

Workers power

- Fiftieth anniversary of the Fourth International
- NHS: unite against low pay
- Burma's masses revolt

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

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TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!

ACCORDING TO journalistic convention August is a "quiet month" for news; the "silly season" in which the British public is ready for nothing more taxing than the birth of another royal parasite.

But the war in Ireland does not respect the parliamentary closed season. Last month it literally exploded onto the front pages again.

On the first day of August the IRA killed one soldier with a bomb at the Royal Engineers' Inglis army barracks in North London; that was the first action in Britain by the IRA for nearly four years. A few days later they carried the war to West Germany with an attack on a barracks in Ratingen.

But the biggest blow was yet to come. On 20 August a coachload of British soldiers was ripped apart, killing eight. Together with the Lisburn bombing which killed six soldiers in early June the message had finally got home to Thatcher. The IRA have launched a renewed campaign aimed specifically at British soldiers.

The IRA, by hitting the entirely legitimate targets of an occupying army, have forced the cabinet into an urgent rethink and set back the Tories' plans for integrating the army into the life of the "community". Twenty-six dead British soldiers already this year, three more than the total for the last five years has caused this in a way that the "acceptable" deaths of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) or Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) has not. Suddenly the smug smile that settled on Thatcher's face after the Enniskillen bombing has gone.

The renewed offensive was serious enough to make Thatcher and King cut short their holidays to convene a "war-council" at Downing Street. The air is thick with

talk of selective internment, security reviews, of suspending the prisoners' right to silence and so on. The introduction of some or all of these measures will be made all that much easier by the wretched bi-partisan attitude of the Labour Party's front bench. They will not do one thing to expose the hypocrisy that lies at the heart of the Tories' reaction to the bombing campaign. Kinnock, on the contrary, helps to poison the minds of class conscious workers when he condemns the IRA actions as the work of a deranged gang of terrorists seeking to indulge their "blood lust".

We did not hear Kinnock thumping the dispatch box in Westminster denouncing Thatcher's blood-lust when the *Belgrano* was torpedoed, or when she helped Reagan bomb innocent Libyans in 1985. We strained our ears to no avail awaiting the cries of "blood lust" to be levelled at Reagan and Thatcher when 300 were shot down over the Gulf in an Iranian airliner!

Talk of the IRA's "blood lust" is Kinnock's way of helping the Tories to stoke up the prejudices of the most backward layers of the working class.

Yet the frankest of the ruling class politicians and military chiefs admit at such moments, as they prepare public opinion for repressive measures, there is a war going on in the North of Ireland, not some inexplicable



The real murderers

of local Loyalist administrations and the British state.

And in that war the 10,000 or so British Crown Forces in the Six Counties as well as all soldiers anywhere who await their tour of duty there, are not innocent bystanders or "soft targets". Together with the RUC and UDR they are the cutting-edge of the repression of the anti-unionist minority trapped in a sectarian Orange state that was partitioned from Ireland as a whole by the British in 1921. That minority are fighting a just democratic struggle against social and economic discrimination at the hands

of local Loyalist administrations and the British state.

This beleaguered population experience daily the British Army as a brutal force. In their patrolling Land Rovers they are not above screaming around the nationalist estates running down and killing children just as they did in June when three year old Gerald Flynn fell victim to them. They relish the joint raids with the RUC into the homes of ordinary Catholic families, destroying furniture, ripping down walls—in an attempt to demoralise and break the spirit of resis-

tance.

British soldiers often pass on information and photographs of republicans to loyalist assassination squads. And of course the soldiers bypass the loyalists and kill directly themselves. In February this year Aidan McAnespie was shot through the chest by a British soldier as, unarmed and in broad daylight, he passed by a checkpoint on his way to a football match. And the killer? He will not even have to "suffer" the fate of the one and only British soldier convicted of killing anyone in the Six Counties since

1969: that soldier served only two years of a life sentence and was back serving in the army by last year.

Class conscious workers must see through Kinnock and Thatcher's denunciations of the Irish freedom fighters as mindless murderers. British soldiers are a tool of British imperialism's reactionary policy of enforcing partition in Ireland. The IRA are resisting that policy. In that conflict we are 100% for the Irish resistance, against the British Army.

• See pages 3 and 10

SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

"ET" equals work for dole

The Tories are worried about skills shortages. their answer is yet more "work for dole" rather than real training. Yet the TUC might go along with them! **Sue Thomas** looks at what is at stake.

UNLESS BRITAIN'S trade unions organise to prevent the establishment of Employment Training (ET), the Tories will be well on course to introducing US style Workfare—compulsory work-for-dole. The new scheme replaces all other adult schemes and means workers previously employed on rate-for-the-job Community Programmes have been sacked or face massive wage cuts for longer hours.

Money paid for a week's work is just £5 more than benefit. Despite the constant assurances from the

Employment Minister that ET will be voluntary, all the signs are that these promises were bare faced lies. Statements and hints from the Tory appointees and advisors, combined with DHSS regulation changes, show that the government is following its previous path for YTS and developing conscript labour for adults.

The new chair of the Training Commission, Brian Wolfson, told the *Guardian* that he could not discount compulsory training: "I think it is very sad but it might

have to be necessary", necessary for the interests of the bosses that is.

Some of the Tories are still trying to pretend that the schemes are for the benefit of the unemployed. DHSS minister John Moore has been contrasting the "sullen apathy of dependence" with the "sheer delight of personal achievement". This nonsense appeals to the employers' most loyal lieutenants in the trade union hierarchy. GMB general secretary John Edmonds argued in the run up to the TUC

Congress that outright opposition to the scheme would

"lose the best part of a training opportunity for unemployed people. The government training scheme is a long way from being perfect. But it is the one we've got. It is better than nothing."

This assumes there is something positive about ET for the unemployed. But what can be advantageous about doing a full day's work for the same subsistence level money as you'd get on the dole? The funds available for ET in the

£1.5 billion training programme are simply not enough to provide quality training, nor is enough time allowed on the programme. Trainees starting an ET are promised a chance to achieve "credits" towards qualifications.

The truth is that ET has the same aim as YTS—taking the unemployed off the register, taking young people off the streets and undercutting the wage rates of existing workers. Professor Patrick Munford, a Thatcherite, was much more honest than Tory ministers when interviewed on Radio 4. "The whole point of these schemes is to drive down wages" he declared.

ET is in fact so unattractive that it will have to be made compulsory to succeed. Already the DHSS regulations to increase pressure on the unemployed are in place—benefits stop if you leave a scheme, replacement of single payment grants by loans. 1989 will see renewed attempts to abolish the "21 hour rule" whereby unemployed people can attend a course of their own choice at college. If ET is allowed to stay, it will follow the path of the YTS, which, despite endless Tory declarations and promises in the early days, is now effectively compulsory for unemployed school leavers who are no longer entitled to claim benefit. ■



You can do that: for dole!

John Harris/IFL

TUC must fight it

JOHN EDMONDS of the GMB is urging the TUC to support ET because Norman Fowler has given an "unequivocal commitment to the voluntary principle"! It is vital that the TUC kicks out the collaborationist proposals of the GMB and supports the policy of outright opposition. But even if this position was carried, the bureaucrats cannot be twisted to lead a campaign and *organise* against ET.

In the six months before the scheme came in, it was left up to rank and file trade unionists on CP schemes, in local government and in the colleges to provide effective opposition. They rarely had back up even from unions such as NALGO officially committed to policies of opposition.

Young workers in the north west took the lead in unionising CP schemes and fighting to prevent

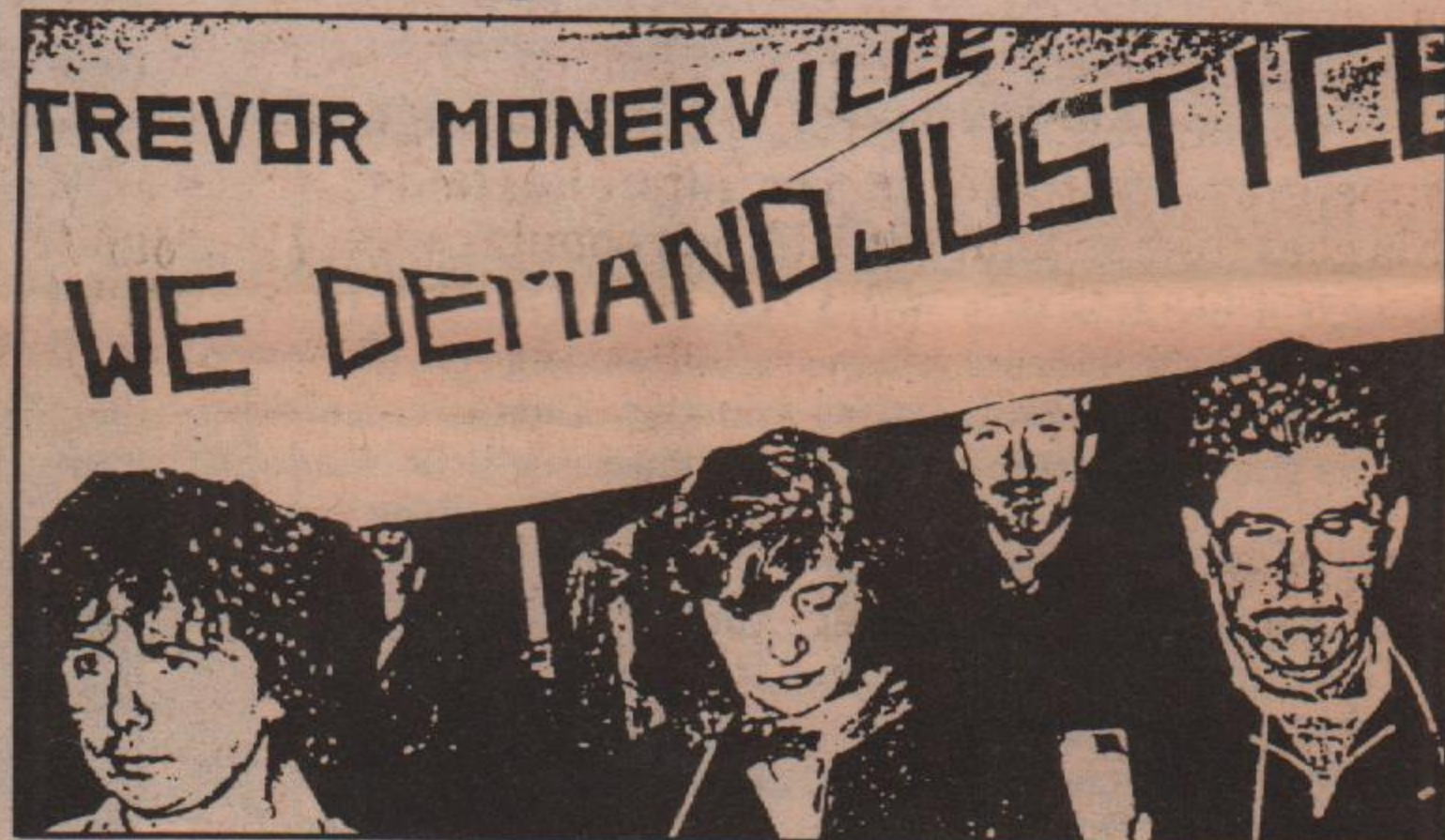
councils starting ET. However, scheme workers did not have the strength on their own to force the councils to keep them on permanent contracts. The battle to stop ET will have to be led by militants within all the affected unions.

