincing argument could shift them into action that might in any way challenge the power of capital or unleash the militancy of the working class.

Brenda Dean and Tony Dubbins, faced with the sequestration of SOGAT's assets and the extinction of the print unions' key power base in Fleet Street, yet still seeing the main danger in the situation not as Murdoch but as mass pickets and class struggle elements from the left, ably sum up the wretched incapacity to lead class struggle today.

Unfortunately Glyn's pamphlet does not get to grips with these problems: it confronts the whole question of policies almost as an academic debate between rival theoretical positions — while the reality is that the conflict is between the interests of two classes, the capitalists and the workers (with the bureaucratic leaders of the labour movement clearly on the side of capitalism).

A closer look at some of the points and proposals in *A Million Jobs a Year* will illustrate these problems.

Glyn on several occasions refers to the two periods in which British capitalism managed to increase employment by 1 million per year.

The first was in the war mobilisation between 1938 and 1942, in which 3.7 million were drafted into the forces. British imperialism was prepared to breach many of its old rules, to borrow, to restrict the rights of sections of capitalists to the general interest of fighting to defend its own empire, markets and global influence.

Yet this was the capitalist state using extraordinary powers to defend itself — and, as Glyn later admits, using those powers with full political endorsement from the Labour, trade union and later Communist Party leaders, *against the working class*: strikes were made illegal, and unions, sucked into "Joint Production Committees" were transformed into an arm of management.

The second period was the immediate post war phase of 1945-48 when the upsurge of working class sentiment had ousted Churchill in 1945, and a Labour government elected by a landslide majority undertook the task of defusing the potential militancy of 3 million demobilised troops and stabilising capitalist rule. The Attlee government's period of office, far from representing any beacon for today's socialists to follow, proved a resounding success for capitalism, disillusioning millions of workers, diverting from socialist demands and paving the way for the Tories who in 1951 returned for the "13 years of misrule" until Wilson's first election triumph in 1964.

It was in these highpoints of class collaboration, far more than the period of "National Government" under Ramsay MacDonald in the 1930s that many of the emerging union leaders, Communist Party members and Labour politicians learned the politics which have proved such a burden for today's workers' movement. For Glyn now to use these episodes one-sidedly, to argue that capitalism could, if it chose, create millions of new jobs, is irresponsible.

A re-elected Labour government could not count on the unanimous support of the decisive sections of British capitalism for a job-creating economic package in the way Churchill's coalition could enlist the bankers and industrialists to profit from the war effort. Nor could Kinnock or the union leaders intimidate big capital into accepting expansionary policies by pointing to anything akin to the mood of a returning newly-jobless demobilised army of 3 million young men and women.

From this inappropriate comparison however Glyn goes on not only to argue for protectionist import controls but also to insist that

**"We know that the rapid expansions of total employment**



Workers fought Wilson's "social contract", but union bur...

(1938-42), and civil employment (1945-48) were technically feasible because they happened."

(p. 12, emphasis added)

"Technically feasible" for capitalism: Glyn's frame of reference is arguing that capitalism can reform itself to incorporate extra workers. This leads on to the argument for increasing the "competitiveness" of "British" industries in the international market. As with Kinnock's line ("Britain has made it; Britain can make it; Britain will make it"), Glyn's argument for a nationalist line is essentially one of abandoning any class analysis. He makes the easy point against the "competitiveness" of goods produced by sweated labour "in South Korea or South Africa". But he ignores the massive increases of exploitation already imposed upon British workers by "British" employers. He does not discuss *who would profit most* from a new, lean competitive British industry still in private hands; instead Glyn hides behind the abstract declaration that

**"Competitiveness in the sense of producing attractive and effective goods, at the minimum cost in labour time, is precisely what allows living standards to be raised, hours of work to be cut and social services to be improved."**

Could Margaret Thatcher disagree? The key issues for socialists are *who owns the firm, who profits from the increased effort, who decides the products to be made, the priorities of the economy, the management of the factories?* Glyn offers no answers.

The pamphlet moves on to propose extensive exchange controls which are (later) linked in to the generalised call for the nationalisation of the financial institutions. But Glyn refers only belatedly and in passing to the need for *workers' control* in the banks and finance houses if the back-room speculations, cash transfers, and



...bureaucrats fully backed it.



Benn's "left" image was used by Wilson to sell the new National Enterprise Board in 1975.



By 1976 the second Wilson government was heavily cutting health and social services.

other wheeling and dealing of the capitalists were to be forestalled. He does not address the real problem of persuading the unions most centrally involved — BIFU, ASTMS, APEX — to renounce their present stance and endorse a policy of nationalisation — a problem compounded by the fact that the Kinnockersly leadership and the TUC leaders also oppose the policy.

Rather than grasp the nettle of a political campaign spelling out the need and the case for nationalisation, Glyn winds up arguing for radical but more restricted measures to curb currency dealings and force the financial institutions to lend to the government, in isolation from any serious mobilisation of the workers' movement.

Such a compromise would threaten to bring the worst of all worlds — provoking a bitter backlash by employers and many confused workers against policies which still fall well short of the all-out na-



tionalisation of the banks which he admits is needed.

In similar fashion, Glyn approaches the question of inflation from a Parliamentary rather than a class struggle point of view. He embraces the discredited and previously quite ineffective call for price controls, only differing from the pathetic Harold Wilson experiments and from Hattersley's present line by arguing

that wage increases should not be limited.

For the working class, experience of runaway inflation even in previous periods of "price control" has underlined the need to defend real wages by establishing cost of living clauses in pay agreements which provide automatic increases to keep pace with rising prices. Such a policy can be fought for, established and implemented by workers through their own trade unions in the workplaces, rather than relying on parliament and the state to control rogue employers.

When he moves on to the section on "Trade" (pp. 25-27) Glyn embarks on a series of suggestions which wilfully blur the line between the protection which we should argue for in a workers' state fighting to establish socialism, but which in a capitalist economy amount to nationalist class collaboration.

