

Workers power

TURN THE PROTESTS INTO ACTION



OF ALL the vicious Tory attacks the cuts in public spending have roused the most immediate and widespread response. It is not difficult to see why. The 3% cut (150,000 jobs) that Heseltine wants in central and local government will have catastrophic effects in every working class household if not via its wage earners then through the loss of vital social services. The cuts proposed for 1980/81 are even more horrific. The Government is considering cuts of 2½, 5 or 7½% in local government (a job loss of 200,000 or more on the middle figure, half through forced redundancy.) The cuts in central government being considered (10,15 or 20%) would mean a loss of 200,000 jobs or more. And all this leaves out of account the cuts in the Health Service.

Add to this the jobs in state-owned industry — steel, ship-building and cars — and the figure of 3 million unemployed being predicted by some economists is not the gloomy fantasy it might at first appear. The response to all these threats has been the mushrooming of Cuts Committees all over the country, to protest pickets, marches, sit-ins in threatened hospitals.

Women have been to the fore in all these protests. As workers themselves, as the direct users of the social services, as housewives whose husbands' jobs or children's schools and nurseries will fall under the axe, they have come out onto the streets in angry protest. Since the cuts are a particularly vicious attack on them, the four million women organised in the unions must be mobilised.

Protest

The TUC and the public sector union leaders have been uncharacteristically quick off the mark, promising a 'vigorous campaign' against the cuts. The Fire Brigades Union has printed ½ million leaflets, the CPSA a glossy pamphlet. A veritable industry of protest has been set under way. The TUC has even promised a 'Day of Action' early in the new year. The South-East Region of the TUC has backed the November 7th Lambeth march and its rapidly rising star, Jack Dromey has called for the day of action in late November to

be taken in working time.

Responses have not been limited to the unions. Labour councils in London (most notably Lambeth and Camden) have pledged not to implement the cuts. Councils in Manchester, Newcastle on Tyne, Sheffield, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, St Helens, West and Mid-Glamorgan have continued to 'overspend'.

Heseltine, however, has not been slow in his response. He has announced in reply to the public sector unions that, 'There is no way that 17½% inflation will be built into next year's allocation. Therefore, if pay awards were to exceed a reasonable figure well below that, it would be measured in massive rate increases, which I am trying to avoid, or job losses in local government.'

The loophole of rate increases, which some councils, like Camden, are using to try to buy time (or avoid a head on clash with the Tories) will be closed under new proposals that Heseltine hopes to drive through by April 1981. These will empower him to set figures for rate rises which if the councils exceed he can claw back by decreasing their Rate Support Grant from central government.

Even the 'hard left' Labour councillors gathered around the paper 'Socialist Organiser' have gone for the rate increases as a redistributive measure which will hit business and commerce. Apart from the boomerang effects in

in job loss through the closing of shops and factories, the massive

rate rises (in Camden they will add £1.50 to £2.00 per week on every domestic ratepayers bill) will create a mass base calling for cuts.

All the forces at present leading the anti-cuts movement are avoiding the central issue, that of turning the massive protest movement into a movement of action: occupations and strikes which will hit not only the Government but their big business backers in the CBI. In the end only the move to axe their profits will stop them axeing our jobs and services. The TUC 'protest-machine' can, in fact, act as a giant safety valve for the Tories — good for letting off steam but for little else.

Strike action

To do this links must be forged with workers in productive industry. Arthur Scargill has called for strike action. We must win rank and file miners to holding him to his promise.

Labour Councils which are planning to implement the cuts must be forced to abandon them.

'Hard' councils like Lambeth must be supported by the whole labour movement. The rate rise blind alley must be resisted in favour of a refusal by Labour councils to pay the interest charges to the financiers. Militants must fight in every organisation of the Labour Movement for the policy of cancelling the debts of the local authorities, without compensation, for nationalisation of the Banks and finance houses.

Only such a perspective, mobilising the millions of workers affected by the cuts, can put Heseltine and Thatcher into head-long retreat — a retreat we must not let them recover from until we have driven them and their class from political power once and for all.

by Jill Daniels

Sunday 28th October 40,000 people march in opposition to Corrie's anti abortion Bill currently in Committee stage in Parliament.

The trade union section was sizeable but was dominated by the white collar unions such as NALGO, ASTMS and the CPSA with relatively few banners from the T&GWU, GMWU and the AUEW—a notable exception being marchers from Ford Halewood and Ford Dagenham. Labour Party branches and Trades Councils

were out in force, but the majority of the march was made up of National Abortion Campaign and Campaign Against Corrie activists.

TUC General Secretary Len Murray who led the march told the crowd in Trafalgar Square "I speak not just on behalf of eight million working men but also four million working women organised in unions. . . For all the women who have or want abortions, and the men who stand by them, the message that must go out from this demonstration is that the Corrie Bill must be defeated."

TUC

This type of rhetoric comes cheap. In fact—the TUC itself did very little to mobilise for the demonstration. They will be only too eager to let it drop again if rank and file trade union members let them.

The resistance to the Bill must be given an even stronger, indeed a dominant, working class component. Why? Because significant strike action is the swiftest and surest way to stop the Bill. How do we get this? Certainly demands must be made on the official leaders, but existing abortion committees must be replaced as soon as possible by Labour Movement delegate bodies. Local and regional trade union conferences need to be called to hammer out a strategy. Activities must centre around

getting speakers to trade union branches, factory gates and workplace meetings. The aim must be to win support for stoppages, building up to a massive strike on February 5th, the likely day for the Bill's third reading (when NAC has called for a mass lobby of Parliament).

Support

To achieve the support of women (and men) trade unionists the connections must be made between free, legal abortion on demand (and not just defence of the still restrictive '67 Act) and the other measures (cuts above all) which attack women workers jobs, wages, and conditions in the home. This needs to be hammered home, not just in propaganda, but in terms of linking up with the hundreds of thousands of women fighting to save their jobs particularly in the public sector.

For the working class the demand for free abortion is only a part of the fight to free women. The total, or partial, exclusion from social and political life that women's chaining to childrearing and domestic responsibilities in the individual household brings with it, MUST BE BROKEN.

Socialisation

The right and opportunity to work for rates of pay full equal to men, the provision of round the clock nursery facilities, are demands—amongst others—that point towards the full socialisation of womens traditional role. This is a goal which capitalism cannot grant but which the class rule of the workers can set out to achieve.

Without turn to unions Brighton will prove a

Hollow Victory

The 'Left swing' at this year's Labour Conference was not the result of a dramatic radicalisation among Party members, even less was it caused by the flooding of the wards and constituency parties with outraged militant workers. In fact it was the inevitable consequence of party leader Callaghan having driven to breaking point the traditional alliance of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the TUC leaders.

The TUC leaders, through their block votes, controlled the conference in the name of millions of workers. It is from their coffers that the future operation of the Labour Party must be financed. In the period ahead they have no use for a demoralised, Callaghan-led Party which has discredited itself in the eyes of tens of thousands of workers. Hence their campaign to review the entire structure of the Party, their concern to revitalise the Party and their distancing from the present Labour leadership. The majority of TUC leaders were prepared to break with Callaghan and Healey in the search for a suitable recipe to offer as an alternative to direct working class action to bring down the Tory government and guarantee a stable alliance with Labour in government after the Tories have been voted from office in 1984! The outcome was defeat for the Right on two of the three constitutional issues and a failure to dent, let

alone break, the 'Lefts' control of the National Executive Committee (NEC). Given such a defeat for the 'Grandees' the euphoria amongst most constituency and many trade union delegates was understandable. Later reaction, even from Left MPs like Dennis Skinner was more thoughtful. "The improvements in the constitution are marginal... Therefore I'm not euphoric."

Such caution is not misplaced. The conference victories over Gaitskell proved to be Pyrrhic ones. They opened the way for Harold Wilson, clad in the mantle of Nye Bevan to enter 'stage left' and carry out the revisionist programme to the letter. Benn, his shield-bearer in the job-cutting rationalisation which accompanied the 'White Hot Heat of the Technological Revolution' and whose radicalism led him to sit tight in Wilson and Callaghan's 'viciously anti-working class administrations' has emerged as the latest claimant to Nye's mantle.

Nevertheless the political and

economic conditions of the 80's are not going to be a re-run of the 60's. The deepening recessions and stagnation of British and World capitalism promise a sharp crisis for the Right-wing leaders and the 'Left' aspirants to power. The defeats at Brighton pose the question as to why Callaghan suffered serious rebuff and whether this situation can be reversed in the coming year.

Callaghan's defeat has its origins in his dogged defence of his openly anti-worker strategy since 1975, particularly the last year, 78-79. In this period he himself undermined the most stable prop of his Government and his regime within the Labour Party. Last Autumn he played the TUC leaders for suckers, extracting a concordat of acquiescence in holding back workers' struggles, limiting effective picketing and gaining large financial donations to the Party to fight an election which he then called off. He openly defied the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Conference decision against his 5% wage limit.

Healey and Callaghan's relentless pursuit of this policy involved threats of financial sanctions against bosses giving in to their workers, vicious attacks on the Fords and Public Sector workers, demonstratively crossing picket lines and urging scabs to break them. Combined with smear attacks via the millionaire press on far-from-militant union leaders like Moss Evans and Alan Fisher the traditional Right PLP-TUC alliance was stretched to breaking point. The catastrophic electoral defeat and the impudent attempt to blame even this on the unions have made Callaghan, Healey and Foot unacceptable candidates to the majority of union leaders as 'unifiers' and leaders of a protest campaign against the Tories.

The union leaders - both left and right - faced with a vicious Tory Government that is only interested in collaborating with them on the basis of surrenders and concessions that they know their members will not accept, desperately need to keep resistance within the channels of protest. To this end they have warmed up the state TUC version of the Alternative Economic Strategy and renamed it the Campaign for Economic and Social Advance. But they know well that an integral part

of containing direct action and the political radicalisation that can be a consequence of it, is to channel it into the safe waters of a Return Labour in 1984 campaign. Protest politics and a Labour Government to undo the Tories evil deeds is the recipe they need to keep control of the 'hotheads' amongst their own membership.

Given Callaghan's record it was a thankless task for Terry Duffy, Frank Chapple and David Basnett to put the Parliamentary Party-TUC Humpty Dumpty back together again. Duffy's predicament was that the checks and balances constitution of the AUEW allows a left majority in its lay-delegate National Committee to defy the totally Right-dominated National Executive. This was combined with the fact that his union was currently engaged in a bitter struggle with the Engineering Employers Federation. Thus Duffy could not 'deliver the goods' - a fact which earned him the contempt of the Economist, James Prior and the PLP Rights.

The buying orders of the PLP, whose reserved seats were full only for the reselection debate stand isolated as never before. The Prentice case, his passage into the Tory ranks has discredited his vociferous backers like Shirley Williams. When one adds to all this the 'normal' need for the Party to do a swift gear change into radical rhetoric when going into opposition and the Left Victories take on a less dramatic proportion. Indeed on a cooler inspection the 'Left' decisions are surprisingly meagre.

Inner party democracy - mandatory re-selection of MPs, National Executive over the election of the leader by representatives of the whole party rather than exclusively by the MPs - these issues held centre stage throughout Conference. Mandatory re-selection was the only measure passed which takes effect immediately. This was an unqualified victory over the expressed wishes of the overwhelming majority of parliamentarians.

Elementary as this democratic right should be too much has been claimed for and expected of this measure. As a mechanism for controlling and subjecting MPs to Party (i.e. Conference and NEC) decisions it is a very cumbersome and blunt instrument. It ignores the fact that MPs, many elected as 'lefts', are rapidly converted to 'realism' by the 'responsibilities' of Office within the framework of capitalist economic judicial and military power. The careers of Michael Foot and Stan Orme - both senior Tribunites and firm backers of Labour's vicious repression in Ireland bear testimony to this. Reselection will be an arduous process indeed except in the case of notorious right-wingers who are anti-trade union and grossly neglect their constituencies. The local Tory Press, opinion polls, right-wing trade union officials can mount a massive fight-back including the threat to stand independently as Dick Taverne did at Lincoln. The 'middle-ground' in the Party are not likely to support re-selection if it means losing the seat. The Right has also suggested postal ballots of members. To use re-selection on a broad scale to budge the right in the PLP needs a revolution in tactics. To outflank the Right, who will use all means to arouse the suspicion and hostility of the 'silent majority' of Labour voters against the 'clique' of activists, it

From tactic to strategy?

Workers' Action's invitation

Workers Action has issued an invitation to the Marxist left (No 155 13th-20th October 1979)

"The peaceful co-existence of left-wing conferences and a right wing Labour leadership is finished for now.

The next year will be important, maybe decisive, in the fight for control - which is really a fight between opposing class interests and class loyalties within the Labour Party. If the militants of the revolutionary Marxist left - most of whom, at present are outside the Labour Party - join in this fight then they can do work which can be crucial for the whole future of the British Labour Movement."

Workers Action continues:

"One of the major reasons for the divisions in the revolutionary Marxist left in Britain has been different attitudes on what to do about the Labour Party. This is the major strategic question for militants trying to re-structure and re-orient the British Labour Movement. The Brighton decisions put the whole debate in a new light.

The key to reorienting large sections of the broad Labour Movement will be a re-orientation of the existing revolutionary marxist forces - and that re-orientation is now possible, round the immediately posed tasks of defending, applying and building on the Brighton Conference decisions."

The confusions and evasions included in this invitation are legion. Firstly the identification of the Left-Right conflict within the Labour Party as "really a fight between opposing class interests" is a bizarre deformation of Trotskyism. The conglomerate left which Workers Action identifies itself with consists of unprincipled but ambitious politicians like Benn, who is not even a consistent Left Reformist, left-reformists like the Tribunites, assorted centrists stemming from the degenerated Trotskyist movement and tired refugees from the far-left 'sects'. It also includes genuine militant working class activists the cast of whose politics remains fluid and could be led to revolutionary conclusions.

Benn's interests are not opposed to those of the ruling class however much they may hate him. He represents objectively its left wing not ours. But, Workers Action will object, we do distinguish "hard lefts" from "softs". Thus in Workers Action No 154 they warn that "many of those who claim to be leading the left will waver or dither" and that therefore "a hard organised left wing will be more and more needed to defeat the hard organised right wing." But this terminology is both misleading and evasive. Hardness and militancy are qualities which many workers and activists in the labour and trade union movement possess. In the bitter struggles against Thatcher which lie ahead the only consistent strategy which can preserve and extend this militancy is a revolutionary one. But "hardness", in itself, is not a political characterisation.

The reasoning behind the Workers Action invitation to the 'far left' to join the Labour Party and their perspective of struggle is we believe profoundly mistaken. Firstly we do not believe that the conflict between the Left bloc and the Right within the Party structure is the central task facing revolutionaries in the coming period. The central front of battle in the class struggle will be the direct action that the Tory attacks will dictate to millions of workers.

In these battles the 'Labour Movement' will be defined not by the bureaucratised compartments of the official trade union bodies and constituency Labour Party organisations - a division Workers Action tends to reinforce with its equation of the constituency Labour Parties with the what it calls the "political structure of the organised Labour Movement." The great majority of militants in the factories, shops and offices are not and have never been Labour Party activists. Most are Labour voters, with reformist horizons. But many are Communist

Party members, some supporters of the 'far left' groups Workers Action condemns for sectarian isolation.