Employers should be told that if ET workers are brought in, the rest of the workforce will be out. The policy of complete non-cooperation must be spread in the town halls and colleges. Rank and file cross-union organisation—whether through trades councils, action groups or other appropriate bodies—will be vital to secure pledges of solidarity action. These will be necessary to link up with unemployed organisations to explain to ET workers that the policy of boycott is directed at the bosses and the commission and must be

linked to the fight for real jobs and training opportunities. Of course, where ET gets established, the movement must get in and *organise* those workers to demand the rate for the job.

Workers, employed or unemployed, have every interest in scuppering the bosses' plans to divide, coerce and segment the workforce. This by no means implies that the working class should not support training, or the introduction of the experience of work and industry into schools. Class conscious workers, students and teachers want to ensure that the new generation understands how capitalist industry and exploitation works. Young workers want to fully develop their skills and talents. They need proper training at full rates to ensure they are not used as cheap labour. Workers at any age should have the right to attend college for courses of their own choosing. The fight against ET is one part of the fight the working class must wage to force the penny-pinching bosses to pay for proper training and to impose workers' controls over its content and nature. ■

Police harass black youth



BY NORTH LONDON WORKERS POWER

TREVOR MONERVILLE, a young black man living in Hackney, along with two friends, Peter Thomas and Paul Rolle, was acquitted in mid-August of various charges including attempted robbery and ABH against three men, one a Johannesburg doctor.

Apparently one of the men and a woman had been mugged one evening and the three "victims" then went looking for their attackers in a car. When Trevor and his companions were spotted a fight broke out. Trevor and friends were arrested but no evidence of identification was produced at the trial. Nine other charges were either dropped or dismissed due to lack of evidence.

Coincidentally Trevor has been involved in a campaign in Hackney for over eighteen months to highlight instances of police brutality and harassment.

This started after he disappeared on New Years Eve in 1986. Five days later after a frantic search by his family he was found by his father in Brixton Prison, bruised, bloody and naked in a cell. He was barely able to talk. This was after three separate enquiries about him at Stoke Newington Police Station where he was being held at the time. The day after his discovery he needed neurosurgery to remove

a clot of blood from his brain and still suffers after-effects from this. Charges of having broken a car window were subsequently dropped.

Since that time he has been arrested twice. Once, in November 1987 after he and his brother were assaulted by three white youths. He was charged with twelve offences and needed hospital treatment again after being taken into custody. Again in March 1988 he was arrested for alleged breach of conditions of bail. This was without foundation and another civil action is being taken over this.

Since 1971 Stoke Newington Police have had fifteen well documented cases of serious violence made against them. Derek Pascall won £3,000 damages after being tortured with a burning cigarette while being questioned in the station in 1984.

There have been four deaths in custody of Aseta Simms (May 1971), Michael Ferreira (December 1978), Colin Roach (January 1983) and Tunay Hassan (June 1987). Against this history we say:

- Self defence is no offence!
- Organise to stop police harassment

For more information write to:
The Trevor Monerville Campaign
 The Family Centre
 50 Rectory Road,
 London N16 7QY

EDITORIAL

For the Irish resistance

WORKERS POWER gives its unconditional support to the IRA in its conflict with the British Army. Every class conscious worker in Britain should do the same. They should do so because quite simply they have right on their side. Their struggle is a completely justified one.

The modern struggle of the Irish people against British colonial rule began with resistance to the partition of their island by Britain in 1921. In collusion with the Protestant Loyalist minority in the North-East Britain aborted the national revolution. The Loyalists became a majority in their own sectarian state. So began over forty years of severe economic and political oppression of the Northern anti-unionists at the hands of an Orange State. As to the South, partition ensured continued semi-colonial servitude.

Resistance to this oppression led in 1969 to Labour sending in British troops to prop up this rule. Resistance to that discrimination and occupation is both necessary and defensible. When there is an imperialist army on your estates and the RUC and UDR are little more than armed Loyalist outfits then that resistance spontaneously takes the form of armed struggle.

We support the right of the IRA to carry out struggle by whatever means and wherever they see fit. We do not insist that they restrict their fight to Ireland or even Britain. The SAS had no qualms about pursuing the war to Gibraltar where they gunned down three unarmed members of the IRA.

The current IRA campaign proves that in a military sense the IRA is intact and capable of hitting its enemy. But more importantly, over the years it has survived the attempts of the British to isolate it from the nationalist community. No amount of British or EEC money directed towards the SDLP has enabled the latter to eclipse the IRA or Sinn Fein in the working class areas of Belfast. The post-1982 attempts at destroying the IRA through the "supergrass" system of paid perjurers has failed. All this goes to show that the IRA has popular support and sympathy. The fact that over 90% of all the IRA's operations go "unsolved" (in criminal terms) shows

the extent of the network of this support.

In the weeks and months ahead the Tories and Labour will ratchet up the hypocritical outrage, stoke the flames of anti-Irish racism and intensify the harassment of the Irish community and political activists. Unfortunately such sentiments already run deep in the labour movement. Some 400 workers at BRD Engineering near Walsall held a two minute stoppage in protest at the Omagh bomb. At times like these we must redouble our efforts to bring home to the labour movement that the just solution to the present conflict can only begin when the British Crown Forces are unconditionally and immediately withdrawn from Northern Ireland and the Irish people throughout the whole 32 Counties can be left to determine their own future. Until then we are for the defeat of the occupying army.

Workers, like those at BRD, will have to learn that the soldiers they grieve for are no friends of labour. In due course they will be used on them or their brothers and sisters, deploying all the techniques of repression that they have perfected in Northern Ireland.

However, our complete solidarity with the struggle of the anti-unionist population does not blind us to the failings of the strategy of physical force republicanism. We criticise the IRA not because British workers object to bombs but because guerrillaism is not effective in freeing Ireland. In carrying out these actions even the IRA does not believe it can defeat the British Army. Some 410 British soldiers have been killed during the last 19 years together with a slightly larger combined number of RUC and UDR. The 10,000 plus British soldiers in the Six Counties will not be blown away piecemeal. If that was true in 1972 when the IRA killed over 200 British soldiers then it is even more so now.

The truth is that we are witness to yet another turn in the IRA/Sinn Fein strategy based on the realisation that the tactics of the previous phase are at an impasse. After 1977 sections of Sinn Fein around Adams recognised the cul-de-sac of the military campaign. To overcome the political isolation from the community the turn to reformist

community politics was undertaken. This accelerated after the 1983 Ard Fheis of Sinn Fein, which was about the time of the downgrading of attacks on the British Army.

Various shibboleths of republicanism were abandoned such as not standing in elections to the Southern parliament. A way out of the impasse was thought to lie with the Southern working class. This is true, but the nationalist politics of Sinn Fein insist that in fighting partition the bourgeois parties of the South such as Fianna Fail are natural allies. The result? Sinn Fein cannot prosecute the class struggle against them in the South. Sinn Fein is thus marginal, achieving only 2% of the vote in elections to the Dail. This together with a sense that their support in the North has peaked, has led Adams to both open talks with the SDLP and sanction a new turn to the military campaign.

The numbers serving in IRA active service units total not much more than 100, with twice that providing logistic and intelligence support. But for every member of an active service unit there are a thousand working class Sinn Fein supporters in the North left passive and stranded on the sidelines. For Workers Power, and our fraternal organisation

The Irish Workers Group, the Irish working class is not an auxiliary in the struggle but the central agent in the fight to end national oppression. But for them to become conscious of this involves winning them to a programme that combines the fight against imperialist oppression with the fight against capitalist exploitation through the methods of mass direct action.

Faced with these tasks the primacy of the guerrilla war, the pan-nationalist compromises with Fianna Fail and the SDLP and the "do-it-yourself" community-style politics of Sinn Fein/IRA promises to lead to yet one more impasse. ■

● See also page 10

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UDM scabs

THE ARCH-SCABS of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers are doing what they are best at—licking the bosses' boots. In a deal with British Coal they have accepted the principle of six-day working in new mines. Roy (the missing) Lynk president of the scabs, hailed the introduction of flexible working since it would help British Coal exploit miners for 300 days a year instead of 233.

This deal stinks and the NUM should be preparing to fight it all along the line. Recruitment campaigns to the NUM must be stepped up. The new mines should be NUM

mines with no six-day or flexible working. Any decent trade unionist should agree with this. Yet Scottish NUM president George Bolton, a member of the stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain, has attacked the NUM for not "facing up to tough and difficult decisions", and for continuing to oppose six day working.

