

VOICER SOCIALIST **VOICE**

**This
ISSUE**

AMBULANCE DISPUTE

**Nicaraguan
Trotskyists
Government
Crisis
Victoria
WINS**



MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER

**In This Issue Ambulance Crews Speak Out
Manchester**

"It will be fatal if the Government carry out their disciplinary threats; they'll kill more than they'll cure. Police are not ambulance staff. It will also cost the Government money in overtime payments to the police who will be unable to cope and will be just running around in circles.

"The top and bottom of it is that this Government dare not give in; if they do they will have to give in to the whole of the NHS and stop starving it of funds and start giving it the finance the whole health service needs.

"Look at the guy in Brighton who won the award as the top ambulance person and has now had to leave because he could not afford to live. The only time the Government know we exist is when they get blown up. We were the heroes of the night in this area during the Manchester airport disaster a couple of years ago.

"One thing I'll tell you; you never see a poor politician; I've never seen one with his sleeves rolled up; I'll swop jobs with them tomorrow".

TROTSKYIST LEADERSHIP and the POLITICAL REVOLUTION:

By Bill Hunter 50p

A criticism of Ernest Mandel's
book: "Beyond Perestroika.
The future of Gorbachev's USSR"

"The most important task for revolutionary leaders is not to speculate about developments in the bureaucracy...but to thoroughly study the mass movements that develop, seek ways of intervening and developing revolutionary leadership and the slogans and tactics of struggle which can assist all independent movements or the masses."

"The method of Mandel covers up the crisis of the bureaucracy and softens the firmness of the struggle against it. A victorious political revolution will only be realised with a leadership that is educated and hardened in the consciousness of the necessity of complete independence of workers' organisation; with its theory, programme and practice completely freed of any illusions of bureaucratic self-reform."

This is the conclusion of the pamphlet.

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The video explains that this is the hour for trotskysm because it is the most consistent political current in the world which fights for workers self mobilisation and supports all the struggles of workers.

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DEFEND THE NHS

Now that army ambulances are being used to try and break the action of the ambulance crews the entire labour movement is faced with the decision of what they are going to do.

The comments from their picket lines is that strike action is needed from other sections of workers. A typical comment was that: "We have public opinion on our side but the government has never taken any notice of public opinion, it needs something more."

At the same time they have noticed that Norman Willis has said nothing, the TUC is keeping its head low. To mobilise the labour movement over this issue would be very easy. Everyone knows how we depend on the ambulance crews. Even the Police Federation have spoken out against the use of police in the current action. The labour movement leaders must show their support, not only in making speeches, but in organising industrial action and mobilise the community.

They should immediately call labour meetings in every place on order to let the movement decide what action has to be carried out.

The Government is so determined to break the action because the real issue is the National Health Service. They are seeking to reduce ambulance crew numbers and to dismantle the service which would lead to privatisation.

That is why we were correct in the last issue of Socialist Voice to say that those now struggling are not only fighting for themselves but for the whole of the NHS.

They have already proved strong enough to get a pay rise for the Fire Brigade. It is their action which made the Government pay as agreed. Now the FBU and all of us, who are dependent on ambulances, need to give our militant support.

HACKNEY CREWS

In the event of troops being brought in ambulance staff intend to peacefully occupy stations to answer emergencies. They but will only leave if forcibly removed by the police.

In London ambulance crews have been sticking strictly to the code drawn up by the TUC to cover industrial action by ambulance drivers. No routine work is being carried out but emergency calls are being answered.

The effect of the action is that most ambulance staff are "sitting in station" but man-

agement are threatening to send people home without pay. They are also trying to separate the union conveners from their members by sending them out on the road.

The ambulance staff are adamant that they will last this one out. They remember that the present review procedure for the firefighters was won after a bitter industrial dispute when troops were brought in to scab using their infamous "green goddesses".

THIS ISSUE OF SOCIALIST VOICE WAS PRODUCED BY

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TORIES WANT HOSPITALS TO CARE FOR PROFIT

Rae Hunter

Another five city hospitals are to close with the loss of 1,000 beds in Liverpool. This will mean longer waiting lists and the loss of more lives.

We are told that the hospitals to be closed are housed in old buildings or the patients will be better served in large, new hospitals. These closures, however, have certainly not helped the patients. Nursing has become less personal in the big General Hospitals.

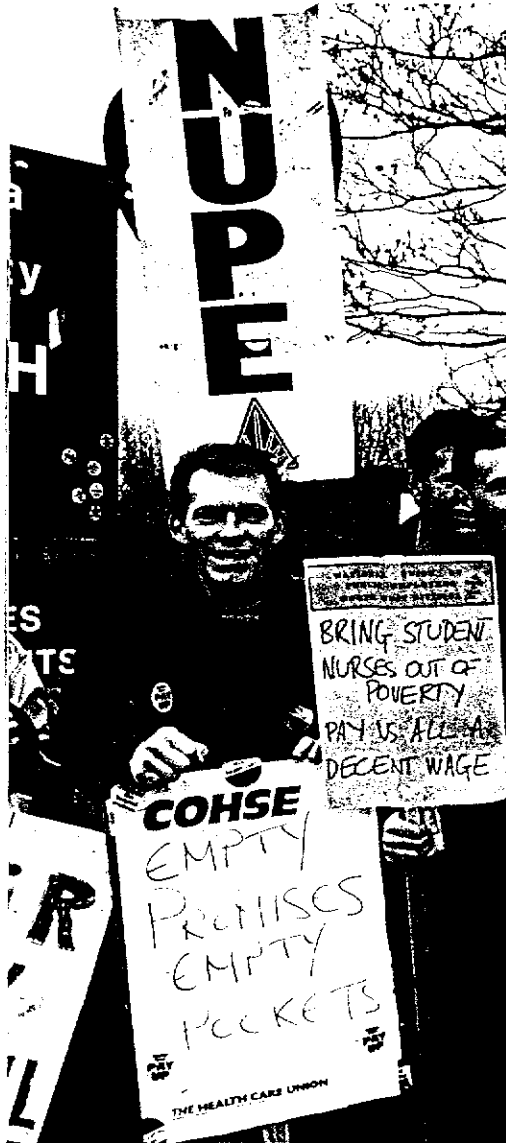
The work load for the staff, nurses in particular, has been so heavy that good patient care is impossible.

Beds are also being lost for reasons other than hospital closures. In inner London, twelve hospitals face a deficit of £30 million. St Bartholomew's Hospital has had to close 75 beds. St. Mary's Hospital has cancelled all waiting lists for surgery for five weeks.

The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital has to find a cash saving of £110,000 this year. It is only able to employ 246 nurses instead of the 270 it needs to staff all the beds necessary. It will have to close twenty beds in November because of the lack of nurses. Children with cancer are having their treatment delayed. Two heart operations were also delayed and four children who came in for planned surgery in mid-October were turned away. Only four of the eight beds in the bone-marrow transplant unit are in use.

An "Observer" report declared that doctors were very angry as, with proper treatment, children with Leukemia now have a sixty per cent chance of a cure.