These militants can and must be won to class struggle tactics and to resolute opposition to the sell outs and betrayals which the leaders of the labour movement will attempt to inflict upon them. The politics which alone can inform these tactics, which can weld them into a strategy for working class power, must be the programme of revolutionary marxism.

The struggle in the Labour Party - initiated by the electoral defeat is at the moment a 'second front'. The de-stabilisation of the TUC-PLP dictatorship in the Labour Party certainly opens up serious perspectives for breaking the hold of both sets of bureaucrats. But in order to prevent a new alliance against the rank and file, appeals for mass entry into the constituencies, for a left alliance led by Benn and a hard left ginger group "defending, applying and building on the decisions of the Brighton conference" is in our view totally inadequate and mistaken.

Worse - Workers Action has turned determinedly to a new 'strategy' for the far left. Workers Action appears closer every day to espousing a policy of changing the Labour Party into a revolutionary party. "We have proved that the political structure of the British Labour Movement can be changed. Now lets change it." Drawing an analogy with the struggle to transform the unions and win revolutionary leadership they urge working within the Labour Party "without constantly making calculations about the improbability of their powerful bureaucracies being defeated this side of a socialist revolution", and scoff at those who make the "effort to build 'our own' labour movement!"

Workers Action is being deliberately disingenuous. The trade unions are mass organisations whose elementary task is economic defence. A revolutionary leadership, a party will comprise the vanguard ie the minority of active militants. This vanguard's task is to win the allegiance of the masses for the overthrow of capitalism. It is true that they may not displace the leaders in the formal union structure but they must break their leadership in the bodies which actively mobilise the masses - the factory committees, councils of action etc.

The Labour Party is a hybrid trade union social democratic party structure. Workers Action says that this can be 'won over' just as much as the unions - that to counterpose its 'smashing' to this is nonsense. Whilst obviously it is empty bravado for tiny groups of marxists to indulge in wish fulfilment fantasies about dynamiting the Labour Party, the obverse of the coin - the idea of a long process of 'boring from within up to the revolution in order to 'transform' it, is equally nonsensical. Building a revolutionary party is a matter of rallying a vanguard around a programme in struggle.

One element of that struggle is winning supporters at present within the Labour Party. A correct tactic for this is to build a revolutionary current in the Labour Party that claims their rights to membership of "the party of the trade unions". Distinct from this is the fighting united front with militant ('hard') reformist workers and activists to further their progressive demands on the reformist leaders. But a united front is a tactic not a strategy. 'Unity' with the reformists exists to effect a break between the mass base and the leaders. Such a break will inevitably be organisational as well as political. Such a situation obviously presents itself now over the question of making the leaders of the Labour Party answerable to the mass base in the unions and in the constituencies. But as we argue elsewhere the key to the forwarding of this struggle lies primarily in the unions. There we must take up the issues and demands linking up with the constituency activists, using the forces mobilised to defeat Thatcher, to defeat Callaghan - and Benn.

Labour Party Conference

is necessary to make this passive majority vocal and active. This means mobilising primarily in the workplace, in the unions.

But re-selection is not the central key to defeating the PLP Right or changing the policies they carry out in office. The Swedish and Norwegian Social-Democracies have automatic re-selection without ceasing to be stable parties of capitalist rule.

Policy

The real root of the PLP's power lies in its independency from the Party in all matters concerning the parliamentary implementation of Conference or NEC decisions. This has always been the case and is firmly enshrined in the Constitution which gives the PLP discretion over the timing and application of Party policy.

Unless the PLP were subordinated to the NEC and Conference, including the power to force the resignation or power to expel from the Party recalcitrant MPs then there is no way Labour in the House of Commons whether as Government or as Opposition can be bound to the will of the majority of the members.

On the issue of the Manifesto the 'Left' NEC made a shoddy compromise. It agreed to bring back to next years conference the necessary constitutional amendments. The 'victory' on this issue thus indicated a will on the part of the majority in the party and the unions to have the NEC control the manifesto but a lack of will on the part of the Left leaders to give decisive expression to this.

Thus 'victory' is an over blown description. Compromise or stalemate is a more honest description.

On the election of the Party leader, the Lefts proposal was weak enough. Instead of demanding that the sovereign body - Conference, elect the Leader, an age-old norm in many continental social-democratic parties, the NEC 'Lefts' supported a call for an electoral college, proposals for which should be brought to next year's conference. Any electoral college scheme would be grossly weighted towards the MPs and the union bureaucrats. The defeat of the resolution - hinged on Terry Duffy's casting vote within the Engineers' delegation.

Thus on the democracy issue the real gains were meagre enough. On the key issues posed to the working class by the Thatcher offensive - on cuts, anti-union laws, abortion, nationalisation, the war and Imperialist intrigue in

Zimbabwe, there was 'left' rhetoric aplenty (on Ireland there was not even left rhetoric). On all these issues there was a solid voting down of action. Thus, Composite 22, that called for support for Labour Councils who refused to implement the cuts was defeated - on NEC recommendation by 5¼ million to 1½ million votes.

Instead a, "massive and vigorous" campaign, "within the law" was supported. Whilst Conference pledged opposition to Corrie's Anti-Abortion bill, it restricted itself to defending the (restrictive) 1967 Act. Moreover, even such defence was rendered empty by the failure to impose a three line whip on Labour MPs in the third reading of the Bill in the Commons.

On anti-union laws Conference did not get beyond the National Graphical Association's resolution which called, "upon all working people to unite against this threat" and for, "maximum opposition" by the whole Party as well as in Parliament and a promise for a future Labour Government to repeal the Tory laws. Given that Callaghan had already sharply condemned industrial action and promised to fight against it, the silence of the Conference can only mean endorsement of his views.

Rhetoric

On nationalisation the rhetoric was plentiful, resolutions promised the, "Socialist Transformation of Society" the expansion of the National Enterprise Board, the renationalisation, without compensation, of hived off state firms or industries. Yet the Militant-backed specific commitment to, "nationalise the two hundred monopolies" had Benn on his feet - a very rare occurrence within the Conference - on behalf of the NEC to oppose it in the best left-demagogic style.

On Ireland, the fake lefts all combined to do Callaghan and Mason's dirty work for them. Only three members of the "left" Executive (Skinner, Maynard and Huckfield) opposed this body's shameful endorsement of Labour's bloody policy in Ireland and its endorsement of bi-partisanship with Thatcher and the Orange murder gangs.

The 1979 Conference can thus be seen as marking no major swing to the left in terms of policy. The Party leader election issue has been in the pipeline since 1976. Re-selection would

have been carried last year but for Hugh (now Lord) Scanlon's 'lost' AUEW vote. What makes the situation explosive are the impending clashes between the unions and the Government, the disrupted PLP-TUC alliance and the varying attempts to re-establish the terms of this alliance.

The Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory - sponsored enquiry represents an attempt to exert Trade Union control over the terms and pace of re-structuring the Party to meet the stormy period ahead. The Trade Union Bureaucracy is deeply alarmed by the declining electoral fortunes of the Party.

Basnett, an arch right-winger, has stated that, "an historic task now faces the NEC enquiry and the whole Party. That task is no less than the revival of the Party and the assertion of a massive democratic Party and a Party of Government for the 1980's and 1990's."

Slipping

Not only has Labour's share of the vote dropped to its lowest point since the early thirties, putting at risk its ability to win elections in the foreseeable future but its hold on the working class vote is slipping badly. The New Statesman (6.4.79) estimated an overall swing to the Tories among union members of 11% since 1974, with Labour holding the voting allegiance of only 50% (compared with 62% in 1964). Amongst skilled workers this swing is even more marked - 54% in 1964 and 43% in 1979, the Tories overtaking Labour with 47%. Union leaders recall the increasing difficulties of raising and collecting the political levy.

The vote gathering machine of the constituencies is also in a terrible state. Membership actually increased this year from 659,737 to 675,946 - although Labour Weekly claims a miscalculation and that the figure should be 670,410. An increase of around 10,000 in a year dominated by election campaigns (including the missed Autumn 78 election) is certainly not the stuff of which dreams are made. The figures are of course grossly inflated by the fact that constituencies affiliate on a minimum figure of 1,000 - Liverpool Edgehill, for example, has "just under 40" according to its agent. Glasgow Govan, "about 140". These miserable membership figures for solid working class areas tell the tale

of a withered an historically declining shell.

Labour Weekly estimates the actual membership at 284,443. This is still, of course paper membership. Active members, who regularly attend their ward, canvass at elections etc., are unlikely to number more than 10-15% of this figure.

The discussion at Conference of "becoming a mass party" shows clearly that the Labour Party is a mass working class party only by virtue of its Trade Union affiliation and the vote of these workers and their families.

The five Trade Union leaders in the Enquiry team consist of 'hard' rights like Boyd and Basnett and uncertain quantities like Evans, Keys and Jenkins. Their call for the Enquiry to limit itself to the issues decided and debated by the Conference in a first instalment report to next year's Conference, plus the PLP's fulminations and dire warnings of a split make it certain that the Left's 'control' of the Enquiry will be illusory.

Benn and the NEC are banking on the success of the membership drive and the raised membership fees to produce a more healthy situation by the 1980 Conference. Benn has appealed to the activists of the far left to enter the constituencies as individual members. His ideas for factory branches, which could draw in the trade union activists - shop stewards and convenors, indicate a realisation that unless the 'lefts' grouped around the Labour Co-ordinating Committee axis, 'turn to the trade unions' and appeal to the rank and file then they will eventually be steamrolled by the block vote, once the Trade Union bureaucracy have agreed a satisfactory deal with the Parliamentary leaders.

Decisive

In forcing through their commission of Enquiry the Trade Union leaders, aided and abetted in this case by Callaghan, intended to make sure that the taking of the vital decisions facing the Labour Party was not left to the PLP, the NEC or the annual Conference. They aim to ensure that they play the decisive role in shaping the future of the Labour Party through their sponsored enquiry.

In the period ahead they will be aiming to cast the Party, from top to bottom, in a mould more directly amenable to their inter-

ests. The aspirants for Party leadership, like Benn and the Constituency activists, will be forced either to compromise with the Trade Union leaders or to challenge the bureaucrats' grip on the Party.

The essential factor which can upset these plans lies in the mass membership of the Labour Movement. This means predominantly the affiliated members of the Labour Party in the Trade Unions, not the individual constituency activists or the Benn promotion campaign being run by the principle elements of the Labour Left.

The struggles against the Tories must be broken loose from the passive protest straightjacket of the TUC leaders and the Labour Left. If this is to be so these struggles must be politicised and militants leading direct action must immediately begin the work of democratising their unions, replacing and ousting their bureaucrats. These militants must be

Shattering

won not to a purblind syndicalism but to a strategy of holding the Labour Party leaders to account and to shattering the old apparatus of reformism in both its parliamentary and Trade Union form.

In this struggle the block vote of the Trade Unions must be taken out of the hands of their bureaucratic leaders and placed in the hands of the shop stewards committees and Trade Union branches that directly organise and defend the millions of formal members of the Labour Party. This will mean militants at every level fighting to ensure that the organised workers, not the Trade Union leaders, operate the bloc vote to hold the Party to account.

Only if this is the case - and it will face the resolute opposition of the Trade Unions and Labour leaders alike - will the battles against the bosses and the Tories not result in the re-establishment of the Right or in a Bennite left-illusionist regime but in the crystallisation of the key elements of a new revolutionary party cracking apart and dissolving the bureaucratized husks of the 'twin pillars' of British reformism.

By Dave Stocking

Benn speaking from the Tribune platform at this year's Labour Party conference.



A programme for

by Stuart King

THE SMASHING of the Somoza regime by the Nicaraguan masses represented a major defeat for American Imperialism in its own 'backyard', a defeat which the American and European bourgeoisies are doing everything in their power to reverse. As in other recent crisis centres for imperialism, the Nicaraguan struggle puts to the test the programme and strategy of all those claiming to be fighting to break the power of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists and to establish workers' and peasants' power.

The crisis in Nicaragua has glaringly revealed, yet again, that the largest world grouping claiming to stand in the tradition of Trotsky — the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) — is as ready as ever to ditch the programme of revolutionary Marxism precisely at the point where it is most crucial to the arming of the Nicaraguan proletariat and peasantry against the manoeuvrings of imperialism and its allies in Nicaragua.

The mass uprisings of workers and peasants in the cities and the countryside of Nicaragua resulted not only in the downfall of the American puppet regime of Somoza but in the almost complete destruction of all the forces of state repression. In the cities and countryside Civil Defence Committees played a major role in the insurrections — organising the distribution of food, health care and other tasks and developing the popular militias. In Managua it was the armed militia and population who stormed the 'Bunker' — HQ of Somoza and the National Guard.

FSLN

The other major force in the overthrow of Somoza was the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) whose guerilla fighters increasingly took on Somoza's National Guard in open battle in 1978.

Formed in 1962, and taking their name from the liberal nationalist General Augusto Sandino, who led a guerilla army against occupying US marines and US-backed Nicaraguan forces between 1925 and 1934, the Sandinistas took their inspiration from Castro's overthrow of Batista. Drawing their strength from the petit-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia all three factions of the Sandinistas worked with a perspective of overthrowing Somoza through an alliance with the 'democratic' or 'anti-Somoza' bourgeoisie. All factions agreed that, for the foreseeable future, a bourgeois-democratic regime, based on a 'mixed economy' was the goal for Nicaragua after Somoza was overthrown. On the duration of this regime, and the strategy for achieving it, the factions differed. The Proletarian Tendency emphasised organisation among the urban working class while the largest grouping, the Terceristas, had close links with the 'Group of Twelve' a group of prominent Nicaraguan anti-Somoza businessmen, lawyers and priests, and with the Social-Democratic Second International.

This perspective of an alliance with the 'anti-Somoza' bourgeoisie' was possible because of the increasing divisions within the ruling class. Having benefited throughout

Somoza's regime from the smashing of trade unions, strikes and peasant revolts, by the mid-1970's the voracious appetite of Somoza was even beginning to squeeze the other major bourgeois families who controlled sections of Nicaraguan industrial, banking and farming businesses. By 1979 Somoza had managed to accrue into personal ownership between 25 - 30% of all arable land. Huge amounts of aid and loans, given to repair the damage to Managua caused by the 1972 earthquake, were channelled either into Somoza's personal bank account or into his own business enterprises which were given the choice contracts for reconstruction.

The leading figure in the bourgeois opposition was Pedro Joaquin Chamorro a member of one of the largest families, in control of the Banco de America and the owner of the big daily paper, 'La Prensa'. He was the founder of the Democratic Union for Liberation (UDEL) an alliance of the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie. Chamorro campaigned in American ruling class circles for the dumping of Somoza before his regime strengthened the Marxists any further. His assassination in January 1978 by Somozaists resulted in a large scale employers' 'strike' and the further social isolation of Somoza.

By June 1979 a coalition government in exile had been formed from the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie and the FSLN. The five person 'Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction' (GRN) had representatives of the two biggest bourgeois families — Chamorro's wife and Alfonso Robelo Callejas, a member of the Montealegre Callejos family which controls the Banco Nicaraguense as well as two other respectable bourgeois figures. The FSLN had one representative the Sandinista Commander Daniel Ortega.

