



## TUC OPENS DOOR FOR HAMMOND DEFECTION

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

TRADE UNIONISTS must place no confidence in the belated decision of the TUC General Council to set in motion suspension proceedings against the EETPU.

Far from representing a move to drive out collaborators with the state and the employers, it is a calculated manoeuvre to wall off the working class from mounting an all-out struggle against the extreme right wing in the trade union bureaucracy by confining any disciplinary action to the smoke-filled rooms of Congress House.

For two-and-a-half years, since the beginning of the Wapping dispute, the General Council has desperately tried to avoid taking action against the scab-herding, pro-Tory leadership of the EETPU. This has enabled Eric Hammond and Co to prepare their withdrawal from the TUC under conditions of their own choosing.

Willis and the TUC leaders intervened at last September's Congress to ensure that eight motions condemning single union, no-strike agreements and the EETPU's poaching and scabbing activities were referred to the TUC's internal Special Review Body. With the support of a whole section of the 'lefts', Willis gave Hammond a full year to pursue discussions aimed at setting up a

## FOR HAMMOND DEFECTION

*Expel the EETPU! Down with corporatism!*

breakaway 'yellow' confederation. The role of the Review Body — notionally to 'resolve' the issue of no-strike agreements — has been to attempt to hang on to Hammond at all costs.

Hammond, for his part, has stuck two fingers up to any controls whatsoever upon EETPU activities, and has continued signing single union, no-strike deals up and down the country. He has made well-publicised overtures to numerous non-TUC organisations, including the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers, the Police Federation and the Royal College of Nursing, and was a guest at the conference of the employers' organisation, the CBI.

The difference between Hammond and the Willis-led majority on the General Council is one of degree, not of principle. The right-wing majority on the TUC are not opposed to single union, no-strike deals, provided that they remain under their own control. The present code, under which the EETPU has been disciplined, only allows for suspension or expulsion if an inter-union dispute is involved. Moreover, it gives its blessing to no-strike deals, provided they are on 'green field' sites and the members are consulted!

The attempt by Hammond's close allies in the AEU leadership to float a single union deal at the projected Ford's plant in Dundee, earlier this year, revealed the true position of the bureaucracy, right and 'left'. Willis threw his considerable weight behind the deal; Ron Todd of the T&GWU was forced, under pressure from the union's membership in Ford's, to oppose it, but made it clear that he is not against single union agreements — only against no-strike deals. This line, echoed by leading Stalinist Ken Gill of the MSF, is completely fraudulent.

Under conditions of worldwide capitalist crisis, leading to cut-throat competition throughout industry, single union deals *with or without no-strike clauses* are sought



THE WAY FORWARD FOR SEAFARERS

- see story page two -

by employers in order to tear up past agreements, accelerate exploitation and drive down wages.

Willis and the TUC majority are travelling the same corporatist road as Hammond, albeit that they are in the middle lane and he is in the fast lane. At the 1982 Wembley conference, TUC leaders pledged their willingness to risk jail rather than submit to Tory anti-union laws. The ruling class called their bluff. Every retreat by the TUC since then — from the 'Messenger' dispute at Warrington, via GCHQ, the miners' strike and Wapping, to the P&O seafarers' struggle — has exposed the trade unions and the working class to ever-greater state attacks.

If Willis and the right-wing TUC majority have been obliged to act against Hammond now, it is not in order to defend fundamental principles but because he threatens to infringe their own control over the unions. Trade unionism stands at

the crossroads. One route leads to ever-greater collaboration with the state, the Tories and the employers — to policing workers on their behalf. That is the essence of corporatism, whether it is implemented by Hammond or Willis. The other leads to the socialist revolution, and demands the building of a revolutionary socialist leadership throughout the trade unions, which upholds their complete independence from the capitalist state. The objective role played by centrists such as Arthur Scargill, and by bothwings of Stalinism, is to attempt to hold together these two trends behind a veneer of 'left' rhetoric and calls for 'unity'.

• An all-out struggle must be launched within the workers' movement against corporatism. The fight against Hammond means also fighting to remove the class collaborators at the head of the TUC.

• Demand that the September TUC Conference in

Bournemouth expel the EETPU!

• All the facilities of the trade union movement, finances, premises, practical and legal assistance, etc., must be extended to rank-and-file members of the EETPU opposed to the Hammond leadership.

• We call upon EETPU members who are against corporatism to stay inside the EETPU and fight it out! Reject the defeatist line of the Broad Left 'Flashlight' group, the 'Morning Star' and 'Workers Press', who call for a walk-out which will leave the bulk of the membership in the hands of Hammond.

• Organise conferences of EETPU members in every region to fight for the expulsion of the leadership! Campaign for re-affiliation to the TUC by driving out the right wing and electing a leadership pledged to revoking all single union and no-strike deals!

• Join the Workers International League!

Gorbachev wins Tory applause

By Philip Marchant

THE FOUR-DAY special conference of the Communist Party, which convened in Moscow on June 28, provided further proof of the deeply reactionary nature of the so-called 'reform' programme.

The 5,000 delegates to the 19th All-Union Party Conference voted to set up a new 2,250-member National Congress, drawn from local councils — a measure described by Mikhail Gorbachev as equivalent to 'restoring the full authority of the Soviets of People's Deputies'.

In fact, the real intention is to cast the net wider for support for the harsh economic programme. Gorbachev's wish 'that representation of working people in the top echelon of government be extended considerably' does not signify a contrite return to the precepts of Bolshevism, but a conscious attempt to enlist an army to police *perestroika* throughout the working class and peasantry.

In his opening address, Gorbachev called for an increase in foreign trade with capitalist countries, whilst re-stating his commitment to a convertible rouble as the only way to fully integrate the Soviet Union into the world market. He demanded a swift end to food subsidies, saying that they undermined incentive and encouraged 'a wasteful attitude, especially towards bread', and berated enterprises for not introducing larger pay differentials.

In a veiled attack on demands for the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia, Gorbachev criticised those who wanted to 'redraw national boundaries' and ruled out any settlement of national disputes other than 'within the existing state structure of our union'.

His remarks on agriculture indicated how quickly the bureaucracy is moving to legitimise limited forms of private ownership: 'We must overcome the estrangement between farmer and soil. We must make the farmer sovereign master.' Delegates approved six resolutions in all, one of which proposes legal changes intended, in part, to overcome the fact that Soviet law does not recognise private ownership of the means of production.

The capitalist press has good reason to fill its editorial columns with hymns of praise to Gorbachev, the man whose vision of the future Margaret Thatcher described as a miracle.

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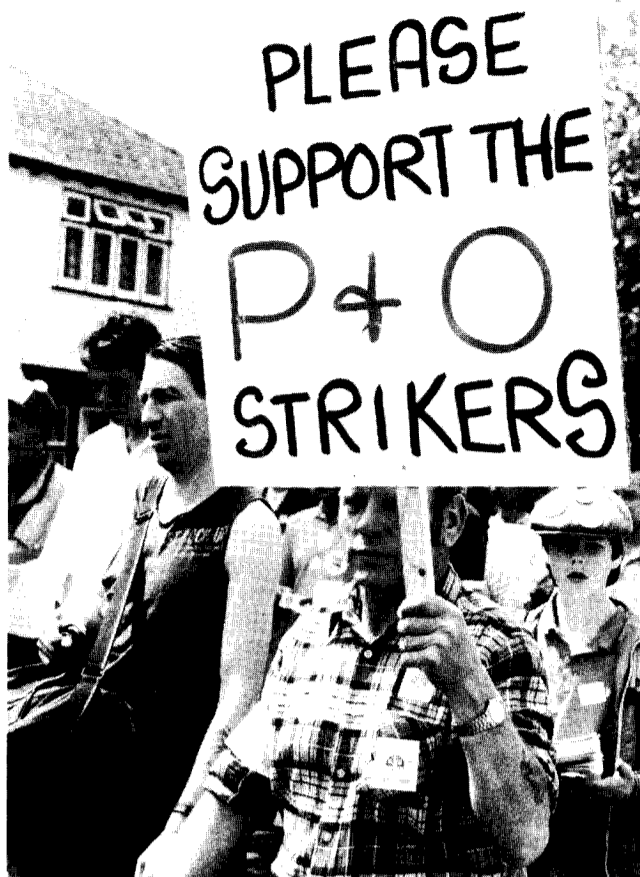
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# THE WAY FORWARD FOR SEAFARERS



Sacked P&O workers show their determination to fight

THE DETERMINED struggle of the P&O seafarers continues in spite of the complete prostration of their own union leadership before the employers and the state.

Sam McCluskie, the general secretary of the National Union of Seamen, devotes all his efforts, not to supporting the strikers at Dover on their picket line, but to trying to persuade them to call it off, or at least keep the numbers present down to six, so that the High Court will give the NUS its sequestrated assets back.

On May 24, the union leaders again visited the High Court to grovel before a judge and try to convince him that they had done all in their power to stop the picketing.

The NUS national executive

By David Lewis

utive decision on May 12 to call off secondary picketing at other ports in order to comply with the Tory anti-union laws led to the initial moves amongst the rank-and-file members in what must become the central campaign within the NUS — the removal of the present leadership and its replacement by leaders who are prepared to fight the state and its agents in the courts.

The emergency debate on the dispute at the bi-ennial conference of the NUS in Hull on May 16 saw substantial support for a call from the Liverpool branch for the resignation from the executive of those who supported the May 12 decision. The developments since then only serve to underline the necessity for seafarers to continue the fight to replace their right-wing leadership.

The role of the TUC bureaucracy is complementary to that of the NUS leaders. They resolutely remained aloof from the struggle until the capacity for treachery of the NUS leadership had been fully tapped and then they started doing what they did for the miners and the Wapping printers at the equivalent stage of their struggles. They made the central issue one of raising money. Not money to keep the struggle going. That would leave Norman Willis open to sequestration and that would never do. This money is to 'relieve hardship', a good, safe intention and not out of place in the mind of any philanthropic



Police cordon at Dover Eastern Dock

ship owner or fair-minded judge.

In conjunction with this charitable effort, they printed thousands of posters calling on the 'general public' to boycott P&O's Dover ferries in favour of other companies. This tactic, also reminiscent of Wapping, is no substitute for mobilising the organised working class through their trade unions and is consciously intended to wind the dispute down whilst preserving the appearance that the trade union bureaucracy is leading a fight. Over 900 NUS members have been abandoned, and the future of all other seafarers placed in the hands of the employers by the NUS and TUC leaders. To continue the struggle, the vital next step must be to **fight for the recall of the NUS conference to remove McCluskie and the right-wingers on the national executive.**

• Seafarers in every port must rally the support of the working class by leading a campaign to establish Councils of Action, based on all working class organisations

in the district • Re-impose the blockade of all British ports • Demand a national seafarers' and dockers' strike • Force the T&GWU leadership to instruct its members to boycott scab vessels • Forge international links with Belgian seafarers and all those under attack • Demand that the European unions, particularly the Stalinist-led CGT in France, halt all sailings to and from Britain • Build a revolutionary Trotskyist leadership in the trade unions — join the Workers International League.

## Print union fined

THE NATIONAL Graphical Association (NGA), currently pursuing merger talks with the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (SOGAT) in order to form a single print union, has again been fined in the High Court.

The decision to fine the NGA £250,000 was taken by Justice Saville at the High Court in Birmingham.

## Resistance to Tory cuts grows in AUT and NATFHE

By Wendy Upton

AT ITS Summer Council, held at the end of May in London, the Association of University Teachers became the latest education union to decide to ballot its members on setting up a political fund. Strong opposition from the general secretary and many executive members failed to deter two-thirds of the delegates from supporting the move.

Delegates threw out other executive recommendations when they voted to oppose any further reduction in staff numbers in the universities, and to expel members who engaged in racial and sexual discrimination. On pay, however, the executive line prevailed, putting the AUT in the familiar position of not starting any real action on the April 1988 claim until the autumn.

The other higher education union, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Edu-

cation, meeting in Cardiff a week after the AUT, heard that members had voted to set up a political fund. Delegates defeated a move by the leadership to split the college and polytechnic pay claims, and voted instead for a flat-rate pay claim of 40 per cent. However, they also voted for a rule change which will mean that negotiations in the two sectors will eventual-

ly be separated, in line with the Tory Education Reform Bill. Reflecting the general trend in the unions, they voted to open merger discussions with the AUT. The conference also carried an emergency motion calling for a one-day national strike later this year over the decision of the Labour-controlled Hereford and Worcester Education Authority to impose longer hours and shorter holi-

## Kinnock moves the goal posts

HARD on the heels of the publication of the Policy Review documents, which underline the rapid move to the right by the Labour leadership, Neil Kinnock is attempting to force through a rule change which would limit challenges to his own position as leader.

On June 22, the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) voted by 16 to 11 to support changing the proportion of Labour MPs required to nominate a leadership candidate from five per cent of the

Parliamentary Party to 20 per cent. At present, this change would mean that a candidate would need the backing of 48 MPs. The recommendation will go forward to the party conference in October.

Proposed by obscure Kinnock loyalist, John Evans, who sits on the NEC as the nominee of the completely unrepresentative Socialist Societies, the move is aimed at ruling out challenges from supporters of the Campaign Group, which has sponsored the Benn-Heffer

campaign, and has the support of little more than 30 MPs. Seafarers' leader Sam McCluskie attempted to go further by moving to restrict leadership elections to one per parliament.

Last September, Workers News warned that 'the "reform" measures proposed by Kinnock are designed to make the leadership clique self-perpetuating and unremovable'. Labour Party members must take up the fight to oust the right-wing leadership, and throw out its bureaucratic rule change.