In other words the NUM, according to this apology for a union leader, should be setting the pace in making deals with British Coal on flexible working. Like Lynk, this stalinist attacks the defence of existing and hard won working conditions as living in the past. But then "Facing the Future" Communist Party style always means grovelling to the bosses. ■

Holloway 30

ON SATURDAY 6 August approximately 3,000 people marched in solidarity with the anti-imperialist struggle in the six counties on the anniversary of internment. The march, called by the Irish Freedom Movement, was supported by Workers Power which was represented by a large contingent.

As the march approached its destination, Whittington Park on the Holloway Road, a group of fascists and loyalists began attacking the march throwing bottles from the road side.

When stewards tried to defend the demonstration the police predictably went for the marchers not their attackers. At least thirty people were arrested, most charged with "threatening behaviour".

This incident followed on from the usual hounding of the march

by the press and Tory MPs who would like to see all expressions of solidarity with the Irish resistance banned. At a time when the resumption of internment and withdrawal of the right to silence in the six counties are being openly debated we must not let this happen.

Our efforts to build a genuine anti-imperialist movement for troops out now in the organised labour movement must be redoubled.

Donations and messages/resolutions of support should be sent to:

Holloway Road 30
Defence Fund,
BM IFM,
London WC1 3XX

(Make cheques payable to Holloway Road 30 Defence Fund)

Justice for mineworkers



Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

THIS YEAR the National Justice for Mineworkers' Campaign and the Nottinghamshire NUM are organising a gala on 10 September. A march will be held and the assembly point is Chesterfield Road South, Mansfield. We urge our readers to get there at 10-30 am, with union banners, to show the scabs who, sadly, still infest Nottinghamshire, that neither the NUM nor the spirit of the Great Strike are dead. And the gala after the march will be a thoroughly enjoyable event. If you cannot make the march get to the rally and Gala at the West Notts College, Derby Road, Mansfield. ■

NHS: Unite to fight low pay

BY WORKERS POWER HEALTH WORKERS

ANGER OVER NHS pay erupted again last month as nurses and ancillaries took protest action in London, Manchester and Sheffield. Government and union negotiators are already back round the table, trying to smooth the passage of the nurses' pay regrading. But militant health workers need to seize the opportunity to relaunch a united fight against low pay.

The "clinical regrading" process agreed in April by the nurses Pay Review Body (PRB) is coming unstuck in two places. First, hospital managers have made it clear that the government's promise to fund the increase in full was a con. The National Association of Health Authorities estimate a £150 million shortfall on the money needed to fund the increase. Secondly these same managers are resorting to all kinds of sordid tactics, at local and national level, to trim the size of the increase. Locally, they have been pressuring individual nurses

into re-writing their job descriptions in order to put them on the lowest grade, setting nurse against nurse in the scramble for places on the higher grades. Nationally they tried to interpret the April agreement in a way that would deprive the majority of ward sisters of all but the basic 4.25%.

It was this that sparked the union negotiators' walkout and the strikes, signalling as it did that every layer of nurses would be pushed down the scale. Whilst union bureaucrats did nothing to organise effective strike action, the COHSE leaders in particular were prepared to use the most militant sections of nurses to back up their negotiating stance. So it was that nurses at the Middlesex, Charing Cross and the London Hospital, Sheffield Northern General and three Manchester hospitals took action on 25 August.

Meanwhile ancillary workers in the NHS were furious at the way the union leaders had stabbed them in the back. In a national ballot both COHSE and NUPE

ancillaries rejected a 4% pay offer. In response the union executives organised another ballot, for an almost identical offer, with no recommendation to reject. This was after dire warning that "rejection will mean action" during the first ballot. Though willing to stand in front of a TV camera with striking nurses the leaders are trying their best to keep the ancillary dispute separate.

Yet there is a vital link between nurses' and ancillaries' pay. NHS managers are already saying they need £500 million more to avoid cuts this year. If they have to find this and an extra £150 million for the nurses it will mean further cuts in jobs, hours and pay for ancillaries, plus ward and hospital closures.

Relaunching action around nurses' and ancillaries' pay is a real possibility and the key task for NHS workers. The major obstacle, as ever, is the union bureaucracy.

First and foremost, health workers must fight to take control of their dispute. As long as the bureaucrats are in control they will try to use rank and file militancy to suit the twists and turns of their negotiations. This will only demoralise their members and ensure that the nurses' and ancillaries' disputes are kept separate. Whilst stewards in the militant hospitals had been organising and preparing to fight the regrading process, it was only the union walkout that allowed them to focus the anger of the rank and file around the sisters' regrading. The bureaucrats' return to the negotiating table removes that particular focus for action.

NHS workers must seize every opportunity for action. Workers at London's Maudsley Hospital have balloted in favour of an all-out strike from 5 September over nurses' pay. In every hospital militants should be arguing for a strike alongside the Maudsley.

Added to this the rank and file needs to reorganise on an area and national level. The London Strike



John Harris / IFL

Health workers' in March — the fight must be taken up again now!

Manchester housing strikes

BY A MANCHESTER LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKER

MANCHESTER LABOUR Council, and its leader Graham Stringer, have decided that "caring cuts" are not enough. They have launched a full scale attack on their Housing Office workforce.

Stringer ordered the Housing Director, Bob Young, to rip up union agreements and compel housing workers to carry the burden of extra work of vacant posts - subject to the council's job freeze - and maintain the fiction of a front-line housing service unaffected by the council's vicious cuts.

Housing workers in area offices with a tradition of strong union organisation had, to a limited extent, blunted the cutting edge of the council's attacks on working conditions by refusing to keep counters open when job cuts meant that there were too few workers available to staff them. Stringer wanted to change this situation.

The Housing office in Moss Side and Hulme was Stringer's first target. On 23 August the Town Hall ordered the office manager to tear up the local agreement with the union on office opening hours. Two NALGO clerks were instructed to open the counter despite inadequate staffing levels. They refused and were instantly disciplined. NALGO members walked out in support. NUPE housing workers joined the strike in solidarity.

The NALGO strikers were then faced with their housing convenor, Danny Whitelock, trying to browbeat them back to work. He supported the Council's attack on Moss Side NALGO members and ordered them back to work on the basis of an undertaking to obey management instructions. Whitelock defended the management's right to manage rather than defend his own union's policy on local agreements.

The second target for attack was the Cheetham housing office in North Manchester. Bob Young ripped up a redeployment agreement with the workers, gave a NALGO steward a mouthful of

abuse and ordered a NALGO housing worker to get lunch, clear his desk and transfer to Moss Side in one hour. When the NALGO member refused he was disciplined. Again NALGO members walked out and again they were attacked by Whitelock.

With two area offices on strike and three housing workers disciplined NUPE and NALGO housing sections held emergency meetings on 24 August. The NUPE section of a couple of hundred workers originated in a split from NALGO. These workers were frustrated by the failure of NALGO bureaucrats to defend their jobs and conditions. They have a strong tradition of militancy and voted by a clear majority to strike.

In contrast the leadership of NALGO housing and the Manchester branch in general have a poor track record in terms of militancy. Whitelock is a good example, capitulating all along the line in the face of the Council's offensive.

The opposition to the NALGO leadership in Manchester is mainly organised by the SWP. However, at the emergency meeting their resolution failed to call clearly for immediate strike action, implying a period of negotiation first. However, this concession - a wrong one in our view - did not defeat the right.

The SWP resolution was defeated 132 against to 72 for. Despite this vote the size of the minority prepared to stand against the established right wing marked a step forward. And, a crushing defeat for all housing workers was averted since the NUPE strike squeezed some concessions on opening hours from the council and, in effect, the discipline measures against the three NALGO members was lifted.

If the opposition to the council is to be built upon then rank and file organisation embracing the NUPE and NALGO workers must be built. In Manchester, as elsewhere, the SWP are opposed to building such an organisation. Workers Power supporters are not, since we recognise that only such organisation can help transform isolated and

Vote Benn and Heffer

AT THE forthcoming Labour Party Conference in October delegates should vote for Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in the election for leader and deputy leader. Trade unionists should do likewise in those unions like the AEU and NUPE which are presently balloting their members on the issue.

Some militants may be tempted to plump for Prescott as Deputy Leader because he seems to have more chance of ousting the openly right-wing Hattersley. They feel this would "sound a warning" to Kinnoch and prevent him junking even more party policy in order to make Labour fit for capitalism in the eyes of the bourgeoisie.

But in fact there is little to distinguish Prescott and Hattersley on political grounds.

Both share a record of betrayals of working class struggle. They both condemned the miners for using violence in the Great Strike. They both denounced Liverpool City Council for trying to defend jobs and services.

Prescott's claims that he will improve debate within the party should

be viewed as suspicious coming from someone who has supported witch hunting.

Benn and Heffer have by contrast consistently supported working class action against the Tories, and defended party democracy. However, *Workers Power* does not endorse Benn and Heffer's programme which is one for reforming the capitalist system. Unlike them, we do not believe that the Labour Party can become the instrument for the socialist transformation of society. A new revolutionary party must be built.

But part of the struggle to build such a party and win support for revolutionary marxist ideas in the working class is to wage an unremitting fight against class collaborationist policies in the movement. If Kinnoch tightens his grip on the Labour Party, it would be to strengthen the hold of such policies throughout the working class movement.

Benn and Heffer were right to stand to try to prevent this happening and no socialist should waver in supporting them now. ■

Committee, which has been ticking over since April has already sprang back to life, with twenty stewards, representing seven hospitals attending a meeting to organise action for 25 August. Crucially the National Shop Stewards Conference which met in March needs to be recalled. Sabotaged at the outset by the SWP it has never functioned since its first meeting. Now it needs to be rebuilt.

Most of all the strikes and re-emerging rank and file organisations need a clear aim. Immediately that means fighting for rejection in the second ancillary ballot, and a fight for emergency union conferences to relaunch a fight on NHS pay. That fight must have as

its aim:

- A flat rate increase for all NHS workers
- A minimum wage in the health service of £185 per week (average industrial wage)
- Breaking with the PRB
- Scrapping the clinical regrading process

Locally this means a fight to sabotage the regrading, launching a dispute over every nurse not put on the highest grade for their qualification. Unless this happens every breakdown of negotiations between bosses and union leaders will be a re-run of August, with nurses and ancillaries kept divided and passive in the fight for their own livelihood. ■

THE SWP AND THE STRIKE

TO THOSE who followed the antics of the SWP during the last round of NHS action, it will come as no surprise that they are just as confused by the current strikes.