To save money at the expense of children's



lives is something that the poor in Asia, Africa and Latin America have experienced for many many decades.

The way in which hospitals are run in Britain has completely altered over the years. Some years back, managers were put in charge. Their sole purpose was to save money - for which they got a bonus. These managers replaced the control of trained medical staff such as doctors and nurses.

The process will proceed apace under the proposals of the Government's White Paper on the "Opting Out" of hospitals. The end will be the privatisation of hospitals and their running for profit alone.

Drastic changes and cuts have already been made in relation to ancillary staff. In some hospitals frozen food has been introduced and whole kitchens closed. This method of giving meals is not only unappetising, it is dangerous.

The method of training nurses is in the process of alteration.

Instead of training on site in a hospital, training will take place in University or College, away from the patients - the nurses will attend hospital in the same way as medical students. Emphasis will be on theory and how to use equipment. As State Enrolled Nurses are phased out, patient care will be carried out by nursing assistants, possibly on Youth Training Schemes. Naturally, such youth will get very low wages and both youth and patients will suffer.

ISL COMMENT

All workers involved in health care should find ways of linking their struggles together. Immediate support is needed by the Ambulance crews. It has been proved that this Government is prepared to let members of the public die in order to defeat the Ambulance dispute.

Overwhelming support should be given by nurses, porters and doctors to their colleagues who drive the patients to and from hospitals.

A major Health rally against the Government for the demands of the Ambulance crews would be a step in allowing workers to express their feelings of support and also begin a unity of struggle between the hospital unions and workers.

LET THE JOINT STRUGGLE BEGIN!

MINERS' SAFETY UNDER



David Compton, NUM branch secretary, Bickershaw Colliery, spoke to Socialist Voice about Health and Safety in Britain's mines.

SV: "What is the situation over safety in the mines?"

DC: "The accident rate is going up throughout Britain. In my own pit the accident rate has gone up considerably compared to last year. Substantial accidents that you hear of outside our industry like broken hands, broken fingers and broken ankles we call common accidents.

Compared to last year I would say injuries of this type had risen by about 25% but that is a conservative estimate. It's not just underground workers, it's surface workers as well.

You see, what they are doing is making more men redundant and stretching the remaining workforce, making them do more work - so accidents happen."

SV: "What is the accident rate like nationally for miners?"

DC: "You look at the trends for accidents in the Coal Board's propaganda newspapers, the trend is going up all the time.

And what is happening is that men are having accidents and continuing working,

men are actually working with broken fingers because they can't afford to take time off. If a man is off sick or injured he is paid just £90 if that, so you can imagine what a bloke is going to say. A bloke came up to me with a broken finger and said '*what shall I do*', I said go on the sick and he said I can't afford to. So he's coming to work doing a lower paid job on the surface."

SV: "Is there no compensation when miners have accidents at work?"

DC: "You can put a common law claim in against the Coal Board but it takes 12 months or more. All they get is something off the DHSS and injury benefit from work which is only made up to so much so that, like I said earlier, they would only receive about £90 a week, maybe less. So a chap will come to work for a bit less money and a lighter job, so maybe the accident rate is a little higher. And if this is happening in our pits it is happening in pits throughout the country, i.e. men coming to work injured because they can't afford to be laid off work."

SV: "What has the union been doing about the rise in accidents?"

DC: "The union tells the men not to do long hours because longer hours obviously will make them more tired and that means you are more prone to accidents. But at the end of the

day it is down to each man. You can't tell a man he should not work overtime. I don't believe we should work overtime, we should have a decent basic wage.

"The environmental conditions at Bickershaw are also deteriorating. We've had four cases of Legionnaires disease at the pit.

"Because of the extreme depth in which we work it is so hot that cooling systems are needed. Legionnaires disease was found in the cooling towers resulting in four men contracting the disease."

SV: "What happened after that?"

DC: "They were off work for up to three months and they are still suffering the after effects of it. The concern that myself and the men at our pit have is that Legionnaires disease is not classed as an industrial disease. All the reserves of coal are at great depth, so obviously we will see an increase of Legionnaires disease in the future.

"The management knew there was something wrong a fortnight before they informed the men. When they found out it was Legionnaires disease the system was stripped down and disinfected but they kept production going. The men expressed their disgust at the management for putting production before the men's welfare, which was quite right.

"We're working at temperatures of over

ATTACK



100 degrees fahrenheit and if that system breaks down you can imagine how hot it is. It's like working with 120 radiators surrounding you. I've been carried out twice suffering from heat exhaustion and that happens to us on a regular basis. We've complained and complained about it for nearly 12 months. If we complain that it's too bad to work the management say the pit will be closed. They hold that type of threat against you.

"The Government themselves are trying to do away with the "Mines and Quarry Act". If that happens the accident rate will spiral."

SV: "How many are working?"

DC: "Well no one is being taken on. Golbourne colliery closed in March of this year and that was a three pit complex, so the workforce has gone down by at least 400. In the last two months 50 more men have been made redundant at the Bickershaw complex. The majority laid off were at Bickershaw and a couple at Parsonage, yet the management want the same amount of production?"

SV: "Does this mean you are expected to work longer hours?"

DC: "Well the men work overtime because the basic wage today compared to elsewhere is rubbish. A face worker earns £175 for a basic week. But when tax and insurance is taken out it's nothing. I take home £130 after working a flat basic week. You can imagine the wages miners on lower grades are taking home."

SV: "How big a question is privatisation?"

DC: "It's a big thing now because we've been told that we have no orders from the electricity generating board after the 31st December 1989. Nothing has been signed, so obviously the electricity generating board is hanging out. If they can get cheaper coal from abroad, such as Columbia and places like that, and with this terminal that they've

built at Liverpool, there is no future."

SV: "Is there more contract work at the pit?"

DC: "Like I said they dropped the workforce at our pit in the last two months by making 50 men redundant. But what they do is they take on outside contractors for belt cleaning for so many weeks and before you know it they are gone. This is all part of the "Weaver" plan. All they want is a certain amount of men working for the Coal Board at each pit and bringing contractors into each different job, which we are against but we are unable to do anything about."

SV: "What areas of work do the contractors do at the moment?"

DC: "Development, drainages, belt cleaning and belt instillations etc, our own men can do the job just as well if not better. But instead they send the contractor in and he has to do the job in so many weeks."

SV: "What other changes are happening?"

DC: "The colliery normally stops for a fortnight every summer, a week in September and a week at Christmas. The management want the colliery to be stopped for only two weeks every year. They want the pit working for 50 out of every 52 weeks. They want us to pick a week at the time that we have our holidays now, and the colliery stops just for that one week, and a week at Christmas. And they want us then to pick a week before or a week after. In September you can have a week off but they have said you have got to apply for it, and you have to give three months notice to have a week off.

We are not accepting flexible holidays, and even the men that are scabs at our pit don't want flexible holidays, nobody wants it. The men are saying this is my fortnight's holiday and I am taking it."