## Camden council imposes speed-up

SPEED-UP introduced by the Labour Council in Camden has provoked an angry reaction from the workforce. Fifteen clerical staff in the building department began strike action on June 15 against increased duties unilaterally introduced by management, who threatened to dock the wages of staff who refuse to take on

extra work. Among the senior managers who have attempted to take over the duties of the strikers is one George Meehan, a UCATT branch secretary and former Labour leader of Haringey Council.

On June 22, workers in the building department took strike action against

the dismissal of two glaziers, sacked in a dispute over a single pane of glass worth £7. They were also protesting at the council's decision to suspend all interior decoration of council flats — a move which has not only hit pensioners waiting for this service, but has also resulted in painters' wages being cut by half.

## Closure announced of pioneering hospitals

THE MAY meeting of London's Riverside Health Authority voted 13 to three to close four hospitals: the Westminster, Westminster Children's, St Mary Abbots and the West London.

The decision arose from cuts in funding by the Thatcher government. The services to be cut include specialist facilities for premature babies, a maternity unit and a cardio-thoracic unit and will lead directly to 600 redundancies.

In the period 1960-1980, teams at Westminster pioneered the first successful human kidney transplants and laid the foundations for the first successful liver transplants.

In the early 1970s, staff carried out the first successful transplants of human bone marrow tissue. The recipients, all children, were patients at Westminster Children's Hospital. Repeated attempts by staff to secure both Labour and Tory government recognition and funding for this work failed. It was supported instead

almost entirely from funds raised by the children's parents.

Westminster Hospital's cardio-thoracic unit developed safe low-temperature techniques for open-heart surgery. This made possible the arrest and suspension of all heart muscle activity for long periods so that previously inoperable heart defects could be corrected within weeks of birth.

## FUNDS

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## Set-back for NUT leaders

THE BROAD LEFT majority on the executive of the National Union of Teachers lost a number of key votes at its special conference held in Harrogate on June 18. While endorsing the general 'new realist' move to shift negotiations from national to regional level, and concentrating on so-called 'professional' issues, the conference voted down executive proposals to increase its legal and professional staff, to reduce the size of annual conference, and to increase the power of full-time officials.

# Mill strike settled for a pittance

THE SETTLEMENT of the all-out strike at Courtaulds, Britain's biggest textile company, on terms only marginally better than the employers' pre-strike 'final' offer, highlights the contemptible role of the trade union leadership in what, together with the series of one-day strikes in all the other mills, was the first total stoppage of the Lancashire cotton industry since 1931.

With the 4,000 workers balloting to reject a 6.5 per cent offer by Courtaulds, their strike began on Tuesday May 31. By the following Tuesday, GMB union officials had got together with the company at ACAS to stitch up a deal: a seven per cent rise or £10 for workers on the lowest rates.

The anger of the mill workers was evident on picket lines all over the county and, whilst it caught the employers by surprise, it was also a cause for considerable embarrassment amongst union representatives. One full-time GMB official's pride in a previous strike-free record led him to 'sincerely regret that we have blotted our copybook' in an interview with Channel 4 News on June 10. The same official went on to blame foreign competition for all the ills of the cotton industry.

This is a blatant diversion from the actual conditions in the industry in which low pay and high productivity prevail, and an attempt to avoid the responsibility of fighting on behalf of a

highly exploited membership.

In the rest of the textile industry in Lancashire, where a series of one-day a week strikes began on May 8, the trade union leaderships, spear-headed by the GMB, have been able to keep settlements even lower. Faced with the same 10.4 per cent claim, the British Textiles Employers' Association (which Courtaulds does not belong to) offered 5.5 per cent. Many of the employers broke ranks with the BTEA and reached their own agreements, with the effect that the BTEA eventually upped its offer to 6.5 per cent. The dispute ended on June 20 after a ballot of the workforce accepted the revised offer. This takes the lowest-paid workers up to a miserable £85 per week.

# Revised cheap-labour scheme goes ahead

By Susan Keepence

THE TORY government's Training Commission, which replaces the Manpower Services Commission, will launch its new Employment Training programme on September 4. The Employment Secretary, Norman Fowler, will take full control of the new scheme which incorporates the Community Programme and the Job Training Scheme.

The new scheme is aimed at the long-term adult unemployed and 18 to 25-year-olds who have been out of work for six to 12 months. Described as a scheme for 'helping the unemployed back into work', ET will, in fact, compel the unemployed to work for their benefit. Availability for work testing is being introduced into the Restart interview. Any worker or youth refusing a place on a

training scheme will be referred to a claimant advisor or adjudicator and disqualified from benefit.

Results of pilot studies show a large increase in the number of claimants being referred to unemployment benefit officers for investigation. As Restart will be the main gateway into the new programme, it is clear that compulsion will exist under these new measures. In a further move to force claimants to work for their dole, the DHSS has increased the number of investigators into benefit frauds, which have been given widespread publicity in the media.

If, as expected, Fowler uses new powers to designate ET as approved training under social security legislation, any claimant refusing a place on the scheme, or leaving the scheme 'without good cause', will be punish-

ed by having their benefit stopped and their income support cut by 40 per cent for six months.

There will be no new funds available for ET. Instead, the cost of the scheme, estimated at £1,345 million, will come from the abolition of the Community Programme and the Job Training Scheme. There will be 600,000 places on the new programme — an increase in the numbers involved, but with even less money spent per trainee.

That this scheme is designed to strip workers of all rights is amply demonstrated by the decision to place it outside existing legislation which provides compensation for those injured or killed at work as a result of their employer's negligence. Nor will participants in the scheme be entitled to a statement

outlining terms and conditions of service. At a stroke, the government has abolished rights won by the working class in over a century of struggle. From September 4, employers will have at their command a mass army of cheap labour.

Trainees will work for their benefit plus £10 per week. A single person currently receiving unemployment benefit will be paid £41.45. A married person on supplementary benefit will be paid £78.70. For the under-25s, the rate for the scheme will be benefit plus £11.95 or £11.25 if married but without children. The current provision for child care allowance of up to £50 per week has not been protected under the new regulations.

Existing agreements which give trade unions the right to veto schemes where employers are found to be using participants as substitutes for staff vacancies will be abolished.

The Tories' destruction of hard-won rights has been made possible by the treacherous support of the TUC General Council. The scale of the attacks eventually compelled Ron Todd, the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union (T&GWU), to resign from the Training Commission on May 28, three days after it officially took over from the MSC. But he was immediately replaced as TUC-appointed commissioner on the Training Commission by Garfield Davies, general secretary of the shopworkers' union, USDAW. In company with the leaders of NUPE and NALGO, Todd has come under increasing pressure from his members to break off co-operation with the MSC.

On June 15, 24,000 T&GWU members on Community Programme schemes went on strike against the introduction of work-for-benefit. On the same day, NALGO leaders defeated a motion at their annual conference calling for complete withdrawal. The conference passed instead a motion which called upon branches to boycott work-for-benefit schemes, and for NALGO members on Area Manpower boards to boycott meetings.

The leaders of the T&GWU, NUPE, and NALGO have no intention of waging a struggle within the TUC General Council for complete withdrawal. They are attempting to channel the rising resistance within the trade unions into 'putting pressure' on the Tories to make peaceable concessions in exchange for their co-operation.

Trade unionists, unemployed workers and youth must force Todd, Rodney Bickerstaffe and John Daly to fight within the General Council for complete withdrawal from the MSC/Training Commission.



## Ellis calls off action

THE STRIKE by Hither Green DHSS workers ended on June 27 as management reluctantly transferred an employee with declared fascist views to another office.

Malcolm Skeggs has been moved to the staff training centre at Hinchley Wood where, to the disgust of the strikers, he will be part of a video production team working on a Racism Awareness project.

Onay Kasab, the CPSA sub-branch secretary, told Workers News that the 12-week strike had exposed the DHSS's equal opportunities policy as a complete fraud. The strength of feeling had

'shaken up the whole Department'. It had forced management to send Skeggs to Hinchley Wood, where they hoped that the existence of only a small CPSA branch would mean opposition would be dropped.

Hither Green was prepared to continue the strike, and had also demanded a boycott of the training centre, but CPSA leader John Ellis was using a vote against industrial action at Hinchley Wood to call off the dispute. 'We stayed out for as long as we could,' said Kasab. 'Unfortunately, the right wing in our union wanted us back.'

# Beavis helps obscure the role of MI5

THE ROLE of the newly-formed Communist Party of Britain, which is grouped around the 'Morning Star', as bagmen for the right-wing TUC bureaucracy and the capitalist state was blatantly demonstrated at NALGO's annual conference in June.

Ivan Beavis, an executive committee member of the CPB, was wheeled out by the right-wing NALGO leadership to oppose a motion which called for an investigation into the role of MI5.

The text of the motion from the Bloomsbury Health Branch which was moved by Ian Harrison, a member of the Workers International League, was as follows:

'This conference calls for a Labour and trade union movement inquiry into allegations surrounding the activities of MI5 against the Wilson government. Such an

inquiry must hear evidence from the members of the Wilson government and trade union leaders.

'This conference believes that the inquiry is necessary in order to politically arm the Labour and trade union movement against secret activities alleged to have been carried out by agencies such as MI5.'

senior officers for military intervention during the final period of the Heath government. Heath himself had ordered joint police and military manoeuvres at Heathrow Airport, and his government had set up a special 'psyops' department for dirty tricks against the trade unions.

Harrison showed that, far

Beavis, in a pre-arranged move worked out with the right wing, attempted to ridicule the motion with a facetious 'point of order' calling for the conference to go into secret session.

Speaking against the motion, Beavis gave a display of vulgar clowning, egged on by the NALGO leadership. He whipped up the most

Beavis was not only present at the meeting which unanimously supported the motion but is secretary of the Metropolitan District Committee of NALGO which supported it as worthy of conference time.

Present at the conference as delegates were sundry members of the SWP, RCP, Socialist Organiser, Labour Briefing and the 'Militant' tendency, none of whom got to their feet to support the motion.

The active role of the Stalinists and the passive acquiescence of the revisionists in covering up the conspiracies of the capitalist state against the working class must be understood by every class conscious worker. The task of exposing the role of MI5 and other state agencies as a decisive part of preparing the struggle of the working class for power can only be carried forward by building a genuinely revolutionary leadership in the trade unions.

## NALGO Conference Comment

In moving the motion, Harrison drew attention to the allegations contained in Peter Wright's book 'Spycatcher', and pointed out that no member of the Wilson government had yet given a full account of the events leading up to Wilson's resignation. The MI5 campaign against Wilson was by no means isolated; it was paralleled by the revelations of Jack Jones and Lord Carver, who had both confirmed the existence of plans among

from being a dead historical question, the permanent activities of MI5 and the Special Branch against the trade union and Labour movement was an issue of vital importance to the working class. The refusal of members of past Labour governments, including Tony Benn, to uphold pledges to restrict the activities of the Security Services and their refusal to reveal their knowledge to the working class had to be exposed.

right-wing delegates, arguing against a Labour and trade union movement inquiry because: 'We don't want to interview a lot of boring sods in the leadership of the Labour Party. We don't want to listen to a load of boring speeches from trade union leaders.'

Beavis is an unmitigated liar and a fraud. He claimed that he did not know which planet the motion came from (applause from the right wing). In fact,

# U.S. STRATEGIC AIMS IN PANAMA BACKFIRE

By Eugene Ludlow

**WITH THE collapse in May of the deal offered by the US government to the military leader of Panama, General Noriega, the Panamanian economy continues to operate on a crisis footing. One report claims that it is only working at 10 to 20 per cent capacity.**

Since June 1987, Noriega and the Reagan administration — previously close allies — have been brought into headlong confrontation. For 15 years Noriega's activities as drug baron and military strong man received the closest backing from US imperialism. In 1972, as head of military intelligence under the previous dictator General Torrijos, Noriega was already being bankrolled by the CIA to the tune of \$200,000 per year. He also established links with ex-Israeli army general and senior Mossad agent Mike Harari, who went to Panama in 1973 to raise funds among the Jewish business community for the Yom Kippur war, and was subsequently recruited as a military and political adviser.

Having conspired with the CIA to assassinate Torrijos, Noriega was given a free rein to develop his criminal activities — exporting vast quantities of cocaine on behalf of South American drug cartels to the United States; laundering the proceeds through leading US banks in Panama; building laboratories in Panama for processing drugs; and providing 'end-user' certificates for Israeli arms dealers, in order to disguise the ulti-

mate destination of weapons shipments.

Noriega's unrestrained gangsterism succeeded in creating a multi-billion dollar base of operations among the Panamanian military clique, but it also threatened to become increasingly independent from its American paymasters, and develop into a major domestic embarrassment for US imperialism.

On June 12, 1987, Noriega's chief of staff and second-in-command of the Panamanian Defence Forces (PDF), Colonel Roberto Herrera, issued a statement accusing the general and the CIA of conspiring to murder Torrijos in 1981, rigging the 1984 election, and organising the assassination of outspoken government critic Hugo Spadafora, whose headless body was found in a US mail bag in Costa Rica in 1985.

The attack on Noriega precipitated a general strike in Panama City and days of violent protest as the working class and the students fought to end military rule. The bourgeois opposition parties, the clergy and business and professional organisations, however, managed to drown this militancy by mobilising the middle class, who toured the city in cars waving white flags and called on workers to 'avoid vandalism and protect private property'.

Once it became clear that Noriega had no intention of being 'retired', Reagan instructed all US business interests in Panama to stop paying taxes, froze Panamanian assets in US banks, and invoked the International Emergency Powers Act, setting in motion a total economic blockade. This act had only previously been us-



GENERAL NORIEGA

ed against Libya, Iran and Nicaragua.