Compromise

How far the FSLN was willing to compromise to achieve this coalition with the bourgeoisie was shown by the July accords between the FSLN and GRN. This envisaged a new national army being formed out of the FSLN regulars and the hated but purged National Guard. Despite the declaration that only National Guard officers and soldiers, who conducted themselves honestly and patriotically' would be included (a difficult thing to find in a force that was notorious for its mass murder, rape and torture of Nicaraguans) the US-inspired deal was to hand over leadership to the younger, US-trained officers in the Guard. The deal was agreed with Somoza. It

was only the intransigence of the deputy left by the fleeing Somoza, Francesco Urcuyo, in refusing to hand over power to the Junta that scuttled this deal which was aimed at securing an orderly transfer of power and continuity in the army.

Although the bourgeois state machine had virtually disintegrated under the impact of the masses and the FSLN forces, leaving the FSLN and CDC militias in control of the country, the FSLN was meticulously sticking to its perspective of consolidating its coalition with the bourgeoisie. The provisional cabinet, appointed by the Junta, gave posts of agriculture, cultural, interior and foreign minister to the Sandinistas. All the economic ministries were reserved for bourgeois figures. The economics minister is former Secretary General of the Central American Common Market, the finance minister a leading figure in the Banco de America.

The FSLN leadership rushed to reassure the world bourgeoisie that for the moment they had nothing to fear. In terms of land and industry, only the property of the Somozas was to be confiscated. While this is a considerable gain for the land-hungry peasantry, given that Somoza controlled huge amounts of land, it still left intact huge estates in a country where 1.5% of the population owned 41% of all arable land before the fall of Somoza.

Deviations

Already 'unapproved' land seizures, in other words peasant occupations of lands not owned by Somozaists, have been reversed. FSLN leader, Daniel Ortega, commenting to a Cuban interviewer about the possible dangers of class struggle, declared, 'In order to keep the struggle from becoming more acute it is necessary to implement the programme supported by the Front and the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie. Then we must struggle against various kinds of deviation'. The deviations referred to obviously are the land seizures which threaten the FSLN alliance with the bourgeoisie.

While the three major banks have been nationalised, they had already been dramatically looted by Somoza in his last months of office and the owners have been compensated with Government bonds with a 6.5% interest rate. The FSLN leadership has already reassured the imperialists that the crippling debts incurred by the Somoza regime will be repaid, provided they are rescheduled. They amount to \$1.53 billion, \$593 million of which is due to be repaid by an economy which was left \$3.5 million in its state coffers after Somoza had departed with

— except



Somoza in his Managua bunker a fortune estimated at \$/ 500 million.

The large scale foreign investments — finishing and assembly factories in tax-free, duty-free zones set up by Somoza — 70% of which are US-owned remain untouched.

From September, under the pressure of the bourgeoisie, led by a campaign in the Chamorro family's La Prensa, the FSLN has been disarming the popular militias which sprung up in the battle against Somoza. Some are being integrated into the national army and there is talk of creating a new national militia, firmly under the control of the FSLN.

The situation in Nicaragua is clearly unstable. For the bourgeoisie and the imperialists the vital task is to reconstruct, and reassert, their control over the state machine. The FSLN, with its control over the armed forces and its undoubted popularity and mass support, is for the moment the dominant force within the coalition. The bourgeoisie, though severely weakened, has the strength of imperialism behind it as well as the bourgeoisies of other Latin American countries.

American loans and aid will be conditional on the 'revolution' not going too far. European imperialism's representatives have already intervened in support of the Tercerista tendency through a visit of Mario Soares, leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party and Filipe Gonzalez, of the Spanish Party, both intervening on behalf of the Second International.

The FSLN continues to develop in the direction of Bonapartism despite left speeches about, 'defending and extending the revolution' from its leaders. They attack, 'extremists' of the Left who they think threaten their coalition with the bourgeoisie. The expulsion of the Bolivar Brigade, and attacks on the Maoist organisation, MAP/FO are examples of this. At the same time they are threatening the bourgeois parties with further land reform and nationalisation if they openly challenge the

Sandinistas' power.

In such circumstances the tasks of a revolutionary communist organisation in Nicaragua should be absolutely clear. The overthrow of the Somoza regime was a tactical gain against imperialism and a historic gain for the Nicaraguan masses. We defend those gains absolutely and the FSLN regime against the attacks of imperialism and its agents in Nicaragua. At the same time it is vital to build an independent revolutionary party that will fight to force those elements of the FSLN who claim to stand with the workers and peasants of Nicaragua to break with the agents of the bourgeois and imperialism in the coalition. Such a party would be fighting around the programme of struggle for working class power in Nicaragua — the only programme which can break imperialism's hold finally.

Record

How does the record of the USFI measure up to these tasks? Far from taking up the necessity for an independent communist strategy in Nicaragua, the USFI has shown, once again, that it prefers to throw its weight behind a petit-bourgeois proto-Left Bonapartist regime. It does this to the point of consciously ditching its programme and publicly stating its opposition to organising politically against the FSLN regime.

Before the triumph of the FSLN and before the USFI was carried away by the sight of a, 'revolution' 'unfolding' before its very eyes it was willing to outline what, revolutionary Marxists will be struggling for' this included, 'repudiation of the foreign debt, expropriation and nationalisation without compensation of not only Somoza's land and property but also that of, 'Imperialism's and of the national (anti-Somoza —WP) capitalists.' A government was demanded that

its own comrades by FSLN

all seasons revolution

could carry out this programme which would exclude, 'all representatives of the ruling classes and imperialism.' (Intercontinental Press 16.7.79)

Bolivar Brigade

These demands were rapidly to be dropped as the USFI adapted to the massive popular support for the FSLN. The SWP (US) took the lead in this by openly siding with the FSLN regime against the Simon Bolivar Brigade. The Brigade was organised by the PST, a Columbian sympathising section of the USFI. It rapidly fell foul of the FSLN. Whatever the defects of the Brigade's project and tactics, and the motives of the PST in launching it, the reasons given by the FSLN for its expulsion from Nicaragua were revealing. The charges included organising more than 70 trade unions, advocating seizure of all the land, organising militias in the barrios of Managua and in Bluefields.

Support

Did the USFI rally to the support of these fighters for their published programme? Far from it. Mary Alice Waters, in a leading article in Intercontinental Press, (IP) September 3rd, launched a vicious attack on the Brigade. It had tried to, 'utilise the objective problems facing the revolution, the gap between the great hopes of the masses for immediate improvements in living standards and the difficulties of achieving this goal quickly.' This abandonment of their own programme — none of the demands of which had been carried out by the FSLN leaders and none of which they even promise to carry out — is shameless enough. But, to side with the petit-bourgeois-bourgeois nationalist bloc against those raising slogans in defence of the class interests of the proletariat and poor peasants, marks nothing less than a betrayal of the proletarian revolution in Nicaragua.

Bolsheviks

What would these self-proclaimed 'heirs' of Lenin and Trotsky make of the Bolsheviks explicit non-support of the Provisional Government in March 1917? What would they make of their successful attempt to 'utilise' the country's 'objective problems', their raising of, 'Peace, Bread and Land' and, 'All

Power to the Soviets' to win the masses from the Mensheviks and Kerensky?

A demonstration which had significant popular support, called by the Brigade when they were summoned to the FSLN HQ was condemned as a 'provocation'. The PST was sharply condemned for carrying out a policy, 'contrary to the position adopted by the USFI. The position of the USFI is to build a campaign of solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution in collaboration with the FSLN, not in opposition to it.' (IP Sept. 3)

An official delegation from the USFI affirmed this position, declaring that the FSLN had been right to expel Brigade members. It reassured FSLN leaders that they were against any activity which would create divisions between, 'the mobilised masses and the FSLN'.

The position arrived at by the USFI, explicitly stated in their statement of October 1st 1979, is that there is no need to build a party independent of the FSLN leadership. Indeed, they see the possibility of these leaders evolving, under the impact of the masses, into a vanguard party. The USFI's schema is to rely on the radicalisation of the FSLN leadership by the masses. But the masses themselves are not offered any tactics, let alone leadership, by the 'Trotskyists'. The pedagogic slogan of throwing the open bourgeois agents out of the government becomes an, 'abstract schema'.

Ditched

Thus the USFI's formal programme for Nicaragua is unceremoniously ditched to sweeten their relations with the FSLN leadership. All the measures taken by the FSLN are lauded as either great steps forward for the revolution or measures necessary to gain, 'breathing space'. 'In order to accomplish their strategic goals, the FSLN leadership places a high priority on building a vanguard party rooted in the masses, organised through the CDC's ... The character and history of the leadership of the FSLN ... show that it would be an error to place any a priori limits beyond which decisive sectors of the FSLN leadership cannot go as the process of permanent revolution unfolds.'

Any agitation against the alliance between the FSLN and the bourgeoisie must, therefore, be jettisoned. 'To focus political intervention today on the slogan, 'All bourgeois ministers out of the government' would likewise be to succumb to the sectarian temptation of applying abstract schemas.

'Such a slogan amounts to deliberately choosing today a direct confrontation on a national and

international level, based solely on the correct observation that representatives of antagonistic social forces exist in the government structure.' (IP October 22)

Similarly the USFI condemn any call for free elections or a Constituent Assembly, as playing into the hands of the 'Democratic counter-revolution'. Whereas in Iran and Peru the USFI uses the Constituent Assembly slogan in a way that reinforces the democratic illusions of the masses, in Nicaragua they fall into the opposite error. They prefer to rely on a would-be Bonapartist regime to safeguard the democratic rights of the masses just as the Mandelites preferred the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) to a Constituent Assembly in Portugal. Not content with jettisoning their socialist programme the USFI, in its haste to tail the FSLN, throws out its democratic programme too!

For Marxists the demand for free elections and a Constituent Assembly are crucial weapons for enabling the masses to overcome their democratic illusions. We do not counterpose democratic slogans to the need to build soviets — as the USFI did in Iran. At the height of the dual power situation in Russia, the Bolsheviks demanded the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. But, for

FSLN leaders. These are necessary measures for some future date but, of course, cannot be agitated for independently and in opposition to the leadership of the Sandinistas!

Fred Murphy, in IP October 8th, is beside himself with rage against those who raise such demands. "In this situation there are severe limits on the improvements that can be made in the living standards of the masses. Playing on the objective problem, ultra-leftist sectarians are trying to build their own political formations in opposition to the FSLN."

IP notes, with obvious relief, that a speech denouncing these 'deviations' from a leading FSLN Com Commandant, "Marked the opening of a campaign to counter the influence of sectarians."

Thus, not only are the socialist and democratic demands ditched but also the defence of the most minimal immediate demands is abandoned. In a remarkable piece of doublethink the USFI statement repeats its formal commitment to the defence of the revolution, 'by arming the people' while its press has been hailing the formation of a 'professional' Sandinista army and peddling the FSLN explanation of the disarming of the militias as justifiable because arms got in the hands of, 'criminal and unreliable elements'.

Resistance

The formation of armed militias under the control of the popular committees provides the only real basis for resistance to imperialist intervention and the defence of working class interests in Nicaragua. To be in favour of a professional army is to hand over the defence of the interests of the masses to FSLN would-be Bonapartes.

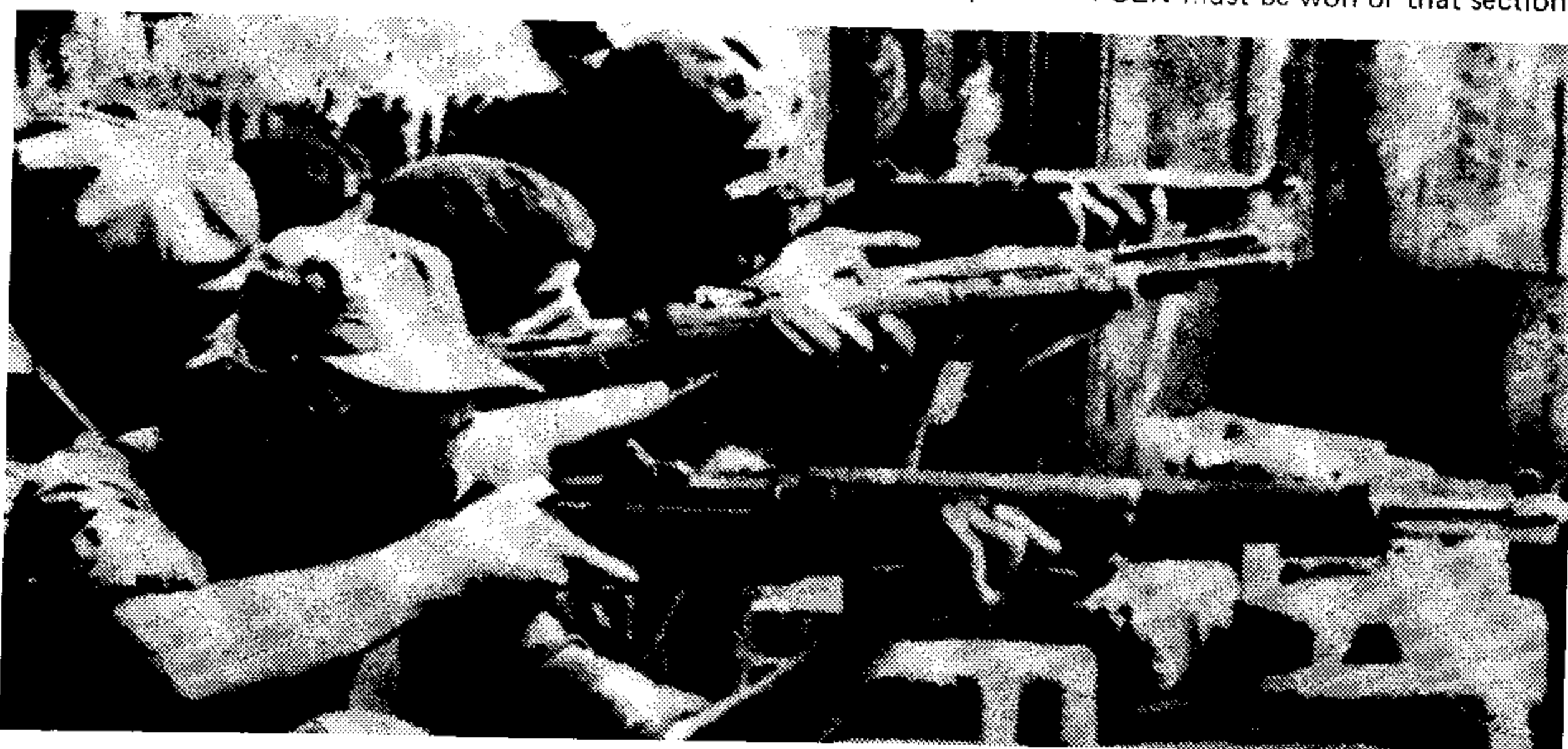
Why is it that the USFI is so willing to liquidate its whole pro-

consistently adapted to what they see as a force capable of bringing about the establishment of a workers' state at the expense of mobilising independent working class action. These 'revolutionary Marxists' proclaim that the mass mobilisation of the workers and peasants will propel the FSLN leadership down the 'Cuban road'. They forget that this road is not the road to the political power of the working class. It is the road to a bureaucratic dictatorship over the proletariat, and the repression of its political vanguard. In espousing the, 'Cuban road' the USFI is, moreover, adopting by proxy the Stalinist programme of Socialism in One Country, a programme whose Castroite version has shown its true face in Eritrea. Castro himself has made it quite clear that he is against was in Chile. The bloody outcome of this strategy was most tragically demonstrated in Chile itself.