MANCHESTER MARTYRS MARCH

SUNDAY 26TH
NOVEMBER

PARADE
AND RALLY

ASSEMBLE:
12:30pm
LONGSIGHT
MARKET
DICKENSON
ROAD
MANCHESTER

ABORTION ON DEMAND

Celia Jones

Operation Rescue (OR), the American anti abortion organisation that blockades clinics to prevent abortions, has joined with "Pro-Life" supporters in this country to prevent women from having abortions. OR, David Alton believes, are acting in Gods interest. OR, in America, is organised through fundamentalist church organisations. These religious fanatics consider the "rescue" of the foetus to be a holy crusade and believe that unless it is criminalised we will all share in Gods punishment, whether it be drought, war, AIDS, or financial collapse.

Recently they attempted to prevent women attending an abortion clinic in South Manchester by blocking the entrance to the clinic and accusing the women entering of being murderers. Police were called when some supporters forced their way into an operating theatre. They were evicted from the premises but very little attempt was made by the police to stop the horrific abuse hurled at women entering the clinic.

Following the American Supreme Court's decision giving individual States more power to regulate abortions OR has become increasingly violent. In Boston, according to the American paper "Socialist Action", OR were able to get a Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court to lift an injunction that had forbidden the group from blocking clinics. However, the Supreme Court is at present scheduled to hear cases where injunctions have been served on three women by their ex-partners to prevent them from having abortions. OR are now planning a "rescue" in Washington DC on 10th and 11th November.

Molly Yarn, president of NOW, National Organisation for Women (America), has called for 1 million people to attend a demonstration in Boston on 11th and 12th November. Buses, trains and planes are being chartered from all over America.

These attacks on a woman's right to abortion in America coincide with the move in this country to give the "Pro-Life" lobby, led by David Alton, debating time in the House of Commons where they will attempt to



Police arrest pro-choice supporter in New York

bring the 28 weeks abortion limit down.

Only eighteen abortions were carried out over the 28 week limit last year. All for health reasons. The NHS normally only carries out abortions before 12 weeks, above that women find it very difficult to obtain an NHS abortion.

David Alton and the other "Pro-Life" supporters, in their so called concern over late abortions, have never once fought for more funding and staff for abortion clinics which would enable women to have earlier abortions.

Another example of their concern over late abortions is their reaction to the abortion pill that can be taken in the first 2 months of pregnancy. Women taking this pill would only need one visit to their local out patients, they would suffer less trauma and would save the NHS thousands of pounds a year. Information about this pill has been kept from the general public. Alton and Co. have never asked in Parliament why.

Their so-called concern for the child stops the minute it is born. Sick children are being turned away from hospitals because of the lack of funds and staff. Young mothers are jailed for petty offences like failing to pay a television licence or receiving stolen goods and their children put into care. A large numbers of families are being

evicted because of mortgage arrears and some parents are forced to put their children into care. In Paddington, London, up to 600 primary school aged children are homeless and have no school to go to.

The sanctimonious, hypocritical attitude of the Pro-Lifers shows no concern for any of these issues.

Access to abortion has never been difficult for women with money. As ever, the individuals rights are equated with economic status. In the past working class women suffered mutilation and death in their thousands at the hands of practitioners of back street abortions. Working class women, unlike the pro-lifer's have always been aware of the needs and responsibilities of a new born infant. That is why they have taken such risks.

Women must have the right to decide. The anti-abortion legislation is part of the suppression of the independent movement of the working class. It is part of the attack on the right to a comprehensive health and social service.

The movement in America has already taken the question into the unions and begun to mobilise 100,000's. It is important to link up with the American movement and work jointly to destroy OR and all those that oppose the basic rights of women.

NO AMNESTY FOR THE BRITISH JUDICIARY! RELEASE THE BIRMINGHAM SIX!

The case of the Guildford 4, recently released after serving 15 years wrongful imprisonment, has thrown a question mark over the entire legal and judicial system in Britain.

How could innocent people be locked up for 15 years for offences they did not commit? Why, if they were not responsible, does it take 15 years to correct an error? What if the death penalty was still in force?

In 1974 a series of bombings were carried out in London by the provisional IRA, directed at pubs

where British military personnel drank. The bombings in Guildford and Woolwich caused a wave of anti-Irish hysteria to be unleashed by the British press.

With pressure on them to find a culprit the British establishment arrested four innocent young people.

Paul Hill (given natural life), Gerard Conlon (30 years minimum), Carole Richardson (indefinite detention), Patrick Armstrong (35 years minimum). These four young Irish

John Owen

bombings, the "Guildford Four" remained prisoners.



Demonstrators at Dublin Central Post Office - focal point of the Easter Uprising

people, were made the scapegoats, and also examples of what the Irish community could expect if they supported the war across the Irish sea.

This savage sentencing however did not stop the wave of bombings across London. In fact it was not until a year later after the "Balcombe Street" siege when an IRA unit was captured, did it end. Despite the "Balcombe" unit's admittance that they had carried out both the Guildford and Woolwich

Mullen Labour MP said: "Everybody, up to the level of Sir Michael Havers, the prosecutor, and Commander Peter Imbert, knew they had got the wrong people. They chose not to face up to that."

The demand now must be to call for the release of the "Birmingham Six" and Judith Ward and to link the campaign with that of the Broadwater Farm youth framed up and jailed for the murder of PC Blakelock.

Not satisfied with four victims the state went on to convict the "Birmingham 6" and the "Maguire" family. Using similar methods to extract their confessions, the Maguire family were supposedly implicated by the "Guildford Four".

There is now an inquiry into how this terrible miscarriage of justice occurred, most people will not be satisfied if only a handful of low-ranking police officers are prosecuted. Chris

VICTORY FOR VICTORIA

Victoria Apetor and her two year old son Stephen, have won their fight to stay in Britain. After ten months campaigning and 77 days of sanctuary in her Manchester Council house, the Home Office have lifted the threat of deportation with no strings attached on 'compassionate grounds'.

As members of the campaign, which included the local community, church and her union, the TGWU, celebrated Victorias' victory, she was looking forward to settling back to the life which was threatened by Britains' racist immigration laws.

Timothy Renton, the Home Office Minister, tried to claim the campaign had nothing



Unions can stop the deportations

to do with the decision to let Victoria stay. Campaign organiser Mary Murphy spoke for everyone when she dismissed his statement as that of a worried man.

The support that came from the community and labour movement was an important

step in the fight against deportations which are often little more than round-ups. Workers have shown that they will give their support. YTS trainees and bus drivers donated money to help Victoria. When the unions back the fights the laws can be defeated.

In Manchester George Roucou was helped by UCATT, Sam Manna by NALGO and Victoria Apetor by TGWU. Their campaigns all won.

If trade unions used all their strength to fight for all those who are threatened, Timothy Renton would really have something to worry about.

CRISIS, CRISIS

Bill Hunter

Only a short while ago Thatcher and Tory leaders were boasting about the glories and successes of the "free market" economy and dancing on what they declared was the grave of socialism. The "new realists"; a large number of Labour Party leaders, trade union bureaucrats and some "Broad Lefts" with the Communist Party's "Marxism Today" in the vanguard, were immensely impressed.

A few months ago she went into Eastern Europe and stalinist bureaucrats welcomed her. In Poland some of them openly expressed their admiration of how she "had dealt with" the trade unions in Britain. But how things have changed.