Glyn's ideas range from a "left" version of "dumping" ("It would be economically justifiable to sell exports below the domestic cost of production, if the foreign exchange was thereby generated which allowed the economy to expand") to full-scale restrictions on imports, enlisting the support of workers to ensure compliance. While British union members kept an eye out for "foreign" goods which might cut the profits of their "own" employers, Glyn lends this nationalist policy an even more bizarre international dimension:

"Labour's potential allies overseas are the labour movements and it would have to be to them that Labour would appeal to minimise the disruptive action of foreign governments and employers. The rather tentative

measures for import controls in certain sectors, which the Labour leadership is now proposing, would be neither mild enough to avoid overseas fury, nor strong enough to allow rapid expansion. (p. 27)

So Britain's Labour leaders should appeal to the international working class to help them protect the markets and profits of British capitalists whom it refused to nationalise: while Kinrock is criticised for being insufficiently committed to import controls! Arguments which would be quite valid to defend a fledgling workers' state in Britain are invoked to dress up a nationalist line of class collaboration.

This is no exaggeration of Glyn's position. Under the heading Social Control and Public Ownership, Glyn spells out his argument that the only decisive element to be nationalised is the "major financial institutions":

"Taking them into immediate public ownership seems absolutely indispensable if a Labour Government is to prevent financial crisis and be enabled to use the credit system as part of planning for full employment."

But strangely, Glyn goes on to argue that

"Depositors in, and contributors to these institutions will also have to be convinced that nationalisation will not jeopardise their interests."

For small savers this is reasonably simple and obvious: but is it not the case that nationalisation of the banks and finance houses is designed to jeopardise the interests of the capitalists? How can it be otherwise? Their interests lie in the perpetuation of high levels of exploitation, in profits derived from rationalisation, and in extortionate interest rates: these interests are diametrically opposed to those of the working class majority. To nationalise the banks and leave these "interests" intact is to replicate the kind of bank nationalisation carried out by Mitterrand (and ridiculed earlier in the pamphlet) or other capitalist governments!

Glyn goes on to exclude the "major industrial firms" from the call for nationalisation, since he argues they have less immediate capacity to sabotage a Labour Plan for Full Employment. Instead he proposes the establishment of compulsory planning agreements, monitored by workers in the firm and by "governor-planners", who should be given access to all the company's books. But the concept is not so much workers' control as state control with a degree of worker cooperation.

Workers would be able to propose modifications and adjustments which after discussion the company would be obliged to accept." (p. 32)

Even if a company refused to comply, Glyn does not propose working class action or nationalisation: instead, he suggests, the government should "have the power to appoint a new management structure, involving workers and planners, to run the firm in the interests of society."

(p. 33)

"Society", as we have seen, is a combination of counterposed class interests: in whose interests would such a hypothetical (capitalist) firm be run?

Throughout this section Glyn bends over backward to avoid the logical demand for the nationalisation or expropriation of major industries and for full-scale workers' control as part of a workers' plan for the economy as a whole.

Instead the whole system dredges up and rehabilitates some of the worst fiascos of past Labour governments, substituting Parliamentary and state intervention, or teams of "planners" and appointees, for the action of the working class.

The final paragraphs contain a passing reference to class action, but significantly regards "extra-parliamentary" action as the perogative of the capitalists and reactionaries:

"The history of all previous attempts to transfer control of the economy indicate that the highest degree of active support and commitment would be required from Labour's supporters [the working class? - HS] to overcome the threat of ... extra parliamentary opposition."

Andrew Glyn, for years a supporter of *Millitant*, knows better than this. He knows that there has been no example in history of the kind of "Transfer of control of the economy" he has mapped out in the pamphlet. He knows that every attempt to implement this type of policy has been an unmitigated disaster — leading in most cases to an abject retreat into undisciplined capitalist policies, and elsewhere — as in Chile 1973 — to brutal capitalist reaction.

Andrew Glyn knows full well that the only occasion in which control of the economy was "transferred" to the working class was in the Russian Revolution of October 1917, led by the Bolsheviks, on the basis of mass mobilisation in developed organs of workers' power.

He must also know that the most probable fate of his pamphlet in the hands of many of those in the Campaign Group of MPs is that its more dubious nationalist elements, its arguments against nationalising industry, its calls for planning agreements and import controls will become widely known and argued, while the far from prominent demand for nationalising the banks and its rather timid gestures towards workers' control demands will be quietly ditched.

If the Labour left embraces the line of this pamphlet in the debates to come on the economic policies of the next Labour government and the line needed in the unions, it will go into the fight hamstringing from the outset. The direction away from independent working class struggle and away from confronting the backward and reactionary positions of the union leaderships shows that Glyn — for all his championing of the cause of "uneconomic pits" — has learned *nothing* from the miners' strike and the course of the class struggle over the past ten years.

What is needed now is not to challenge Kincock's "better way" of running capitalism with "An Even Better Way", but to spell out the real problems facing the working class in industry and the super-exploitation and low pay which threatens those in the public services, in Thatcher's newly-fostered "small businesses" and those still on the dole. We don't need more abstract academic arguments: we need a programme for class action, and a leadership prepared to fight for it in the unions and the Labour Party.

If Glyn's pamphlet becomes the "full programme" of the class struggle left in the labour movement, the fight for a serious socialist perspective will become substantially more difficult.



# Socialist Bookshelf

## "Against the Stream"

# Learn the lessons of Trotskyist history!

THIS very important book should be read by all Trotskyists. There is no other history of Trotskyism in Britain covering this period other than side reference in such books as Robert Black's *Stalinism in Britain* and reports on particular periods such as *The Balham Group* by Reg Groves.

In fact British Trotskyism which has correctly long attacked the Communist Party for hiding or distorting or just plain lying about its history, has published a great deal on the history of Stalinism but little on its own past.

Even the CP now producing its own lying history has not prompted Trotskyist organisations to write their own.

It has been left to two unaffiliated Trotskyists to do this. Quite naturally some of their analysis will be distorted because all histories are subjectively written. But it is difficult to criticise because of the lack of alternative material.

As you read through this book, particularly the later periods, you see how important this history is.