Noriega responded, on March 3 this year, by closing all Panama's banks to prevent the local pro-American business community from withdrawing its assets. At least two deals have been proposed to Noriega by the Reagan administration, the most recent offering to set him up in Spanish exile and drop drugs proceedings against him which are currently before Federal courts.

But despite the opposition of a substantial section of the capitalist class in Panama, which wants to 'normalise' relations with the US, Noriega has not only clung to power, but threatened to reveal information concerning his links with former CIA director and Republican presidential candidate George Bush. Publicly, Bush has been forced to distance himself from Reagan, saying that he would not 'bargain with drug dealers... whether they are on US or foreign soil'.

Prior to the building of the canal at the end of the nineteenth century, Panama was part of Colombia. The US fomented a rebellion and assisted in the setting up of a separate state which would allow the US full control over the Canal Zone.

Today, Panama is dependent on the \$200 million annually which is injected in-

tioned there. But the US administration is paying the price for the 'sex and drugs' economy which inevitably to the economy by the 10,000 US troops permanently staggers up around US military personnel stationed in semi-colonial countries.

Panama has become an area of vital strategic importance for US imperialism because of the canal and the sophisticated intelligence-gathering installations subsequently established there. It has also become a major centre for corruption, with an estimated \$500 million a year in drug revenues passing through the banks. Forced to distance itself from Noriega because of mounting concern within the US over drug addiction amongst youth, the US government is worried about encouraging the rise of an anti-imperialist regime, and is fostering relations with other elements of the bourgeoisie and the military.

The Panamanian working class and poor peasantry must place no confidence in those sections of the capitalist class opposed to Noriega. Only by uniting urban workers with the rural poor on a socialist programme can US imperialism and its clients be overthrown in Panama. This must include:

- Withdrawal of all US troops;
- Nationalisation of the Canal Zone, banks and major industries under workers' control without compensation;
- Disbanding of the PDF;
- Breaking up of the landed estates and distribution of land to the poor peasantry;
- Down with Noriega — for a workers' and small farmers' government.

## Black trade unions defy employers' threats

BLACK WORKERS in South Africa defied banning orders and employers' threats of victimisation to mount a mass 'stay-away' from June 6-8.

The strike was called by the COSATU and NACTU trade union confederations to protest against the restrictions on anti-apartheid organisations and the Labour Relations Amendment Bill soon to become law. The new legislation will outlaw political strikes and 'sec-

ondary' action, and allow employers to sue trade unions for loss of income due to strike action deemed illegal.

The general strike was supported by over two million workers — more than the combined membership figures of COSATU and NACTU. Although gold mines worked relatively normally, the strike affected coalmining and closed down car plants and a wide range of manufacturing industry.

THE FORMAL announcement of the closure of Krupp's Rheinhausen steel mill in May brought to an end five months of struggle by the steel workers to save their jobs. The phased shut-down of the mill in the industrial Ruhr region of West Germany will mean the loss of at least 3,000 jobs.

The collaboration of the Social Democratic regional government, and the IG Metall trade union bureaucracy in Krupp's plans ensured that the accelerating decline of the German steel industry would not be halted at Rheinhausen.

In Johannesburg and Pretoria, 80 per cent of workers struck. An indication of the size and strength of the action was the Botha government's attempt to create a diversion by calling up army reservists on the third day of the strike on the pretext that Cuban troops were about to invade Namibia. During the course of the strike, supporters of Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha organisation launched a series of murderous attacks upon trade unionists and township residents in Natal.

On June 9, Botha extended the state of emergency for the third successive year. In a further move to bolster its discredited 'reforms', the government declared it an offence to advocate the boycott of municipal elections scheduled for October.

Despite the dismissal as a



P.W. BOTHA

result of the mass strike of an estimated 2,000 trade union activists, the twelfth anniversary of the Soweto uprising on June 16 was marked by another huge 'stay-away'.

In direct contrast to the enormous combativity shown by the black working class, ANC leaders, in a further attempt to woo a section of the white capitalist class, held talks in Frankfurt, West Germany, at the end of May, with representatives of the Afrikaner-based National Democratic Movement, which was formed by ex-members of Botha's National Party.

## ITALIAN ROUND-UP

By Ian Harrison

### Unofficial strike-wave

ITALY's ruling five-party coalition, led by the Christian Democrats, continues to meet with organised resistance from the working class opposed to the government's austerity measures.

The strike-wave which began in the winter has continued under the organisation of the unofficial COBAS rank-and-file committees. In March, April and May, trains, inter-island ferries and planes belonging to Alitalia, the state airline, were subject to continual strikes. Each month COBAS organised a one-day general strike which succeeded in drawing groups of public sector workers behind the transport workers and airline staff.

Strikes have now spread to the schools, colleges and universities. Teachers fighting for a cost of living increase have rejected appeals from their union leaders not to strike and joined the growing number of COBAS action committees.

These developments have made an impact on COBAS itself which, recent reports indicate, is on the point of splitting into a 'moderate' and a 'radical' wing.

### Fascist leader dies

GIORGIO ALMIRANTE, for over four decades a leader of the Italian fascist party, the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), died on May 22, aged 73. Among the first messages of condolence received by the MSI was one from Communist Party leader Alessandro Natta.

This obscene gesture was an insult to the memory of hundreds of Communist and militant workers murdered by fascists in post-war Italy and to the thousands killed under Mussolini.

Almirante was a fascist and virulent anti-semitic from his youth. He volunteered for Mussolini's North African expeditions in the 1930s and was decorated as a war correspondent. When Mussolini set up his last redoubt in northern Italy, the Republic of Salo, Almirante served as aide to the Minister of Culture and Population. In May 1944, he issued an instruction to all Italians to rally to the fascist statelet within 24 hours: 'Those who do not present themselves will be considered outlaws and executed by shooting in the back.'

Having spent some time living under a false name, Almirante was allowed to

stand as a parliamentary deputy in 1946 and was elected. In December 1946, he formed the MSI with Mussolini's son Pino Romualdi, who coincidentally died a few hours before Almirante on May 21. He served as MSI general secretary up to 1950 and again from 1969 until he stepped down last December. On returning to the leadership in the late 60s, he criticised his 'soft' predecessors and declared that his policy was 'less stuffed shirt and more stick'. Under Almirante, the MSI acted as the parliamentary cover for a wave of fascist terror bombings and assassinations — the 'strategy of tension' — such as that at the Bologna railway station. These were directed not only indiscriminately but also at state officials with the aim of implicating the left and preparing a military coup. The MSI became Italy's fourth largest political party, polling 5.6 per cent in last year's general election and with its strongest support in the economically backward south.

The joint funeral of Almirante and Romualdi in Rome on May 24 attracted a crowd of over 10,000 who gave the fascist salute.

### Craxi picks up CP vote

LOCAL and regional elections in Italy on May 28 confirm the deepening crisis of Italian Stalinism. The Communist Party's share of the vote fell to 21.9 per cent — 12.5 per cent less than it polled in 1976, when it concluded the treacherous 'historic compromise' with the ruling Christian Democrats.

Chief beneficiary of the Stalinist decline has been the reformist Socialist Party, led by Bettino Craxi, which is a member of the coalition government. Its vote increased to 18.3 per cent. All the other coalition parties registered small gains, while the fascist MSI lost two per cent, polling 3.9 per cent.

### Occhetto succeeds Natta

ALESSANDRO NATTA has been succeeded as leader of the Italian Communist Party by Achille Occhetto, formerly the deputy chairman. His election by the 280-member Central Committee on June 21 was almost unopposed.

Though the official reason for Natta's resignation was because he had suffered from a heart attack, the promotion of Occhetto, a keen supporter of Gorbachev, is intended to give the party a new lease of life following its poor showing in elections.

# ARMENIAN REVOLT DEEPENS CRISIS OF BUREAUCRACY

**FIVE MONTHS** of continuous upheaval and mass strike action in Soviet Armenia have demonstrated the complete inability of the Stalinist bureaucracy to resolve the nationalities question in the Soviet Union.

In dispute is the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which lies within the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan but is largely populated by Armenians who demand its return to Armenia.

The dispute has unleashed the historically pent-up national aspirations of Armenians, the source of which is rooted in centuries of oppression by Tsarism and the Ottoman Empire, overlaid by decades of Stalinist reaction.

On February 14, students in Nagorno-Karabakh boycotted schools and universities and took to the streets demanding union with Armenia. Armenian history is not taught in the universities. The next day, local Karabakh officials called for a review of the region's borders. The Moscow bureaucracy responded by dismissing the call as 'against the interests of workers in both republics'. In defiance of the Moscow ruling, demonstrations spread to Erevan, the capital of

**By Terry McGinity**

Armenia.

The Karabakh government council voted for secession from Azerbaijan on February 20, after mass demonstrations in the region's capital, Stepanakert. Gorbachev accused the demonstrators of 'nationalism' and 'chauvinism', and again refused to countenance any change. In Erevan, hundreds of thousands took to the streets.

Gorbachev met with Armenian church, Communist Party and intellectual leaders on February 26, and put out a speech on television calling for a one-month truce, at the end of which he promised to convene a special plenum on the nationalities question. Ka-



Demonstration in Erevan at the end of February

ren Demirchyan, leader of the Stalinist party in Armenia, was booed and jeered when he appealed the following day for a return to 'normality'.

On February 28, hundreds of Armenians were massacred in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait on the Caspian Sea, in what even official versions were forced to admit was a pogrom. In Erevan, 300,000 gathered at the monument commemorating the massacre of one-and-a-half million Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in 1915.

The promised review of the border question resulted in

an arrogant rejection of Armenian claims by Moscow. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet ruled that: 'It is considered inadmissible... for all sorts of self-proclaimed groups to call for the redrawing of state and administrative borders secured under the Soviet constitution.' In an attempt to buy off the Karabakh and Armenian masses it announced a grant of £362.8 million over seven years to Karabakh, together with certain cultural concessions. But the bureaucracy's attempt to ban demonstrations utterly failed, and mass 'stay at homes' grew,

culminating in general strikes in both Karabakh and Armenia.

The resurgence of the national question throughout the Soviet Union over recent months has been fuelled by the stagnation of the economy, and has poured into every fissure which has opened up within the Soviet bureaucracy. The rift between so-called 'hardliners' and the 'reform' element led by Gorbachev reflects the divergence in tactics between different groups within the bureaucracy. Both are united in their determination to maintain their status as a privileged caste. Ligachev favours the 'old' methods of police coercion. Gorbachev the discipline of 'market economy'.

Above all, what the national minorities sense out of this crisis in the bureaucracy is its historic weakness and their opportunity to push their demands. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, the respective Communist Parties are left floundering in the wake of developments. The Armenian party was forced to

trim its sails to the prevailing wind, and on June 16 the Armenian Supreme Soviet voted unanimously for the incorporation of Karabakh. The Azerbaijan bureaucracy strengthened the reactionary elements among Azerbaijani nationalists by reaffirming its refusal to concede the territory. This vulgar opportunism on the part of the two 'communist' parties underlines the impossibility of any section of the bureaucracy resolving the conflict from the standpoint of proletarian internationalism.

Every twist and turn of Stalinist policy has manifestly failed, oscillating from threats to promises, and from toleration to troop deployments. The Stalinist leadership in Nagorno-Karabakh displayed its cynicism when, five days after troops were sent into the region on June 22, it called for the general strike to be lifted and for the Armenian masses to place their confidence in the decisions of the June special party conference in Moscow.

The events in Armenia and Azerbaijan have activated the collective memory of national oppression in both republics. Not surprisingly, the experience of the massacre by the Turks has been evoked in Armenia. No less potent is the memory of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. The Transcaucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were amongst the most brutally repressed areas of the Soviet Union, using the pretext of 'separatist tendencies' to justify the mass execution of communists, workers and peasants. In 1949, there were further mass deportations of Armenians. These regions remained amongst the most economically backward.

Only the smashing of the Stalinist bureaucracy through the political revolution can uphold the national aspirations of both Armenians and Azerbaijanis, and re-establish Leninist internationalism.

## Storm over Yugoslav austerity plan

A NEW WAVE of strikes and demonstrations swept Yugoslavia last month as workers reacted angrily to the government's latest austerity package.

Over 50 strikes were recorded in one week and, following a similar demonstration by miners earlier in the month, 5,000 striking workers from a tractor factory in the capital Belgrade marched on parliament on

June 17, where they were joined by passers-by to demand the government's resignation. Six days later in Slovenia, 5,000 striking car workers laid siege to the town hall of Maribor and attacked the mayor demanding a 50 per cent pay rise.

The austerity measures, introduced at the end of May, were aimed at securing a \$400 million stand-by credit from the IMF and

**By Martin Sullivan**

satisfying the terms for re-scheduling the country's \$21 billion foreign debt. In a reversal of last November's price freeze, petrol, postage, railway fares and coal prices were raised by an average 30 per cent while wages were frozen. The measures were accompanied by a 23.9 per cent devaluation of the Dinar on May 27 — the se-

cond in seven months.

A special conference of the Yugoslav Stalinist party, held from May 29-31, announced a further reactionary turn by the bureaucracy towards capitalist restoration. Proposals which are in line with the increased role envisaged for the IMF and the World Bank include plans to lease the assets of unprofitable state enterprises to individual investors, and the further 'de-regulation' of wages and prices which will be allowed to find their own level according to 'market forces'.