This willingness to sacrifice the historic interests of the working class in the hope of achieving a 'deformed workers' state' has led post-war 'Trotskyists' into making a series of disastrous concessions to Bonapartist and Stalinist regimes — Tito, in Yugoslavia, Ben Bella in Algeria and to would-be Left-Bonapartists like Carvalho in Portugal.

For communists the mobilisation of the working class under independent revolutionary leadership around a programme for the smashing of the bourgeois state machine and the establishment of the proletariat's dictatorship on the basis of soviets, is not an 'optional extra' but the only road to establishing the political and economic power of the working class.

In Nicaragua the only genuine Trotskyists will be those who fight for political power for the working class through the establishment of workers' and peasants' soviets, armed peoples' militias and the dictatorship of the proletariat. We do not deny that the mass base of the FSLN must be won or that sections



Sandinista rebels

the USFI, any such demand would "break the dialectical inter-relationship that has been established between the activity of the masses and the leftward evolution of the FSLN leadership." (USFI statement October 1, 1979)

Expropriate

The desperate need for the workers and peasants to expropriate the capitalists and landowners and repudiate the crippling foreign debts which would immediately clash with the FSLN's 'democratic stage of the revolution' disappear from the demands of the USFI except in the form of good advice to the

programme, and the need for a revolutionary party and place its faith for socialist revolution in the petit-bourgeois leadership of the FSLN? It does so to the point where it can declare that, "By explaining its programme and ideas, the Fourth International places itself firmly on the side of the FSLN's battle to ensure the victory of the socialist revolution."

By acting as loyal militants in the framework of the organisation which led the overthrow of Somoza and leads this revolution, the members of the Fourth International in Nicaragua will defend the fundamental ideas of revolutionary Marxism." (USFI statement October 1st)

The USFI and many other strands of post-war Trotskyism has

of the leadership might be won over. But they must be won to a revolutionary party fighting intransigently for the expropriation of the capitalists and imperialists, and for spreading the revolution to the Balkanised Central American republics under the slogan 'For a Socialist Federation of Central America.'

We do deny that the policy being pursued by the USFI leadership and most of its national sections represents a revolutionary strategy for the Nicaraguan masses. Indeed, these policies confirm, on a broader scale than ever, the bankrupt, centrist nature of the USFI and spell potential disaster for all those workers and peasants who look to its leadership.

THE TACTIC OF the general strike originated in the British Radical and early Trade Union movement of the nineteenth century. But after the demise of Chartism in 1848, discussion of the tactic disappeared until the anarchists of the First International, led by the Russian Bakunin, brought the issue again to the forefront.

Their understanding of the general strike, as being synonymous with the social revolution, provoked a scathing response from the Marxist wing of the International.

For the anarchists the mere absence from work on a national scale would bring capitalism to a halt, in which event the working class could simply step in and take over. The Bakuninists, interested in grand schemes, but with a traditional sectarian contempt for reality, had failed to draw any of the vital lessons that Marx did from the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871.

The anarchist version of the general strike took no account of the armed, coercive, power of the capitalist state. It would not simply disappear as industry came to a halt. On the contrary it would become ever more vigorous in its attempts to smash the working class. For Marx and Engels the idea of being able to simply 'step in' was absurd and fatal. This led them to reject the General Strike as a method of struggle that existed only in the fantasies of the sectarians.

Training

It was not until 1893 that the Marxists were able to perceive that the tactic could be used in a way beneficial to the working class, in its revolutionary training and for its revolutionary goal. It was in the small, but relatively highly industrialised country of Belgium that the General, or Mass Strike as Luxemburg called it, revealed itself as a genuinely proletarian method of struggle. The Belgian Labour Party, affiliated to the Second International, rallied a working class movement, born out of a series of mass strikes that had raged in the 1880's, around the slogan of universal and equal suffrage. In an attempt to win that demand the Labour Party led a General Strike, in 1891, that rocked the ruling Clerical Party, and forced them to grant a revision of the

Constitution. A follow up to this took place in 1893 when 250,000 workers, almost the entire organised Belgian working class, struck. The result was the hasty granting of universal but unequal suffrage — property holders had more than one vote so a right wing majority in Parliament was guaranteed — by the Chamber of Deputies. In response to this mass political strike movement Engels revised the one-sided notion that the Marxists had previously held, and offered an analysis that envisaged different types of general strikes, 'You yourself remark that the barricades have become antiquated (they may, however, prove useful should the army turn a third or two-fifths socialist and the question arise of providing it with the opportunity to turn its bayonets) but the political strike must prove victorious immediately, by the threat alone (as in Belgium where the army was very shaky) or it must end in fiasco or, finally, lead directly to the barricades.' (1)

Potential

The concrete experience of 1891 and 1893 made possible a broadening of the Marxist grasp of the General Strike. Its potential as a means of political proletarian struggle was glimpsed. But it was left to the revolutionary Marxists of the next generation, primarily Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky, to refine and develop what Engels had only hinted at.

The suffrage question in Belgium was not finally settled in 1893. The task of winning equal voting rights remained. In 1902 yet another general strike was launched by the sturdy Belgian labour movement. In the intervening years, however, the Labour Party, having won 24 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, had grown used to struggle only on the parliamentary plane. Indeed, the leaders had found common cause with the bourgeois Liberal Party who had been squeezed out of any share of political power by the ruling Clerical Party. So, a parliamentary alliance was hatched and an all-class 'opposition' formed. The price of this deal was that the Labour Party agreed to drop the demand for women's suffrage from its programme.

When the 1902 strike broke out the Labour Party was tainted by a rotten compromise with the class enemy. In Parliament the Clericals, now confident of the reliability of the army, refused to budge on the suffrage issue and defeated the opposition. The Liberals' response to this was typically electoral.

Feeling the pinch of the

ROSA LUXEMBURG

strike they declared, 'We Liberals salute the calm and disciplined behaviour of the strikers, but would call on them to go back to work so as not to suffer needlessly. The next elections will see the victory of the opposition.' (2)

Vandervelde, the leader of the Labour Party, actually praised this declaration and orchestrated an about turn in his own party. On Saturday, 19th April, the party declared its total support for the 'sacred' strike — and on Sunday, 20th April it issued a call to end it! Vandervelde went even further and appealed to the King to resolve the constitutional crisis. The result of this treachery was the defeat and demoralisation of the Belgian labour movement and the tying of the Labour Party to the bourgeoisie in an alliance that became unshakable.

It was Rosa Luxemburg who fired the major polemical broadside against the Belgian Party. Parliamentarianism had been the dominant tactic within the Second International during the period of its consolidation in the 1890's.

But that trend was becoming transformed from an expedient tactical line for a specific period into a definite overall strategy. Luxemburg and the left of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) began their fight against this drift by arguing that the mass strike was of crucial importance as a tactic because it represented the, 'masses in motion'. Instead of passive reliance on the work, no matter how conscientious, of Social-Democratic Deputies, the German left grasped the importance of the mass strike as a central tactic in the struggle for Socialism. One that drew on the energy and organisation of the working class itself.

Guarantee

The Belgian Party defended its actions by appealing to the forward march of history. That the general strike had been called off did not matter one way or the other because history guaranteed a victory for socialism at some stage. Here we see the bankruptcy of the Second International's gradualism that was to reveal itself so starkly and treacherously in August 1914, when the Social-Democrats supported their native bourgeoisies in the Imperialist holocaust.

Luxemburg saw, in the line adopted by the Belgians, a failure to use the Marxist method in relation to actual class struggle and a political cowardice in the face of the enemy. She argued, 'Generalities to the effect that, in the final analysis, the course of history

is biased in our direction ought not to be applied when analysing any specific episode of our class struggle.' (3)

In other words, Socialism tomorrow is little comfort for a working class suffering defeats at the hands of capitalism today. The task addressed by Luxemburg was how to weld

the MASS

the day to day battles of the working class against capitalist attacks into an active offensive for the destruction of capitalism itself.

Here Luxemburg was striking a blow at the sterile evolutionist orthodoxy that was current in the Second International and manifested itself most clearly in the divide between a maximum programme (eventual Socialism) and a minimum programme (the routine, day to day struggle for reforms, and improvements in the here and now). These programmes were never linked in the Second International's undialectical scheme.

Fig-leaf

Vandervelde's talk of future Socialism was a fig leaf to cover his cowardice and his treachery. Immediately after the Parliamentary defeat, at a time when 300 000 workers were on strike and locked in a resolute battle with the Belgian State, he declared that the strike was 'now doomed'. For the reformist, this legal defeat automatically meant doom for the mass strike.

Luxemburg saw in this refusal to fight, a trait so typical of reformists and vacillators, a bureaucrat's fear of stepping beyond prescribed limits and a lack of faith in the will of the masses. The working class were declared beaten before they had even seriously entered the battle. Vandervelde had tied the mass strike to legality from the outset — and therefore legality won.

In the same way the British trade union bureaucrats in the General Strike of 1926 were able to cripple the struggle in advance. From the first day of the strike the right wing TUC leader J H Thomas argued that it was not a political strike, and he later gave thanks that the 'constitution' had won in the struggle with the working class he was supposed to represent.

In the Belgian strike, Luxemburg saw clearly what Engels had earlier hinted at. The mass strike need not merely be a pressure lever, a threat subordinated to parliamentary action, but can become the corridor to the revolution. It is not the revolution itself but in bringing the working class into the head on clash with the capitalists and their state, it poses revolution, which class shall rule in society, as the logical outcome. She criticised the Belgian Party for refusing to use the strike in this fashion:

'A general strike that has in advance had fastened to it the fetters of legality is like an artillery demonstration that begins with the shot being thrown into the water in front of the enemy's very eyes And the general strike remained ineffective because behind it in turn there was no threat of the actions of the mass movement following its unrestricted logic - no spectre of revolution.' (3)

At root the Labour Party's failure resided in its sacrifice of proletarian independence to the Liberal Party. The logic of parliamentarianism was parliamentary deals. Inevitably the Labour Party, frustrated in being a constant minority in the chamber, wanted to seek a short cut to power. The Liberals were the perfect ally in this attempt. Like the Labour Party they were in a minority and were in favour of reforms that seemed to place them well to the left of the Clerical Party. But the Liberals were a bourgeois party and, as such, had independent class interests, bourgeois interests to defend. Not only would proletarian needs and interests clash with these, but so too would the working class method of struggling for its needs.

The strike hits at the pockets of the capitalists, and this meant hitting at the pockets of Liberal Party members. The mass strike hit their pockets as well as those of the Clerical Party. The Liberals response was to turn the screws on

MARXISM THE GE

Vandervelde who they had embroiled in their orbit. Lacking the politics or the will to break the alliance Vandervelde sacrificed the struggle of the working class. Just as thousands of workers were flooding into the strike movement the Socialist fraction in the Chamber and the Executive of the Labour Party called the strike off.

Luxemburg explained this, and in so doing demonstrated the centrality of the mass strike as an independent purely working class action:

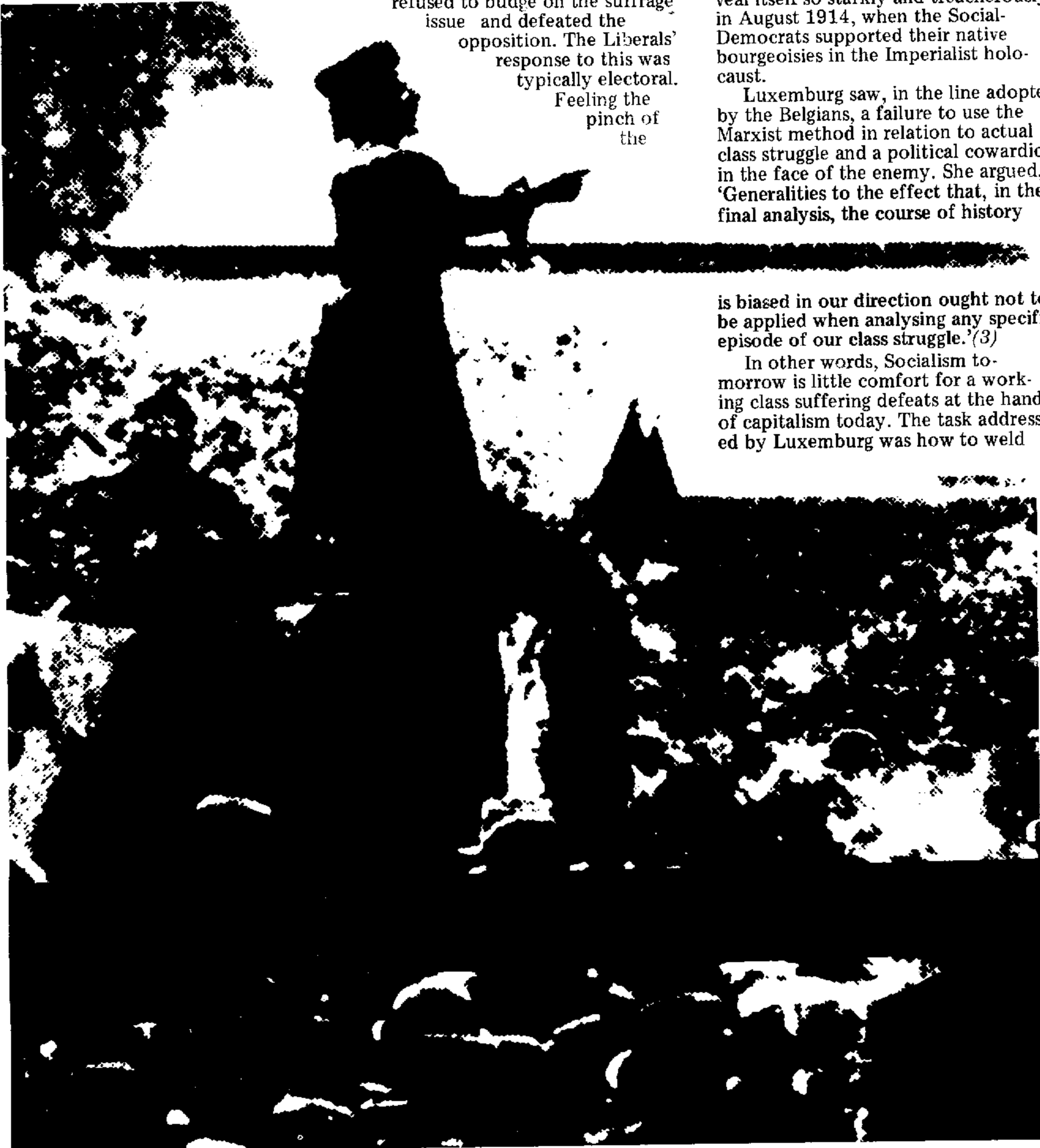
'The explanation for the contradictory and hesitant actions of the Belgian Party leaders can be found in their position of middle men halfway between the workers storming into battle and the Liberal bourgeoisie trying to hold them back for all they are worth.' (4) The crucial lesson of the Belgian defeat of 1902 is not that the general strike is no good as a weapon of class struggle, but that defeats will always follow when the working class movement is tied, by its leaders, to the interests of the class enemy.

Russia 1905

If the Belgian events exploded some of the myths and prejudices that had previously surrounded the question of the mass strike, then it was the strike wave in Russia that culminated in the revolution of 1905 that placed it beyond doubt, at the centre of the Marxist armoury of tactics. Luxemburg was quick to respond to these events attempting to feed their significance and lessons into German Social Democracy in her pamphlet *The Mass Strike, The Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906). Here she codified many of her earlier thoughts on the general strike.