Many of the questions dogging Trotskyism, such as how to relate to the Labour Party, have also been confronted in the past. Because of the lack of any study of this history, Trotskyists today are forced to live the experience over again. Virtually none of the lessons of the past have been learned.

The most many Trotskyists have done in relation to the history of their movement has been to read Trotsky's Writings on Britain.

These have been very helpful, but they have only given a very limited view of the experience. Most of the Writings are letters which answer particular questions but do not show the real conditions prevailing at the time on the ground in Britain.

This is why every Trotskyist should read this new book. By the huge amount of quoted material it is clear that Bornstein and Richardson have done a great deal of work. In fact this

*Against the Stream: A history of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1924-38*, by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, reviewed by Tony Richards.

and a further volume dealing with the history up to 1949 took them 10 years to prepare.

They have gone over all the old editions of the Trotskyist papers as well as much other material, and they have interviewed many of the people involved in this period. With the amount they deal with, I can't help feeling that they shouldn't have tried to compress it so much.

The book starts by dealing with the first tentative supporters of Trotsky, reflecting the struggles against Stalinist bureaucratism taking place in Russia in the mid 20s. In fact some

of the leaders of the British Communist Party were at first receptive to Trotsky. But this soon changed, and it was the British Communist JT Murphy who moved Trotsky's expulsion from the Comintern.

The authors go on to show how the opposition developed in the CP and moved towards the formation of a Trotskyist group.

Their expulsion from the CP showed how all bureaucrats act similarly: the Trotskyists were expelled just before a conference, and the leaflets they issued to delegates outside the conference were taken out of those delegates hands at the door. (Shades of Gerry Healy's regime 40 years later in the WRP!)

The Communist League was formed in 1932: by the end of 1933 it had 52 members.



1932: Trotsky arrives as an exile in France.

The International Left Opposition argued for the Communist League to enter the ILP. The majority would not. So the minority split and entered themselves.

The majority protested to the international about the breach of democratic centralism. The international backed the minority. In fact its attitude to democratic centralism and what a group represented, dealt with on pages 150-51 of the book, is very interesting.

Nevertheless the speed with which the split occurred was a very bad sign for the future of Trotskyism. In fact by the end of the book there are 3 Trotskyist groups in Britain. A long tradition was started in these very early days.

The main battle in and with the ILP was over their attitude to Stalinism. But one of the other major battles at this time, with most of the other groups was over the issue of League of Nations Sanctions against Italy for its invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The ILP had a generally correct position of opposition to these imperialist sanctions — but this relapsed into a form of pacifism. The book deals extensively with both these questions.

Eventually the International came to the conclusion the period of entry work in the small ILP should come to an end and Trotskyists should be in the Labour Party.

Trotsky argued this not as a principle but as a tactic flowing from the opportunities offered in that particular period.

A good deal of this book is spent on detailing the different attitudes to this entry work. Bornstein and Richardson themselves argue complete entry very strongly and present it as though this is an overriding principle.

It is here that copies of the documents and propaganda produced by Trotskyists at that time would have been useful. In fact a documentary history alongside this work is badly needed.

The split into three groups was over attitudes to the Labour Party. One of the groups thought it was necessary to be completely outside and building the independent revolutionary party. The international argued for the fusion of all three groups. In fact two did fuse for a while into the RSL. But it was an unprepared fusion which quite quickly fell apart.

Not surprisingly many of the Trotskyists of this period became worn out with the factional struggles and just dropped out.

It was a very difficult period to work in. The chapter of this book on the Moscow Trials is very interesting. As we look at that episode of Stalinist history today it is very easy for people to see the truth. But in this period the Stalinists were able in alliance with social democrats and liberals in the Popular Front, to almost completely isolate the Trotskyists from the rest of

the left.

Much of the work by Trotskyists in those days was experimental. It was the attempt to break from an essentially propaganda opposition, as the Left Opposition in the CP, to building their own groups and parties with roots and practical work in the masses. The pressures of the period are one reason why some of the central characters involved can be seen abruptly changing position, and suddenly switching from one group to another.

All of this was also, to a lesser degree, true of the International movement some of whose leaders misdirected the small weak British group.

But his means we must study this history all the more. As we look at the groups today we see that in their recent history they have been making the same mistakes as those made in the earliest of days of the movement.

Some of today's leaders have purposely covered over or distorted this history. It is obvious that some of them had a reason. That history would show the incorrectness of their

present actions. The renegade Jock Haston (once a Trotskyist, now an EETPU official) says that he recruited Gerry Healy. Healy was then a Stalinist who physically attacked him at Hyde Park Corner! Clearly old habits die hard, and false methods of the past have helped shape the present crisis of the Trotskyist movement.

Following their recent expulsion of Gerry Healy, and a start of the debate on the degeneration of the SLL/WRP in Britain, some of the current WRP majority around Cliff Slaughter are now revealing a bit about the history of that tradition. They have gone back to material from the 1940s. Few WRP members would even have dreamed such material existed. Why has it been deliberately hidden for so long?

Let us hope that one thing to come out of the present crisis of British Trotskyism will be a new attitude to the history of our movement. This volume by Bornstein and Richardson could play a very important role in developing the necessary discussion.

I eagerly await its companion volume.

### ***Sickle Cell Anaemia — Who Cares?: A survey of screening and counselling facilities in England. Usha Prashar, Elizabeth Anionwu, Milica Brozovic. Runnymede Trust, £2.00. (62 pages).***

SICKLE cell disease is a term for a group of blood diseases resulting from the inheritance of sickle haemoglobin. Haemoglobin is the oxygen-carrying component in the red blood cells. Sickle haemoglobin can cause the red blood cells to distort into a rigid "sickle" shape which block up the small blood vessels and cause sickle crisis.

The severity of the disease varies but the person is affected from childhood and may have crises and become dangerously ill with severe pain, fever and jaundice. There are many acute and chronic complications involving virtually every part of the body, e.g. strokes, loss of sight, hip and shoulder problems.

Sickle cell disease occurs in Black and Asian populations and until recently was considered to be a rare tropical illness of little significance in Britain. But sickle cell disease occurs with a frequency of at least 1 in 200 babies in the Afro-Caribbean community.