In the London Strike Committee and the Middlesex Hospital COHSE branch they have argued resolutely for keeping nurses' and ancillaries' action separate. Not wanting to "confuse two issues" they argued for a one day strike by nurses and one hour (dinner-time) 'solidarity action by ancillaries at the Middlesex. In the end ancillaries took two hours of action and are clearly impatient to strike for their own claim.

In a further twist in an endless SWP debate about tactics towards the union bureaucracy, the SWP moved to kick out COHSE bureaucrat Pete Marshall from the London Strike Committee, despite the fact that he was committed to supporting the one day action. Whilst we should put no trust in the bureaucrats we should argue for them to organise action, including forcing them to attend strike committees and implement their decisions. The SWP's confusion is doubly ironic since on the issue of linking nurses and ancillary action, Marshall was to the left of them (not a difficult task).



GPT mass meeting at Stoke Green, Coventry.

BY IAN HILL

THE 'RATIONALISATION' plans of the recently merged GEC and Plessey Telecommunications company (GPT) is facing opposition from its 6,000 workers in Coventry. On Friday 26 August a mass meeting voted to reject the company's latest offer on 800 job losses.

This offer represented a climbdown by GPT management who previously demanded compulsory redundancies. However, they merely proposed instead that these redundancies become "voluntary". They also insist that this will involve redeployment at lower wage levels, downgrading from full-time to part-time working and the closure of plants "surplus" to their requirements. Understandably, many workers at the mass meeting reacted angrily to this latest offer.

GPT management have gone on record as stating that by the end of the 1990s they envisage there being only 5 major telecommunication firms in the world, two in the USA, two in Europe and one in Japan. At present even the newly merged GPT is only the fourth largest in Europe alone. It is clear that further mergers are planned.

Whenever these occur, "rationalisation" quickly follows. "Rationalisation" is merely bosses' jargon for job losses, wage cuts and plant closures. Even now, under the GPT merger, production of the digital

GPT Fight job cuts

telephone system, System X has been transferred from Coventry to Plessey's in Liverpool. Management have also proposed the closing of the Spon Street site in Coventry. In this way the GPT bosses hope to isolate sections of the workforce and play off one against the other.

In the coming ballot in Coventry, militants must argue for strike action to reject all job losses, not just to improve redundancy deals. Now is the best time for such a campaign.

GPT management have already made concessions after a few days of an overtime ban. Workers in Beeston, Nottingham, have just taken strike action against a time and motion study. Messages of support and solidarity for Coventry workers have already arrived from Liverpool and Beeston.

Action taken in Coventry must

be spread to these and other sites in Britain. Strike pickets should tour the country addressing mass meetings until a national strike is won. A national combine meeting should be called with delegates from every section on every site to organise and co-ordinate national strike action against all "rationalisation" plans, not just those concerning Coventry.

Workers in Coventry might argue that such a campaign is unwinnable and unrealistic, given that the strength of the workforce has been weakened by over 10,000 job losses in the last ten years. On the contrary, it is the only realistic way to halt the GPT bosses' attacks on the whole workforce. It is the only realistic way to stop further job losses. Even if the present deal is eventually accepted here in Coventry, such a national fightback must be fought for now!

Fight Cardiff Witch-hunt

WORKERS POWER SUPPORTERS
IN CARDIFF CENTRAL CLP

THE WITCH-HUNTING season is well under way in Cardiff Central Labour Party. Not content with the expulsion of a Militant supporter and the suspension of an entire ward, the local right wing, led by former Parliamentary candidate Jon Jones and Wales Labour Party Secretary Anita Gale, has now turned its attention to its first Workers Power supporter.

The present round of events began last October with the expulsion of Militant supporter Chris Peace. When he was allowed to attend subsequent meetings of Plasnewydd ward, the Welsh regional office suspended the ward. Coming as it did one week before the scheduled Constituency AGM, at which the left had been expected to take control, the suspension served the interests of the right wing very nicely.

It is also no coincidence that the suspension should occur in a ward which had consistently opposed the local Labour council's plan to close a secondary school in the constituency and Kinnock's misleadership of the Party. Furthermore, Workers Power supporters had won the ward to a policy of opposition to the witch-hunts. A resolution passed by

Plasnewydd committed it to "continue to recognise any expelled member as a bona fide Party member" and "any ward . . . which is disbanded or disaffiliated for similar activities".

In response to the suspension of Plasnewydd, the "Fight the Witch-hunt in Cardiff Central" campaign (FWHCC) was organised. This campaign began as one purely opposing the suspension of Plasnewydd, but Workers Power supporters argued that its aims should extend to opposing the expulsion of Chris Peace and supporting the right of all socialists to organise within the Labour Party. This position was eventually won.

Meanwhile the right wing was getting its way at the AGM, which was completed on the third attempt, without Plasnewydd members (including left-wingers nominated for key posts) and with Anita Gale in the chair!

But this was not enough for the right wing. Not only did the Wales Labour Party refuse to lift the suspension of Plasnewydd, but at the first meeting of the new Constituency Executive Committee (EC), the witch-hunt was extended. The EC recommended to the GMC that it should investigate the application for membership of Steve Wride,

a Workers Power supporter in Cathays ward. Steve's application was accepted by the ward in March, but never ratified by the CLP due to the postponement of its AGM.

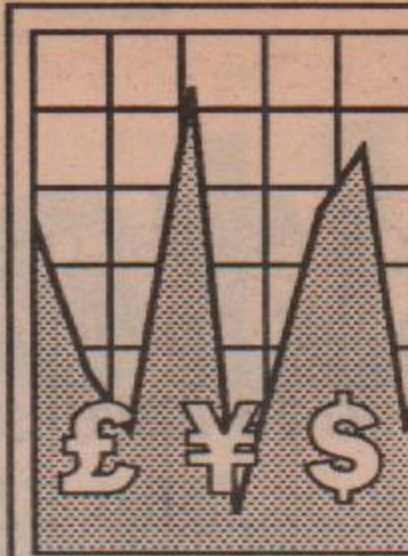
Clearly the tactic adopted by the FWHCC of lobbying GMCs purely on the basis of democratic rights has not curtailed the right wing's attacks, but merely emboldened them. The FWHCC must unite all the issues and mobilise the membership of Plasnewydd ward to defy their suspension.

Rather than allow the witch-hunters to isolate and neutralise active militants, the project of an "illegal" but campaigning ward will cement the collectivity of the membership and build support from local trade unionists and Party members. Total opposition to Kinnock, Hattersley and Prescott's schemes to ditch the working class completely must be fought for alongside workers in struggle.

For the right of all socialists to be active members of the Labour party!

- Defy the witch-hunts!
- Bring the class struggle into the Labour Party!

Messages of support to :
FWHCC, c/o 22 Norwood Court,
Elm Street, Cardiff



SPOTLIGHT on the economy

The bosses and 1992

SUDDENLY BRITAIN'S bosses are very excited about the EEC. A spate of TV commercials has urged them to grab the "golden opportunity" provided by the relaxation of trade barriers in the EEC in 1992. But while 1992 is the boardroom buzzword, 94% of Britons recently polled knew nothing about it.

It is vitally important for workers to understand what is going on in 1992. Not least because it has already opened up splits within the Tory Party.

By 1992, according to a plan drawn up by Britain's Lord Cockfield, the European bosses aim to remove 350 obstacles to free trade, such as the delays facing lorry drivers crossing Europe's patchwork of frontiers. Mostly these are not caused by import controls but by differences in taxation, safety standards etc. The plan is to even out these differences by 1992, creating a "single European market".

There are obvious advantages to individual bosses and to the ruling classes of Europe as a whole. Economists estimate that the EC's gross domestic product (GDP) will increase by 5% just from the removal of trade barriers.

But the most important effect of 1992 will be to massively strengthen the tendency towards the "regionalisation" of the world economy, a development with stupendous consequences for US imperialism.

US imperialism created the post war economic order to suit itself. It was the world's banker, the dollar was the world's currency and US imposed free trade agreements guaranteed the supremacy of its industry on the world market.

The end of the post-war boom threw this into disarray, revealing the weakness of the USA compared to Japan and West Germany, and leading it increasingly to offload the cost of the recession onto the healthier economies of its imperialist rivals.

At the end of the 1970s, France and Germany (the leading imperialisms of the EEC alongside Britain) decided to counteract this in a series of measures designed to speed the growth of an economically unified Europe.

They established the European Monetary System (EMS), the basis for a future common currency; they agreed a series of strictly enforced international shake-outs in industry (e.g. the Davignon Plan for steel); they agreed to take in three big agricultural producers (Greece, Spain and Portugal).

The problem is that every act of international co-operation between the imperialist powers of Europe, though it may be cloaked in the rhetoric of "international brotherhood", turns out to be an act of vicious economic rivalry against the USA. The EMS threatens the dollar, the steel plans with their quotas and import controls weaken US steel, and three trading partners won to the EEC are three lost to the USA.

The political spectre these developments invoke is almost unthinkable to all the participants: the breakup of the imperialist camp into competing regional blocs.

But whereas the French and German bosses can temporarily ignore that spectre, Britain is faced with a very sharp dilemma in a period of economic rivalry between Europe and the USA. After 1945, Britain became Washington's clos-

est junior partner both economically and politically. This position would be lost if the British bosses opt for full participation in a unified European economy.

However, the dangers of staying outside the single market are even greater. One wing of the British ruling class wants to embrace the single European market more fully than does Thatcher (see WP 108 on the interest rate wrangle). Their desires have nothing to do with internationalism. The profit motive guides them here as everywhere else.

For the massive financial sector of Britain's economy, concentrated in the City of London, the "golden opportunities" of 1992 will be possible only if Britain enters the EMS. If it stays outside, London risks losing its position as financial centre to Frankfurt.