"Thatcherism" is the product of a British capitalist society living on a speculative, parasitic credit boom while, underneath, its production foundations and strength are steadily being eaten away.

The "prosperity" of Thatcherism and the former "miracle Chancellor", Nigel Lawson, was the prosperity of the square mile in the City of London. It was the prosperity of the speculators, the housing profiteers, the land buyers and developers, the financiers, the near gangsters and fiddlers: all those who could benefit from the expansion of fictitious capital and the break up of the traditional defensive practices for workers and the increasing legal control of the organisations of the working class.

Thatcher, with her bombastic arrogance, attempted, Canute like, to hold back the inevitable decline of British Imperialism in the councils of world capitalism and in the markets of the world.

She gave her blessing to Gorbachev. Now both are going through the same process. Their images are crumbling. However, their personal fate and personal characteristics play a minor role. Thatcher's complaints about and resistance to proposals from the other European powers have a far deeper significance than her personal characteristics.

The querulousness and frustration reflect the circumstances of an imperialism that is



The Iron Lady tries it on

no longer able to dominate Europe from a position of strength and from which it can, as in the distant past, play off France against Germany. The fifth rate power in decline, which has lost its imperial and "Commonwealth" trade and sterling areas, cannot fight in present world markets through economic dominance and strong state controls.

It has no alternative but to go into the European Common Market and hope for assistance from American Imperialism in serving its interests in seeking to counter the dominance of German capitalism. "Europe has been the issue underlying most of Mrs Thatcher's biggest errors" writes Peter Jenkins in the Independent of 27th October. Europe was at the root of the Westland affair, which in 1986 provoked the resignation from the Cabinet of Michael Heseltine and, by her own admission, could have brought her down. It was Europe that drove her to excesses which helped to lose her the elections to the European Parliament last June. Europe was

the issue on which she sacked Sir Geoffrey Howe from the Foreign Office last summer, badly upsetting her Party in the process. Now Europe is the issue underlying the resignation of her Chancellor.

The expansions which capitalism has gone through in the period of the seventies and eighties have assumed an ever more fictitious character. The ever greater expansion of credit and speculative capital has not been matched by increases in production.

The "entrepreneurs" have been creators of individual wealth drawn from the parasitic, speculative and credit expansion of finance capital in a period of decline. The Thatcher Government has drawn support from these with its policies sustaining the continuous rise in house prices, its privatisations and taxation policies.

Public property and public funds have been used to develop the polarisation of wealth in Britain while life is steadily getting harder for the unemployed, the disabled, single parent families, the sick, the

aged and students.

The Government is in deep economic crisis. Mr Kinnock tells us that Britain now has the worst trade gap and inflation rate of any European capitalist country. But Mr Kinnock and the Labour and trade union leaders are certainly not preparing any campaign to remove this Government. They want only the "natural" process of parliamentary procedure and elections. They will do nothing that might excite the ranks. One thing is held in common by the imperialist Government of the United States, the Thatcher Government and the ruling class in Britain, the bureaucracies in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and his fellow bureaucrats in the Soviet Union and the Labour leadership. All of them are hostile to the mass of the working class moving independently to solve their great problems. You



CRISIS

only have to read their reaction to the events in East Germany recently. In no way, either in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union or in Germany do the imperialists want a powerful movement of workers developing to remove the bureaucracy and the legacy of oppressive relations that stalinism created. Their fear of "chaos" echoes the feelings of the stalinist bureaucracy and is reflected in the sympathy of their spokespersons for Gorbachev. Above all they want a "controlled" penetration of capitalism into the workers' states. The Labour and trade union bureaucracy showed clearly their fear of the mobilisation of the working class during the miners' strike. Without a doubt, the long period of the Thatcher government has been due to their weakness and treachery. Kinnock and the Labour leaders will seek to confine their attack on the Government to an anti-Thatcherism without any fundamental division on policy. The Labour leaders see themselves as better managers of capitalist economy. But the real question is the capitalist economy itself.

By 1980, output in British manufacturing industry was two thirds of Italy, one half of France and less than half of Germany.

8.8 million workers were employed in manufacturing in 1970. In the middle of 1980, the number had fallen to 6.66 million, a fall of one and a half million in a decade.

John Hughes 'Britain in crisis: De-industrialisation and how to fight it' (Spokesman Books -1981) declares:

"Indeed, what is now occurring is something unique in British industrial history since the industrial revolution. Thus, comparing decades, manufacturing output had risen over 30 per cent over the two trade cycles largely located in the decade of the 1960s; but over the decade from the early 1970s to the opening of the 1980s, there has been no growth at all. Indeed, the official statistics indicate a small decline over the decade. The 1960s, with their growth rates of 30per cent, were not unusual; all the decades from the 1930s to the 1960s had shown similar rates of growth in manufacturing in the UK. A decade without any overall growth is unprecedented".

So manufacturing and its output was going

through a process, the result of the decay of British capitalism, which was worse than in the thirties! Britain was being squeezed relentlessly out of world markets. So that again and again it faced a balance of payments crisis. In 1976 the Labour Government was in dire straits, with Denis Healy, the Chancellor, canceling his visit to Manila and returning to seek aid from the International Monetary Fund. And these problems developed while North Sea Oil continued to flow. A big question for capitalist politicians was and remains: what happens when this flow runs out?

The decline is highlighted by the decline of manufacturers which are major ones in the struggle for world markets. There are *"quite shattering and unprecedented examples of decline in major commodity groups"* says Hughes and gives figures for the motor industry, declaring *"the actual figures still should have the capacity to shock"*.

He goes on: *"Measuring, again, so as not to exaggerate, from the cyclical 'peak' of 1973 to that of 1979, the volume of exports of passenger cars fell by 18 per cent while the volume of imports rose by 94 per cent."* He then talks of capital goods and writes that the performance here *"must be regarded as, at least, a disturbing a phenomenon - potentially an even more serious one. The volume of capital goods exports has declined slightly since the mid 1970s, while the volume of imports has risen nearly 60 per cent between 1975 and 1979."*

British cars lost out even in the home market: *"... in the course of a decade the output of cars has moved from a net export surplus of around half the total of the UK market to an import surplus of over one third of the market."* In the early 1980's Britain, this former "workshop of the world" for the first time in history imported more manufactured goods than it exported.

The imperialist countries attempted to get out of difficulties by intensifying exploitation in the "Third World". The annual profits of the previous generations of multinational subsidiaries implanted in the Third World - most notably in Latin America - already

exceeded, by far, the new investments which could profitably be made there. The studies suggested that the same mechanism could be set up in Europe. And in fact US firms found that because of the low cost of European labour, it was far more efficient and profitable to compete with European firms on their home ground - in Europe itself - than by exporting from the US, even given a devalued dollar. (World Economic Crisis Fitt, Faire and Vigier.)