Explosion

Czarist Russia possessed a seemingly backward working class. It was a tiny minority in a predominantly peasant country. To the orthodox 'Marxists' of the Second International it seemed the least likely place for an explosion of major class battles. Yet, in October 1905, out of a strike by a group of printworkers over a purely economic issue a mass strike movement developed that rocked the very foundations of Russian absolutism. The strike movement began as a patchwork of economic struggles. Its political coalescence came largely as a result of the unifying influence of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers Deputies, a workers council that was born in the struggle itself. In this movement the working class found themselves striving to carry through the democratic tasks that had in the past, and most typically so in



BURG and STRIKE

ISTS ANALYSE GENERAL STRIKE

WORKERS POWER has argued that the General Strike must be prepared for now, inside the workers' movement, to smash the Tories' proposed anti-trade union laws. We do not raise the slogan of the General Strike lightly, or without thought. The General, or Mass Strike is a mighty weapon which, if it is to succeed, has to be fully understood. We must point to its implications, its logical development when unleashed, the treachery of the current leadership inside the unions, the types of organisation necessary for the strike and so on.

In this article by MARK HOSKISSON, we look at the lessons drawn and the understanding developed by Rosa Luxemburg, a leading member of the left wing of the German Social Democratic Party in the early part of the century, as a result of her experience of particular general strikes. We regard her analysis as useful and relevant to today's revolutionary application of the slogan 'For a General Strike'.

France in 1789, been carried through by the bourgeoisie.

But they went beyond these tasks and gave voice as well to their own demands—most notably for the 8 hour day. Thus the Russian events brought the direct struggle for power by the proletariat to the centre of the world's political stage—they heralded the opening of the epoch of socialist revolution. This was something that Luxemburg partially grasped. She argued that though the tasks of the Russian revolution were democratic they were being carried out in a historical milieu very different to France in 1789. As such the outcome, resulting from the mass strike need not be confined to the rigid dictates of the dogmatists—the struggle could go beyond the democratic tasks: " 'Revolution' like 'mass strike' signifies nothing but an external form of the class struggle which can have sense and meaning only in connection with definite political situations." (5)

Actual

Like Trotsky, who argued that the 'truth was always concrete' Luxemburg turns her eye to the actual, the specific not contenting herself with general truisms as her guide to action.

German Social Democracy was forced to take account of the Russian events. At its 1905 Congress at Jena the party agreed in principle to the use of the Mass Strike in the event of any attack on voting rights. This was obviously a limited notion of the mass strike, curtailed even further in reality by the fact that at a Congress in Cologne in the May previous to the Jena Congress the German Trade Unions

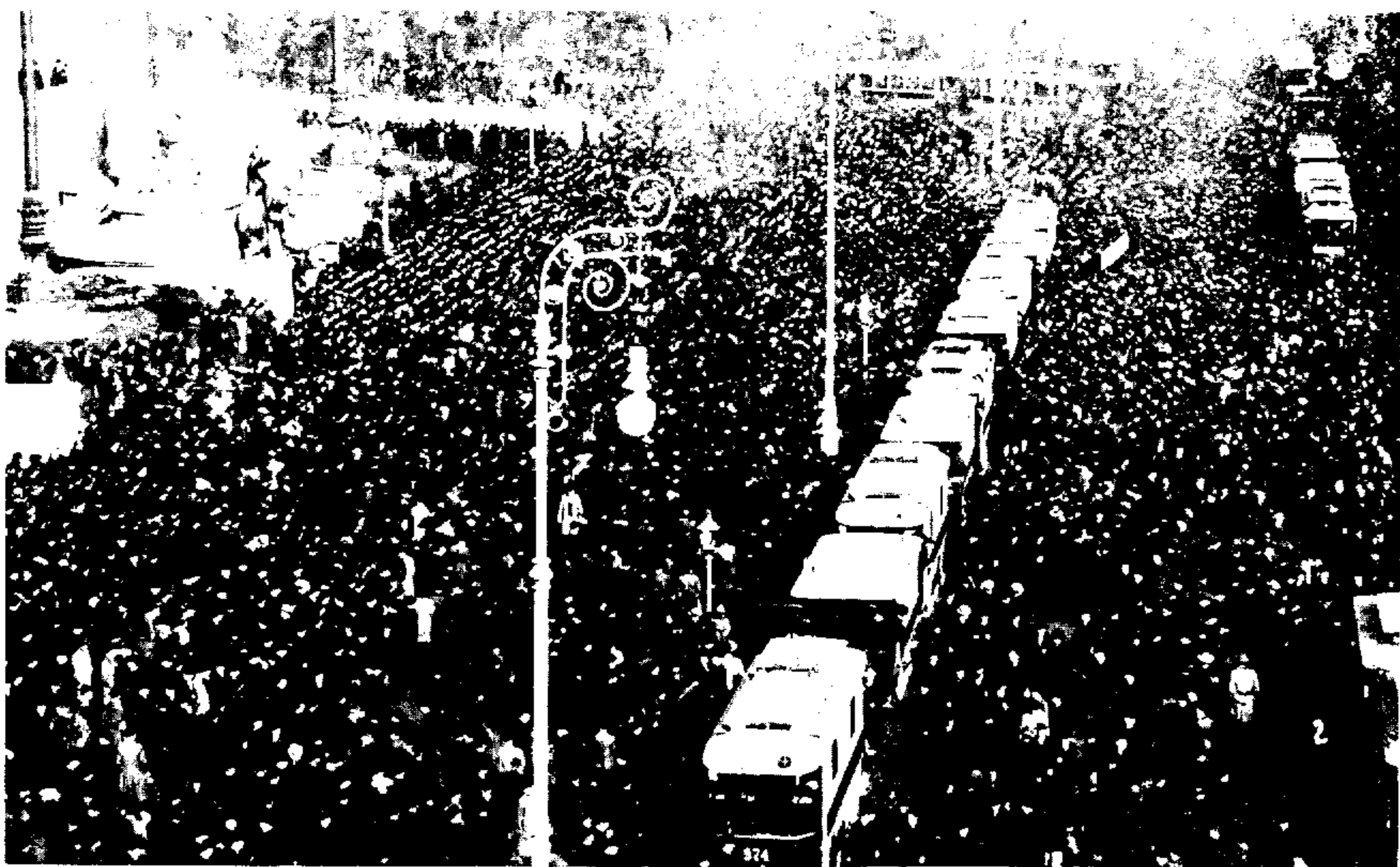
had voted against even discussing the question of the mass strike.

In 1906 the social democratic leaders made a secret deal with the union leaders that the Jena decision would never be implemented. In her pamphlet then Luxemburg was, despite Jena, arguing against the entire leadership of the German Labour movement.

Wave

Everything in Luxemburg's account of the mass strike demonstrates why the official leadership feared it so much. First of all she pointed out that the mass strike was something that grew, spontaneously, out of economic class struggle. It was not something that the leadership could simply name a day for. This was because of the inner nature of the mass strike itself. As a spontaneous movement it moved like a wave, sweeping all before it and pulling in many behind it. It stretched beyond the organised movement, pulling in the unorganised, the non-party and non-unionised masses, the communities, the lower middle class—all the toiling masses.

Such a movement, with its own logic, its own unfolding demands and throwing up its own leaders, challenges the prerogative of the old union and party leaders to control it. As such it challenges the existence of that leadership—it threatens them and in so doing raises the need for a new leadership, one that has the interests of the strike as its own, a revolutionary leadership: "An artificially arranged demonstration of the urban proletariat, taking place once, a mere mass strike action arising out of discipline, and directed by the conductor's



Demonstration in favour of universal suffrage, Vienna, November 1905.

baton of a party executive could therefore leave the broad masses of the people cold and indifferent. But a powerful and reckless fighting action of the industrial proletariat born of a revolutionary situation must surely react upon the deeper lying layers, and ultimately draw all those into a stormy general economic struggle who in normal times, stand aside from the daily union fight." (6)

For Luxemburg the notion that you had to wait until you had finished the organising, until you had all the masses carrying party or union cards, before you could call for the mass strike was hopeless pedantry. As Luxemburg put it most graphically:

"And while the bureaucrats of the German Labour Movement rummage in their office drawers for information as to their strength and maturity, they do not see that which they seek is lying before their eyes in a great historical revolution, because, historically considered, the Russian Revolution is a reflex of the power and maturity of the International and, therefore, in the first place of the German Labour movement." (7)

Her sharp dialectical thinking showed her that organisation was in fact a result of struggle and was there to serve future struggles, not as the right wing were arguing, the other way round. Probably the most important lesson that Luxemburg drew from the Russian events was the perception of the interaction of economic and political struggle in a mass strike. Strikes rarely begin as conscious political actions. More usually they are centred around economic demands for higher wages, better conditions etc. However, a number of such strikes, coalescing, invariably begin to develop common goals, goals that are devoted to meeting immediate needs but in so doing stretch beyond the narrow sectional interests from which they spring.

Obstacles

Further, a united fight for these goals will bring workers up against political obstacles—the capitalist army and police force, an economic crisis, bankrupt firms and so on—such obstacles can only be dealt with in a political way and so political factors mingle with the economic in the mass strike situation. Luxemburg described this relation between economic demands and political struggle in the Mass Strike. "The economic struggle is the transmitter from one political centre to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilisation of the soil for economic struggle." (8)

In the mass strike the everyday, the routine, the narrow patterns are all shattered and replaced with

the broader horizons of a whole class on the move, fighting for the future. It is this dynamic of the mass strike, this breaking of the traditional barriers between the political and the economic that gives it a powerful revolutionary potential. It can go beyond even its own professed aims—it pits class against class and therefore asks the decisive question—who rules society? The full logic of this was not fully elaborated by Luxemburg but she paved the way for a Marxist grasp of the general strike question by asking all the right questions and, albeit sometimes implicitly, drawing the correct conclusions.

Prussia 1910

The general strike question was posed concretely for German Social Democracy in 1910. In the debate that took place Luxemburg showed a clear-sightedness and trust in the strength of the masses, in their will and energy whereas Karl Kautsky, once the 'pope' of Marxism now fast heading to the camp of the opportunists, could offer nothing but an electoral perspective for the masses. An article entitled 'The Next Step', by Luxemburg, was published in March 1910 in the paper the Dortmund *Arbeiterzeitung*.

Prelude

This was not a major Social Democratic organ, but the article had been refused publication in all the main journals and papers of the Party.

In Prussia in 1910 the state launched an attack on the working class' right to vote. Luxemburg argued that this was a prelude to an all out attack on the rights of the entire German working class. As such it demanded a generalised response. Social Democracy confined the fight back to a round of huge street demonstrations—a protest campaign. These demonstrations mobilised thousands and proved that, given a proper lead, large sections of the proletariat were willing to fight. Faced with the failure of the demonstrations, despite their size, to achieve any concrete results from the Junker/militarist state (the Junkers were the landowning class in Germany), Luxemburg asked the question—'What Next?' Her answer was unequivocal—the Mass Strike to defend suffrage rights.

This alone could weld the class into a force capable of def-

eating the militarist state. She repeated in this article and in ones that followed, many of the main points made in her earlier pamphlet. The movement had to be coalesced as it was arising, it could not be seen in an exclusively 'political' or 'economic' light. But the opportunities were tremendous and were borne out by the increasing size of each demonstration. But, eventually, with no resolute leadership, with nowhere to go from where it was, the movement petered out and a great opportunity was lost.



Karl Kautsky

Kautsky had been unwilling to have the debate with Luxemburg on the Mass Strike since it posed the awkward problem of the secret deal to junk the Jena decision at the precise moment when that decision should have been implemented. Despite censorship Luxemburg did manage to draw Kautsky out and forced him to answer her arguments. Kautsky, in an article called 'What Now?' gave an alternative perspective to that outlined by Luxemburg. After developing an elaborate theory of the war of attrition, a war of delaying tactics until the working class was so well organised that it could enter the final decisive battle certain of victory, he stated what all this meant in relation to the Prussian events:

Judgement

"It threatens to make next year's general election a terrible day of judgement for the Prussian Junkers and their allies or semi allies. Their statisticians already recognise the possibility that we will win 125 seats in the coming elections. . . We have the key to this momentous historical situation, overwhelming victory in coming Reichstag elections, already in our pockets through the whole combination of circumstances. Only one thing would lead to us losing it and ruining this tremendous situation: an act of stupidity on our part." (9)

1: The Early Years

BELGIUM; RUSSIA; GERMANY



Living vindication of both Luxemburg's and Trotsky's arguments. The first ever Soviet of Workers' Deputies, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Russia, 1905.

Rosa Luxemburg

Continued from Page 7

Stupidity of course means relying on the strength of the working class and on its ability to fight for itself with its own tools of struggle. This 'wait for the election' strategy, echoing the mistakes of Vandervelde in Belgium, not only paved the way for the betrayal of 1914 but also set a grim precedent for traitors inside the workers movement. In 1968 in France when 10 million workers were involved in the biggest General Strike in history the British Communist Party, faithfully parroting Kautsky, wrote:

Derails

"... the Communists would enter the electoral battle with confidence and called on everyone to guard against giving any opening to provocations wherever they might come from..." (10)

Such a strategy inevitably loses. It derails and therefore demoralises the mass movement. It perpetrates the reformist myth that Parliament is a neutral forum which the working class could use for its own ends. Marxists have a name for such a strategy—parliamentary cretinism. Luxemburg's answer to this feature of the right in social democracy in her time was clear:

"We live at a time in which no more advantages can be gained in parliament for the proletariat.

This is why the masses themselves must enter the theatre of action". (11) Written in 1910 these words ring as true now as they must have done then, just seven years before the victorious working class revolution in Russia.

Luxemburg's major weakness was that she overestimated the potential of spontaneity. Her malefactors and her false friends both overplay this aspect of her politics. In fact, in her writings on the mass strike, she always argued that the role of the party was to lead the mass strike politically. However, she did not, and to some extent could not, see that a mass strike without a revolutionary party at its head driving it forward along its logical path, needn't result in catastrophic defeat, but would not lead to revolutionary victory either.

Burned

This lesson has been burned into the collective memory of revolutionary communism after the experiences of Britain in 1926 and France in 1936 and 1968 where tremendous mass strikes have been defeated or demobilised by the reformist and stalinist misleaders who stood at their head. Even here Luxemburg's emphasis on spontaneity is historically justified. She was fighting the schematism, the lifeless view of socialism and struggle being propagated by the parliamentarians in the Second International. Her passionate defence of the masses in motion against this was an important factor in developing a revolutionary wing inside social democracy. But it did lead to a lack of clarity

as to how revolutionaries should prepare and agitate for the general strike and what they should do in general strike situations to win leadership.

It was left to Trotsky to argue clearly and precisely for new forms of organisation to run the strike, for defence measures and for the sort of agitation necessary to weld the disparate slogans of mass strike movements into ones clearly focused and class wide in their content.

The lessons are clear for today. We must not simply 'wait and see' before we begin raising the call for a general strike. Definite political situations, irrespective of levels of consciousness, require definite political and tactical answers. This was the case in Prussia in 1910 it is the case in Britain in 1979. The attacks on the unions by the Tories, being prepared for legally and through the strengthening of the police and state repression apparatus, demand clear and resolute answers from the workers movement. Various strikes and movements will develop against the Tories but they will all be weakened by their isolation and their inability to tackle the real crux of the Tory attack.