Thatcher however remains a resolute opponent of European co-operation at this level. As a reward for planning 1992, Thatcher sacked Lord Cockfield and replaced him with Leon Brittan who, as the Westland affair showed, is about as pro-European as Yorkshire County Cricket Club. She is bitterly resisting entry into the EMS; once in the EMS the kind of measures Lawson is taking to damp down the trade deficit and inflation would become impossible.

All the other measures which the French and German bosses are promising workers and small farmers, like the equalisation of benefit rates and "social justice", she describes as airy fairy nonsense. Where the state and semi-state car giants of Europe dream of a future unified car industry, Thatcher intrudes by inviting Nissan and Honda to set up within the ramparts of the future "single market".

Yet Thatcher does not wish to withdraw from Europe, nor does any section of Britain's bosses. She is manoeuvring for the most advantageous conditions possible in the European market which, like it or not, is now Britain's major trading area.

The fundamental contradiction of imperialist capitalism is that it creates an international economy that is strangled by national antagonisms. There never has been a "peaceful" international co-operation between the imperialisms unless it has been imposed by the strongest on the weakest.

Thatcher wants Britain to supercede Germany as the leading economic power in the EEC. Is this really possible? The answer lies in the balance of class forces. Germany may remain the strongest economy, but it is an economy based on social peace and class compromise much more deeply rooted than in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s.

If a recession strikes, Thatcher has the advantage of having already inflicted serious defeats on the British working class and battered its union bureaucracy into submission. In contrast the German working class remains strong if generally dormant, and it is questionable as to whether the regionalised German ruling class could summon up a Thatcher to take them on.

So there are real material roots to the argument simmering away amongst the bosses about Europe, despite the euphoria about 1992. A recession and a renewed period of inter-imperialist rivalry could bring it to a boiling point. ■

The tendency around Socialist Outlook is fast becoming the rest home for the left. Former supporters of Socialist Viewpoint and International founded it. They have recently been joined by erstwhile followers of Socialist Action and the Socialist Labour Group. John Stuttle examines the politics behind this centrist coalition.

WITHIN THE pages of the fortnightly newspaper *Labour Briefing* there is little evidence of a struggle to "... [forge] a serious marxist current, rooted in the labour movement and embracing the struggles and most militant of the oppressed".

Yet this is the task which the magazine *Socialist Outlook* has set itself and its supporters, who are among the most ardent sellers of *Briefing*.

The self-professed trotskysts in the groups which fused to produce *Outlook* (the tendencies previously around *International* and *Socialist Viewpoint*) are failing in every sense in the task of providing the leadership and programme necessary to forge a serious marxist current in the labour movement. Their abandonment of the independent revolutionary newspaper is just one example of the liquidationist politics, consistent with the method of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), the international tendency which they support.

Labour Briefing is not the paper of a revolutionary tendency. It has never claimed to be that, being originally founded by London Labour left elements who were explicitly hostile to the idea of revolutionary politics, democratic centralism and the Leninist party. Despite years of work inside the Editorial Board of *Briefing* by the supporters of *Outlook* and its predecessors, the pages of this paper continue to be dominated by anti-party propaganda.

Attack

At their recent AGM a paper put forward by the National Steering Committee contained this thinly veiled attack on revolutionary leadership:

"People should be able to turn to *Briefing* to find out what is going on in the class struggle—something they cannot find in either the bourgeois press or the sectarian 'party line' publications." (*Briefing* no 65, 22 June 1988).

To compare the papers of the left with those of the bourgeoisie is a disgrace in itself, implying that the systematic lies and distortions of the capitalist press are willfully aped by the "sectarians". But consider that this comes from a steering committee stuffed full of supposed "revolutionaries" from *Outlook* and the real abdication of their struggle for leadership can be seen.

The revolutionary newspaper is a key weapon for marxists seeking to win the working class to their programme. In every strike, every struggle of the oppressed and every action of the exploited against imperialism the programme of revolutionary trotskysm is necessary to take these forward to victory.

Winning

Marxism is about struggling for this programme, patiently explaining the necessary tactics and strategy to workers, winning them to our side and away from the reformists and centrists who lead them to defeat. This cannot be done without the clearest and most open statement of our ideas, and critique of false ideas. It is in this daily task of revolutionary leadership that the newspaper is a necessary tool for revolutionaries.

Briefing is far from this. It merely

How socialist is their outlook?

LABOUR BRIEFING

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

reports struggles which are already going on, giving no perspective for victory, only offering support, and "forging the links".

Solidarity is essential in any struggle, but on its own will not arm the working class with the weapons it needs to defeat the bosses once and for all. That requires the creation of workers' councils, a workers' militia and a revolutionary party which can lead the working class to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

This is what the pages of a revolutionary paper should be preparing the class for, not the mealy mouthed left reformism of *Briefing* whose crowning slogan, far from working class power is "Labour—take the power!".

Supporters of *Outlook* will reply that *Briefing* is not their paper, and therefore we should not expect it to have a fully fledged party line. They claim to be the left wing within the "united front" of *Briefing*. But it would be a long

selfes.

Trotskyism is irreconcilably opposed to reformism, of a right or a left variety. One of the tactics used by trotskysts may be to side with left reformists against the right in an attempt to demonstrate the bankruptcy of left reformism to workers who continue to have illusions in it. Such is the case with the current Labour leadership campaign.

Revolutionaries advocate support for Benn and Heffer against the Kinnock/Hattersley or Kinnock/Prescott ticket. But this tactic is one of critical support, with the critical element being central if it is to succeed in breaking workers from left reformism.

Benn and Heffer remain, proudly, reformists. Whilst their left colouration enables them to side with workers taking action, with the oppressed and against the most right wing elements of

A tireless fight is required for revolutionary politics. This will not make us immediately popular with left reformists and centrists and will generally get us called sectarians. But if we hide our programme, accommodate to the misleaders, then we would only contribute to the defeat of the working class.

and fruitless search to look for evidence of a serious debate in *Briefing* between reform or revolution.

Although much of it is written by *Outlook* supporters, it remains as Graham Bash accurately describes it in the summer issue, simply a "notebook of the left". Bash is one of the non-aligned *Briefing*-ites, and by maintaining their alliance with him, *Outlook* are ensuring that it remains nothing more than his "diary of an anti-party radical".

If *Briefing* fails to be a useful paper for militant class fighters, then perhaps the ideas of marxism will be better explained in *Socialist Outlook* itself, which is, after all, not a "united front" but the journal of the "trotskyists" them-

elves and the associated groups like Women For Socialism to "give active support to campaigns not just be a talking shop or dissolve into sectarian wrangling".

When centrists talk of "sectarian wrangling" it means "let's not argue about politics and programme". The confusion that surrounds the Chesterfield conferences reflects the crisis of leadership in the working class. Reformist and centrist ideas compete with each other to deepen the confusion. In this context revolutionaries have a clear duty—to argue for the ideas of marxism in the most direct way.

Outlook and *Briefing* supporters instead go along with the idea that by getting together we can

These are correct charges against the campaign. According to Pete Firmin these problems "stem from an underestimation of the crisis of leadership in the labour movement" (*Socialist Outlook* 8). Such a crisis does indeed exist, at all levels of the movement.

It can only be solved by applying the strategy and tactics of revolutionary marxism to each and every struggle of the working class, including the winning of workers away from their illusions in Tony Benn! In fact the failures of the Benn/Heffer campaign stem from the fundamental weaknesses of left reformism, including an inability to challenge the union bureaucracy.

Solution

The solution put forward to the crisis of leadership which Firmin has identified is a "united democratic left... campaigning around the policies and actions which can defeat Thatcher and throw aside those in the ranks of the labour movement who hold back that fight".

The marxist anthem *The Internationale* has a famous line "... and at last ends the age of cant", "cant" being the practice of saying one thing and meaning another. British parliamentarians are past masters of it, but in the 1980s trotskyst currents in the Labour Party have honed it to a fine art.

In the pages of an avowedly "revolutionary" journal we might think Firmin is referring to revolutionary policies and actions. In practice it turns out to be nothing other the policies and actions of Benn and the Chesterfield movement which Firmin thinks "can begin to create such organisation for the battles ahead".

Does the Socialist Conference movement really present this opportunity for solving the crisis of leadership in the working class? In a report of the second Chesterfield conference by Mandy Mudd in the same edition of *Outlook* the confusion about just how this crisis will be solved is shown. She argues that there was a "serious commitment to develop a detailed and coherent alternative to Labour's policy review". But she goes on to urge the local confer-

learn from our personal experiences and come up with an alternative to Kinnock.

That way they can present themselves as enthusiastic supporters of the Chesterfield movement, not wreckers like the "sectarians" of Workers Power, and even the Socialist Workers Party, who commit the crime of arguing for their ideas.

Just like in *Briefing*, at Chesterfield *Outlook* supporters failed to put forward a programme, they avoided tackling the key question posed: "reform or revolution?" This is not merely an oversight, or the result of an inadequately prepared intervention. It is a conscious decision to drop the banner of trotskysm in favour of a cosy non-aggression pact with left reformism in the hope of winning wider layers of support.

Liquidationism

This is classic liquidationism which Trotsky argued with repeatedly in the thirties when he was attempting to build sections of the International Left Opposition and then the Fourth International. Trotsky battled time and again against those who tried to find a short cut to building the party by dropping their political banner and accommodating to centrism or reformism.

The lessons of that period are clear and must be learned by revolutionaries today. Marxism is irreconcilably counterposed to all forms of reformism and centrism. We seek to win workers away from such misleaders in order to lead them in the only way which will win.

Despite our differences with reformism, left and right, we seek the broadest unity in action. A real united front is a joint commitment to action, and it is the test of united action which is the main weapon for revolutionaries in their battle against reformist politics. Reformist leaders and their methods fail that test every time just as Benn and Heffer are doing, just as the Brent Councillors are doing.

But a paper based on "agreement to differ" is the very opposite of unity in action. It allows the useless layer of left reformist councillors to put on a left face and consoles a dwindling group of centrists with the idea that they are at the centre of things.

Tireless

A tireless fight is required for revolutionary politics. This will not make us immediately popular with left reformists and centrists and will generally get us called sectarians. But if we hide our programme, accommodate to the misleaders, then we would only contribute to the defeat of the working class.