Plans have also been announced to create new types of enterprise involving state, private and co-operative ownership. Failure to implement the reform package would result in a Special Congress being held in the autumn to carry out a root-and-branch purge of the party leadership, Serbian Stalinist leader Slobodan Milosevic told the conference.

Calls by the bureaucracy for austerity have been continuously undermined by a wave of corruption scandals. Prime Minister Branko Mikulic survived an attempt by Slovenian party officials to impeach him in connection with profiteering on party officials' holiday villas. At the conference, one delegate revealed that bureaucrats' cars cost the country £1 billion per year. Meanwhile, 25 officials of the bankrupt Agrokomerc enterprise went on trial in May for corruption.

Rumours circulated by the official Socialist Youth

Alliance in Slovenia that army chiefs had planned a coup in March against 'reformist' elements in the Republic, involving mass detentions of politicians and journalists, were officially acknowledged to be true on May 19. Two writers and a soldier, arrested in early June, are being held in Ljubljana prison in Slovenia charged with betraying army secrets. 20,000 people called for their release on June 21 and a rotating protest vigil of women is being held outside the prison.

The Slovenian party 'reformers', including the Socialist Youth Alliance, openly favour the extension of private ownership, breaking from the Federation and closer economic and political ties with capitalist countries.

## Break the coalition!

THE RESULTS of the second round of the National Assembly elections, which gave no overall majority to Mitterrand and Rocard's Socialist Party, record not, as many bourgeois pundits have claimed, the desire of the French electorate for 'moderation', but the sharp tension between the classes.

Voting returns gave the Socialist Party 276 seats, the right-wing UDF/RPR bloc 281, the Communist Party 27, and the fascist National Front 1.

The outcome gives Mitterrand's nominee as prime minister, Michel Rocard, the chance to pursue his policy, declared before the election, of 'ouverture' or opening out — in other words, a coalition with the capitalist UDF, as a conscious alternative to a joint government with the Communist Party.

UDF leaders Raymond Barre, Simone Veil and Giscard D'Estaing have all made diplomatic statements indicating their willingness

**By Richard Price**

to serve in, or support, a Rocard-led coalition. Mitterrand lent his weight to a coalition by encouraging abstentions amongst Socialist Party voters with his ambiguous call during the election for 'a clear but not excessive majority'. In the wake of the election, one of the constituent parties under the UDF umbrella, the Social Democrat Centre (CDS), has announced its intention to act as a distinct parliamentary group under the name of the Union of the Centre.

The increase in the vote for the Communist Party represents neither a vote of confidence from the working class, or a lasting revival in the fortunes of French Stalinism, but a move by sections of the working class attempting to bar the road to coalition with the right.

On the other hand, the reversals suffered by the Na-

tional Front were mainly due to the switch back from proportional representation and are neither as dramatic nor as 'final' as many impressionists have made out. The lower middle class remains in a highly volatile state, alienated by Mitterrand's slump policies, and resentful of the traditional right-wing parties.

Mitterrand and his right-hand man Rocard have set themselves up as indispensable brokers on behalf of French capitalism. They have become the 'politicians of the golden mean' of the Fifth Republic. The task of the coalition is to bind the working class through its main party to the programme of the French capitalist class.

The working class must demand: Break the coalition! Remove the coalitionists from the leadership of the Socialist Party! Form a Socialist Party-Communist Party government pledged to socialist policies!

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# EDITORIAL

## Moral socialism 'left' and right

**THE SPECTACLE** of a three-cornered contest for the rights to Christian morality between Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock and Tony Benn has given the working class the opportunity to examine the encrusted prejudices which lie beneath the skulls of British Labour leaders.

Thatcher got the ball rolling on May 21 when she addressed the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. While admitting that she found some difficulty in accepting the precept of 'loving your neighbour as yourself', Thatcher naturally found the moral justification for capitalism in the biblical doctrine of individual responsibility and the struggle between 'good' and 'evil'. 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat', she smugly told the assembled clerics, quoting St Paul, and slipped in a racist reference to 'our desire to maintain the essence of our own identity'.

On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Methodism, Thatcher approvingly quoted its reactionary Tory founder, John Wesley, on 'The Use of Money': 'Gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can.'

Kinnock's opportunity to enter the fray came at Prime Minister's question time on May 24. Eager to prove himself more righteous than Thatcher, Kinnock questioned her use of the scriptures and bandied quotations with her across the dispatch box.

Last but not least, enter the Rt. Hon. Tony Benn, whose speech at the Chesterfield Conference on June 12 dwelt on the need to go beyond 'the mindless repetition of words like "competitiveness", "productivity" and "market forces"' and replace them with something imponderable called 'the quality of life'. However, Benn's most extensive foray recently into the field of morals came in a lecture delivered in March to the Christian Socialist Movement, entitled 'The Moral Basis of the Radical Left'. In it Benn looked forward to politics being recast in 'a proper moral framework': 'Looking ahead to the politics of the twenty-first century [!], worldwide, it is now [!] possible to imagine a new line-up of forces between those who follow the ethical values of Christianity and the economic analysis of socialism on the one hand, and the forces of capitalism and militarism on the other.'

Like Thatcher, Benn holds fast to 'ethical values' which include the concepts of 'good' and 'evil'. But even the simplest examination shows it to be impossible to apply these concepts to all classes, and for all time. What is 'good' for the trade unions is quite clearly 'evil' to the employers and vice versa, and thousands more such examples could easily be produced.

According to Benn: 'The rock upon which any society must be built is its conception of moral values.' This is clear enough. Instead of morals arising upon the economic foundations of class society, Benn has society founded upon absolute morality.

Despite the differences in their interpretations of Christianity and Labour Party policy, what unites Benn and Kinnock is that they are both ideologically bound hand and foot to the philosophical outlook of the ruling class. Morality has an objective class basis. In commending 'eternal moral values' to the working class, Kinnock and Benn are fulfilling a definite need for capitalism. As Karl Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue wrote: 'Christianity . . . is first and foremost the religion of societies founded on individual property and the exploitation of wage labour, and that is why it has been, is, and shall be, whatever is said, and whatever is done, the religion of the bourgeoisie.'

Amid all the uncertainties of life arising out of the world crisis of capitalism, the leaders of both the Tory and Labour parties reach instinctively for the ideological garbage of ages, dust it off, and give it a new lease of life. Thatcher recognises in religion a weapon to beat the 'idle' and 'irresponsible' working class with; Kinnock and Benn hope to turn back the clock and cement collaboration between the working class and the capitalist class under the heading of a 'compassionate' and 'caring' society. Benn even acknowledges the 'contribution' of Marxism ('the bag of tools that Marx bequeathed to us') and recognises the existence of the class struggle, only to place the future of socialism under the benevolent guidance of the Almighty.

If religion takes a 'left' form with Benn, then it is no surprise. Trotsky noted that 'in Britain there is an ultra-flexible, conciliatory, I might even say Menshevik, church. In addition, British Menshevism is thoroughly imbued with the priestly spirit. All this is merely the church's way of adapting to the different groups and layers of the proletariat — a complex division of labour in the service of the bourgeois order.'

What journalists have dubbed 'the battle for the high moral ground' is an instructive episode, and goes a long way to showing that the role of Benn, for all his challenge to Kinnock's leadership, is to act as a cover for Labour's right wing. The classic socialist texts were written by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky — not by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Those who have not broken from the morality of the capitalist class are incapable of leading the struggle for socialism.

As the Kinnock leadership attempts to distance the party from the trade unions in order to attract Tory voters, Benn's function is to placate the working class base of members and supporters, ensure them that their interests can still be represented by the Labour Party, and insulate them from Marxist politics.

The Workers International League calls for a critical vote for Benn and Heffer in the leadership election. But every class conscious trade unionist, Labour Party member or supporter must say to him or herself: For the struggle to remove Kinnock and the right wing? — Yes! For the mysticism and pacifist-nationalism of Benn? — No!

BRITAIN's balance of trade figures for May were a record £1.2 billion in the red. They, along with last October's stock exchange crash, show the fragility of the so-called 'booming' economy fostered by the Tories at the expense of untold misery for the homeless and the unemployed.

Despite eight years of a Tory regime which has sought to reverse the decline by stepping up attacks on the working class, decrepit British capitalism has continued to fall behind its Japanese, German and American competitors in the fierce struggle for international markets.

The Tories' third term manifesto reflects the depth of the world economic crisis, its consequences for British capitalists and how they intend 'solving' it. The Social Security Act, further anti-union legislation, education 'reform', Poll Tax, the dismantling of the NHS, work-for-benefit schemes, the biggest sale of nationalised industries so far, with electricity next on the list, and the Housing Bill. All are aimed at opening up areas for investment and speculation previously denied to capitalism by the reforms and democratic rights won by the working class over decades.

The Housing Bill was published in November last year before 'consultation' was completed, withdrawn a week later because of printing errors and, on its way through parliament, was subject to dozens of government amendments. Such is the urgency with which the Tories view this measure. It is expected to become law in July with Part 1, dealing with the abolition of rent control and tenant security, in operation as early as October.

Setting this pace are the banks, monopolies and financial institutions of the City of London who are desperate to avoid another 'Black Monday' on the stock exchange. They hope that the purchase of local authority housing by the private sector on the scale provided for in the Bill will inject value into the mountain of promissory notes and paper money accumulating in their vaults. One City speculator cheerfully forecast that this 'important new area for investment' will be worth over £40 billion by the year 2000.

In 1979, with the post-war boom a fading memory, the Tories began the task of ridding British capitalism of much of its outdated, surplus capacity made redundant by the superior productivity of its rivals. They opened British industry to the rigours of the world market, closing mines, factories, shipyards and slashing government spending. Millions of workers, no longer employable at a profit, were slung onto the dole and anti-union laws passed. As Geoffrey Howe, a self-proclaimed 'Thatcherite', explained last month: '... we got rid of the barriers to

# BRITISH ECONOMY OVER TO THE SPI

enterprise which weighed so heavily on industry in Labour Britain.'

Thatcher carved out openings for billions of pounds worth of idle capital threatening to spark a financial catastrophe if it could not find new areas to invest in. Nationalised industries became one such area; land and property was another. The parasitic banks, insurance companies and building societies, seeking the highest and quickest rate of return, have poured billions of pounds of their profits into prestige office blocks and prime high street outlets.

Behind all the trumpeting about a 'home-owning democracy', the Tories are attempting to drive a wedge between the majority of workers on the one side and its better-off sections and the mass of the middle class on the other. By encouraging them, through £5 billion worth of mortgage tax relief, to buy their own homes, the Tories are inviting them to feast on the crumbs from the table of property speculation. House prices rose 26 per cent in the South East last year and 30 per cent in East Anglia, the new commuterland, where the annual rise this year is expected to top 40 per cent. This policy is not new. Fredrick Engels noted it in his pamphlet 'The Housing Question': 'The cleverest leaders of the ruling class have always directed their efforts towards increasing the number of small property owners in order to build an army for themselves against the proletariat.' Under the Tories, 2.5 million more people now own their own house, pushing owner-

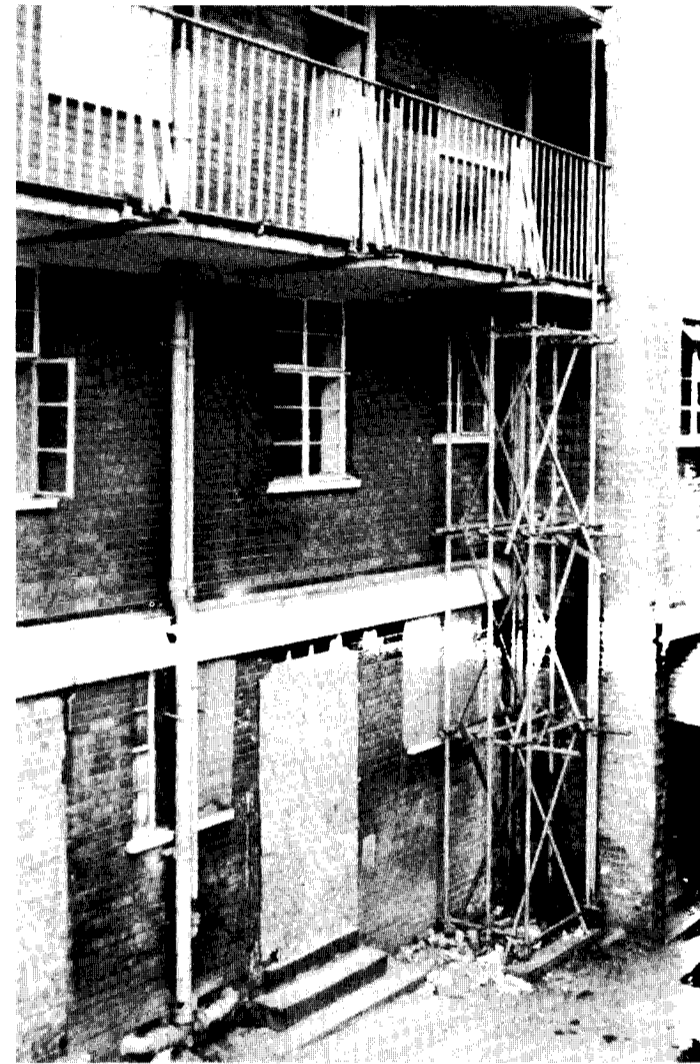
occupation up from 57 to 66 per cent.

Since 1979 local authorities have been compelled to sell over 700,000 of their best housing stock to tenants, whilst reduced funding of council building has meant that, in 1985, only 30,000 new homes were completed. Homelessness has soared as workers and their families leave the decimated north to seek work in London. The so-called 'boom' in the South East has been

### Special feature

achieved entirely at the expense of the working class and can only be maintained on the same basis.