Goal

They can be strengthened through the bringing of them together into a general strike. It is the duty of revolutionaries not to shout abstractly about a general strike but to raise it as the goal the working class must set itself if it is to repel the Tory onslaught. We must agitate and propagandise around the call now in order to win a vanguard of militants to a recognition of its necessity. We do this by seeking out forms of organisation that challenge the routine, that go beyond the particular workplace or craft. And we do it around slogans that prepare militants for the tasks ahead, that break the barriers between politics and economics, but are also, as Trotsky said "all hitting at the same point"—the inescapable need
FOR A GENERAL STRIKE TO BEAT THE TORIES' ANTI TRADE UNION LAWS.

1. Letter from Engels to Kautsky, November, 1893.
2. Luxemburg on Belgium. First Translated in Permanent Revolution No 1.
3. Ibid.
- 3a. Luxemburg on Belgium. First translated in Permanent Revolution No2.
4. Ibid.
5. The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions — Rosa Luxemburg.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. 'What Now?' Kari Kautsky; Translated in Workers Action No 143.
10. Morning Star; 1.6.68.
11. The Next Step, Rosa Luxemburg, published in 'The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg'. Edited by Robert Looker.

The translations of the writings of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky on the mass strike by the journal 'Permanent Revolution' and the paper 'Workers Action' provided valuable source material for this article. We would like to acknowledge our debt to the translators of these writings.

"Reactionary epochs like ours not only disintegrate and weaken the working class and its vanguard, but also lower the general ideological level of the movement and throw political thinking back to stages long since passed through. In these conditions the task of the vanguard is above all not to let itself be carried along by the background flow: it must swim against the current. If an unfavourable relation of forces prevents its from holding the positions that it has won, it must at least retain its ideological positions, because in them is expressed the dearly-bought experience of the past. Fools will consider this policy "sectarian". Actually it is the only means of preparing for a new tremendous surge forward with the coming historical tide.

Great political defeats inevitably provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions. On the one hand the true vanguard, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis attempts to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come. On the other hand the routinists, centrists, and dilettantes, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the authority of revolutionary tradition and go backward in their search for a "new world".

(L.D. Trotsky: Stalinism and Bolshevism 1937)



The Centenary of Leon Trotsky

The unique contribution of Leon Trotsky is not primarily to be found in his heroic role in the October Revolution and his masterful leadership of the Red Army in the Russian Civil War. These triumphs he shared with Lenin and the leading cadre of the Bolshevik Party.

The true test of Trotsky's calibre lies in the battle he waged, almost single-handedly, to preserve and extend the small and isolated nucleus of revolutionary Marxism in the face of massive defeats for the proletariat and its vanguard internationally.

Expelled from the Soviet Union by Stalin's thugs, hounded and hated by bourgeois and Stalinist bureaucrat alike, Trotsky kept alive the flame of revolutionary communism — the tradition of Marx, of the Russian revolution and the revolutionary Communist International.

Contribution

In the face of the degeneration of the Russian Workers' state and the Communist International, the savagery meted out on the workers of Germany, Italy and Spain by the fascists, and the betrayals of the Stalinists and Social Democrats Trotsky's most important contribution to the working class was the construction of the Fourth International.

Steeled in the underground in pre-revolutionary Russia, in the seizure of

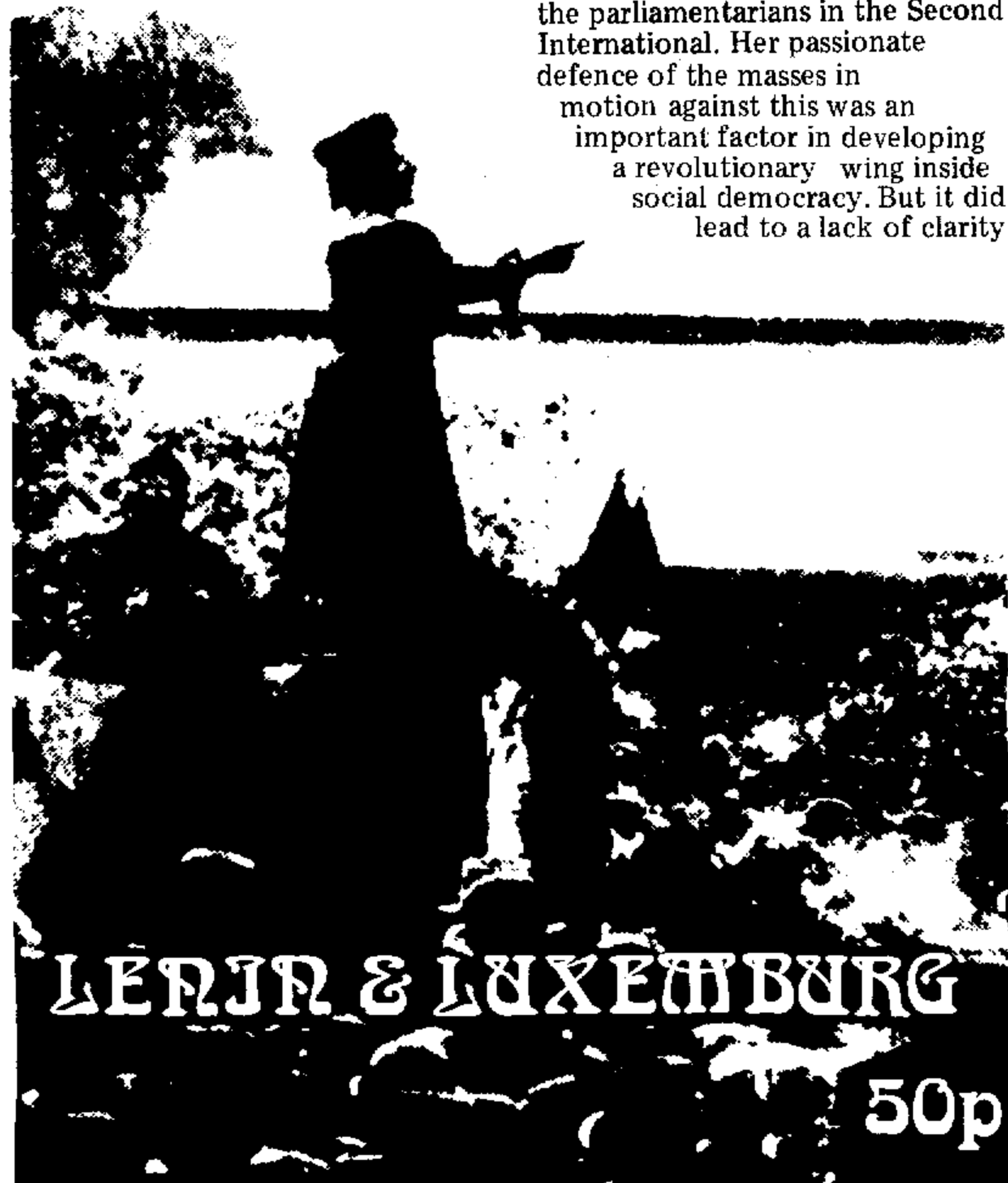
state power by the Russian workers and the battle to defend that state against bureaucratic degeneration, Trotsky spent his last decade constructing the cadre and programme of a new revolutionary international. He did so 'against the current' of moral and political collapse in the wake of defeat and demoralisation in the workers' movement. He did so knowing that the preservation and development of that cadre was the prerequisite of preparing the working class for the decisive battles ahead.

Inspiration

While the hack journalists of the colour supplements jeer at the isolated, exiled and seemingly defeated Trotsky we take our inspiration and programme from that period of his work. On the occasion of the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of his birth we commit ourselves to continue the struggle of Leon Trotsky, in the face of the opportunists and centrists of today, to re-build an International revolutionary workers' party capable of preparing and leading the struggle for workers' power and communism.

We will be carrying an analysis of the contribution and legacy of Trotsky in the next issue of our paper.

★★★★★



Back copies of the Journal Workers Power 6 are still available at 50p plus 20p postage and packaging. That issue carries the third part of a series of articles on the relationship between Party and Programme. In this we look at the formation of a revolutionary current within German Social-Democracy — the Left-Radicals, consisting of Rosa Luxemburg, Klara Zetkin, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring and other figures such as Karl Radek and Anton Pannekoek.

Send a 70p PO or cheque, payable to Workers Power, to the address printed in the Subscriptions box on the back page.

Army threat behind Right's victory

By Mark Hoskisson

In mid-October Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish Prime Minister, announced the resignation of his Republic People's Party (RPP) Government. The resignation followed a landslide defeat in the latest round of by-elections. The RPP lost all 5 seats in the Lower Chamber that were up for election, to Suleyman Demirel's right wing Justice Party (JP), whose share of the vote rose from 36% in 1977 to 47% in 1979. The JP also won 33 of the 50 seats in the elections for the Senate. The results show a marked swing to the right—but underneath these figures there is a complex political situation.

The Ecevit Government has been in almost continual crisis since it took office 21 months ago. The RPP is a bourgeois party but its election marked an increased desire for reforms on the part of the great mass of Turkish people, after two years of Demirel's reactionary rule. But Ecevit, far from fulfilling such desire, from his first day in office attacked the working class economically and physically.

Almost his whole term in office was spent negotiating a £164 million loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). To get the cash Ecevit had to prove himself a trusty servant of Imperialism. He devalued the Turkish Lira by 43% at the IMF's insistence, and he scrapped all plans for economic growth in Turkey. He allowed inflation to rise at rates between 5-7% a month with a likely end result of 100% inflation by the beginning of 1980. These policies, achieved by wage ceilings, freezes on public spending and tolerance of massive unemployment, were all geared towards making the working class pay for a crisis not of its own making.

Ecevit lost much of the support that had originally placed him in

power. In addition he suffered an embarrassing flow of defections, or "transfers" as they are called in Turkey, from the RPP ranks in Parliament. This culminated in no less a personage than the Deputy Prime Minister defecting. On doing so he declared: "It has become clear that it is impossible to overcome the heavy crisis, threatening the republic of the great Ataturk, with this Government."

During the two weeks prior to the summer Parliamentary recess the RPP survived by boycotting the Chamber, thus rendering its meeting inquorate. However, the tactic could only be shortlived and the bye-election results forced Ecevit into a corner. After a period of uncertainty, Demirel has agreed to form a coalition government from his Justice Party, the Nationalist Action Party of Alparslan Turkes, a classic fascist party, and the National Salvation Party, an Islamic fundamentalist grouping. The prospects for the working class from this motley alliance, in terms of increased repression, are grim indeed. Only a few days after Ecevit's resignation Parliament voted to extend martial law in 19 of Turkey's 67 provinces, for a further two months. The Guardian recently summed up Demirel's likely course:

"If Mr Demirel does come to power again, he is expected to collaborate closely with the army to suppress terrorism, particularly from left-wing guerrillas." (25.10.79).

murders

While Ecevit was in office there were 2,000 political murders, an average of 100 a month. The majority of these stemmed from NAP attacks, organised by the

party's military wing, the 'Grey Wolves', on working class organisations or ethnic minority groups such as the Kurds. In response to these attacks, particularly one last winter at Kahramanmaraş in which the fascists left 100 dead after a days bloody rioting, Ecevit introduced martial law in selected provinces. In effect this meant the untrammelled rule of an army heavily infiltrated by Turkes' fascist butchers, as well as other assorted anti working class elements. There has been massive repression as a result of this move.

Celebrations on May Day, a major event for the Turkish working class, were prevented in Istanbul, the largest city, by a 29 hour curfew and the arrest the day before May Day of six leaders of DISK, the left wing trade union confederation. During the polling for the recent elections 200,000 troops were mobilised, polling stations were guarded by armoured cars and 6 people were killed in incidents involving the army and some anarchists. The overwhelming bulk of the violence has, however, come from the state or the fascists. Ecevit, architect of much of the repression, but still pretending to be the people's friend, called on workers not "... to behave in any way that might hinder the duties of the Turkish armed forces who are striving to bring peace to Turkey ..."

The working class, joined by many Kurdish people from the Eastern provinces, were facing daily physical violence and harassment and could not afford the patience that Ecevit called for. They moved their May Day celebrations to the city of Izmir and staged a 100,000 strong march, stewarded by their own 'security teams' recruited from left wing youth organisations. A further



Suleyman Demirel

example of working class resilience to the all round attacks they are facing can be found in the SODA chemical workers who have been on strike for over 18 months. As part of their campaign they staged a defiant march which Ecevit banned from entering Istanbul. A co-ordinate response to the repression came last August when tens of thousands of workers marched in over 40 cities.

determination

In Izmir a march of over 4000 people burnt an effigy of fascist leader Turkes. Clearly there is a determination and energy that could, potentially be used, to bring Ecevit, Demirel and the IMF to their knees.

But the working class lacks a resolute revolutionary leadership that could really harness and direct its efforts. The DISK leadership, despite being imprisoned by Ecevit, continued to support him in the recent elections.

The fight to build a new party, a revolutionary leadership, will have to be related to forging unity in action—in defence against the state's economic and physical attacks and against the fascist violence—between the two trade union bodies. But also these sluggish and bureaucratic unions

will have to be thoroughly transformed, placed in the hands of their members so that they are able to carry out effective defence measures. The Turkish Communist Party (TKP) is incapable of doing this. It holds fast to the Stalinist programme of building a broad democratic alliance to organise a democratic revolution, after which, and only after which, the socialist transformation can be placed on the agenda of history.

The editor of Turkey Today explained to English speaking readers in a recent editorial that the TKP's strategy, as expressed in its paper *Iscinin Sesi* (Workers Voice), was: "To lead the broad democratic and anti-fascist movement into the struggle for an advanced democratic people's revolution".

This strategy has already proved disastrous in the "democratic" alliance with Ecevit, that brought him to power. An alternative course of action must be fought for inside the working class. A united front of all workers organisations must answer the united front of the profit hungry bosses and their imperialist paymasters. A struggle for full democratic rights, up to and including the right to form a separate state must be fought for, for all nationalities, and in particular, the Kurdish people.

The austerity being imposed on the working class must be fought by a defence of living standards and jobs that starts from a refusal to accept the idea that workers have in any way caused the economic chaos that reigns. The fight for such policies will not be carried out by the RPP—only the seizure of power by the workers and peasants of Turkey, the formation of a workers state can put paid to the ugly intrusion of imperialism. The threat of a military intervention which was a reality in both 1960 and 1971 cannot be ruled out should Demirel fail to piece together a workable coalition. The struggle is over high stakes. The small and scattered Trotskyist forces must begin a drive to win the masses away from the RPP and to the strategy we have outlined before the question gets settled to the advantage of imperialism.

H block: RAC's collapse into moralism

By a member of the Irish Workers Group

On Sunday 21st October about 500 people attended a conference in West Belfast organised by the Relatives Action Committee to plan a new campaign in support of Republican prisoners in Long Kesh. The prisoners are now in the fourth year of a no wash blanket protest against the British Government's denial of political status to Republican prisoners.

The Conference was held against a background of almost two years of consistent political activity—mainly marches and rallies—by the RAC's to publicise the issue throughout the North and win support. However, despite the tireless activities of the relatives, the heroic campaign of the H-Block prisoners and the spread of committees throughout the Northern Ireland Province, the campaign has failed to have

any real effect on the British Government.