Screening at birth is possible and clearly needed. However, there has been no attempt to mobilise resources and provide a service comparable to that for phenylketonuria which occurs in 1 in 10,000 babies but for which every new born baby is screened.

Other services, such as antenatal counselling and diagnosis in pregnancy (prenatal diagnosis) are also inadequate.

In April 1984 the Runnymede Trust carried out a postal survey in order to identify accurately what services are provided for sickle cell disease within the NHS, with particular reference to screening facilities, counselling practices and provision of in-service training. Questionnaires were received back from 98 District Health Authorities.

Services were generally poor, even in those Districts with high ethnic minorities. Of those districts with over 10% ethnic minorities, all screen pregnant women for sickle haemoglobin. A minority have some form of counselling for pregnant women, educational material on sickle cell disease and some form of screening of new born babies.

But only a minority offer prenatal diagnosis, have regular in-service training, specialist clinics, trained counsellors and keep statistics; and there are only six sickle cell centres.

The booklet argues the case for sickle cell centres to be set up along the lines that haemophilic centres have been set up nationally. The setting up of centres results in more expertise, education, screening and counselling. It has been very successful in treating haemophiliacs so surely the same applies in the case of sickle cell disease.

The authors point out that the black and ethnic minority communities are discriminated against, and that this is one symptom of racism in the NHS.

# WRP after Healy

## Fight to break from sectarian method!



Still with Healy: Corin Redgrave

**WORKERS' Press**, the weekly paper of the purged Workers' Revolutionary Party, devoted two pages of a special issue on February 7 to a reply to an article in the last issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

Now, as we are going to press, the latest issue of *Workers' Press* has published the *Open Letter* to the WRP from members expelled in 1974, which we carried in our December issue.

Clearly the WRP has moved to a much more open attitude to discussion with other tendencies: with this in view, **JOHN LISTER** looks at some of the more recent developments since last year's expulsion of WRP founder and leader Gerry Healy.

**WITHIN** days of our last issue going to press, the further split we had forecast in the ranks of the purged WRP majority took place.

A group of 50-60, raising the tatty banner of "political continuity" with Healy's International Committee, set out to form a new "British section", apparently taking with them funds from the WRP Young Socialists as a nest-egg.

Masterminding this ultra-sectarian breakaway, and showing that he for one had neither learned nor forgotten anything during the "break" with Healy was the leader of the IC's tiny American section, Dave North.

In Britain, the new breakaway grouping's main strengths were among inexperienced youth members and in the Yorkshire base of Central Committee member Dave Hyland.

If this small-scale split appears sadly bizarre, the latest split in the Healy rump takes the biscuit: having split from the majority of the WRP because they refused to condemn Healy's systematic rape of women members and slavishly endorsed his every political notion, the minority group-

ing — heavily overpopulated with corrupt elements from the full-time apparatus — ousted *Healy himself* from their leadership (apparently on the grounds that he has completely lost his marbles)! In the true Healyite tradition, this change of leadership had again to result in an organisational split — leaving a new, ultra-Healyite group consisting of Healy himself, Corin and Vanessa Redgrave and two dozen acolytes to carry forward the continuity of the "fight for the right to rape".

But the dangers of disintegration are far from over in the main WRP itself, which lacks either an authoritative leadership or a developed perspective and orientation towards the workers' movement in Britain.

One of the chief dangers has emerged in the form of the profoundly pessimistic line argued in a lengthy document from General Secretary Mike Banda, still in self-imposed exile in his native Sri Lanka.

Apparently churned out in a fit of extreme subjective depression, and without obvious reference to documentary sources, Banda's text "*Twenty-seven Reasons* (why the International Committee should be buried forthwith and the Fourth International Built)" (*Workers' Press*, Feb 7) effectively dismisses the entire history of the Trotskyist movement — from its foundation in 1938 to the present day — as an utter waste of time.

While this might appear to offer a useful counterblast to the traditional Healy/IC sectarian nonsense of the triumphant all-conquering "thin red line" of Bolshevik continuity flowing exclusively through limited forces of the British SLL/WRP and its international hangers-on, it offers no balanced assessment of the factional struggles waged by Trotskyists in the harsh conditions since 1938.

Banda's negative line of criticism concentrates exclusively upon the evil motivations he attributes to the leading figures of the Trotskyist movement, particularly in the post-war period. Even if all he says were true (and there is little reason to accept it all), it would be the equivalent of writing a history of the trade union movement which looked only at the

manoeuvres, intrigues and corruption of the top bureaucrats — and ignored the class struggle and the courageous actions of rank and file workers.

The Trotskyist movement as a whole certainly has to come to terms with major historical weaknesses — most significantly its inability to grasp and confront the counter-revolutionary role of post-war Stalinism, and its tendency under massive ideological and material, class pressure to adapt politically to existing nationalist and reformist leaderships.

Banda, as one of the key theoretical defenders over the decades of Healy's crude political assertions, has until now been very much part of this problem. His document however points no way towards solving it.

Instead of recognising that the key strengths which underlay the continued existence and attractive power to Trotskyism — despite its rotten and sectarian leaderships — were the revolutionary aspirations of the youth and workers drawn into its ranks, their attempts to fight Stalinism, reformism and bourgeois nationalism, and their willingness to struggle in practice, against all the odds, for what they believed to be a correct line, Banda effectively dismisses every struggle, every intervention, every slogan as the outcome of some sick, cynical manoeuvre.

Instead of drawing a balance sheet of post-war Trotskyism with a view to reconstructing a principled programmatic basis on which the most determined forces could be re-organised and united, Banda's approach is that of a single-minded accountant, seeking to prove the whole enterprise bankrupt and bring in the liquidator. In his demoralisation he retains Healy's aloof sectarian dismissal of every other tendency as worthless — except he now brands his own tendency as the worst of all!

This kind of demoralisation is by no means surprising as a backlash following the de-throning of Healy, whose personal prestige and authority acted as the keystone to the WRP's self-satisfied conception of representing the sole "continuity of Trotskyism" against an evil horde of "revisionists" and imagined or real police/FBI/GPU spies.