The Housing Bill will mean the return of slum housing on a scale not seen since the 19th century, landlord employers and the equivalent of massive wage cuts as rent swallows an ever-greater proportion of a worker's income.



Derelict council estate in Hackney

## What the Housing

THE GOVERNMENT's new Housing Bill, currently passing through parliament, is shrouded in Tory rhetoric about 'the rights of the individual' and the 'free market economy'. Slogans such as 'tenants' choice' and the 'right to rent' will provide the justification for an unprecedented assault on the standard of living of the working class. Due to become law in July, the Bill contains four major proposals.

### Abolition of rent control and protected tenancies

Part 1 seeks to end much of the legislation currently protecting the interests of tenants. Most tenants live in 'regulated' accommodation which means that the landlord cannot simply evict them whenever he feels like it. The Housing Bill will 'de-regulate' many tenancies and it is predicted that, as in 1957 when partial 'de-regulation' took place, there will be a spate of evictions as landlords take advantage of the booming property market to sell houses free of 'sitting tenants'.

Complementing this assault on the genuine rights of tenants will be the abolition of rent controls established in the 1977 Fair Rent Act. In order to make it profitable for the landlord to let his property rather than sell it, he is to be allowed to set the rent at so-called 'market levels', jacking them up every time house prices rise so much as a percentage point. Private sector rents will be sent rocketing almost immediately.

### 'Privatising' the Housing Associations

The next thrust of the Housing Bill is to 'end the monopoly'

on housing of the local authority for rents not reflecting their value, therefore, to see the passing of it into the private sector.

Part II of the Bill is a sort of insurance policy, a sort of insuring a rapid rate of transfer from the very beginning. This will be business through Housing Associations.

Housing Associations currently receive grants which will be cut by between 10 and 20 per cent. They will be forced to raise new funds from tenants, an aggressive attitude towards tenants' housing or face further grant cuts. Housing Association rents will just survive when their grants are cut. Some of the more dilapidated council housing will be hard put to survive and are likely to fold.

### Crash programme to private housing sell-off

Part III provides for the establishment of Housing Trusts (HATs), of which there will be two in London. Their areas will be designated by the Secretary of State for the Environment. They are to be set up in the more dilapidated council housing areas. They will carry out all the duties of a local authority, but will have no say about being sold. They will be a forum for hard selling

# ...Y TURNED ...ECULATORS

by Daniel Evans

After the war, the Labour Party assured workers that the housing crisis would be solved for all time. This has proved to be an illusion, despite the major gain which mass council housing represents. Instead of leading the struggle to defend this gain, however, the Labour leaders are more concerned about wooing middle class voters.

Labour's housing spokes-

man, Clive Soley, while promising a future Labour government would reintroduce rent controls, has made no mention of returning the thousands of council estates, which will be in private hands by then, to the local authorities. At the same time, Labour-controlled councils are capitulating to Tory rate-capping and Poll Tax legislation as fast as they can. They have proved themselves incapable of defending working class interests a thousand times over. Only the abolition of capitalism can solve the housing crisis once and for all and consign homelessness, over-crowding, dereliction and landlordism to the dustbin of history.



There are fortunes to be made in London's docklands by building luxury dwellings

## Tories plan end of council obligation to the homeless

TORY SECRETARY of State for the Environment Nicholas Ridley has announced government plans to review the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act which obliges local authorities to give priority to the housing of homeless families and individuals. The review is expected to propose a new bill for the autumn.

Ridley accused homeless people of using the law to 'jump council house waiting lists', indicating that the bill will give more legal cover to the widespread practice amongst local authorities of denying bed-and-breakfast accommodation to homeless families on the grounds that

they had made themselves 'intentionally homeless'. It will pave the way for mass evictions of families and individuals living in hotels.

The most notorious case of this practice was perpetrated by the Social and Liberal Democrat-led Tower Hamlets council in May when it stopped bed-and-breakfast payments to ten Bangladeshi families. Despite a Court of Appeal judgement critical of the way in which the council had declared them 'intentionally homeless' and ordering a review, the families were given two weeks notice to leave. A further 36 families are still facing eviction.

It took the council two

years to achieve its objective in this case and the government's new bill will look to speed the process up dramatically, at the same time as widening the definition of 'intentionally homeless'. Lobbying by Tower Hamlets Council also helped to formulate the Tories' racist Immigration Act.

Ridley announced further proposals which will force local authorities to make their 112,000 empty houses immediately available for occupation, saying it was a 'scandal' that in London the number of empty houses exceeded the number of homeless in bed-and-breakfast — thought to be 8,500 families (40,000 people).

With this legislation, and by coercing Housing Associations to create temporary hostel accommodation, he hopes to avoid the chaos of the mass eviction of families from bed-and-breakfast which the end of the Homeless Persons Act will bring. The vast majority of empty council houses, however, are uninhabitable and the extra £21 million which Ridley is allowing councils to spend on renovating them this year will only provide cosmetic repairs. At the same time, with the number of families in hotels rising by nearly 300 a month, it would not be long before all the empty houses were filled.

Ridley cynically blamed homelessness on 'a new social phenomenon'. 'Young people leave home very much earlier to try their luck in getting a house,' he said. 'To discourage this 'phenomenon', the Tories recently passed the Social Security Act containing a clause which sent youth homelessness, in London alone, rocketing by an estimated 35 per cent overnight. The clause altered the way DHSS payments for

bed-and-breakfast accommodation are made. Payments are now made two weeks in arrears and hoteliers are unwilling to wait. There are now 50,000 young people under the age of 19 living in night shelters and other temporary accommodation in London. They cannot get local authorities to pay for their bed-and-breakfast because they are barred from registering on their housing lists.

The Tories say that homelessness is caused by swindlers trying to jump housing lists, young people leaving home earlier and private landlords being discouraged from letting flats by rent controls and the 'monopoly' on housing of the local authorities. The opposite, of course, is true.

Growing homelessness is incontestable evidence of the decay of capitalism which brings in its wake mass unemployment and a sharp rise in speculation in all fields. The collapse of council house building has been engineered by the Tories as part of the redirection of public money into private pockets.

Local authority housing, despite its many limitations, was and remains one of the great reforms wrested by the working class from the capitalist class and must be defended at all costs. But the resolution of the housing crisis can only be brought about by revolutionary means. As Fredrick Engels put it over 100 years ago: '... it is not that the solution of the housing question simultaneously solves the social question, but that only by the solution of the social question, that is, by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, is the solution of the housing question made possible.' ('The Housing Question').

### Programme of action

THE development of the world economic crisis of capitalism has created a vast pool of misery in the form of dereliction, overcrowding, homelessness and extortionate levels of rent, alongside which flourishes the most frenzied speculation in property and land. This state of affairs cannot be reformed; it can only be solved through the overthrow of the capitalist system, and the taking of power by the working class.

The working class must be united around a fighting programme of action, whose central demands must be:

- Requisitioning of all empty dwellings and the excess property of the rich to house the homeless!

- Housing allocation and rent levels to be determined by committees of tenants, trade unionists and housewives — down with Rachmanism!

- Cheap public housing as of right to all workers and youth on council waiting lists, in bed-and-breakfast or entirely homeless. Reduce the age qualification to 16!

- Labour councillors must refuse to comply with the Housing Bill and the Poll Tax — end the sale of council housing!

- Demand that the Labour and trade union leaders mobilise the working class to bring down the Tories, and implement a fighting programme including:-

- Repeal of all anti-working class legislation including the housing, social security and immigration acts;

- Nationalisation of the building societies and banks;
- Nationalisation of all building and development land under workers' control;

- A crash programme of public works, including the creation of cheap housing with proper amenities;

- Compulsory purchase at sale price of all council housing which has been sold off.

- Join the Workers International League.

## ...g Bill will mean

...ies which the Tories blame the 'market level'. It intends, huge swathes of public hous-

...transitional' section aimed er to the private sector from be done by subsidising big ocations.

...y receive government grants and 75 per cent. They will n private sponsors and take acquiring local authority s. It is estimated that Hous- by as much as 50 per cent ose which cater for ethnic nd private sponsorship and

...re council housing for

...ishment of Housing Action re likely to be five at first be decided by the Secretary d their officials will be ap- o take over the running of ock and will be obliged to al authority landlord apart y homeless people. Tenants rferred to a HAT which by the government. Funds

will be made available for renovation to make the properties more attractive to potential buyers.

**Charter for private landlords to take over council estates**

Part IV of the Bill, entitled 'Change of Landlord in the Public Sector', but nicknamed 'the tenants' choice' by Tory propagandists, will allow Housing Associations and private companies or individuals to put in a bid to the local authority for any housing estate which takes their fancy. Having made their bid, they then have to ballot the tenants to see if they wish to transfer. But an abstention will count as a 'yes' vote so, in a block of 100 buildings with 50 tenants voting against, ten in favour and 40 abstaining for whatever reason, the estate will be transferred to the new landlord. Those who voted against will have their houses leased back to the council by their new owner until they either move out or die. However, their rent will not be set by the council but by the new landlord.

To assist any prospective private landlords in securing a majority vote in favour of his bid, the Tories intend to offer some 'inducement' to council tenants in a later piece of legislation likely to be announced in the Queen's Speech in the autumn. Local authorities will no longer be allowed to subsidise council rents from the income they receive from rates. Together with ever-decreasing central government allocations to local authority housing programmes, this will send council rents soaring by, in the most extreme case — Camden — for instance, an estimated 220 per cent.

# IN DEFENCE OF THE THEORY OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION

**THE FEBRUARY revolution in Russia in 1917, far from resolving the fundamental questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics, brought to the surface in a new form all the struggles of the preceding 15 years.**

The struggle which took place within the Bolshevik Party in the spring of 1917 contains lessons for Trotskyism today which are far from being purely 'historical'. Lenin castigated the old Bolsheviks who 'on more than one occasion played a lamentable role in the history of our party, repeating senselessly formulae they have learned by rote instead of *studying* the peculiarities of new and living reality'.

A certain parallel exists between those Bolshevik leaders who in February and March attempted to turn the Bolshevik Party into a source of support for the bourgeois Provisional Government, and almost all those organisations and tendencies today who call themselves 'Trotskyist'. Most of today's 'Trotskyists' pay lip-service to the theory of permanent revolution, only to trounce it in practice by tail-ending one or another section of the bourgeoisie. Thus the 'United Secretariat' has passed successfully from uncritical support for Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Nasser and Castro, through 'guerrillaism' and peasant warfare to its present frank prostration before every bourgeois nationalist trend on the planet. The Morenoite International Workers League (IIT) is above all characterised by its notorious adaptation to Peronism. The 'orthodoxy' of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the International Committee crumbled as it pursued 'alliances' with the Arab and African bourgeoisie in the 1970s (although it remained a 'stern' critic of the bourgeoisie in colonial and semi-colonial countries where it had no influence).

The succumbing of these forces to revisionism transformed the theoretical heritage of the Russian revolution into a dead abstraction — a suitable subject for holiday speeches and commemorative rallies, but entirely devoid of a living content.

To the extent to which doffing one's cap in the direction of the Russian revolution, and even the defence of the USSR, has become almost an involuntary

## PART SEVEN

By Richard Price

gesture of centrists, revisionists and Stalinists, in order to mask their true nature, so has it long ceased in itself to be any measure of revolutionary principles.

For over a month prior to Lenin's arrival from Switzerland in Petrograd on April 3, 1917, the Bolshevik leadership within Russia proved entirely incapable of independent revolutionary leadership. For three weeks after the February insurrection, the accidental trio of Shliapnikov, Zalutsky and Molotov improvised. Trotsky writes that: 'They behaved not like representatives of a proletarian party preparing an independent struggle for power but like the left wing of a democracy, which, having announced its principles, intended for an indefinite time to play the part of loyal opposition.' ('History of the Russian Revolution', Vol. 1, Sphere, p.271).

Not only did the internal Bolshevik leadership submit to the transfer of power to the bourgeois Provisional Government; it suppressed the resolutions of the worker-Bolsheviks, especially from the Vyborg District, which demanded the transfer of power to the Soviets.

The return of Kamenev and Stalin from Siberia turned the helm to the right. The central party organ, 'Pravda', under their control after March 13, avoided defining either the Provisional Government or the war as imperialist. On March 15, in an article printed beneath the proclamation of the SR and Menshevik-dominated Petrograd Soviet, 'To the Peoples of the Whole World', Kamenev fully endorsed its line of national defence, arguing that a 'free people' would not lay down its arms, and would 'answer bullet with bullet, shell with shell'.

Kamenev and Stalin's conception of a 'national revolution' was not only parochial and divorced from the development of the socialist revolution internationally; it remained within the bound-



Burial of the martyrs of the February revolution

daries of a bourgeois revolution.

The line of 'pressure' upon the Provisional Government was defended explicitly by Stalin at the March party conference. Describing the Provisional Government as the 'fortifier of the conquests of the revolutionary people', Stalin argued for support for it 'in so far as the Provisional Government fortifies the steps of the revolution', but opposition 'in so far as it is counter-revolutionary'. (Trotsky: 'The Stalin School of Falsification', New Park, pp.187-8).

The resolution put to the conference by the Bureau of the Central Committee lays its emphasis upon 'decisive control' being exercised over the Provisional Government by the Soviets. An alternative resolution from the Krasnoyarsk Soviet, which Stalin supported, recognised that the Provisional Government was the representative of the imperialist bourgeoisie, but resolved 'to make entirely clear that the only source of the power and the authority of the Provisional Government is the will of the people'. (Ibid, p.190).