The country is now entering a recession and a great sharpening of the struggle for markets. British capitalism must sharpen its struggle to cheapen the costs of labour. Meanwhile, however, general engineering workers and car workers enter the European movement for a thirty five hour week. The majority of the population are opposed to the Thatcher Governments' privatisation plans, attacks on the Health Service and the Poll Tax. Now, as the Government is rocking, is time to strike the decisive blows. In euphoria over the resignation of Lawson, some Labour MP's sang the "Red Flag". But something other than that is needed.

In Britain the rich have got richer while the poor have got poorer and the prospects, are more serious. Homelessness increases, pensioners will not be able to pay the Poll Tax, more children will be turned away from hospitals and schools, young beggars on the streets will increase, pollution will increase as will speed-ups and accidents at work. A real campaign by the workers organisations on class demands would get the support of every worker. It would mobilise the hatred of workers for this Tory Government and the accelerating lack of faith of the middle class.

The real question is policies to overcome the crisis of British capitalism which is now going to hit the mass of the population more and more.

TROTSKYISTS FIGHT

The PRT (Workers Revolutionary Party) is standing in the Nicaraguan elections as an independent party in the Nicaraguan working class. It is the Nicaraguan section of the International Workers League (IWL).

A summary of the Election Manifesto is printed below. A full copy can be obtained by writing to SV

The PRT can be traced back to the intervention of the precedent of the IWL in the Nicaraguan revolution. Comrade Moreno founded the Simon Bolivar Brigade in 1979 as a direct consequence of the appeal by the Sandinista revolutionaries to help in the overthrow of the Somoza Regime. Over four hundred fought in this Brigade which played an important role in the successful struggle against the old regime.

PRT MANIFESTO:

The PRT was founded on 23rd August 1984 by a group of revolutionary militants who had struggled against the Somoza dictatorship under the name of the Revolutionary Marxist League.

After the revolutionary triumph of 19th July 1979 we continued the struggle to establish a government of workers in the struggle towards socialism, in order to end the exploitation by capitalists and imperialists which has plunged us into backwardness and poverty.

We have participated in all the struggles that workers have fought against the anti-worker policies of the Sandinista Government. We offer our support and militant solidarity to the development of the independent mobilisation of workers and peasants.

We equally participate in the military defense of the revolution.

The PRT has already actively participated in the struggle of university students to abolish the "Academic regulation of 1987", which allowed the Sandinista Government to take 1000's of students from their classes.

The PRT is a party of anti-imperialist and socialist workers and youth. We struggle for the founding of a workers' government which would open the possibility of a socialist Nicaragua as a part of the formation of a socialist Central America.

The triumph of the popular insurrection of 19th July created great expectations of workers and youth.

It gave a glimpse of the possibilities for a Nicaragua free from imperialist oppression with the right: to work, to study, to a decent wage - a life with dignity.

However after ten years of revolution these aspirations have not been fulfilled. We are living through the most dramatic stage of the

BONIFACIO MIRANDA

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE



JUAN CARLOS LEYTON

VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE



history of Nicaragua.

The revolutionary conquests that were achieved by the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship are being slowly lost due to the policies of the FSLN.

The youth have no work and have greater difficulty in studying. The poverty increases at an alarming rate.

The Fourth Congress of the PRT proposed four candidates: Bonifacio Miranda for President, Dr Juan Carlos Los Leyton for Vice-president, Rene Tamariz Corea and Leonor Morales Guerrero as deputies from Managua.

Our candidates are independent of the FSLN. The plan of struggle is put forward as a basis to continue the party's work to stop Nicaragua's dependence on the capitalist and semi-colonial crisis.

PLAN OF STRUGGLE

1 END THE HYPERINFLATION

The workers should impose, in the first place a price freeze on basic goods and food as well as basic services (gas, electricity, petrol and transport). They should open the books of the enterprises to stop speculation and the greed of the owners.

2 AN IMMEDIATE RISE IN WAGES

A minimum salary to be introduced in line with the cost of living so that a worker can feed his family and obtain the basic services.

Guarantee the right to free collective bargaining.

For a pension equivalent to the wages received at the time of retirement.

3 REJECT THE ECONOMIC PLAN OF THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT

The economic plan only benefits the capitalists, and creates poverty and job losses for tens of thousands of workers.

For a new economic plan developed for the workers which will guarantee the reconstruction of Nicaragua for the benefit the people. This new economic plan should be discussed and approved by workers meetings.

4 NO PAYMENT OF THE EXTERNAL DEBT

The foreign exchange which is produced by workers is destined to pay the external debt and to make the large landowners rich.

Prohibition of the exportation of any food production (meat, sugar, rice, bananas, beans etc.)

5 NATIONALISATION OF THE MAIN ENTERPRISES AND FARMS

The multi-nationals and large factories should be placed under the control of workers. Down with the Sandinista bureaucracy which runs the nationalised industries. All the profits from the nationalised industries and the large farms to be used in the new economic plan of workers.

6 INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF NICARAGUA

Following the boycott of the imperialist banks and the blackmail of the supposed friends of the Nicaraguan Revolution we call

THE ELECTIONS

for an international campaign from workers of the world to donate a days pay in order to help the reconstruction.

7 NOT A SINGLE PEASANT TO BE WITHOUT LAND

We must continue the agrarian reform to guarantee land to all the peasants to be divided between individuals and co-operatives.

We support the co-operatives but peasants must not be forced to join.

No returning the land to the old owners.

Industrial products and loans to be available at a low cost.

8 AVOID THE RUIN OF THE SMALL BUSINESSES

Nicaragua has 1000s of families who work in small concerns and are facing total ruin. The PRT respects those who do not exploit the people and who suffer the consequences of the economic crisis. Low credits must be made available for these people.

9 EDUCATION FOR ALL

Free education for all from Primary school to college.

Increase the provision of education and eliminate the subsidies to private colleges and universities.

We need a plan of education to be elaborated by teachers, students and families.

For the autonomy of universities under the control of teachers, students and workers.

10 THE RIGHT OF YOUTH TO STUDY AND TO WORK

Equal work and equal wages for all the youth. Reform the military service, so that their compulsory service is completed in 3 months. After that the youth can only be called up in cases of imperialist aggression.

11 FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN WORKERS

Equal wages for equal work. Child care services to be developed in the factories, workers districts and the peasant areas.

12 FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

For the right to hold meetings, demonstrations. For the liberty of the press and trade unions, the right to strike, the right to legal defence etc.

13 FOR A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

In the Constituent assembly all social organisation should be represented including trade unions which are democratically elected by the people.

We say there should be no pacts or compromises; let the constituent assembly decide.

14 ELIMINATE THE PRIVILEGES IN THE ARMY AND THE POLICE

Soldiers and the Sandinista police have the right to participate in politics. The forces should be democratic, they have the right to elect their own officers.

15 FOR A NEW STATE OF AUTONOMY FOR THE ATLANTIC COAST

For a Government of Autonomy of the Miskitos, Negros, Sumus, Ramas and Garifon etc. Respect for religion and language. This autonomy to be approved by all including the minorities in the area.

16 DISCONTINUE THE AGREEMENTS THAT HARM THE REVOLUTION (ESQUIPULAS II)

17 TRIAL AND JUSTICE FOR THE SOMOSA GUARDS AND THE CONTRAS

18 FOR THE SOCIALIST REUNIFICATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA

In the first place we need to expel the Americans from the area and form a Federation of Socialist Republics of Central America. End the American bases in Panama, El Salvador and Honduras.