But by one-sidedly and subjectively opening up a discussion on the history of the movement without fixing the terms of the debate or insisting upon an orientation toward today's living workers' movement, Banda's line is exposing the WRP majority to the danger of predatory raids by fanatical sectarians such as the Spartacists or the home-grown Workers Power, who feed off the casualties of demoralisation.

Such groupings have endless points to score on the bankruptcy of

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qui luttent depuis 5 ans dans  
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rialiste et la terreur fasciste.

LES Américains approchent de Paris. La classe ouvrière doit mettre profit la situation et passer à l'action  
pour assurer elle-même sa libération contre le fascisme et la réaction, contre  
la terreur et la dictature. Déjà, les chemins de fer sont entrés en lutte.  
de grève générale de la C.G.T. illégale.

**HITLER s'effondre**

**VIVE LA GRÈVE DES CHEMINOTS ! SOUTENEZ LA**, comme l'ont  
déjà fait les métallos qui ont débâtyé dans plusieurs  
dans les usines, les bureaux, les chantiers, des

**GRÈVE GÉNÉRALE !**

Pour vos revendications :  
salaires de Juin 36.  
Pour le contrôle des cantines :  
le contrôle de la production  
des besoins du peuple.  
Pour les libertés ouvrières :  
le droit syndical, la  
Pour la libération de  
les prisonniers politiques.

**Occupez**  
**OUVIERS LI**  
aux usines en lutte de votre région.  
Commencez en Juin 36. Réunissez-vous dans l'unité d'Action.  
Occupiez-les ou joignez-vous  
à vos délégués. Qu'ils consti-  
tuent leur Comité d'Action.

French Trotskyists and others in occupied Europe risked everything to campaign underground in World War 2: the movement is much more than the weakness of its leaders.

the history of the WRP — and of every other tendency bar their own. But they have a line for the present-day class struggle which is easily as sterile and self-isolating as Healy's most extravagant lunacies.

Any fool with the benefit of hind sight can point the finger at the blunders of the past: few sectarians have anything deeper to say or anything useful on offer for the actual problems facing the WRP today. And when it comes to making criticisms of the history of particular currents, people like the Spartacists who themselves live in glass houses should hesitate before throwing stones. A quick look at the despicable Spartacist record advocating Stalinist repression in Poland and supporting immigration controls in the imperialist countries (to name but two obvious points) or a look at their degenerate internal regime should be an eye-opener for wavering WRP members.

At first sight Workers Power, with their Healy-style open letter listing their ready denunciations of every other current (save for now the WRP!) as "centrist", and with their apparently open-minded suggestion of immediate fusion with the WRP, might seem to be a more attractive offer.

But they are no more honest than the Spartacists, nor is their history one of any exemplary practical work in the British class struggle. Their "potted history" served up for would-be WRP "comrades" carefully skirts around their own relatively recent

abandonment of the state capitalist analysis on the Stalinist states, claiming that "...on Stalinism and many other questions we have maintained consistently revolutionary positions in contradistinction to the waverings of the centrists."

Banda-like, Workers Power effectively write off the whole post war history of the Fourth International ("...collapsed into centrism in 1951"). But in place of the smug complacency of the "thin red line" concept of Trotskyist continuity so long cherished by Healy and the WRP, Workers Power (who have never led any struggles anywhere in the workers' movement) substitute the megalomaniac arrogance of the "minute red blob" theory of a grouping magically discovering the elixir of everlasting Trotskyism amid a wilderness of centrists. Springing from nowhere and with no record of struggle, they now proclaim themselves authorities on Trotskyist orthodoxy.

Hastening to score cheap points on the numerical decline of other groupings on the left, Workers Power swagger, boast and inflate the picture of their own size, with wilfully deceptive claims for the size of their support amongst miners, and their ludicrous slogan of launching a new rank and file "minority movement" in the NUM consisting of themselves and a few close supporters.

Behind the bravado and bluster is the harsh fact that Workers Power is a small, ossified, sectarian current which has never succeeded in work-





Will WRP break from its sectarian abstention from the functioning Miners' Support Committees and other broad campaigns?

ing constructively with any number of unaffiliated workers or with any other forces on the hard left in any significant campaign. Despite a flurry of activity around the miners' strike, Workers Power's main focus for political intervention — like that of the Spartacists — is still the meetings of other currents on the left. Broad campaigns and initiatives they see purely and simply as an occasion for polemics and a platform for their own sectarian politics of hair-splitting and ultimatums. Their conception of a 'united front' is one in which all forces involved agree to unite behind the Workers Power programme!

Curiously, the Workers Power "planks for a fusion platform" skirt around the fundamental issue of democratic centralism.

Could this be because the whole "fusion" ploy is not so open and fraternal after all, but a deliberate manoeuvre to lure around some unsuspecting WRP militants, while recognising that it is not a viable possibility with the group as a whole? Why else would Workers Power as a minority in any fusion with the WRP not even mention the question of in-

ternal regime and the rights to form minority tendencies and factions, especially in the aftermath of the exposure of the Healy regime?

Whatever the real plans of this parasitic propaganda group, for WRP members to embrace the politics of Workers Power would be to leave the sectarianism of Healy — and Banda — intact, and duck the central problem of relating seriously to the actual struggles of the British labour movement.

The priority at present for the WRP is not to reject out of hand the whole history of struggle — imperfect, inadequate, against the stream — of the post war Trotskyist movement, but to recognise and seek politically to tackle the common political problems which have remained unresolved by any section of that movement.

In other words, the lesson of the break from Healy and rejection of Healy's political methods, the lesson of the break from North and the nonsense about "IC continuity" must be a break from the sectarian conception of an "us and them" world of "Marxists" versus "revisionists".

Without a continuous struggle for the Marxist programme, defended

by internal democracy and guaranteed right for minority views, any "Marxist" can become a "revisionist". Yet even "revisionist" organisations comprise militants who — like WRP militants before Healy was exposed and expelled — see themselves and their organisations as Trotskyists and fight for what they believe to be revolutionary Marxism. Their experiences in that fight are therefore not entirely useless or negative, though the demands they raise and the results of the fight fall short of what is needed. The fight for the reconstruction of the Fourth International is the fight to distil the strengths and positive political lessons from the history of the movement, while learning the lessons of its many failures.