The Relatives were forced to organise this conference in order to initiate what they called a new campaign on a broader basis of support for the prisoners. But at the conference it soon became clear that the organisers, dominated by Provisional Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), had very different ideas from those of the revolutionary marxists present as to why the campaign has so far failed and what steps were necessary to take it forward on a new basis.

The Irish Workers Group (IWG) and People's Democracy (PD) were prevented from distributing their leaflets outlining their ideas and alternatives for the campaign both inside and outside the conference hall. Even more alarming they were prevented from distributing their resolutions for the consideration of the participants. This anti-democratic action took place even before acceptance by the conference of the standing order

justifying such conduct as necessary to ensure 'unity'.

An emergency resolution from the Irish Workers Group, supported by the PD, deploring such conduct as an affront to a conference organised to defend democratic rights, pointed to the consequences for the remainder of the conference. They argued that without resolutions before the participants no effective debate could take place. Speakers from Provisional Sinn Fein and the IRSP opposed the motion with arguments about "disrupters seeking to make H-Block a party political issue." The motion was defeated.

The arguments of Provisional Sinn Fein and the IRSP set the tone for the rest of the conference. An IWG motion to have the whole afternoon session given over to debating the resolutions was rejected. The vacillating centrist PD and the Socialist Workers Tendency (SWT—a tendency within the Socialist Labour Party which solidarises with the British Socialist Workers Party), voted

with the Republicans. As a result, there was no open honest debate and discussion around resolutions as the basis for learning the issues of the struggle so far and establishing a new programme of action. Instead the conference, was subjected to close on 2 hours of rhetoric and speechifying by the Republicans.

The last session was formally reserved for resolutions which had not been made available for people at the conference to consult and evaluate. Consequently, as the IWG had predicted earlier, the first motion presented by the Provisional Sinn Fein was passed by a large majority—all other resolutions automatically fell.

The resolution called for a single issue H-Block campaign aimed at mobilising "Irish and International opinion" on the moral and humanitarian aspects of H-Block. Ironically for the Republicans such a perspective made it easier for the Peace People present at the conference to spread their pro-imperialist social

pacifist ideas. Kieran McKeown 'Peace Leader' received a warm ovation when he spoke of the need for unity against the denial of human rights in Long Kesh.

The election of the committee in the middle of the debate confirmed the drift rightwards of the campaign in search of the respectable liberal conscience of the Irish petit bourgeoisie. Apart from the Republican and PD members 2 lawyers, 1 priest and 2 human rights activists were also elected along with four relatives.

The IWG believe that both the organisation and content of the conference vindicate their analysis of the RAC campaign as being increasingly unable to break through to the anti-unionist Irish working class. As a consequence it is drifting inevitably into moralism and humanitarianism.

The difficult task facing Irish marxists is to combat this drift with a revolutionary socialist alternative based on mobilising the working class. Moralism, no matter how well intentioned, will not remove the imperialist yoke from Ireland. The self sacrifice of the H-Block prisoners and the military valour of the provisionals will come to nought unless this alternative is developed.

CUT THE HO - NOT J

By Steve McSweeney.

IN 1972 THE TUC resolved to fight for a "working week of 35 hours in all industries with a further target of a 32 hour, 4 day, week without loss of earnings". In 1979, the engineers, misled by Terry Duffy through a series of one and two day strikes, failed to achieve their original 35 hour week goal - but did win a 39 hour week to be implemented by 1981.

Herman Rebhan, of the International Metalworkers Federation, said that this 'victory' would be used as a rallying cry in the rest of the world. Despite the rhetoric there is an element of truth in this - the hours question will figure more prominently in the pay negotiations, in this country, this winter.

The latest unemployment figures reveal the burning necessity for a strategy to beat the ever-lengthening dole queue that capitalism inflicts on the working class. There are, currently, 1,367,639 people registered unemployed. Although this figure is down on the previous month's, there is nevertheless an upward trend in unemployment - 37,000 more people signed on in July, August and September than in the previous three months. Already 5.3% of the total workforce is unemployed. In addition to this, CBI 'godfather' John Methven, has predicted that 3 million will be on the dole within two years.

Recently Leyland, British Rail and Singer announced the axeing of some 83,000 jobs. The closures at Corby and Shotton steel works will massively increase unemployment in that industry.

"...there can be no doubt that the demand for a cut in hours, particularly for the 35 hour week, will figure more prominently in future disputes."

The Tories are letting the crisis rip, which means endless job losses, as part of their scheme to browbeat the working class into accepting that they must pay the cost of the capitalist crisis. In this situation there can be no doubt that the demand for a cut in hours, particularly for the 35 hour week, will figure more and more prominently in future disputes. Ron Todd of the T&GWU has already stated that it will be an important part of the Ford claim, while Charlie Donnet, GMWU, for the public service workers, has called it a target he is willing to discuss. The public sector manual workers' claim and those at Fords and Leyland and all T&G claims aim for a reduction in the working week.

In going into struggles for shorter hours, workers should watch their leaders carefully. In their world of negotiation and give and take with the bosses, union officials will always aim for a compromise. In 1978 a special conference of the Post Office Engineers voted unanimously for a campaign of direct action to win the 35 hour week. This was vital given the fact that many of their jobs were under threat from new technology. The management initially refused to budge, issuing a memorandum which read, 'Take a hard line with the unions.'

After a prolonged, but never all-out, series of strikes, demos etc., the momentum of the campaign faltered and the bureaucrats stitched up a 37½ hour deal, with the promise of increased productivity to compensate for the reduction. Obviously this kind of approach will have no effect on the number of unemployed.

Again, last year, the 35 hour week was part of both the Ford and the lorry drivers' claims. On both occasions it was the first thing to go in

the negotiations. Ford workers should take the warning for this year's negotiations - Ron Todd has already hinted that he is prepared to reach an agreement with the bosses that there will be no loss of production should a reduction in hours be granted. We are prepared to discuss realistically the problems that would be created and the ways that the trade unions can help them.'

This cynicism with regard to the hours question is reflected in the most august trade union circles. In 1978, union conferences representing 6 million workers voted for the 35 hour week. The TUC, of course, endorsed this, and then immediately asked the Labour Government to grant a 38 hour week! Callaghan refused but even then the TUC failed to mount a single action in their campaign for shorter hours. Their record is a disgrace and the message to militants is clear: winning shorter hours can only be achieved through determined rank and file action. Action that refuses to bargain with the hours of workers' lives and that holds fast to the demand for a 35 hour week and no loss of pay.

This will be doubly so in the face of mounting international preparation by the bosses to resist a drive for a shorter working week. The West German engineering and metalworking bosses granted 6 weeks a year holidays in the face of the IG Metall strike in 1978 in return for a guarantee that the 40 hour week would remain in operation until 1982/3. Only in Belgium have European workers managed to significantly dent the 40 hour barrier.

"There is an obvious connection between the scale of unemployment and the number of hours worked."

The Personnel Director of ICI Europa expressed his class' preparedness to fight ruthlessly to keep the 40 hour week in operation when he declared, 'In fact the widely recognised over-manning in British industry already constitutes our own national work-sharing programme and its inevitable results in terms of low national income should present sufficient warnings to other countries of the danger of this path.'

There is an obvious link between the scale of unemployment and the number of hours worked. But a reduction in hours in itself will not guarantee that the dole queues will shorten. Indeed, between 1953 and 1973 the average working week was reduced by 2.3 hours. This did not affect unemployment, however, because it was accompanied by an increase in productivity of 117%. In other words the rate of exploitation was stepped up so there was no need for the bosses to take on extra workers. The fine print of the engineering settlement underlines this. EEF chief, Frodsham, was at pains to point out that, 'Both parties will try very hard to improve productivity so that improved performance will pay for the cost of the 4 year agreement.'

Thus, the argument runs that workers must produce as much in the 39 hours as they previously produced in the 40 - and for 39 hours pay!



Last year Ford workers demanded the 35 hour week - but that was the first thing their leaders dropped.

Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

for workers' of hours

This will have no effect on the dole queues, in fact, given the coming recession and the consequent fall in demand, it will lengthen them.

Unemployment has always been a feature of capitalism - a result of its need to shunt workers in and out of production in response to short term fluctuations in demand and profitability. It is true that unemployment on today's scale has not been seen for decades. This is because, in the aftermath of the Second World War, and the rapid expansion of US imperialism that this allowed, capitalism enjoyed a long period of boom in which continuous expansion required virtually all available workers to be employed. Even then, of course, unemployment never disappeared and the official figures took no account of the thousands who did not register as unemployed, particularly women, whom capitalism could never profitably employ.

The fight against unemployment, therefore, is, and always has been, central to the defence of the working class against the ravages of capitalism. For this reason the struggle on the hours question is a crucial one:

"...it isn't even the number of hours worked as much as the speed of production which is crucial."

The essential prerequisite before a cut in hours can effect unemployment is that less must be produced than the bosses actually need. As such it isn't even the number of hours worked as the speed of production which is crucial. Normally there would be little point in working slower for the full forty hours, better to cut the hours - but in continuous process industries this point could be important.

The fight for shorter hours will depend on the mobilisation of the rank and file in a long, and probably bitter, struggle. Clearly this cannot be generated if the end result is going to mean less pay. Alongside the demand for shorter hours, therefore, we also demand the maintenance of the weekly rate.

Tory Chancellor Howe has already announced his intention of holding back wage claims with the threat of redundancies, 'More pay will all too often mean fewer jobs.' In this wage round the bureaucrats are poised to

place the struggle for shorter hours as an alternative to wage claims that improve and safeguard their members' real wages. The public sector manual workers' claim of NUPE, T&GWU and G&MWU, for example, calls for only a 17.5% rise as a starting point for negotiations. Against both the open class enemy and the treacherous union bureaucrats we have to insist on at least the same pay for fewer hours.

This is a demand that many militants will find it difficult to put. It runs completely counter to the old trade union maxim, 'A fair day's pay for a fair day's work'. This serves only to prove the limitations of traditional trade unionism.

In a situation where employers are forced to dig their heels in, where the competing interests of the two major classes in society are pitted one against the other, trade unionism is trapped into accepting the arguments and attitudes of the capitalists. What the workers need becomes 'unrealistic' and 'unreasonable'.

At the heart of the matter is the question of how wages are determined. A common belief is that they depend

URS OBS!

upon the value of the products turned out in the period of payment — usually a week. Hence, it would be argued a shorter week with less produced must lead to a fall in wages. On this basis arguing for the same wages for less output does appear to fly in the face of economic reality.

Marxism long ago revealed that in this, as in so many things, appearances are deceptive. After all, how are the wages of 'unproductive' workers determined? How could you put a price on the output of workers in the service industries?

In reality wages are based on the money required to keep a workforce alive and capable of reproducing itself in both numbers and skills. The level of wages, therefore, depends on the standard of living that workers expect and can fight to win.

"...whatever the length of the working week it is crucial that workers win the necessary wages..."

Whether the worker is employed or not makes no difference to the cost of living. (Which, incidentally, is why we demand the average wage for the unemployed.)

scale of hours that is the cutting of hours by whatever is needed to keep everybody employed. In this context stewards must control the sharing out of the available work across the entire workforce.

At the same time, if more workers are to be taken on, management have to have their hands forced. Their 'right' to decide on the size of the workforce has to be taken away. We have to fight for **Trade Union control of hiring and firing**. At present, even if this were won, it would not be easily implemented because neither unions nor stewards know who needs work. To change this the Trade Unions must register within their ranks all the unemployed. This would have the added benefit of uniting the whole working class, thus preventing the bosses, or the Fascists, from playing the unemployed off against the employed.

In this light the ritualistic call for the 35 hour week from the TUC is only a partial answer to unemployment. Indeed, on the basis of their record of inaction, no answer at all. If it is posed on its own, without also calling for workers control and lower productivity together with the demand that employers take on more workers, then the slogan of the 35 hour week

control

is dangerously one-sided.

Nevertheless, it is a demand that we would urge militants to take up and fight for. It is one to which the union leaders should be tied, we must demand that they act upon it. But, to the Ford workers, the public sector workers, the miners and all the other sections of workers who are calling for the 35 hour week, we raise the clear warning that the bureaucrats will, indeed, in the case of Ron Todd already have, started to buckle on the question. We believe that the demand can only be won by the self activity of the rank and file.

In 1866 the First International, under the leadership of Karl Marx, began the campaign for the eight-hour day. On May Day 1890 the Second International called for an international strike in support of the same demand. It took years to win it, but, in the end, it was won by the direct action of workers themselves.

In 1905 the working class of Petrograd, in Russia, joined the campaign. They fought for the eight hour day by the simple, but effective, measure of leaving work, en masse, after eight hours. The same sort of grit and initiative is needed if the 35 hour week is to be won today — if it is to become more than the cherry that is quickly removed from the officials' negotiating cake and actually become a means of combatting the evils of unemployment.

Thus, whatever the length of the working week, it is crucial that workers win the necessary wages to defend, and extend, their living standards.

The bosses, of course, will reply that nice as that might be it just does not make economic sense. Our answer to them is clear, **'We are not going to bail you out of the crisis that your system has created, from the point of view of OUR economy this is the only demand that does make sense.'**

The clash of class interests is obvious and no amount of arguing is going to persuade the bosses to give in. Their aim is to win profits, not to satisfy the needs of workers. The question is therefore raised, how are we to fight for shorter hours?

We have argued that it is the volume of output, the speed of production, that is central to the question of the shorter working week. To prevent a situation developing in which workers produce as much in a shorter week as they previously produced in 40 hours we have to fight for workers' control of both production speed and the number of hours worked. Shop stewards must win control of the speed of work and the volume of output and, therefore, the number of hours worked. We call for a sliding

MINERS' CLAIM: STRIKE COULD TOPPLE TORIES

The Tory Government, remembering the battles that Heath's various phases of Incomes Policy produced, are currently playing a careful game. Instead of openly announcing a statutory limit on wage rises they are restricting the money supply and imposing vicious cash limits in the Public Sector. The philosophy is, that in the private sector pay rises will have to be bought by higher productivity while in the public sector a limited amount of available cash will determine the scale of wage increases. Make no mistake—this is an Incomes policy and, like all incomes policies under capitalism it is aimed at cutting workers living standards.



Andrew Ward (Report)

Breaching this policy will be vital in the public sector if its many employees are not to continue having to live on poverty line wages. It is in this light that the current miners pay claim must be seen. It could become a rallying point for the whole of the public sector workforce.

The NUM claim is for rises of between 35 and 63% with a new minimum wage of £140 for face-workers. An important feature

of this claim is that it has been brought forward from March to November, as a result of conference decision. In October, the NCB, fearful of treading on the unions toes, and fully aware that it will be able to stitch up a mutually acceptable compromise with its old pal Joe Gormley, agreed to the change in the settlement date. But, they are proposing that the changeover be in stages, with an interim date, for this round of bargaining, being at the beginning of January. Gormley, who saw talk of industrial action as "miles away" will probably swing the right wing on the Executive into accepting this. In return the NCB are likely to go part, though not full, way to meeting the NUM claim, softening the compromise up with concessions on fringe benefits.

This course will not only be disastrous for the miners—it will also weaken the ability of the less powerful unions in the public sector to take on the Government.