This ambiguous line strengthened those like Voytinsky (shortly to split and become a right-wing Menshevik) who wanted recognition of the 'revolutionary work' done by the Provisional Government. The delegate Krassikov, who attempted to raise in principle the issue of the seizure of power by the working class was abruptly interrupted by the chairman of the March 30 session, Nogin, with the words: 'The question under discussion involves the practical steps for today. The question of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not under discussion.' (Ibid, p.203).

During the session of April 1, Stalin came forward as the advocate of fusion with the Mensheviks, and against what he termed 'trivial disagreements' in the party.

The entire trend among Bolshevik leaders within Russia was running in a diametrically opposite direction to the line developed, in-

dependent of one another, by Lenin in exile in Switzerland, and by Trotsky in New York. In the first of his 'Letters from Afar', written on March 7, Lenin already speaks of 'a situation that is transitional from the first stage of the revolution to the second... He who says that the workers must support the new government in the interests of the struggle against Tsarist reaction... is a traitor to the workers, a traitor to the cause of the proletariat, to the cause of peace and freedom... this new government is already bound hand and foot by imperialist capital'. (Lenin: 'Between the Two Revolutions', p.19).

Lenin's second and third letters, which were not published at the time, stress not only the class nature of the Provisional Government, but the necessity for independent working class organisation, and the creation of a workers' militia.

Trotsky in New York greeted the first news of demonstrations which reached him at the beginning of March as 'the beginning of the second Russian revolution'. His article 'Two Faces', published on March 4, confidently predicts that 'the Russian revolution will not stop. Time will come, and the revolution will make a clean sweep of the bourgeois liberals blocking its way, as it is now making a clean sweep of the Tsarist reaction'. (Trotsky: 'Our Revolution', Hyperion, p.197).

Two days later he writes: '... the proletariat ought to unite about itself the rising masses of the people with one aim in view — to seize governmental power. Only a Revolutionary Workers' Government will have the desire and ability to give the country a thorough democratic cleansing during the work preparatory to the Constituent Assembly, to reconstruct the army from top to bottom, to turn it into a revolutionary militia and to show the poorer peasants in practice that their only salvation is in support of a revolutionary workers' regime.' (Ibid, p.203).

Lenin's arrival in Petrograd on April 3 and the struggle for the 'April Theses' marked the decisive phase of the preparation of a genuinely revolutionary leadership. Lenin's speech to assembled Bolshevik delegates on April 4 had the effect of a thunderbolt.

His position was unequivocal: on the key question of the imperialist war, he showed that the Provisional Government was itself imperialist 'through and through', and that it was 'impermissible to make the slightest concession to "revolutionary defencism"'. The war could only be terminated 'through a complete break with international capitalism'.

In a series of pointed references to the positions of other Bolshevik leaders, Lenin called for 'no support whatever to the Provisional Government', and the transfer of the entire state power to the Soviets. He ridiculed the demand for 'control' over it as demanding that an imperialist government cease to be imperialist, and he rounded upon plans to fuse with the Mensheviks. ('The Stalin School of Falsification', pp.227-236).

Lenin's report was received with a near-unanimous opposition among leading Bolsheviks, the solitary exception being Alexandra Kollontai (see 'Where does "Revolutionary Defencism" lead?' in her 'Selected Writings', Allison and Busby, pp.110-112).

Lenin's delivery of the theses shortly afterwards to a joint meeting of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks provoked even greater hostility. Bogdanov shouted 'Delirium, the delirium of a madman'.

When published on April 10, in an expanded version, under the title 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution', Lenin rendered even more explicit the impossibility of the bourgeoisie carrying further the bourgeois revolution. That class, having been thrust into power, was already allying itself with the representatives of monarchical reac-

tion. Lenin still speaks of the old Bolshevik slogan of 'the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' — but only in the context of having been already realised in part in the creation of the Soviets. The significance of the Dual Power brought into being by the February revolution — the Provisional Government of the bourgeoisie and the Soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants — was that it marked an extremely unstable, transitional phase between the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions.

On the day after the publication of Lenin's theses in 'Pravda', Kamenev dissociated himself from their conclusions in an editorial note, stating that they were merely Lenin's 'personal opinion': 'As for Comrade Lenin's general scheme, it appears to us unacceptable in as much as it proceeds from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is completed, and builds on the immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution.' ('Between the Two Revolutions', p.70). On the same day the Petrograd Committee of the Bolsheviks rejected Lenin's theses by 13 votes to 2.

In his first 'Letter on Tactics', written immediately after 'The Tasks of the Proletariat', Lenin went still further: 'The Bolshevik slogans and ideas on the whole have been confirmed by history; but concretely things have worked out differently... The person who now speaks of only a "revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" is behind the times, consequently, he has in effect gone over to the petty-bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle; that person should be consigned to the archive of "Bolshevik" pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of "old Bolsheviks").' (Ibid, pp.64-5).

With these words, Lenin completed the strategic turn towards the conquest of power. Lenin's victory in the party, sealed by the April Conference (April 24-29), was by no means automatic; throughout April, Kamenev and Rykov voiced their sharp disagreements, which boiled down to the old Menshevik prejudice that 'our revolution is a bourgeois revolution', and therefore had to be led by the bourgeoisie.

In discarding the outworn slogan of the 'democratic dictatorship', Lenin arrived at conclusions that Trotsky had fought for for over a decade, in formulating the theory of permanent revolution. However, only the existence of the Bolshevik Party, tempered by long years of irreconcilable struggle, made such a sharp transition possible.

- To be continued -

## JOIN

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ADDRESS.....

TRADE UNION.....

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Workers International League  
1/17 Meredith Street, London EC1R 0AE



# A century since the matchgirls' strike

By Bob Pitt

**THIS MONTH** marks the centenary of the famous strike at the Bryant and May match factory in east London, a dispute significant not only for the fact that the strikers were all women but, more importantly, because it was fought by a section of the working class who for years had seemed incapable of collective class action.

'Hitherto,' Engels wrote in 1889, 'the East End was bogged down in passive poverty. Lack of resistance on the part of those broken by starvation, of those who had given up all hope was its salient feature... Then last year came the successful strike of the matchgirls.'

The Bryant and May matchmakers were among the most oppressed and exploited of East End workers. They worked a twelve-hour day, starting at six in the morning, for wages which in many cases were barely at subsistence level. Fines were imposed for the most trivial offences, and further fraudulent deductions were made from their pay. Girls who carried boxes on their unprotected heads were reduced to partial baldness, while others suffered poisoning — 'phosphy jaw' as it was known — from the phosphorus which, having no place other than the workrooms to eat their meals, they consumed with their food. Not surprisingly, Bryant and May's profits were extremely high, their shareholders receiving dividends of 23 per cent in the year preceding the strike.

Unlike east London's thousands of outworkers though, the matchgirls were united by the discipline of factory labour. Even before the strike they had developed a strong sense of solidarity, getting together to discuss their grievances and attempting to defend those who were victimised by the foremen. They had already been brought to the edge of revolt when one of the directors insisted that the workers should contribute from their wages towards a statue of Gladstone and take a half-day's 'holiday' without pay for the unveiling. However, effective opposition was impossible while the matchgirls remained outside the trade union movement, which at that time was largely restricted to the 'labour aristocracy' of higher paid, skilled workers.

It was the intervention of Annie Besant that provided the catalyst in the transformation of the matchworkers' discontent into organised resistance. Formerly a clergy-

man's wife, Mrs Besant had rejected Christianity to become a secularist. In 1885, she had joined the Fabian Society and subsequently became a member of the avowedly Marxist Social Democratic Federation, although the limitations of the socialist theory she acquired from these groups can be illustrated by her claim that the formation of a trade



ANNIE BESANT

union at Bryant and May might lead to the moral improvement of the workers but could do nothing to raise their wages. Indeed, shortly after the matchgirls' strike she was to renounce socialism, having been converted to eastern mysticism. Nevertheless, Annie Besant's journalistic and organisational abilities played an important part in the success of the strike.

After interviewing the matchmakers at the factory gates, Mrs Besant exposed their appalling wages and conditions in an article entitled 'White Slavery in London' in the 'Link', a small journal of which she was editor. She distributed the paper to the workers and also sent a copy to the employers, who immediately threatened to sue her. To that end the foremen tried to bully the women into signing a document affirming that they were all happy in their work, and when they refused to do so their leader was sacked. On July 5, the whole workforce walked out in protest. The next morning a great crowd of matchworkers gathered outside the factory but despite threats from management refused to go to work. One of them told a reporter that the allegations in Mrs Besant's article were all true, 'and we'd 'ave come out long since, but we wasn't agreed'. An estimated 1,300 women were now on strike. That afternoon a hundred of them marched up to the 'Link' offices off Fleet Street to ask for assistance in their struggle.

The company responded with a blanket rejection of the strikers' grievances. It was a 'downright lie', declared one of the directors, that fines had been inflicted. Nor had the women been forced to sign anything; on the contrary, the document in question had been circulated as

a spontaneous gesture of loyalty by the workers themselves, who had been 'displeased at the disparaging remarks made about the firm'. The company secretary added that 95 per cent of the strikers wanted to return to work and were prevented from doing so only by 'intimidation' from the other five per cent. Needless to say, this stand was endorsed



ENGELS

by the main capitalist newspapers, notably the 'Times', which asserted that the strike had been 'forced' on the women by 'those pests of the modern industrial world, the Social Democrats'.

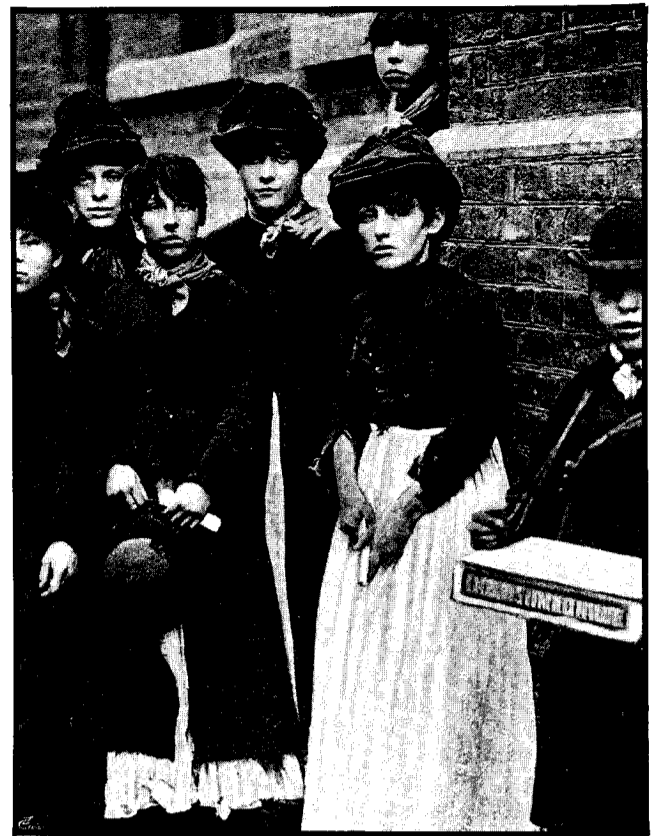
Annie Besant organised public meetings across London to rally support for the strikers. The largest of these, on Mile End Waste, drew a crowd of thousands, 'stret-

ched within the bourgeoisie, one section finding it expedient to distance themselves from the methods of Bryant and May. Several wealthy individuals — including the grandfather of the present Lord Hailsham, no less — sent contributions to the strike fund. And the 'Financial World' denounced the company's dividends as 'Blood Money'. As another bourgeois journal, the 'St James Gazette', explained, 'grinding the faces of the poor' fuelled radical de-

that this was merely the outcry of a handful of agitators in search of notoriety, the workers having had no grounds at all for complaint. 'Why,' he exclaimed, 'the next thing Mrs Besant and party will be demanding us to do will be to provide them with champagne dinners.'

To step up pressure on Bryant and May, the 'Link' published a list of the shareholders who had enjoyed such high dividends from the exploitation of the matchgirls — these included three MPs and over fifty clergymen. In the House of Commons, Annie Besant's former colleague in the secularist movement, Charles Bradlaugh, extracted an admission from the Home Secretary that illegal fines had indeed been imposed by the company, and demanded to know why they had not been prosecuted. Bryant and May's case was further undermined when four social workers from the East End settlement Toynbee Hall wrote to the 'Times' demolishing the employers' lying claim that a high average wage had been paid and ridiculing the idea that contentment had reigned in the factory until the intervention of Mrs Besant.

Under the impact of this publicity a distinct split ap-



Matchgirls on strike

peared for state regulation of labour relations and, worse still, encouraged the 'mischievous interference of the Socialists'.

No doubt all this helped to weaken the employers' position. But the decisive factor in the success of the strike was the strength of organised labour, not least of the matchgirls themselves. For although a small group who earned higher wages did return to work before the end of the dispute, the great majority of the women acted with a discipline and cohesion remarkable for workers so new to the class struggle. When several hundred strikers waited patiently to receive their strike pay, one

to back the strike and issue an appeal for funds. This wrecked Bryant and May's hopes of starving the women into defeat, and they were forced to accept the Trades Council's offer to mediate in negotiations with the strike committee. The matchgirls returned to work on July 17, less than two weeks after the start of the dispute, with the employers having conceded on all the main points. The woman whose dismissal had provoked the strike was reinstated, fines and deductions were abolished, barrows were to be used so that girls no longer had to carry boxes on their heads, and a dining room was provided where meals could be eaten free of phosphorus contamination. The company also agreed to recognise a Union of Women Matchmakers, which was founded on July 27 with Annie Besant as secretary. By September it had recruited over 800 members, making it the largest women's trade union in Britain, and over the following year it secured substantial increases in wages from Bryant and May, particularly for the lower paid workers.