In this sense the line argued by WRP spokesperson Cliff Slaughter — for an open exchange between the WRP and other political currents on they way forward — is a real step forward.

The fact is that the burning issue before the WRP is how to break from sectarianism.

Healyism has always been more

than the personal vices or corruption of the individual and his inner circle; more than the particular political errors or cynical adaptations at any given point of history. The essence of Healyism over many years has been its *sectarianism* towards the mass organisations of the labour movement and the patient fight for leadership and for respect amongst the most militant sections of the rank and file.

Breaking with Healyism must mean therefore rejecting the sectarian methods of sterile propagandism, self proclamation and swaggering denunciation of opponents, to adopt a serious orientation towards the actual situation in today's workers' movement, fighting for positions of real leadership and influence.

Central to this must be an appraisal of the immense crisis of leadership which faces today's workers' movement and the development of a *programme* which equips WRP members and supporters to offer a serious alternative in the struggles and campaigns that emerge.

Trotsky's writings — and bitter experience from decades of largely fruitless propagandist work — confirm that to defeat and break up social democracy it is not adequate simply to denounce the reformist politicians and union bureaucrats. It is necessary to formulate and participate in demands, slogans, campaigns, strikes and struggles through which the rank and file of the workers' movement can learn *in practice* of the treacherous role played by their leaders, and at the same time recognise a way forward in the fight.

Marxists must struggle not simply to convince *themselves* and small circles of sympathisers of the evils of reformism, but find the means to convince tens of thousands of workers if socialist revolution is to be a fact rather than just a phase.

In the current situation of the British labour movement this must begin with building maximum support for every struggle that takes place against the employers' offensive, the Tory government and the forces of the state.

Concretely it means that the WRP should break from its aloof "go it alone" attitude, and get involved in the local Miners' Support Groups, in building broad solidarity with the Printworkers, and in work around Silentnight and other struggles. WRP members will find that in many of these campaigns they can find readers for their press, an arena to put forward policies and demands to advance the struggle, and a closer involvement with the mass labour movement in their own areas from which years of Healyite activism has often kept them isolated. If coupled with increased participation in their own unions, it can result in a substantially strengthened local base. Respect can only be won where constructive work is done.



*Task is building mass Marxist organisation, not simply one-by-one recruitment or sterile propagandism.*

Of course such support work is not the end but only the first step in developing a rounded perspective to replace the blinkered sectarian politics of the past.

The crisis of leadership in the labour movement is daunting and all-embracing. The wholesale rush towards the politics of "new realism" amongst top union bureaucrats (including one-time "lefts" such as NUPE's leadership) is the outcome of seven years' ruthless Tory offensive. But the same union leaders have become the key driving force which installed the "Dream Ticket" Labour leadership and now back its every move to junk and dilute those conference policies with which they disagree.

The growing likelihood of a possible re-elected Labour government, or a Labour/Alliance coalition, moving immediately onto the attack against working class living standards means that the preparations for a political fightback must begin now not only in the unions but also in the Labour Party.

The WRP must also draw a serious balance sheet of its experiences in seeking to establish their party as an organisational alternative to the Labour Party, while abstaining from any serious involvement in the political debates, struggles and inner life of the labour movement as a whole.

Is it the case on past experiences that a mass revolutionary party will simply be constructed through one-by-one recruitment on the basis of propaganda work from outside the mainstream labour movement? We think the 20 years SLL/WRP experiences over and above the actual process of splits which produced the mass Communist Parties of the Comintern indicates that this is *not* possible, and that far more serious attention needs to be focussed on how to develop a serious dialogue, joint work, campaigns and other activities which will draw the WRP closer to the rank and file of the Labour Party and trade unions.

Central to such debates must be the development of a programme for



action, not simply for current struggles, but also with a view to the improved opportunities to build and intervene in mass struggles, which are likely to arise if the Tories lose the next election.

Once again a programme of worked-through *transitional demands* in defence of jobs, living standards and workers' control — mere mention of which was more or less sufficient to get some of us expelled from the WRP in 1974! — can be seen as vital for the political fight against the right wing Labour leaders.

In similar fashion the WRP, which has now made the belated and welcome step of opening discussion on women's liberation and gay liberation, must assess how its campaigns and demands on these questions must relate to the existing mass-based and labour movement campaigns and organisations. It is not enough simply to "go it alone" and launch more or less token WRP campaigns (though this would be a major stride forward): it is vital to find ways to reach out to the best forces already fighting, and through genuine *mass* campaigns to reach the unorganised forces.



International solidarity, anti-racist and anti-fascist work — all must be carefully assessed from a new, sober grasp of the actual forces at the disposal of the WRP and the ways in which the most impact can be made on the labour movement.

It is real discussion on *these issues*, the fight for a serious orientation to the actual problems and struggles of the British working class, the unemployed, the oppressed, that can pave the way for a real break from sectarianism, rather than a lurch from one bankrupt line to another.

It is indeed encouraging to see that Workers Press has reprinted our Open Letter and replied at length to the article in the last issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*. We would hope that our frank expression of the problems and our willingness to discuss how best to resolve them can lay the basis of further exchanges.



Healy

## Still available

Copies of *The Battle for Trotskyism* and other literature on the WRP are available (£3 including post and packing) from Socialist Viewpoint's Bookstall, BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

## The Paris Commune 1871

# When Parisian workers took power

By MATTHEW JONES

**TO this day the basic programme of working class state power put forward by revolutionaries is largely inspired by the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871.**

This was the first time in history that the organised working class had seized state power in its own right and used it to establish what Marx and Engels later called the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Over forty years on, the lessons of the Commune were the first considerations of Lenin and Trotsky when the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government in Russia in October 1917. If, as Lenin put it, the 1905 Russian revolution and the Moscow insurrection were the dress rehearsal for 1917, then the Paris Commune was the political inspiration for the whole act.