19 NEITHER CONTRAS! NOR-SANDINISTA! FOR A WORKERS SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT.

The plan also demands many rights for workers including housing, social security, democratic rights, a free health service and the independence of the trade unions

International campaign

CONDEMNS THE AMNESTY



The MAS was the largest section of the last demonstration against Menem's Amnesty

The international campaign against the Amnesty to the Generals proposed by Menem in Argentina is achieving world wide success. Already many of the biggest trade unions and leading political figures of the workers movement have condemned the Amnesty. The countries where this has occurred include Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.

Recently the campaign reached Europe getting a response from Spain. In Portugal many people have signed a petition which said:

"NO TO THE AMNESTY FOR THE MILITARY MURDERERS OF ARGENTINA. We want to express our solidarity with the democratic feelings of the Argentine people. We are against the military assassins recovering their liberty after being condemned by public tribunal. Repudiate the Amnesty!"

Signing the petition were numerous leading members of the National Federation of Teachers and a leader from the Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP).

In France 150 people demonstrated against the Amnesty and a meeting of human rights and political organisations including the French Socialist Party, the French Communist Party, the Revolutionary Communist League and the Radical Left Movement also condemned the Amnesty.

In Britain hundreds of trade unionists have already signed the petition against the Amnesty. In a recent conference of Amnesty International many of the delegates attending signed expressing their disgust with what Menem has done.

A WORKERS' PROGRAMME FOR POLAND

A statement by the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) declares that; *"the appointment of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as premier of the People's Republic of Poland is an expression of the deepening of the crisis of the system of the ruling Nomenklatura."*

The PPS (Democratic Revolution) says that the appointment of the Mazowiecki Government does not mean that "society has taken power" although it creates possibilities for the fulfilment of "social expectations". The Party puts forward the demands for the dissolution of the Security Police, together with the reform of the penal code, with the end of securing democratic freedoms.

It believes that, *"all those fulfilling leading functions in the administration of the economy should be subject to free, secret, equal, proportional and direct elections"*. In accordance with clause 2 of the twenty one demands of the Gdansk Inter-factory Strike Committee in 1980 it wants the securing (of) the right to strike and the security of strikers and those rendering them assistance. *"In accordance with demand no 7"*, declares the PPS (DR) statement, *"payment should be made to all strikers for the period of the strike as for medical leave"*.

It goes on to say that all members of society should have the right to satisfactory living conditions but the *"indispensable conditions for the realisation of these goals is the subordination of the economy to the producers. Only such a model of social life can guarantee to each person the possibility of their selfrealisation and it is the indispensable condition of the emancipation of society. To the last moment of its existence, the government of Mieczyslaw Rakowski followed in the footsteps of its predecessors, in executing faits accompli, which orientated the Polish economy in wholly the opposite direction."*

The possibilities for appropriation by the nomenklatura were widened and opportunities given for the development of speculative and corrupt capital. The conditions were created for the sale of the national means of production to foreign capital.

What is more, it permitted the precipitate rise of foodstuff prices through the introduction of market mechanisms in a situation in which there were acute food shortages; it continued the process of linking up the bureaucratic economy with market mechanisms, so worsening the position of the majority of society. The Government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki should radically break from the policy of the preceding Government."

The statement is evidently directed to the great number of workers who look to the new Government for the possibilities of change, even though the Solidarity leaders



Tadeusz Mazowiecki

have refused to form an independent Solidarity Government and the Mazowiecki Government puts forward its "shock" austerity plan. The PPS (DR), therefore, states that; *"There should be an awareness that the destiny of the economy rests first and foremost in the hands of the workers themselves. Only through the self organisation of the workers and through their initiative can the resistance of the old Party-State apparatus be overcome..."*

In accord with thesis no 1 of the Solidarity programme, adopted by the First Congress of Delegates in 1981 the PPS declare: *"We demand a self managed and democratic reform at every level of management and a new socio-economic system, combining planning, self management and the market... The reform should socialise planning."*

The PPS (DR) also demands the control over production by *"self management chambers"* and the public availability of economic information and *"monitoring production, cooperative links between self managements and Chambers of Self Management (with reports on the state of enterprises and the economy). This will make possible a national democratic discussion on the principles of central allocation of economic surpluses and an ever wider satisfaction of the needs expressed by society."*

To defend workers from the crisis, the PPS demands workers' control over prices and social control over distribution of foodstuffs. It declares that, in accordance with the thesis no 7 of Solidarity; *"the basic structures of*

Solidarity should: set up a nation-wide network of trade union commissions, co-ordinated centrally and in cooperation with the organisations of Rural Solidarity."

The statement quotes thesis no 9 of the Programme of Solidarity and demands its implementation: *"We are for the universal right to work and against unemployment."* The PPS (DR) adds: *"Like the trade unions in Western Europe, we demand the thirty five hour week."*

They call for the renunciation of foreign debt, *"Society cannot be responsible for debts incurred by the wasteful measures of nomenklatura governments."* The statement ends by quoting the 1981 Programme of Solidarity: *"We want a real socialisation of the system of management and of the economy and therefore we aim at a self-managing Poland."*

VIDEO

EAST MEETS

WEST

This video features the tour by Joseph Pinior, a leader of the Polish Socialist Party, to Argentina.

It shows Pinior receiving a mass welcome by Argentine workers organised by the MAS, our trotskyist Party in Argentina, now growing by 1000 members every month.

This historic meeting shows that a world alternative for workers, whose fight for socialism is a human need not an idealistic dream, exists.

Trotsky's fight for the Fourth International and socialism with democracy lives on in Poland and Argentina. Argentina is in a revolutionary situation and workers are starting to build their own independent organisations. Even armed forces and the police have currents within them fighting for democratic control of their jobs.

Send £8.00 to:

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ARMY & MASSES OPPOSE GORBACHEV

Peter Money

A big movement is developing throughout the working class in the Soviet Union against the economic policies of the Government. It is headed by the miners, who are once more taking strike action against the failure of the Government to deliver what was promised as a result of their strike in July. The miners are striking despite such action being made illegal just last month.

However it is not just the miners, the struggle is reaching into all sections of workers. Strikes have been taking place in the Soviet Union continually throughout the year.

Before the big miners' strike, 15,000 workers were on strike on average every day. Since this has increased, most notably on the railways.

The economy of the Soviet Union is in the severest of crises. It is actually shrinking. All basic goods, including food, are in short supply and prices are going up all the time. Unemployment is now widespread. **Three million jobs are estimated to have disappeared since 1986.** According to official figures, unemployment in Azerbaijan is 28%, in Tajikistan it is 26% and in Uzbekistan 23%. Pravda reported that it will reach 15-16 million by 2005.

Living conditions, shortages and price rises are particularly bad in the peripheral areas and the big mining and industrial regions but they are also deteriorating badly in the centre.