To the Fabian historians of trade unionism, the Webbs, the strike was won because the 'weakness' of the matchgirls gained them the sympathy of 'all classes'. The lesson drawn by other unskilled workers was rather different. It was that, once organised, they were no longer weak and could defeat the most brutal of employers. Against a background of an upturn in trade and falling unemployment, the matchmakers' victory was followed by an upsurge of militancy among previously unorganised sections of the working class, most significantly the gasworkers' successful struggle for the eight-hour day in 1889 and the great dock strike later that year. These battles saw the rise of the 'New Unionism' of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, which raised the banner of socialism and independent labour politics. As Engels put it, the matchgirls' strike was 'the light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move'.



The strike committee of the matchmakers' union

ching far along the waste and across the road to the opposite houses, seriously impeding the traffic', according to a report in the radical press. 'The crowd was a typical East End gathering; the men were mostly in rough garments, their features bearing the stamp of habitual privation, and factory girls, matchmakers and others, were in great force'. Their unanimous condemnation of Bryant and May failed to move Mr Frederick Bryant, who maintained

observer noted 'the way in which the girls were determined to stand together at all costs. "I can pawn this for you", "I'll lend you that..."; was heard all about the room, and in every direction girls might be seen plotting how they could help one another on'.

Donations and messages of support arrived from the trade union and socialist movement throughout the country. The major breakthrough came when the London Trades Council decided

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# Rudolf Klement: killed by Stalin

HALF A century ago, Rudolf Klement, secretary of the Bureau for the Fourth International, was brutally murdered by Stalinist agents. Klement was killed on the eve of the founding conference of the Fourth International.

Born in 1908, Rudolf Klement joined the Left Opposition in Germany in 1932. In May 1933, he joined Trotsky in Prinkipo as his secretary — a position he occupied for the next two years during Trotsky's exile in France. Klement was among the most talented recruits to the Trotskyist movement in this period, writing fluently in three languages and with a good knowledge of six more. He played an active part in the conferences of the International Left Opposition. With Trotsky's expulsion to Norway, he became the administrative secretary of the International Secretariat in Paris.

In addition to assisting Trotsky's literary work, Klement played an important role in unmasking the Moscow Trials, and wrote a number of important articles. Trotsky praised his article on revolutionary defeatism, 'Principles and Tac-

By Richard Price

tics in War', adding that it 'shows anew that new, very serious Marxist cadres have grown up amongst us'.

After the murder of Leon Sedov in February 1938 (see Workers News, No.7), Klement assumed central responsibility for the preparations for the Fourth International's founding conference, including the drafting of its statutes.

The same GPU gang, directed by Mark Zborowski, which had been responsible for the murders of Sedov, Erwin Wolf and Ignace Reiss was on Klement's trail. A briefcase containing his papers, including the report of the International Secretariat to the founding conference, was stolen on the Paris Metro on July 8, 1938.

Trotsky's assassin, Ramon Mercader, is known to have been in Paris at this time, and boasted in Mexico that he had met Klement. On July 13, Rudolf Klement disappeared. His room was discovered in order, with an uneaten meal on the table. Nothing further was heard until a number of Klement's comrades, and subsequently Trotsky, received letters posted on July 14 at Per-

pignan, near the Spanish border, claiming to announce Klement's break from Trotsky. The letters accused Trotsky, in Stalinist fashion, of making a 'bloc' with the Gestapo and fascism against the Soviet Union.

If the hypothesis of an 'instant conversion' to Stalinism is considered, it immediately runs against the inconsistencies which riddle the letters — mistakes entirely out of character in this precise and serious young man. For example, Trotsky is attacked over his attitude to the POUM, while the GPU author holds up the example of Belgian Trotskyist leader Georges Vereeken who was sharply opposed to Trotsky's — and Klement's — criticisms of the POUM's opportunism. Moreover the POUM was suffering sharp repressions from the Stalinists in Spain. In addition, the letter to Trotsky is signed with a pseudonym Klement had not used for over two years.

Although the handwriting bore a marked resemblance to that of Klement, Trotsky rejected the possibility of Klement's 'conversion' as 'absolutely inconceivable', and regarded the letters as a 'skilful forgery' by the GPU.



Rudolf Klement (left) with Leon Trotsky in France in 1933

When the Trotskyist press raised the alarm after Klement vanished, the French Stalinists produced a mysterious 'Spanish officer' — in fact a Russian — who claimed to have seen Klement in Perpignan on the day of his disappearance. This 'Spanish officer' then departed the scene as mysteriously as he had arrived.

On August 26, 1938, Rudolf Klement's headless and legless corpse was found in the Seine at Meulan, twenty miles downstream from Paris.

Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher, claimed that the GPU's choice of Klement as a victim was puzzling, adding that he might have become aware of Zborowski's role as an agent. This is possible, but Deutscher consciously blurred over Klement's importance in preparing the founding conference of the Fourth Inter-

national. Deutscher had himself opposed the proclamation of the Fourth International. By assassinating Rudolf Klement, the Stalinists aimed to deal the Fourth International a body-blow at its inception.

In 1975, Georges Vereeken, by then an ageing Pabloite, wrote 'The GPU in the Trotskyist Movement', which contains an 80-page chapter entitled 'Rudolf Klement: An Agent? Certainly a Coward'.

Vereeken sought to brand Klement as a Stalinist agent but the 'evidence' he advanced was based almost exclusively on citing sharp polemics made by Klement on behalf of the International Secretariat against Vereeken's opportunist errors. These flimsy grounds are supplemented by personal abuse: 'Wolf's handshake was vigorous, but Klement would slide four flab-

by fingers into your hand in a manner I found physically repulsive.'

The Workers Revolutionary Party published the book in English in 1976, and added an introduction which, although it distanced itself from his views on the Fourth International and Spain, refrained from commenting at all on Vereeken's allegations against Klement — an astonishing omission.

When the Fourth International was formed in September 1938, Rudolf Klement was posthumously elected honorary president along with Erwin Wolf and Leon Sedov. Writing to Rudolf Klement's aunt, Trotsky described him as 'unselfish and courageous. I was sure that he would play an important role in the future'. It is in this spirit that he should be remembered.

\* Reprinted in 'Revolutionary History' Spring 1988.

THIS MONTH we conclude the extract from the correspondence between Leon Trotsky and his comrades, Alfred and Marguerite Rosmer, during the period following the murder of Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, in Paris. Trotsky's grandson — 'Seva' as he is referred to in the letters — is still alive. Now known as Esteban Volkov, he lives in Mexico.

From Marguerite Rosmer

21 March 1938

Dear Friends,

Seva's future is a source of preoccupation for Alfred and me and we often speak about it. The child certainly had great affection for Leon and his absence is very painful to him; he is unhappy and appears to be worried about his immediate future. A fortnight ago, Elsa and Roman affectionately and discreetly celebrated his birthday and a few friends also made a fuss of him on this occasion; when the next day Lola, with whom he was still staying, told him he was lucky to be made a fuss of like this, he said to her 'You think I'm lucky? I don't think so, and after that he was silent. I don't see him much at the moment and I am very sad about this. I asked Jeanne to send him to me at Perigny for the Easter holidays but I don't think she will. I cannot insist because she has her own ideas and she is very obstinate.

She certainly treats Seva in a maternal way, in view of his present upset state, but she cannot give him in his life the things which a young boy needs. I think it is now necessary for him to have a real boy's and adolescent's life and that all our efforts ought to be directed to this end.

If he stays in France, it will be difficult to take him away from the troubled life of Jeanne and all those around her. Could he be placed as a boarding pupil in a provincial lycée? I think this has to be ruled out in Seva's case; the life of a boarding school boy in France is no joke; the children are overworked by stupid studies; they have very few games and are often badly fed.

I am thinking of the American schools where the children study useful things, without intensive overwork as in this country and where they can have a healthy and enjoyable life. Seva is very sociable, he likes games and joins in them with enthusiasm, he also likes intelligent work; I think he would adapt quickly and well to American school life and he would have some good friends in New York (your friends) who would be happy to look after him and to give him friendship and affection to make up for the life of a boarder with its dry and impoverished emotional side.

## ROSMER-TROTSKY CORRESPONDENCE

I also believe that America will not enter so readily into this dance of death as our old Western Europe which is collapsing and which will be spared no horror; this is why it would be preferable for the child to live his adolescence in the New World which may be spared for some time yet.

I have been thinking a lot about America as a refuge for the child because Alfred has often spoken to me about your young friends in New York; he found them very loyal and very attached to you and he thinks that some of them would be very pleased to look after the child.

Those are my thoughts; you see that they are similar to yours; if they seem to you unreasonable, work out some others, we will be with you; make use of us and rely on our deep and secure friendship. We are thinking every day of Leon to whom we were so much attached these last 18 months and of you both, with infinite grief.

Marguerite

From Alfred Rosmer

Cité Jardin 187  
Les Lilas (Seine)  
25 March 1938

Dear Friend,

Your letter of the 12th has just arrived and as there is a good post tomorrow I am writing this note in haste so that you can have my reply more quickly.

As far as I know, no objection has been raised with regard to the obligation on each of us to conform strictly to the terms of Leon's will. As soon as I received your telegram about the setting-up of a small committee whose task will be to collect, examine and pass on the files (in agreement with Jeanne and Henri M[olinier]) I collected together the comrades whose names you gave me. We are all completely agreed to act as you have indicated, particularly as each of us consider your suggestion as representing the best that could be done. We notified Jeanne straight away and arranged a meeting with her. We haven't been able to hold this meeting because Jeanne refused to recognise our little committee and she added that she had already herself submit-

ted a different proposal and was awaiting your reply. Our action was therefore blocked and we also have had to wait for your decision. Your letter has given us that; we shall observe its stipulations precisely. I have no need to tell you that I for my part am absolutely determined to show the maximum amount of conciliation and goodwill and that I shall exert all my efforts to remove from our path anything liable to create the least complication in completing our work. In any case the arrival here of the woman friend that you told us about will certainly contribute to facilitating this.

As regards the new 'Moscow trial' I can't tell you anything today. Hitler's Anschluss<sup>1</sup> has arrived just in time to save Stalin — for the time being. The most recent hearings and the executions have disappeared in the face of the menace of war which has resulted in a real panic at the top more than at the bottom, among the leaders more than among the rank-and-file. The mere announcement of the trial caused a veritable consternation among the popular front leaders (apart from the Stalinists of course) not because it was an abominable crime but because it was a serious error. An article by Jean Piot in 'L'Oeuvre'<sup>2</sup> concluded: 'It is no good taking us for fools.' Even the Stalinists were embarrassed and that old crook Cachin could only repeat: 'Wait before you express an opinion'; but as soon as the 'confessions' came, all that was necessary was to print them below big headlines and suppress all the protests and denials. You have already no doubt seen that Krestinsky claimed to have passed 'substantial sums' to me in Berlin where I had gone to visit him accompanied by Magd[eleine] Paz!<sup>3</sup> I shall write to you about this in my next letter.

Affectionate greetings to you and Natalia

A.R.

### NOTES

1 On March 11, 1938, the German Army invaded Austria and Hitler proclaimed the 'Anschluss', i.e. union of the country with Germany.

2 Jean Piot was chief editor of 'L'Oeuvre', a journal which represented the right-pacifist wing of the Popular Front.

3 During the third Moscow trial, the old Bolshevik and former diplomat Nikolai N. Krestinsky had implicated a number of foreign militants whom he claimed to have met during the period while he was ambassador in Berlin.

# The turning point of the Russian revolution

**THIS PAMPHLET, published by the Workers International League, brings together five articles by Leon Trotsky which cover the decisive turning point of the Russian revolution from July to September 1917.**

All the items are newly translated and four of them have never previously appeared in English. The longest section, 'What Next?', is a brilliant analysis made in July of the class forces within the Russian revolution.

The chapter of 'What Next?' entitled 'The nature of the Russian revolution' in particular demonstrates that Trotsky, far from repudiating the theory of permanent revolution on joining the Bolsheviks, openly upheld it as the guiding thread of his analysis. Against the insistence of the Mensheviks and SRs that the revolution was a bourgeois revolution and that the role of the working class was to act as the loyal supporter of the 'democratic' Provisional Government, Trotsky insists that the struggle of the working class could only be carried forward through proletarian revolution. Above all, Trotsky stresses the interconnection of the Russian revolution with the proletarian revolution throughout Europe.

The other articles in the collection are: 'With Blood and Iron', 'When will there be an end to this accursed slaughter?', 'The Kornilov Affair Exposed' and 'An inquiry to the Bureau of the Central Executive Committee'. These articles comprise two sections of the Russian

**What Next?  
and other writings from 1917  
by Leon Trotsky  
Workers International League £2**

edition of Trotsky's Collected Works, Volume 3, Part 1, published in Moscow in 1924.

The overthrow of the Russian monarchy in February 1917 brought to power the first of a series of provisional governments, all of which proved incapable of satisfying the demands of workers and peasants. Early in June 1917, the Provisional Government of Prince Lvov embarked on a large-scale military offensive in Galicia. The response of the Petrograd working class was to take to the streets in a series of demonstrations which started on July 3, and lasted for four days. This spontaneous movement was suppressed by the government, which unleashed a campaign of terror against the Bolsheviks, closing

'Pravda' and ordering the arrest of the main Bolshevik leaders. Lenin and Zinoviev were forced into hiding, while Kamenev was jailed.