Socialist Outlook is running away from a fight for marxist ideas in the labour movement. In the last months it has been joined by two groups of "trotskyists" even more opportunistic than its founders; the former Socialist Labour Group and over 100 former supporters of *Socialist Action*, who wrangled for months over whether Benn and Heffer were being "ultra left" by challenging Kinnock.

What little steam these fading "revolutionaries" have left will only speed *Outlook's* rightward course.

Those within its ranks who still consider themselves trotskysts would do well to think hard about the crisis of leadership within the working class, and rather than add to it by heaping confusion and uncertainty upon the class through the pages of *Briefing* and *Outlook*, they should look to the clarity of programme and perspective offered in the pages of *Workers Power*. ■

Brent goes bust!

Under pressure from the leaderships of NALGO and NUPE and the Labour Party's "Mr Fix-it" for local government, David Blunkett, Brent's Labour controlled council has accepted the principle of "an independent inquiry" to probe its financial crisis. The decision only temporarily delays some of the most savage cuts railroaded through the Labour group in a panic-stricken effort to stave off surcharge and stay in office. G R McColl analyses the background to the current crisis and the woeful response of the labour left.

BRENT COUNCIL'S ruling Labour Group has agreed to the most vicious package of cuts yet undertaken by a local authority in Britain since World War Two. Every social service in the borough faces the prospect of being slashed to the statutory minimum.

The Labour Group remains poised to issue redundancy notices to more than 1,700 of the 3,500 NALGO members in its work force, while nearly 25% of the borough's teaching staff are likely to be sacked before the autumn term. And as the cuts proceed, alongside the job losses most of Brent's children's homes, day centres for OAPs and the mentally handicapped, and five libraries will close. The council has already enacted a steep rent rise of £7-10 a week.

Under pressure from NALGO and NUPE, and from ex-lefts David Blunkett and Ken Livingstone the council has accepted the principle of an "independent inquiry" into its fiscal crisis. This decision has temporarily delayed some of the cuts, but the Labour Group is still committed to an assault on the living standards of its employees and service users.

Following in the footsteps of the other "left" councils in London, only in more dramatic style, Brent's leading Labour Group reveals, almost literally, the bankruptcy of left reformism in local government. Elected in 1986 after two years of Tory mis-rule in the borough, Brent's Labour council stood with the pledge of "no redundancies, no reductions in services".

Like the other left councils, such as Lambeth, these manifestos "pledges" are but empty words written by reformists with neither the political programme nor the commitment to carry them out.

Since 1979 the Tory government has sought to engineer these "fiscal crises in the local state" in order to reduce public expenditure and discredit Labour-run local councils. Endless rounds of legislation, from the 1980 Land and Planning Act through to rate capping and the Poll Tax, have eroded the spending power and limited independence of local authorities.

In the face of this, all the left Labour councils have been able to offer by way of defending local services and jobs is "creative accounting" and cuts with a conscience. But the fact that leaders like Dorman Long in Brent and Linda Bellos in Lambeth feel guilty about their cuts matters little to the working class service users and local government workers. By choosing to carry out the Tory's cuts for them the Labour left has only succeeded in discrediting itself with the working class.

The example of Brent shows just how hopeless left municipalism

turns out in practice.

By the end of its first year in office, the 43-strong Labour Group found itself ratecapped, ditching policy pledges it couldn't possibly keep whilst playing the game according to the Tories' rules, and under the glare of constant hostile publicity from the bosses' media. While council officials were feverishly negotiating a wide range of loan and leaseback agreements with both British and overseas banks, the Labour Group's fragile internal cohesion came completely unstuck in spring, 1987 as bitter feuding broke out between ethnic blocs of councillors engaged in clientelist politics and fighting over pie that wasn't expanding as promised. Charges of racism, alleged death threats, and court cases, some still pending, were the result.

With Thatcher's third electoral triumph in June 1987, the writing was plainly on the wall for Brent and a long list of other once "left" Labour councils. The choices were starker than ever with the escape route of creative accounting now blocked: either mobilise for a big fight that would inevitably be illegal or else be transformed into an increasingly pathetic agent of Tory policy for the inner cities.

In Brent as elsewhere the latter course was pursued from autumn 1987. Initially, the large-scale retrenchment began under the leadership of the first black woman to head a majority Labour group, Merle Amory. The one-time Livingstone protege soon found the political and personal pressure

Following in the footsteps of the other "left" councils in London, only in more dramatic style, Brent's leading Labour Group reveals, almost literally, the bankruptcy of left reformism in local government.

unbearable, resigning first from the leadership and eventually from the council altogether, with her seat falling to the Tories.

Amory's departure as Labour's chief triggered the outbreak of further open warfare in the council chamber in October/November 1987 as veteran black councillor Dorman Long stood with the support of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee to narrowly defeat Ron Anderson, erstwhile champion of the hard left.

Last autumn's round of rent rises and cuts in teaching staff provoked little resistance and so Brent's immediate crisis seemed to recede though the borough remained ratecapped. In late July, however, the current storm erupted following a report to the council from Stephen



Anti cuts demonstrators lobby the council inside Brent town hall

Forster, Brent's director of law and administration. He indicated that an additional £17 million in "savings" had to be found by the fourth week of August in order to avoid the immediate threat of surcharge and disqualification. Council leader Dorman Long and about 30 other Labour councillors have proved all too ready to comply.

It was at this point that pressure from Livingstone and others, whose major criticism seemed to be that Brent should have made cuts earlier, caused the Labour Group to go for an independent review.

It was to be a similar exercise to the one in Liverpool in 1985, the *Stonefrost Report*. This allowed the *Militant* leadership of Liverpool council time to stage a more orderly retreat but did nothing for the council workers and tenants in

the borough's NALGO branch took strike action in protest at the threat of mass sackings. Later that evening a vocal, 500 strong demonstration of council workers and Brent residents brought the scheduled council meeting to a halt.

The NALGO local executive, however, has shown no appetite for leading a fightback and is now relying on the forthcoming inquiry to blunt the council's call for compulsory redundancies. NALGO's national executive has effectively disavowed industrial action to oppose local authority cuts even as it supposedly pursues a national pay claim. And, as in so many other boroughs, local officials of the manual unions have been willing to collaborate with the council's attacks.

But the preparedness of the local trade unionists and community groups to fight shows the way forward. The town hall unions together with other local workers and service users should be drawn together in delegate based councils of action to lead the resistance and draw up their demands for improved services, pay and conditions. In opposition to the "independent" enquiry the workers and service users should open the books of the council, expose the massive draining of funds to the banks and money lenders and, through the precept, to the Metropolitan Police.

By concentrating the fight in the workplaces and communities, taking control over the budgets and spending plans, the workers of Brent can be mobilised to defeat the Tory and Labour attacks. The fight needs to be spread to all other boroughs facing cuts, and linked to the campaign against the Poll Tax.

Events in Brent demonstrate the inability of Labour's municipalism, left or right, to defend local workers from the Tory onslaught. The lessons of these failures must be learned if the grim prospect of yet harsher onslaughts on the inner cities is to be avoided. ■

WHERE WE STAND

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party and the LPYS, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class world-wide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit-bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary international (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The MRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

ON 3 September 1938 twenty two delegates met in Paris to found the Fourth International (FI). In all, eleven countries were represented. Despite the small size of this conference it was an historic occasion.

It achieved the consolidation into a unified movement of the only consistently revolutionary communist organisations in the world. As that world plunged headlong into total war the forces of the Fourth International, led by Leon Trotsky, raised the banner of working class internationalism and world revolution.

Trotsky's struggle to build the FI began in 1933. In that year Hitler came to power in Germany. His victory was a direct result of the bankrupt policies of both the social democrats and the German section of the Communist International (CI).

The German Communist Party, nominally committed to revolutionary policies against fascism, pursued an equally disastrous course of action. Under the guidance of Stalin's Communist International, then in its ultra-left "third period" phase, the German communists denounced the social democracy — which had the allegiance of millions of workers — as "social fascist".

The practical consequence of this absurd equation of reformism and Nazism was the refusal by the communists to fight to force the social democrats into a workers' united front against fascism. This rejection of the united front allowed the fascists to come to power without a shot being fired. Once in power Hitler set about smashing what had been the most powerful working class movement in the world.



The enormity of the German defeat in 1933 prompted Trotsky to rethink his policy towards the stalinised Communist International. For the preceding ten years the International Left Opposition — Trotsky's faction — had struggled to reform the Communist International. They believed that, in the face of Stalin's disastrous errors, the masses in the International could act as a lever for its reform. But following the German defeat not one section of the Communist International challenged Stalin's assertion that his policy for Germany had been entirely correct.

This total lack of criticism demonstrated that the Communist International was now totally stalinised. That is, it had been turned into a servile instrument of policy for the bureaucracy in the USSR. It had no living forces within it that could restore it as an instrument for world-wide socialist revolution. It was, in short, dead for revolution. Trotsky realised that the reform perspective was totally exhausted. If the German tragedy had not evoked a response from the rank and file, nothing would.

Thus, in August 1933 the International Left Opposition set itself the task of building a new revolutionary international. The struggle for the FI had begun. Despite the weakness of Trotsky's movement, he recognised that there was no alternative to this course. He wrote:

"It is necessary first to formulate the historical problem clearly and courageously and then to assemble the forces to solve it. Certainly we are still weak today. But that does not mean that history will grant us delay. . .

Ferdinand Lassalle, who was no stranger to opportunism or adventurism, expressed perfectly well

the fundamental requirement of revolutionary politics: "Every great action begins with a statement of what is". Before replying to concrete questions about this — how a new international is to be built, what methods are to be applied, what dates are to be fixed — it is necessary to assert openly what is: "the Communist International is dead for revolution".

Trotsky recognised that the precise tactics necessary to build a new international depended on developments in the class struggle and inside the international workers' movement. His initial perspective for the International was one of regroupment. Following the German defeat certain left wing parties and factions — some originating from the social democratic parties — had been pushed to the left and repelled by stalinism at one and the same time.