The France of 1848-1870 was ruled by Louis Bonaparte, self styled Emperor Napoleon III, who gave his name to the original Marxist definition of a *Bonapartist* regime (see Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*). The regime had stepped into the vacuum created when the bourgeoisie had proved itself incapable of maintaining its rule over the working class, but that class was not yet politically and organisationally mature enough to take power in its own right.

After putting down the heroic Paris workers' insurrection of June 1848 with great brutality, and whittling down to nothing the powers of the elected National Assembly, the Second Empire of Napoleon III was established in 1851. The Second Empire was a regime of phenomenal corruption where bribery, embezzlement and speculation reigned supreme; however, rapid industrial development of the major towns, particularly Paris, did take place. Side by side with this expansion there was a growth in the size and influence of the working class.

The Second Empire was in size and influence a mere parody of the First Empire of Napoleon Bonaparte. The



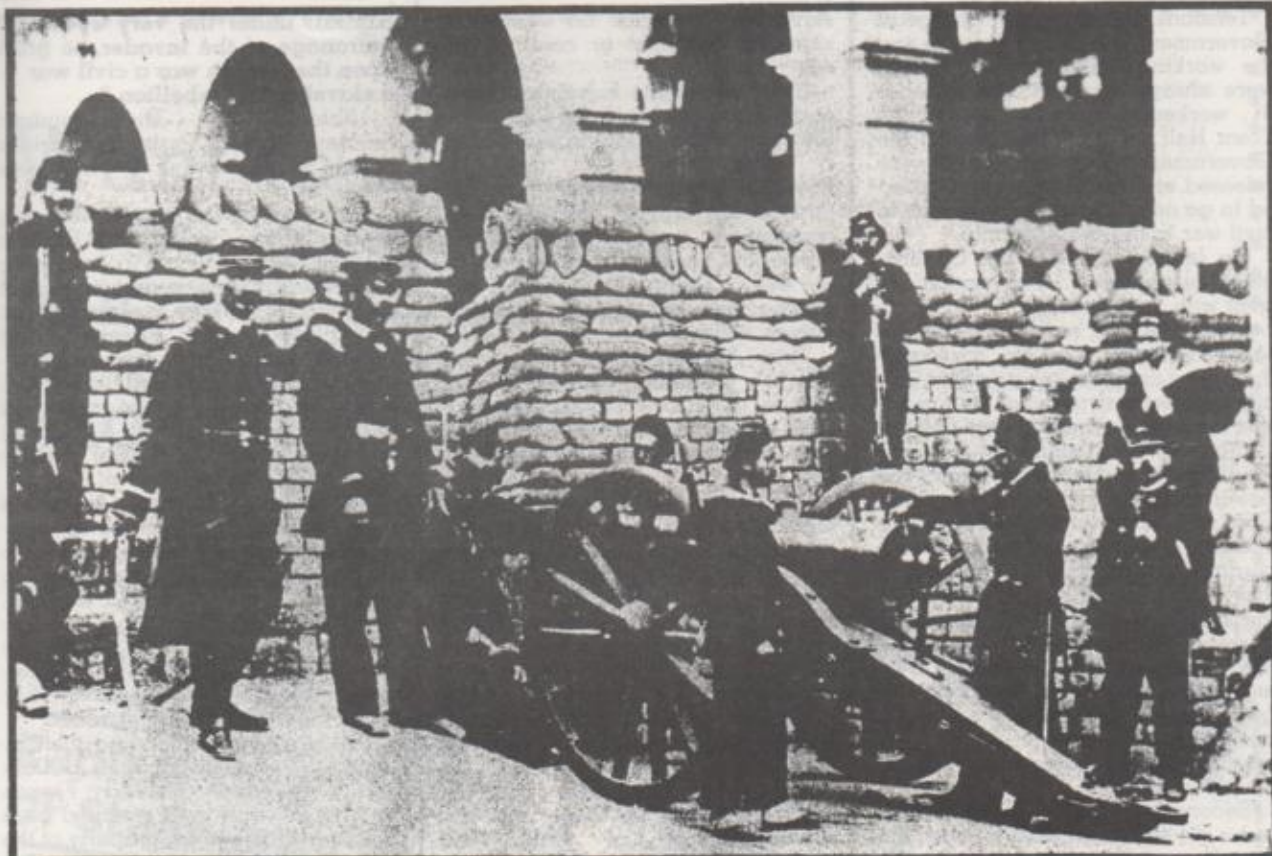
French chauvinists and speculators around Louis wanted a war, to restore French domination of Europe, to enrich themselves by plunder, and to quell discontent at home caused by conditions of work and the ruinously high taxes imposed to maintain the immense bureaucracy of the state.

In particular they laid claim to the Western provinces of Germany which had been a part of the First Empire. After 1866, when the Prussians

under Bismarck had defeated the Austrians, and established Prussian dominance over Germany, the cry became "on to Berlin" to crush the Prussians.

On July 15 1870 Napoleon III declared war on Prussia and marched to occupy the "left" bank of the Rhine.

The First International, the International Working Men's Association, founded by Marx and Engels, pro-



*Communards on the barricades.*

tested against the war. Both the French and the German sections held large meetings and issued proclamations. In Paris on July 12, the members of the International issued a manifesto against the war, part of which reads:

**"Once more on the pretext of European equilibrium, of national honour, the peace of the world is menaced by political ambitions. French. German. Spanish workmen! Let our voices unite in one cry of reprobation against war! ... Brothers of Germany! Our division would only result in the complete triumph of despotism on both sides of the Rhine..."**

Numerous other manifestoes were issued in towns across France. In Germany, meetings in Berlin and Brunswick came out against the war. At Chemnitz delegates representing 50,000 Saxon workers unanimously adopted a resolution, part of which reads:

**"In the home of the German Democracy, and especially of the workmen forming the Democratic Socialist party, we declare the present war to be exclusively dynastic... We are happy to grasp the fraternal hand stretched out to us by the workmen of France..."**

The war was a débâcle for the French. They were defeated at Sedan on September 2 1870 after being driven back across their own border. Napoleon III and most of the French army were taken prisoners by the Prussians.