However, the movement is not just larger it is growing in confidence. In Inta, a mining town in Siberia, for example, the miners have formed a "city committee" and published a manifesto with political as well as economic demands. One of the demands is for the abolition of Article six of the Soviet constitution which stipulates the "leading role" of the Communist Party. The miners are also breaking through the years of isolation forced upon them by the old stalinist bureaucrats and are seeking links with the international workers movement. The Ukrainian miners, for example, have specifically asked to make links with British miners with whom a special bond is felt since the British miners' strike.

The tremendous confidence of the miners has penetrated the whole of the industrial workers of the Soviet Union and has even influenced the army. Last month saw the founding conference of Shield, an



unofficial trade union for servicemen and their families.

One of the reasons for the founding of the union is the conditions in the army. Officers, for example, work 12 to 15 hours a day and get only one day off a month and soldiers are effected like everyone else by inflation, shortages and the lack of housing. However, the programme of the new union also contains the demand to; **"rule out the use of military force against our own people and those of other countries"**.

The programme of Shield states:

"The army is going through a severe crisis, like our whole society. The military system's current principles fail to provide for the best use of the forces' potential. Public bodies have practically no rights inside the army. Servicemen's social security hardly exists. The notion of law is minimal.

"There is no justification for a parallel command structure run by the Party. All it does is to create ideal conditions for bureaucracy. It leads to protectionism, corruption and arbitrariness and slows down the process of forming an army fit for a socialist society based on law."

The depth and strength of this independent movement amongst workers has also had its effect on the official unions. The union's council, last month, put forward a draft law that would give the unions the right to: **"veto factory closures and lay-offs, reverse 'unjustified' price increases, control the activities of co-operatives (i.e. private businesses) and to decide how the profits of any state enterprise should be spent"**.

These demands run completely counter to the plans of Gorbachev and the aims of perestroika. The co-operatives, for example, account for 3% of national income at present

and employ nearly 3 million people. They are the vanguard of Gorbachev's market economy proposals. However, they are widely disliked and accused by the official unions of profiteering, selling state-produced goods at inflated prices, making fortunes for a few and fostering the current big increase in crime.

One official union speaker at a rally in Moscow on 5th October condemned the co-operatives and said that there were now 100,000 (rouble) millionaires in the Soviet Union and that 80% of the 300 billion roubles in savings accounts belonged to only 3%

of the population.

Leonid Albalkin, the Deputy Premier and finance minister, said that this was a "distortion" but agreed that there would not be "equal pay" in the new Soviet society. However, just like any trade union bureaucrat he refused to say what the actual figures are. He then went on to say that his 'solution' to the crisis would include the selling off of state housing and the encouragement of the building of co-operative flats for sale. One of his academic colleagues, economist Stanislav Shatalin has proposed a programme of privatising everything except telecommunications, roads, public welfare and supervision of the credit system.

The massive upsurge throughout the whole of the Soviet Union against the bureaucracy, that wants to impose these conditions, is showing its strength and is forcing concessions out of Gorbachev.

We are seeing great developments of the revolutionary workers' movement throughout the Eastern Block. It is in this conditions that a leadership equal to the task of overcoming the problems of the Soviet Economy by developing workers democracy and struggling for an international leadership is emerging.

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POVERTY AND STRUGGLE IN BRAZIL

Imagine someone saying to you that the price of a loaf of bread would cost £54 in two years time. You would no doubt ignore it as scare mongering. But that is not science fiction. That is present day Brazil.

Kevin Bulman

Brazil is now faced with annual hyperinflation of over 1,000%, and as we reported in a previous issue of Socialist Voice Brazilian money has been devalued by 1 million%.

The effects of this economic catastrophe has meant a rise in prices of all kinds of basic goods. **Bread prices have risen 12,000% in the last two years.** The money for a tankful of petrol for a car could, astonishingly, have bought two automobiles two years ago. **Would you go tea-total if you were told the price for a refrigerator four years ago now buys you a glass of beer,** this has happened in Brazil.

One street vendor indignantly snapped back "the rich" when an American reporter asked "what type of people buy cucumbers?" (they had risen from 10 to 60 cents in the space of one week).

In Rio De Janeiro one third of the population live in the shanty towns known as favellos, which have little running tap water and no adequate sewerage system. The answer of the rich to this problem is to barricade themselves into their beautiful homes surrounded by space age security systems and armed security guards.

The average wage of workers from the favellos is a pitiful 30 to 35 dollars per month. Sixty per cent of Brazil's 140 million population still live below the poverty line. Child mortality is actually increasing in Brazil, with 84 in every 1,000 children dying before they reach the age of five. In the north of the country the people are becoming smaller generation by generation because of malnutrition.

One effect of inflation and the external debt of \$120 billion is the recent bankruptcy of Rio De Janeiro. The city administration claimed they could not afford striking hospital workers the pay rise they were demanding, or pay their usual wages.

Many are affected by this crisis. One doctor who worked in a favello hospital earned \$20 per week. He had to leave his job to seek work elsewhere because the purchas-



Brazilian police confront angry teachers during street protest

ing value of his wages had fallen by 40% in the last 12 months.

A decade of economic stagnation has forced Brazilian families to turn school children into breadwinners; almost a fifth of Brazil's 58 million children and adolescents work full-time as delivery boys, rural workers, shoe-shiners or gatherers of waste paper. The Federal child welfare agency, Funabem, calculates that there are seven million street children across Brazil.

These same children face murder by military police and death squads who receive active and sympathetic support, as well as payment, from shopkeepers and traders, who demand the streets be cleaned up. The "Independent" stated that 1,397 street chil-

dren had met violent deaths since 1984, and that..." a street child dies from stabbing, strangulation, beating or gunshots every two days in Brazil and that 82 children have been murdered by death squads this year".

Workers are not accepting this situation. They have made giant strides in recent years, building one of the world's most powerful trade union movements, the CUT. This organises over 18 million people.

The political development of the Brazilian workers is also shown by the growth of support for the Workers' Party which received millions of votes in the last elections and is standing Ignacio Lula, president of the CUT and PT, as candidate for President in this months election. Parallel to this achievement is the great achievements of Trotskyism in Brazil. The most dynamic trotskyist tendency is the organisation Convergencia Socialista (a section of the International Workers' League - Fourth International).

Convergencia Socialista fought for and won the battle to make the CUT and PT adopt a class programme. Part of the programme of these two organisations is to refuse to pay the crippling external debt, the nationalisation of the financial system, workers control of industry and proclamation of the need for socialism.

The latest opinion polls show that many workers are turning to the Workers' Party which will be in a fight with the bourgeois candidate Fernando Collor de Mello in the presidential election to be held on 17th December. The Workers' Party's success has forced Mario Amato, president of the powerful Federation of Sao Paulo Industries to say that "800,000 businessmen" would abandon the country if the Workers' Party won. Lets hope they hold him to that promise.



Bankworkers strike - April 1989

JUNK BONDS AND JUNK STOCKS

Peter Windeler

Workers and their families in capitalist countries rely on companies for wages so they can afford food, housing and the other necessities of life. What then is the significance when the value of these companies suddenly collapse as they did around the world on Friday 13th October?