These formations were not revolutionary communist. They were centrist organisations. That is, they were parties which, under the pressure of events, vacillated between revolutionary communism and reformism. In 1934 a number of such centrist organisations moved to the left. Trotsky sought to regroup with these left-centrist organisations and win them to consistent revolutionary politics.

In 1934 the ICL proposed regroupment with the left centrist German Socialist Workers Party (SAP) and two Dutch socialist organisations (the OSP and the RSP). Between them these four organisations numbered well over 20,000 members and could have attracted many more. To try and realise this potential the ICL formed the Bloc of Four, with these groups. This Bloc maintained the revolutionary principles of the ICL and drew the left-centrist groups towards these principles. It did not, in itself, break the Germans and the Dutch from centrism, but it tried to "help them make the right choice", as Trotsky put it. Describing the declaration of the Bloc of Four, Trotsky wrote:

"... it defines clearly the road of the Fourth International on the basis of an irreconcilable struggle with the social democracy, a complete break with bureaucratic centrism [i.e. with stalinism as he then defined it — WP] and a resolute condemnation of all attempts along the lines of the Two-and-a-Half International." (The Two-and-a-Half International was a collection of centrist parties which briefly left the Second International only to return to the reformist fold a short time later.)

The ICL's attempt to break the left-centrists from centrism was entirely correct. It brought tangible gains for the movement in Holland. And, in a parallel development in the USA, a fusion of the Trotskyists and the leftward moving Workers' Party, led by AJ Muste, led to the creation of a 1,000 strong section of the ICL. However, objective factors meant that the full potential of the tactic of the

Bloc of Four was not realised. In particular a split with the SAP became necessary when that organisation vacillated on and then rejected the key slogan of the Fourth International.

While this phase of building the Fourth International did not bring mass forces to Trotskyism, it did furnish later generations with priceless lessons with regard to centrism. In the first place it demonstrated the importance of determining in which direction — to the left or right — a centrist organisation is moving. On the basis of this revolutionaries must decide upon their orientation: whether to help left-centrist complete a development to revolutionary communism or to launch an all-out assault on rightward moving centrists. But such assistance to left-centrists was, in no sense, an excuse for abandoning or diluting the revolutionary programme in the interests of diplomacy or to service a manoeuvre.



On the contrary, the experience of the Bloc of Four demonstrated that the only way left-centrism can be helped is if it is faced with the communist programme and obliged to make a decision between consistent revolutionary politics or a retreat towards reformism. If it is not confronted in this way it will hide behind vague phrases and shift the responsibility for making hard choices from its own shoulders and on to those of the "historical process" (or as many of today's centrists, such as the United Secretariat of the Fourth International call it, the "objective process"). In other words centrism refuses to advance clear precise revolutionary answers to the problems faced by the masses. Instead it waits for the "historical process" to provide those answers for it. In doing so it paralyses itself. If it has any influence over the masses it merely serves to confuse and disarm them. And it paves the way for the triumph of the right wing traitors inside the workers' movement.



Fourth International, French language journal of the MFI announces the founding conference

TROTSKY'S STRUGGLE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

This month is the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International. In commemorating this great event Mark Hoskisson looks at the struggle to build the International in the years 1933-1938



The experience of the Bloc of Four was, therefore, crucial in steeling the embryonic forces of the Fourth International in the struggle against centrism. It demonstrated that the only way of winning the best elements from centrism was through an intransigent defence of the revolutionary programme and an uncompromising struggle against centrist vacillation. In the years ahead this struggle against centrism became a hallmark of Trotskyism, as various centrist formations capitulated either to social democracy or to stalinism.

In the attempt to regroup with left-centrist forces the Trotskyists had stood firm on the question of the revolutionary programme. In applying the tactic of entry into the social democratic parties this same firmness was also maintained. In France the social democratic party, the SFIO, had been thrown into crisis by Hitler's triumph. This crisis deepened in 1935 when Stalin embraced the popular front. In practice the popular front in both France and Spain meant concluding a pact with social democracy and with the "liberal" or "anti-fascist" wing of the bourgeoisie and subordinating both the immediate and the historic interests of the workers to the bourgeoisie. This turn opened up debates inside social democratic parties on how fascism could be fought, on coalitionism with bourgeois parties and on relations with the stalinists.

Against sectarian tendencies inside the ICL, such as Hugö Oehler's faction in the US section, Trotsky urged his follow-

ers to intervene in these debates through organised entry into the social democratic parties. This policy, known as the "French turn", since it was pioneered in France, was not at all liquidationist as Oehler and others argued. It involved entry as an organised tendency, openly fighting for the Fourth International and against the popular front. When the reformist bureaucracy moved to silence and expel the Trotskyist tendency, as it did in France in the summer and autumn of 1935, Trotsky argued for no compromise.

For Trotsky entry was permissible only insofar as it facilitated the open struggle for the revolutionary programme. Accepting being silenced by the bureaucracy in order to stay inside a mass party was never part of his policy. His policy on entry was well expressed even before the "French turn" in his advice to his British followers in 1933. On entry into the Independent Labour Party (ILP) he wrote:

"Of course, such an entry would be inadmissible if the Central Committee of the ILP should demand from our friends that they renounce their ideas, or the open struggle for those ideas in the party."

And to this day this remains the proper criterion in relation to the entry tactic.



As with the Bloc of Four, however, the entry tactic failed to win any real mass forces to the Fourth International. By 1936 it was becoming clear to Trotsky that the possibilities of rapid growth, as a result of either regroupment or entry, had been by and large exhausted. In July 1936 an interna-

FOR THE TIONAL

the Fourth International.
ks at Trotsky's struggles



tional conference of the ICL decided, in effect, on a new turn. The Movement for the Fourth International (MFI) was formed on the basis of a recognition that the new International would be created by Trotskyists alone and that its chief strength would be its defence and development of the communist programme.

In the period between 1936 and 1938 the Trotskyists faced their gravest difficulties. The defeats suffered by the working class at the hands of fascism and as a result of the treachery of the popular front in France and Spain spread a mood of demoralisation. The capitalist crisis was edging the world to the brink of war. In the USSR Stalin was consolidating the triumph of his political counter-revolution by destroying all of the Bolshevik old-guard in the Moscow show trials and labelling Trotsky a fascist. Everywhere Trotskyists faced persecution. Everywhere the MFI was a beleaguered tiny minority.

Needless to say these events took their toll on the cadre of the MFI. Key leaders, like Rudolf Klement, Leon Sedov (Trotsky's son) and Erwin Wolf were murdered by Stalin's secret police, the GPU. Others like Sneevliet, the German Bauer and the Italian leader Leonetti, moved to the right, towards centrism or stalinism.

Yet, during this "midnight of the century" Trotsky drew together the elements of the revolutionary programme and hammered into shape a movement capable of defending it. On all of the key questions the ICL and MFI had advanced revolutionary answers. Against the popular front they argued for proletarian independence and the workers' united front. Against Stalin's counter-revolution they formulated a programme for the proletarian political revolution to overthrow the Soviet bureaucracy.

Against the threat of war they advanced the line of revolutionary defeatism.

In 1938 Trotsky codified these positions and fused them with a transitional action programme for the international working class. This programme broke down the barrier between the struggle for minimum reforms and the struggle for socialism.

It formulated demands which began with the immediate needs of the masses but, through the struggle for elements of workers' control and working class political independence, directed the fight for those needs towards the tasks of the socialist revolution and the transition to socialism itself. In other words transitional demands were a bridge between the day-to-day struggles and the revolution.



By the summer of 1938 Trotsky had completed the final draft of the international programme, *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*. The basis for the formation of the FI now existed. Moreover, in the USA, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party had been formed. While it was comparatively small (with a formal membership of 2,500) it had a good record of leading working class struggles, proving in practice the value and viability of Trotskyist politics.

For Trotsky there was now no need for delay. Indeed delay, in the face of the mounting war threat would have extremely negative effects. The dangers of political demoralisation and disorientation in the face of war and reaction would be accentuated without the formation of the FI. A democratic centralist international was the best available means of minimising these dangers. As Klement, the MFI's secretary, wrote before he was murdered:

"It is necessary, in any case, that those who, throughout the world, are fighting for the Bolshevik programme of the Fourth International should build, consolidate, enlarge their international organisation, adopt, on the basis of their common programme, common rules of conduct, apply on a national and international scale democratic centralism."



Despite these arguments for the formation of the FI there were those who flinched from the practical consequences of Trotsky's policy. At the founding conference the Polish delegation argued that the formation of the FI was premature. They reasoned that without mass support and in a period of profound reaction its formation would be a mere fiction. At the conference their position was defeated but their arguments have been used by groupings like the British Socialist Workers Party, to justify a refusal today to prioritise building an International.

The argument from the Poles was, in fact, an evasion of their internationalist duty. The forma-

tion of the FI had never depended on whether or not there was a period of working class defeat or advance. As early as 1934 Trotsky had sharply castigated this viewpoint when he wrote:

"The proletariat has need of an International at all times and under all conditions...But even in the period of the worst decline, it is necessary to prepare for a future ascent, giving our own cadres a correct orientation. Fatalistic complaints about the objective decline most often reflect a subjective decline."

Trotsky was right. Waiting for a period of working class ascent was a centrist vacillation. It meant offloading onto the working class the responsibilities and duties of its revolutionary vanguard. By forming the FI Trotsky ensured that when the world war did break out, when the stalinists and social democrats lined up with their bosses in that war, the voice of revolutionary internationalism could still be heard. Despite its small size the FI, like the three Internationals that preceded it, formed a vital stage in the struggle for world revolution. As Trotsky put it:

"The Fourth International, we answer, has no need of being 'proclaimed'. It exists and it fights. Is it weak? Yes, its ranks are not numerous because it is still young. They are as yet, chiefly cadres. But these cadres are pledges for the future. Outside of these cadres there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name. If our International is still weak in numbers, it is strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres."

Yet despite Trotsky's best efforts the war did disorganise the FI. Without its founder to guide it the leaders of the SWP in the USA neglected the leading bodies of the FI and it was left to young and inexperienced European cadres to reconstruct the FI in the years 1944-48.