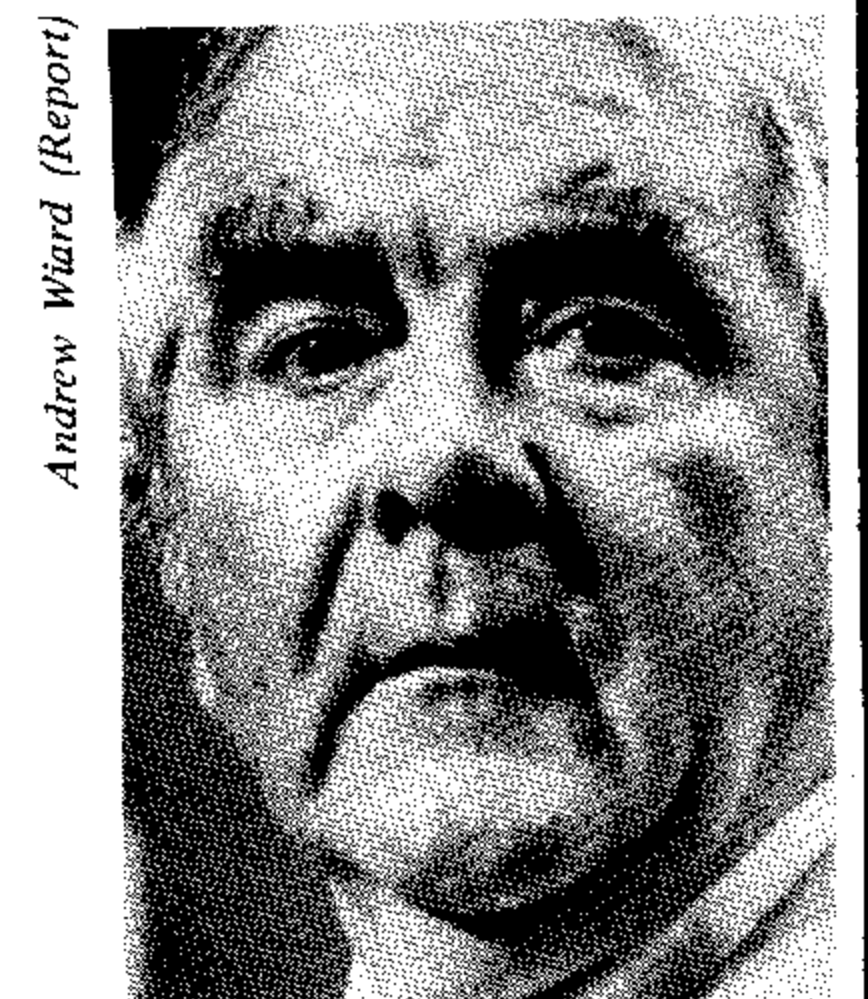
coal stocks

The time is ripe for the miners to move into action. The Electricity Board is relying heavily on coal, 10% more than in 1974 during the last miners strike, because of the high cost of oil. The power stations coal stocks are down to 14.5 million tonnes, compared with 19.9 million last winter. In practical terms this means a fully maintained electricity supply for only two weeks. Stocks at the pitheads are at a similar low, half a million tonnes down on last years supplies.

In this situation the miners could very quickly bring the NCB to its knees and, in doing so,

directly confront the public spending slashing Tories. What is more the strong bargaining position that the low stocks put them in means that they could bring them to their knees as well. In this battle the miners could become, once again, the leading force in an all out onslaught on the Tories incomes policy by all public spending workers.

The course of action needed is clear. The NUM conference voted for the full claim and for a settlement date in November. The Executive must not be allowed to trample on that decision. Mass pithead meetings must be organised, lodges galvanised into action, in preparation for strike action. The left on the Executive such as



Andrew Ward (Report)

Scargill must be called upon to turn verbal militancy into real action. The pits should be brought to an immediate standstill until the NCB meet the Union claim in full.

Don't wait until January and allow stocks to be built up. Don't let Gormley cobble together a compromise. Kill the Tories incomes policy before it can be brought into full scale operation.

Police and courts don't wait for new union laws

While the TUC consoles itself with having pledged opposition to the Tories anti trade union laws, the state has already moved into action against workers in dispute. Those who thought that the bosses legal attack would not come until it had been taken through the cumbersome passages of a parliamentary bill, should take a close look at police and judicial activity in some recent strikes.

Ellesmere Port

The crumbling of the strike at Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port, where 4,000 AUEW members voted against the advice of their stewards and returned to work after an eight week strike shows that the new police tactics can be wickedly effective. The strikers have been harrassed by the courts and the Special Patrol Group (SPG).

Injunctions were served on the convenor and leading stewards to prevent the picketing of Vauxhall dealers. At the plant in Luton, local special police squads cleared the pickets from Merseyside to allow lorries into the plant. In a series of incidents nine pickets were arrested and two badly by these uniformed thugs. In these circumstances the failure of stewards to call a mass meeting throughout the eight week stoppage indicates that in present

the claim. Vigorous picketing by the militants is not enough.

Bedwas

The SPG moved into action once again, against pickets, at the Rosedale factory at Bedwas in South Wales. Workers sacked by the company are maintaining a round the clock picket of the plant. On October 19th 300 police, including SPG officers were moved in against them, to remove goods from the factory.

The Tories are determined to smash effective picketing—for them the only good picket line is a useless one. They are quite prepared to use violence and intimidation to achieve this end. The legislation will be an important adjunct to their aim but they will not wait to ensure legal sanctioning before they move into action—and neither must we.

Every picket line must be

defended. All strike committees, union branches in dispute and Trades Councils must take measures immediately to organise disciplined units of workers who can defend pickets against the inevitable attacks from the police and the SPG.

Solidarity

Every group of worker that faces the SPG thugs and the injunctions of the courts must be supported by mass pickets and by solidarity stoppages. They must not be left to struggle alone. Every victory for the police and courts strengthens the hand of the Tories and their plan for legal shackles on the Unions.

workers power

BL BALLOT CANNOT BE BINDING

Not content with the closure of Triumph Speke and the slashing of over 20,000 jobs over the last 18 months, Michael Edwardes wants to chop a further 40,000 from the Leyland workforce. The first stage of this plan involves the closure or part closure of 13 plants and the loss of 25,000 jobs. The aim of this savagery is the 'recovery' of British Leyland. Edwardes wants to be able to finance 60% of Leyland's capital investment programme for 1980-85 of £1,818 million from company profits. This is entirely in line with Tory industry minister Keith Joseph's plans of making firms pay for themselves and letting those that can't go to the wall.

There is little sign that Leyland workers are, as yet, prepared and organised for a fightback. Despite its generally loyal support for the engineering strikes that work-force's resilience to the Leyland bosses has been undermined by a combination of misleadership by the unions at every level, and by the participation schemes that existed until recently. The unions, affronted by Edwardes' refusal to consult them over jobs slashing, withdrew from the participation scheme several weeks ago. Not that they would not have agreed to his plans just that they were smarting over not being consulted. This has not altered the outcome of the situation. Edwardes' plan has applied the same participation method by organising a ballot in which workers are being asked to 'decide' the future of British Leyland.

Boycott

The choice being given is clear: 'Do you give your support to BL's recovery plan? Vote Yes or No'. The accompanying statement from management waves a warning finger at workers who may think the choice is not so clear cut: 'If you vote no then you will set the company on a course which will be very grim indeed for all of us.' Clearly the aim is to consolidate the legacy of participation which makes workers co-responsible for the fate of the company over which they have no actual control. Just as we would have called for a boycott of the participation machinery while it existed so we would argue that Leyland workers should have rejected Edwardes' ballot by boycotting it. The result under the impact of an expensive and flashy propaganda campaign, will inevitably be in favour of the Plan. By participating in the ballot workers give credence to its supposedly 'democratic' outcome and the community of interest between management and workers that it presumes. This will decisively weaken the chances of a fightback against the Plan, regardless of the ballot's results. It is a boss's ballot (they even refused to hold a joint one as proposed by the union officials) and its

results should not be regarded as binding by Leyland workers.

However, we recognise that many militants would not agree with this, and given the balance of forces inside Leyland campaigned for a 'No' vote. While pointing out the pitfalls of such a course we endorse the opposition to the bosses that it displays and campaign with 'No' campaigns alongside such militants.

Participation

The dilemma facing the workforce at Leyland, and the acceptance of both the ballot, and probably the Plan, stems from the failure of the trade unions at both official and convenor level, to offer an alternative that workers could be mobilised around. The Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions, having welcomed participation from the outset, are now following that path to its logical conclusion. They are calling for a 'Yes' vote in the ballot—yes to 25,000 of their members jobs. Their arguments are based on 'realism'. Confed General Secretary Alex Ferry declared: "We were not prepared to call their bluff—because some of us don't believe it is a bluff." This was echoed by Ken Baker who was dizzied by the depth of BL's plight: "We have been to the precipice and did not like what we saw." These views have led Confed leaders into pouring union funds into an advertising campaign in the popular press to support Edwardes' Plan.

The union leadership at convenor and senior steward level, under more pressure from the actual feelings on the shop floor, relative to the officials, has declared its support for a 'No' vote. Derek Robinson of the Communist Party, once an architect of participation and an ardent supporter of Edwardes' schemes, now claims to be in opposition. He blames the present discord on Edwardes' personality and, in an interview in the CP journal 'Comment' harked back to the good old days of 'open management' by Whitaker Edwardes' predecessor.

But the opposition being mounted by Robinson and his CP cronies is totally inadequate.

GEC Sheffield occupation

DURING THE recent Engineer's dispute a small number of local and domestic disputes got lost amidst the national battle. One of the companies hit by a number of such strikes was Weinstock's electrical empire the General Electrical Company—GEC.

In Liverpool there was a 15 week strike, there was a sit-in at Trafford Park Manchester, a 24 hour picket was mounted outside a Birmingham GEC plant and in Hartlepool there was an occupation. Despite Duffy's 'historic breakthrough' another GEC dispute, at GEC Traction Sheffield, is still on. This plant has been occupied by 560 workers since September 7th.

The dispute arose when the management attempted to replace the present wage structure—piece-work rates for each job plus a lump sum supplement—with a fixed hourly rate. The change would have meant a wage cut. In addition it would have weakened shop floor organisation, which had grown strong precisely by being able to determine piece-work rates.

Local negotiations broke down during the summer and the dispute got lost in the struggle over the Confed's national claim. The workforce struck in response to the Confed's call and in return the management seeing a chance to break shop floor organisation, cut sick pay

and threatened 30 lay offs. The production of engines for the Advanced Passenger Train which are made at the factory was not affected by the interruption of production caused by the strike so the lay offs were a blatant provocation.

A mass meeting immediately voted, unanimously, to occupy and accordingly the factory was taken over, the gates blockaded with a disabled articulated lorry. It was only at the end of October that the dispute was made official. For a long time it had been left to the unofficial GEC Combine Committee, representing all but one GEC plant in the country, to organise blacking and solidarity.

The dispute highlights just how far the recent Confed settlement was from solving many of the problems engineers face. If the dispute is to win it must link its action with other GEC plants. The Combine (the unofficial one that is, which has shop steward support—like Fords GEC also has an 'official' bureaucratically controlled combine) should be building for company wide action against Weinstock's attempts to decimate effective trade union organisation.

The occupation itself is in a precarious position. The management and office staff are being allowed to work normally—this means that workers do not have full control over the premises.

brand of leadership, based on finding common cause with the bosses has demoralised the workforce, seriously weakened the shop floor leadership and organisation and has paved the way for a victory for Edwardes in the ballot.

We believe that an alternative starts from the actual needs of workers, the need to defend jobs and living standards, and not from the priorities of the bosses such as profit margins and viability, needs to be fought for on the shop floor. Opposition to the plan must not stop at the passive voting stage that it is at now.

The militants at Jaguar, Solihull, Longbridge and Cowley, grouped around the newly formed Leyland Action Committee, must begin a campaign to answer the ballot with genuine workers democracy. In every shop and plant mass meetings must be held in which a fighting strategy to beat Edwardes must be thrashed out. Stewards should prepare the members for such meetings with the production of detailed propaganda, newspapers where possible, to combat the right wing press barrage that will be used against the workforce. The committee should also overhaul the bureaucratically controlled Leyland Combine Committee, building a national stewards action committee in its place.

Plants threatened with closure must be occupied and all work that the bosses try to transfer should be blacked. In this regard Robinson must be called on to turn his militant words into action: "Any plant asked to receive this work should refuse to do so and it will certainly lead to plant occupation by those plants expected to lose work if the management try to move it."

In the fight to defend jobs militants should not lose sight

The management could easily allow the police and the Special Patrol Group in to bust the occupation. This must be prevented by asserting complete control over the plant and by organising workers security units, from the fittest and ablest members of the occupation. Such units would be responsible for organising the necessary physical defence of the occupation.

Security

Furthermore, preparations must be made to defy the probable intervention of the courts. In the Hatlepool GEC occupation the AUEW members there left peacefully when the law came to serve a writ on them. We say defy any writs that are served by mobilising the entire local labour movement to guard the factory through mass pickets. Call on the local Trades Council to launch an action committee to spread support for the occupation and to co-ordinate it with other disputes in the area.

These measures can help win the occupation and put paid to Weinstock's attempts to get away with the sly imposition of a wage cut.

Messages of support and donations should be sent to AUEW Convenor Mick Axe, 34, Lathkill Road, Sheffield 13.

of the need to defend living standards as well. In no condition must any truck be given to the idea that the one can be traded for the other. The annual claim in Leyland from the stewards Combine is for £24 across the board to be proofed against inflation by £1 for every 1% rise in inflation and for the 35 hour week. Indeed this claim can be used to unite the workforce through a company wide strike, which will boost confidence for the fight over jobs.

Claim

Mass meetings, shop meetings and shop steward based action committees must be organised in order to win the mass of Leyland workers to fight for the FULL CLAIM NOW.

Against the chauvinist, class collaborationist policies of the CP, workers must be won to a revolutionary answer. A fully nationalised Leyland, and a fully nationalised car and components industry must be fought for. Such nationalisation would be based on workers control of production, won through strikes and occupations it would challenge the bosses sacred property rights. The fact that thousands of jobs are threatened in components industries and therefore potentially in other car firms, means that such a goal could become a rallying focus for workers in those industries.

Many Leyland workers may argue that these policies are dreams and cannot be realised. We argue that what is going on is a nightmare for Leyland's workforce and that the road we propose is rooted, in reality, in the actual needs of every worker.

Rather than gamble losing a mass meeting, which was likely because of their bankrupt leadership at Longbridge, Robinson's Work s Committee refused to call one in opposition to the Plan. Instead they put out a leaflet—small fish in the face of the massive campaign for a 'Yes' vote being waged. At the Albion works in Glasgow a mass meeting was held and the usefulness of such a tactic in opposing the plan was clear. The meeting voted by 2,800 to 2 in favour of opposing the redundancies.

CP Tied

The CP cannot mount any serious opposition because it is tied to the strategy of making Leyland competitive. It is therefore disarmed when Edwardes argues to the workforce that that is exactly what he is doing. In a leaflet given out to a meeting of Leyland stewards on October 13th they argued for: "A major drive on the new Mini Metro to be launched next year so that BL re-establishes its market share and prestige."

Giving the same sort of enthusiastic advice to the job-cutting bosses Robinson assured them: "We have to see British Leyland as an important and integral part of our manufacturing base." The 'our' in question is British industry. In the CP's view British industry, and therefore BL, have to be made competitive against European rivals, and this can be done, mainly through import controls which will keep foreign cars out of the domestic market. So, Robinson lines up with the bosses against foreign workers by arguing for the export of unemployment! This