The significance is that we are now living in a world which is subject to the roller coaster of high finance to which no worker can place his or her own future or that of their families. Collapsing share values are frequently followed by factory closures, as seen after the Crash of 1929, the prelude to the Great Depression.

On Friday 13th on Wall Street, in the last hour of trading, the Dow Jones index dropped 190.58 points, the second largest fall in history and comparable to "Black Monday" in 1987 and the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

The initial reason for the fall was that Japanese banks refused to lend the money to enable a management/labour buy-out of UAL, the parent company of United Airlines in America. The US has the largest economy in the world but recently much of the value of its stock exchange has been supported by, what are known as 'Junk bonds'. These bonds have been used to break-up large concerns for a quick profit. Junk bonds are financed by banks lending money at high interest rates, but, of late, there have been signs that the bubble was about to burst.

In September, the Canadian developer, Robert Campeau, nearly defaulted on \$1.27bn of debt payments on loans used for acquiring Allied Stores and Federated Department Stores.

Prior to the collapse in October, the US Labour Department gave details of its Producer Price Index for September, showing a rise of 0.9%, giving an annual inflation rate of 10%. This made Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan state that interest rates would have to remain high to combat inflation, but, at the same time, the American Business Council, which represents big business, warned that the US economy could skip into recession next year unless interest rates fell.

Every other stock exchange in the world followed the collapse on Wall Street. Even



the oil market became jumpy, moving in line with equities.

In the UK the FT-SE index collapsed by 204.2 points on the following Monday, eventually ending up 70.5 points down, 3.15% of its value, on the day. The UK economy is particularly weak prompting the head of a Japanese stock broking firm to state that the UK economy was on the "edge of a cliff" and could go over the edge at any time.

Undoubtedly, the period of growth in recent years is over and the prospect of a world recession looms large. As the Financial Times reflected: "One can scarcely conceive of equities suddenly producing a one-day upward movement on this scale".

Capitalism is a system which inclines to over production, over production being when goods cannot be sold at a profit (not when goods are not needed by someone). Stocks and shares represent the appropriated labour of workers but, to retain value, goods must be produced and money must circulate. Marx noted that, "In a crisis metamorphosis of capital gets stuck, industrial capital cannot transfer from commodities".

Since the war, in the West, the standards of living of workers have improved. But to quote Marx again, "Crises are always prepared by precisely a period in which wages rise generally and the working-class actually gets a larger share of that part of the annual product which is intended for consumption".

It is just such a period we are entering now. But periods of crisis are also periods of revolution.

INTER NATIONAL COURIER

International COURIER

The second issue contains articles on Poland from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) including excerpts from their paper, the Robotnik, and an interview with Josef Pinior.

The International Courier is the journal of our international party, the International Workers League.

It is now being produced in three languages: Spanish, Portuguese and English.

For the current issue and back copies write to:
ISL, PO BOX 9, Eccles SO,
M30 7FX.

SOUTH AFRICA DIRTY TRICKS FAIL

Frances Kelly
MANCHESTER NAMBIAN
SUPPORT GROUP

With elections due from 7-11th November events of the preceding week showed just how precarious is the path to Independence. On 1st November South Africa's Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, threatened to call off the elections, claiming UN communications showed SWAPO troops had crossed the border from Angola!

In the face of swift investigation by the UN they were forced to back down, amid rumour that the Security Forces - still smarting since their loss of power after Cuito Cuaravale - had wrong-footed their political masters: the South African Conservative Party.

While the prospect of a CP-SADF (South African Defence Force) bid for power - and the likely resulting bloodbath - should please no-one, it might only differ in degree from the situation now current and that planned under De Klerk's sponsorship: South Africa's statement came less than 24 hours after the UN Security Council considered a report from the Africa Group and passed a strong resolution demanding South Africa fall into line with the UN Peace Plan.

Immediately it was passed, the UK representative, Tickell, publicly stepped back from it and, in a thoroughly British display of even-handedness which flew in the face of all the evidence, stated Britain was as concerned about the behaviour of SWAPO as that of the South Africans. That was the cue the South Africans (whether government or SADF) needed - without such international backing it is doubtful they would ever have tried it on.

THE SITUATION NOW...

The African Group's report (available from the Namibian Support Committee £1) details South Africa's current breaches of the UN Peace Plan - expanding on the UN Secretary General's earlier report:

- * The failure to withdraw some 1,000 SADF personnel working in Namibia.
- * The creation of a Ministry of Defence, under the Administrator General's control.
- * The retention of the command structures of SWATF (the SADF-surrogate force), with fortnightly briefings to all "demobilised" SWATF personnel.
- * The failure to demobilise two whole

SWATF battalions.

- * The retention of the notorious Koevoet within the police force.

- * The failure of the police force (SWAPOL) to cooperate with the UN: including failure to give notice of patrols so they can be monitored and an insistence on interrogating prisoners alone.

- * UNTAG's diminished numbers mean South Africa is running some airports un-



Mass SWAPO rally at Katutura, Namibia

monitored: the potential of which is militarily devastating.

To many observers, it sounds like business as usual for the South Africans.

The report goes on to say that the late agreement on electoral legislation (25 days before the election date) will cause serious difficulties in educating the voters. A rival political party has, for instance, taken SWAPO's torch symbol as its own on the voting paper; while voters have been told that, "if they don't like the DTA (South Africa's puppets), they should cross it out with a big X". It further points out that the media is still under South African control, the discriminatory laws are still in place and there is evidence of massive registration of South Africans to vote.

All this leaves fears of rigging and intimidation still alive.

WHAT NEXT?

The results should be known by 15th November but there is still, on the eve of the election, no agreement on the laws by which the Constituent Assembly will run.

From elections to independence is a long step: South Africa is trying to delay the date

of independence from the UN's plan of 1st April 1990, trying to veto the workings of the Constituent Assembly and arguing it must control Defence and Law and Order in the Transitional Period. The signs are that the UN is fighting back - a welcome development - but even if they force South Africa to backdown on all of that, many problems remain.

As the Constituent Assembly begins its work, the country faces bankruptcy: South Africa has engineered it that the budget runs out in January; the Western powers have enforced that SWAPO will need a 2/3rds majority to settle the Constitution. If South Africa's rigging works, there will be long-drawn out arguments and forced compromises with South Africa's puppets and South Africa - even if it fails to re-form SWATF - has issued 120,000 gun licences (each for up to 10 weapons) to its friends and has fostered private militias, while massing troops in Walvis Bay. Economic blockade and 'civil' war will be very real threats to the assembly and an incoming government.

Nujoma's return showed clearly the extent of SWAPO's support, but Lubowski's death, days earlier, not only showed South Africa's intentions but also that the western media - which had ignored South African atrocities until there was a "white" death is unlikely to give lasting attention to Namibia. After the elections the eyes of the world will turn away again. Solidarity from all socialists and other anti-apartheid forces will be even more important.

NAMIBIA NUCLEAR REACTIONS

This video shows how international working class links can protect the interests of workers throughout the world.

Available from:

Open - Eye, 90-92 Whitechapel, Liverpool, L16.

Hire charges: £7.75 individual - £15.50 organisations.

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