Within days, the offensive failed disastrously. Lvov resigned, and was replaced as prime minister by Kerensky. At mass meetings and in print Trotsky expressed his solidarity with the Bolsheviks, although the formal fusing of his Inter-District Organisation or Mezhrayontsi with the Bolsheviks was delayed until July 26 in order to assure maximum unity.

On July 23, Trotsky and Lunacharsky were arrested and held in the Kresty prison. It was there that Trotsky wrote most of the articles which comprise this pamphlet. A so-called 'State Conference' took place in

Moscow on August 13, and was met with strike action by the working class. In late August, General Kornilov turned on his erstwhile co-conspirator against the working class, Kerensky, and attempted an insurrection. Through its correct analysis of the situation, the Bolshevik Party — a persecuted minority in July — was able, by the end of August, to play the leading role in the struggle against Kornilov and prepare the overthrow of Kerensky through the socialist revolution in October.

It was on the basis of this experience that the Third Congress of the Third International elaborated the tactic of the United Front in order to win the masses from their reformist leaders and conquer state power. This pamphlet is not only a valuable addition to the still meagre English translations of Trotsky's writings of 1917; it is also a vital weapon in building the revolutionary leadership today.



The July Days — demonstrators scatter as they are attacked by Kerensky's troops

## Moscow winter of discontent

**Moscow Diary  
by Walter Benjamin  
Harvard University Press £7.95**

**By Richard Price**

**WALTER BENJAMIN, one of the greatest literary critics of this century, kept this diary during a two-month visit to Moscow from December 1926 to January 1927.**

The purpose of Benjamin's visit to Moscow was two-fold: he had been attracted to communism for several years and was also infatuated with Asja Lacin, whom he had met in 1924.

Although the reader has to bear with Benjamin's tortured account of the eternal triangle between himself, his friend Bernhard Reich and Asja Lacin, whom he described as a 'Latvian Bolshevik', the diary is important in two respects: as a portrait both of his own development and of the Soviet Union during the final period before the repression of the Left Opposition.

Characteristically, Benjamin tends to grasp political developments in their refraction through literature and art. The winter of 1926-7 was the last before the suppression of radical artistic groups and, although there was still a wide variety of innovators active in the theatre and the cinema, Benjamin already detects the dead hand of bureaucracy. Many of the writers and directors he met were members of literary oppositional circles, at odds with the increasing uniformity demanded by the bureaucracy.

In contrast, Benjamin describes Bulgakov's play 'The Day of the Turbins' (a special favourite of Stalin's) as 'an absolutely revolting provocation . . . as dramatically insipid as it is intellectually mendacious'. He was equally repelled by the cynicism of the Western literary 'fellow travellers' feted in Moscow.

Benjamin was able to witness the effects of Stalin's continued support for NEP and the extension of private ownership. He comments ironically: 'Nevertheless



WALTER BENJAMIN

there are fortunes — and from the Russian point of view they are colossal — accumulating in certain hands. I have heard of people who pay more than 3,000,000 roubles in taxes. These citizens are the counterpart to the heroism of war-time communism, their's is a heroism of NEP-manship'. He refers to the domestic policy being pursued by Stalin as 'above all trying to bring about a suspension of militant communism, to usher in a period free of class conflict, to depoliticize the life of its citizens as much as possible.'

Alongside the new bourgeoisie — the NEPmen — beggars and prostitutes are in evidence. Rumours circulate of growing anti-Semitism. Benjamin visits a court and sees a peasant woman sentenced to imprisonment for having performed an abortion.

Benjamin's political conclusions are cautious. He notes the bureaucracy's growing cult surrounding Lenin, with its 'shrines' in factories. He meets Trotsky's sister, refers to speeches by Opposition leaders Trotsky and Kamenev, and decides to postpone any decision on joining the German Communist Party.

Asja Lacin emerges from the diary, despite Benjamin's devotion, as petulant and thoroughly self-centred, her political views vague and inconsistent.

With all its idiosyncracies, 'Moscow Diary' is nonetheless an important addition to the list of Walter Benjamin's works published in English.

## Primo Levi — a 40-year fight for the truth

TRAINED AS an industrial chemist in Turin, Italy, before the Second World War, Primo Levi joined a group of partisans in 1943, and was subsequently arrested and sent to Monowitz-Auschwitz in 1944.

Levi was neither an orthodox Jew nor a Zionist, considering himself an agnostic. He stands among the ranks of intelligent humanist writers, bringing to all his works the analytical insight of a skilled scientist. His unique contribution to literature is contained in his works dealing with the concentration camps of Hitler's Germany.

For Levi, unlike many who have written on this subject, the task was not to pour hatred on the German people collectively, or to cry foul against history. Instead, he patiently analyses the functions assigned to the camps and the layers of inmates, always at pains to distinguish between falsehood and truth.

Levi was not armed with a Marxist analysis. His work is nonetheless extremely

**The Drowned and the Saved  
Essays by Primo Levi  
Michael Joseph £10.95**

**By Ian Harrison**

valuable for the scientific detachment with which he approaches his subject. As one of the 'saved' referred to in the title of this, his last complete work, Levi emerged from the camps determined to tell the complete story and thereby, 'make "the rest" participate in it.'

'We must be listened to: above and beyond our personal experiences, we have collectively been the witnesses of a fundamental, unexpected event . . . it happened in Europe . . . it happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say.'

He spent 40 years fighting against the stream of lies, falsification and myth surrounding the growth of fascism in Europe. While the Nuremberg Trials were staged in order to draw a democratic veil over fascism, and appease a genuine desire on the part of the

masses to cleanse the world of it, the process of de-Nazification in Germany in reality was manipulated to protect capitalist interests.

Levi recounts with genuine horror the discovery that the company which designed and built the crematoria for the concentration camps was still trading under its original name in Wiesbaden in 1975.

It must be stated that these essays are not the most accessible of Levi's writings. New readers are encouraged to begin with 'If This is a Man' (published by Abacus). 'The Drowned and the Saved' was written at a time when Levi's health was beginning to fail, and his powers of memory declining. Yet, in spite of this, he was not despairing for the future of mankind: 'The aims of life are the best defence against death, and not only in the *lager*'



PRIMO LEVI

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# Police brutality against Aboriginal youths exposed

**THE AUSTRALIAN bicentennial festivities are, by definition, a celebration of the white history of the country since it was 'discovered' by Captain Cook in 1788 and colonised by Britain.**

Today's descendants of Australia's original inhabitants, the 250,000 Aborigines, are rightly incensed by this tasteless jamboree. Their memory of the past 200 years is of slavery, attempted genocide, stolen lands, deprivation, alcoholism and continuous brutality at the hands of the European settlers.

Since last year, Aboriginal protest groups have been drawing attention to this less-publicised part of Australia's history, with particular emphasis on the continuing victimisation of their people. One aspect of their findings — the high death rate amongst Aboriginal youths in police custody — caused such widespread anger that the Labour Party government of Bob Hawke was forced to set up a Royal Commission to

investigate the claims.

There have been at least 98 deaths under these conditions recently — almost all of them young people. The causes range from 'suicide' to alleged murder and have until recently been kept secret from the population of Australia.

One such death, however, sparked off the national campaign for an investigation. John Pat, a 16-year-old Aborigine, was knocked unconscious by a policeman outside a hotel in Roeburne, Western Australia. He was driven to the police station where he received ten blows to the head, two broken ribs and a gashed aorta. He died from a brain haemorrhage. The policemen who were arrested in connection with the death were acquitted and reinstated in the force, even though evidence had been admittedly falsified.

Many deaths of this nature, it was revealed, are recorded as suicide even though the evidence points to murder. The actual suicides are explained by the hopelessness felt by Aborigines in their oppressed position and justifiable fear of

**By Graham Fenwick**

police brutality. Many Aborigines have told of beatings, torture — mental and physical — and also rape.

The proportion of Aborigines in jail is 14 times the national average. Every year in Roeburne, all Aboriginal men, women and children are arrested on average three times. Such is the ruthless treatment dispensed by the Australian state — a far cry from the sanitised version of history promoted by the bicentennial celebrations.

Other forms of racist oppression also fuel Aboriginal anger. Many are forced to live in suburban shanty towns consisting of tin houses whilst others, driven off their ancestral lands by landowners and developers, are forced to scratch a living in the most inhospitable desert regions. Their sacred sites are disregarded and destroyed by multi-national companies, typically mining and farming.

Youth employment prospects are bleak: over 50 per cent of the Aboriginal

labour force is unemployed while the national rate is nine per cent. Some Aboriginal towns have up to 80 per cent of the active population unemployed. Such work as is available is low paid.

Last month, Prime Minister Hawke attended a gathering of 10,000 Aborigines in a remote part of the Northern Territory and held

talks with tribal elders. He promised that his government would 'receive and consider' their proposals for a treaty to be signed by 1990. Petitions handed to him outside the meeting called for self-determination for the Aborigines, permanent control of ancestral lands and compensation for lost use of land.

Hawke's treaty will satisfy none of these demands. Australia's growing economic

crisis will intensify the problems of Aborigines, along with those of the white working class, as the Labour government bows more and more to the requirements of the multi-national corporations and finance capital. Workers and youth, however, must throw their weight behind Aboriginal demands, and fight to end this shameful aspect of Australian history through the struggle for socialism.



**A HALF-DAY strike of school students from Quinton Kynaston, Haverstock and Pimlico schools took place on May 18 in protest at the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority and the cut-back in teachers' jobs resulting from ILEA budget cuts. The students**

marched from Chalk Farm to the Department of Education and Science in Waterloo, where they presented a petition calling for the retention of ILEA and an end to Tory attacks on education.

## Leak confirms cost-cutting aim

**By Lizzy Ali**

**TORY CLAIMS** that the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority will lead to 'improved standards' have been revealed as completely cynical. In June, Jack Straw, Labour education spokesman, revealed the contents of a secret briefing paper prepared for Education Minister Kenneth Baker, which had been leaked to him.

The document conclusively proves that the purpose of abolishing ILEA is to cut costs. After 1994, the cost of any spending on education in the 13 inner-London boroughs, over and above the level of government grants, will be financed by the Poll Tax. At present, the gap between government funding and ILEA expenditure is 60 per cent. All protection for education expenditure in these boroughs will be removed between 1990 and 1994.

According to the Labour leader of ILEA, Neil Fletcher, who has himself led the capitulation to Tory cuts and attacks on teachers, the effects of abolition will lead to expenditure cuts of at least 40 per cent.

The impact of these changes will be disastrous for the working class. Coun-

cils, who will be responsible for the provision of education after abolition, will be faced with the choice: either raise the Poll Tax and risk

losing power, or make massive cuts in education. It's not difficult to guess which course they will choose.

## Namibian school strike against military bases

**By Christine McDermott**

**SCHOOL PUPILS** in Namibia have taken the lead in the struggle against the South African forces which illegally occupy their country.

A strike by 600 pupils and their teachers in the northern town of Ponghoni grew into a nationwide boycott after the authorities closed down the school on March 17.

By early June, more than 25,000 students from 35 secondary and primary

schools had joined the protest which is calling for the closure of South African military bases. Students and teachers from several schools in the Ponghoni area fear that the presence of the bases close by, which are used by the South Africans to strike at neighbouring Angola, is a risk to their lives.

The Administrator-General of the racist occupying

regime, Louis Pienaar, refused their demands and called instead for the security forces to construct bomb shelters for the schools.

On June 6, police moved into Katutura township outside the Namibian capital of Windhoek and attacked a large group of school children, firing at them with tear gas and rubber bullets. When they were caught, the children were brutally beaten and 43 were arrested. One victim suffered such terrible head injuries from a rubber bullet that intensive-care treatment was necessary.

The mass school boycott led to workers taking up the call for the closure of the bases and, on June 20-21, in the biggest strike in Namibia since 1972, over 50,000 staged a two-day general strike.

## College no-strike deal

**THE MANAGEMENT** of Nottingham City Technology College has proposed no-strike clauses for its teachers. The scab, non-TUC Professional Association of Teachers, which has a no-strike clause embedded in its constitution, is thought likely to accept the deal. This system of control over the teaching staff will go hand-in-hand with the authoritarian educational methods intended for the pupils.

City Technology Colleges have been introduced as a business-orientated alternative to state schools. They are being jointly backed by private capital and the Department of Education and Science. Local author-

ities will have no say in how they are run.

Tory plans to extend CTCs into the existing state school system are already being proposed in Thamesmead, on the outskirts of London, where the local comprehensive school is threatened. There has been widespread opposition from parents who have correctly pointed out that the college will be set up at the expense of local working class children. A spokesman for the Trust responsible for running the CTC has dismissed this opposition, despite the growing confidence of parents' action groups which expect a massive rejection of the proposal in a forthcoming ballot amongst parents.

### Daily god-slot

**IN AMENDMENTS** to the Education Reform Bill passed in the House of Lords on June 21, the government revealed that it is seeking to rid education of its more liberal nature. The new clauses mean that schools will have to enforce daily religious services.

### NUPE rejects YTS

**DELEGATES** at the annual conference of the National Union of Public Employees in May defeated a recommendation from national leaders calling for co-operation with government proposals to introduce YTS cheap-labour schemes onto NHS hospital wards.

## Scottish Tories up in arms

**TORY ASSAULTS** on education, in the form of university cuts, are coupled with a surprising campaign by Scottish Tories to safeguard Scottish universities. Have the Tories had a change of heart? Only when their own defence research is at risk. Cuts in Scotland have been so effective that they have cut the Defence Studies Department at Edinburgh University!