On September 4, the Paris workers rose and delivered the death blow to the shattered Second Empire. A republic was proclaimed. The Prussians occupied a third of France and encircled Paris; the siege began.

Inside Paris a Government of National Defence took over. This was a bourgeois affair, composed of the Paris representatives of the old Legislative Assembly of the Empire.

The leaders of the working class, particularly Blanqui whose followers, the Blanquists\*, had a majority among the workers of Paris, were in jail. Thus a government composed of some of the worst swindlers, thieves and speculators in Europe, headed by Thiers, a former Bonapartist Minister of Police (!), was able to usurp the power seized for them by the workers of Paris.

In reality this was a Government of National Defence *against the working class*, openly trying to betray Paris to the Prussians and break the power of the Paris working class by treachery, famine and broken heads.

After the Commune was establish-

*\*Blanquists: Followers of Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) who believed that mankind would be freed from wage slavery not by means of the class struggle but by a conspiracy by a small minority of intellectuals. They lost sight of the real conditions necessary for a successful uprising and ignored contacts with the working class and peasantry. Blanquists had a majority in the ruling body of the Paris Commune.*

ed its *Journal Officiel de la République Française* published the correspondence of the government and army officers revealing this. The most important result of the rising of September 4 was the arming of the Parisian working class. The National Guard, over 300,000 strong, was made up of everyone in the city who was able to carry arms, and it was overwhelmingly working class.

The Prussians laid siege to the city, causing widespread food shortages and famine. Bismarck demanded the handover of Alsace and Lorraine, plus the payment of the cost of the Prussian invasion force, and an indemnity of 5 million Francs as terms for an armistice. The Central Committee of the German Socialist-Democratic Workmen's party came out against these demands in a manifesto issued on September 5:

**"We protest against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. And we are conscious of speaking in their name of the German working class. In the common interest of France and Germany, in the interest of Western civilisation against Eastern barbarism, the German workmen will not patiently tolerate the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine."**

In addition, the manifesto called for the return of Louis Bonaparte to France for trial as a common felon and accused Bismarck of trying to get Bonaparte reinstated Emperor so that he could finish the job of ruining France.

Tensions between the bourgeois Government of National Defence and the working class National Guard were always apparent. On October 31, workers' battalions stormed the Town Hall and captured part of the Government. However, they were released and the Government allowed to go on as the only alternative to civil war in the besieged city.

On January 28 1871 the Government surrendered. Two conditions went with the surrender:

- firstly the line regiments and the Mobile Guard were to surrender their arms and be taken prisoner. The city walls were stripped of their guns, and the forts surrounding the city occupied by the Prussians. So great was the Prussian commanders' fear of the power of the organised Paris working class that the National Guard was allowed to keep its weapons including artillery and the conquering army occupied only a small part of the city consisting mainly of public parks! Even this they left after a few days. Despite entreaties from Thiers and the bourgeoisie, Bismarck was not going to put down the revolutionary Paris workers: the French bourgeoisie was going to have to do its own dirty work.

- Secondly a National Assembly was to be elected eight days (!) after the

surrender to decide on whether to sign the armistice or continue the war.

Even before the surrender Thiers and his bourgeois cohorts were out in the country campaigning with the only allies they could find, the Royalists, to return a reactionary majority in the National Assembly. Communications were in chaos, many areas only heard of the elections on the eve of voting, so it was not surprising that out of 750 Representatives, 450 were Royalists.

This Assembly, known as the "Rural" Assembly because of the number of backward landowners present, signed the armistice when it first met at Bordeaux on February 12 1871.

The bourgeoisie and its allies were facing economic ruin. To add to the cost of the French war effort and the vast parasitic bureaucracy of the state there was an army of half a million Prussians holding them by the throat demanding its costs plus the huge indemnity, with 5% interest on unpaid instalments.

Thiers and Co. had one answer: the workers and peasants of France. As Marx put it:

**"Thus the immense ruin of France spurred on these patriotic representatives of land and**

**capital, under the very eyes and patronage of the invader, to graft upon the foreign war a civil war — a slaveholders rebellion."**

(ibid, p. 41) Three hundred thousand armed Paris proletarians stood in the way — war was inevitable.

The government started chipping away at Paris, appointing Royalist ambassadors, levying a 2 centime tax on publications; passing sentence of death on the workers' leaders Blanqui and Flourens; the suppression of Republican journals, laws on overdue commercial bills and house rents which hit Paris hard; the transfer of the National Assembly to Versailles; and the renewal of the state of siege lifted on September 4.

The National Assembly appointed three vicious reactionaries to command the three agencies of state force in Paris: Vinoy, a Bonapartist, to command the army; Valentin, another Bonapartist, to head the police gendarmes; and Aurelle de Paladines, a Jesuit general, to command the National Guard... They never took up the appointments.

Thiers started demanding that the National Guard hand over its artillery and *Mitrailleuses* (an early French form of machine gun mounted on a light gun carriage) as property of the state. This was the grossest insult. The guns had been paid for by public subscription during the siege and manufactured in the city. Many of them had been saved from the Prussians by the National Guard who rounded them up from where the bourgeois capitulators had left them and secured them inside the city. Finally Vinoy and a group of *sergents de ville* and some regular line regiments were sent to seize the guns on March 18 1871.

After the surrender of France and the flight of the bourgeois Government of National Defence, the National Guard reorganised itself. Most of its units, with the exception of a very few Bonapartists elected a supreme Central Committee to command the Guard. When Vinoy made his attempt to remove the guns from one of the depots at Montmartre he was foiled by the women and children of the area who called out the National Guard. His force was dispersed or taken prisoner, and in one instance the 81st line regiment, after repeatedly refusing to fire on an unarmed crowd, shot dead its own commanding officer General Lecomte.

The National Guard seized power in the city that day, March 18, and opened elections to the Paris Commune. At the same time sympathetic rebellions took place in Marseilles and Lyons — but these were swiftly crushed. Paris, having endured five months of famine, stood alone against the shareholders' revolt and the armed might of Prussia.

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