Such was the tempering of the FI's cadres that all of its sections stood out against the pressure of imperialist war and proclaimed a revolutionary programme in the years immediately after it.

It was only the enormous problems caused by the expansion of stalinism, the Tito-Stalin split and the failure of economic crisis and revolutionary situations to materialise that disorientated the FI and led to its degeneration and collapse in the years 1948-1951. The baleful effects of this collapse into centrism and its subsequent fragmentation are still with us today.

But we can only overcome that degeneration and refound a Leninist-Trotskyist democratic centralist International by basing ourselves absolutely on the achievements of 1938. The greatest tribute we can pay to Trotsky and his courageous comrades is to re-elaborate his programme to meet the new tasks that fifty years have accumulated and to refound his International in unflinching combat not only with reformism, but with centrism which misuses his name and dishonours the banner of the Fourth International. The MRCI, though its forces are weaker than those of 1938, follows Trotsky's method — first formulate the task, then win the forces to fulfill it. Inspired not only by Trotsky's politics but also by his courage, we are confident of victory. ■

In defence of *Marxism*



The UN: the bosses' International

"To the robber League of Nations which was set up after the last world war, Lenin and Trotsky counterposed the Third International, the Comintern. To this new robber League of Nations which they are contriving in San Francisco now, we, the modern communists, the heirs of Lenin and Trotsky, counterpose the Fourth International." (Cannon, 1 May 1945)

THE CEASEFIRE in the Gulf war has put the United Nations (UN) back in the news. Its Secretary-General, Perez de Cuellar, has been hailed as a great man of peace. But what is the UN and what should the marxist attitude towards it be?

The UN was founded in 1945. It was presented as a defender of world peace. But its actual role was, and still is, defending the domination achieved by US imperialism as a result of the war.

The US wanted a period of relative stability so that it could reap the fruits of its victory. It needed to expand its areas of economic exploitation. To this end it sought to dismantle the old colonial empires of Britain and France. It replaced them with a system of semi-colonies — formally independent countries with pro-imperialist rulers who would help the USA pursue its plans for economic penetration. It wanted to create semi-colonies, whose independence rendered their economic enslavement by imperialism that much easier.

The creation of the UN was one element in this process. Firstly the USA hoped that it would function as a "global armed force" to intervene in any conflicts which were a threat to "world peace". Secondly it was seen as a way of drawing the newly emerging rulers of these semi-colonies into a form of "world parliament". The appearance of democratic participation in the General Assembly of the UN would win the political allegiance of the semi-colonies, the USSR and the declining imperialisms.

The US negotiated with the British, the French and the USSR to determine the exact structure of the UN. None of these powers wanted a "world parliament" which would potentially act against them. The structure of the UN reflects this concern, allowing only the chosen powers to influence key decisions. The UN was established with a Security Council of five permanent members (USA, USSR, Britain, France, China) who decide on key issues of intervention and each have the power of veto. The other members of the General Assembly of the UN have no such powers.

The involvement of the USSR in the UN reflected the position adopted by the stalinist regime during the war. It did not alter the fundamentally pro-imperialist nature of the UN. For the imperialists the participation of the USSR was useful in a number of ways. They wanted to make sure that the USSR did not exploit the process of decolonisation in order to expand its own spheres of influence. They also recognised the role of the USSR in demobilising or crushing revolutionary upheavals which were anticipated at the end of the war. Stalin delivered on both counts, proving yet again that the Soviet bureaucracy was a loyal agent of imperialism within the workers' states and the world working class.

The UN has been important for the USA in smoothing the path of decolonisation. Through a system of "trusteeships" of newly independent countries, it has been able, in most semi-colonies to train up ruling elites who are loyal to im-

perialism.

Has the UN succeeded in its other aim, that of intervening to avert threats to "world peace"? The first demonstration of the cynicism of the US with regard to this aim was seen when the USA invaded Korea in 1950. This act was against the UN Charter, but under pressure from the USA the UN actually backed the invasion. In situations where imperialists have felt their own power threatened, they have ignored the UN and relied on their own armed might to determine the outcome.

Where the UN has intervened in conflicts, it has generally been as a "peace keeping" force, such as in the Lebanon. But the peace they agree to keep is one that suits the imperialists. The UN did not intervene in the Lebanon to prevent the Israeli invasion in 1982. It allowed the Israeli butchers to drive the PLO out, massacre Palestinians in camps, and only intervened when the Israelis had withdrawn and a new status quo had been established.

The UN has not had a totally smooth path as the defender of US interests. It has grown from 51 member states at its foundation to well over 150. These states include many new semi-colonies, and even degenerate workers' states such as Cuba.

Drawing such figures as Fidel Castro and Robert Mugabe into the imperialists world parliament has created contradictions. The invitation of Yasser Arafat to address the General Assembly, the condemnation of Israeli atrocities, the granting of funds to liberation struggles in southern Africa — all these have been an embarrassment for the US and its imperialist allies. In addition, through many of the auxiliary bodies set up by the UN, the semi-colonies have formed a vocal opposition.

The Group of 77 nations was formed in the mid 1960s, including all the non-industrial member states of the UN, that agreed a programme of economic change which would place responsibility on the imperialists to improve the trade terms with the semi-colonies.

What is shown by the occasional oppositional statements from the UN, or the programme of the Group of 77, is the illusions which the rulers of the semi-colonies have in the possibility of an alliance with imperialism to effect progress in their own countries. Numerous rulers of the semi-colonies have been drawn into an alliance with imperialism, many have received direct benefits, many have had well paid jobs in Geneva. In short they have been bought off.

Marxists should have no such illusions. Trotsky said of the League of Nations (predecessor of the UN) "The League in its defence of the status quo is not an organisation of 'peace', but an organisation of the violence of the imperialist minority over the overwhelming majority of mankind". The UN is the same — it exists to perpetuate the rule of the imperialists. The oppressed nations and the exploited workers of the world must stand in hostile opposition to this thieves' kitchen. The United Nations is *their* international. We must build ours.



The longest war

MORE REPRESSION ON THE WAY

IN DECIDING how to respond to the latest offensive of the IRA Thatcher has not been lacking in advisors. Loyalist MP Ken Maginnis pressed her to reintroduce internment. Paisley wants more SAS death squads operating in the North as well as capital punishment for the IRA.

Back-bench Tory Ivor Stanbrook argues for pressure to be put on the Southern government of Charles Haughey to allow the British Army and RUC to carry out "hot pursuit" of suspects across the border and the setting up of a "joint security command" with Dublin. Among the more exotic measures trumpeted in the press has been David Owen's call for the border to be sealed "with barbed wire if necessary".

Of the more explicitly political measures touted, the demand for the banning of Sinn Fein has been aired again. In addition there is talk of a total news black out on their statements and activities, of Gerry Adams' seat being deemed vacant and of passing legislation to the effect that all those who stand in future Westminster or local elections must sign a declaration renouncing violence.

Thatcher and King have ruled out nothing. Already the RUC have used their existing powers to detain a number of activists for questioning. And indeed this is the dilemma. After 19 years of occupation, of 16 years of direct rule from Westminster what new measures would help either to diminish the military effectiveness of the IRA or serve to reduce the political support for Sinn Fein?

If the 360 mile border could be sealed by wire or troop saturation it would have been done by now.

Thatcher and King know that the key to "border security" is the willingness of Dublin to be complicit in repressing the IRA. Since the 1965 Extradition Act 159 people have been handed over to the North. The Anglo-Irish Agreement, coming up for its third anniversary, has done much to deepen and broaden the co-operation of the Southern bourgeoisie in enforcing partition. Any further measures must gain their assent to be workable.

That is why the work of the Anti-Extradition Campaign in the 26 Counties is so important. It urgently needs to draw in wider layers of the working class and get industrial action against further extradition cases. Mass protests on the border, while important, will not prevent republicans being handed over.

It is unlikely that we shall see measures such as blanket internment, capital punishment or the banning of Sinn Fein brought in because while they may appease sections of the unionists they have dubious "security" value, and could well bring about considerable political propaganda victories for Sinn Fein. In addition the Tories have every interest in sustaining bi-partisanship with Labour (as well as unanimity in its own ranks).

Here it is important that the Tories are careful not to "go over

the top" in such a manner as would make it difficult to persist with the idea that the situation in the Northern Ireland is not so very different from the rest of Britain but that a few "special measures" are necessary to deal with a "criminal terrorist" minority. Measures that hit masses of the nationalist population indiscriminately back fire and in the process contradict the attempt by the Tories to shore up the support of the constitutionalists like the SDLP.

All of which reinforces the point that it is the existing measures that we in Britain must renew our campaign against. They have been draconian enough. They start with the daily harassment, the arbitrary killings by the RUC, UDR and Loyalist gangs. They continue with arrests and detention under the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act. This legislation, to be made permanent next year as opposed to annually renewable, has been used to detain and intimidate thousands of Irish people in Britain; a mere 1% have ever been charged with an offence.

The existing methods of repression culminate in Britain with the use of the frame-up (beatings are often used) as in the case of the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four or most recently Patrick McLoughlin. In the Six Counties the no-jury Diplock Courts, the regular beatings, the use of paid supergrass and the sending of republican fighters to the Maze Prison are all part and parcel of British policy.

Over the last 19 years the British ruling class and its governmental servants among the ranks of the Tory and Labour parties have shown themselves impasive in the face of liberal public opinion.

The *Bennet Report* on torture in Castlereagh detention centre and Amnesty International's rebuke for "extrajudicial killings" (i.e. shoot-to-kill operations of the RUC) were both met with cynical disregard. Cover-ups and intimidation and appeal to "national security" are used, as was the case in the Stalker affair.

All this barely provokes a response from Labour's front-bench. When they do pipe up it is to protest on secondary or procedural grounds. It is up to class conscious workers to act for the anti-unionists and the Irish in Britain. Over 19 years the left and the labour movement have failed to build an anti-imperialist solidarity movement around "Troops Out Now! Self-Determination For The Irish People As A Whole!"

The latest substitute for this, the "Time To Go Charter" launched in June is yet another attempt to evade the real issues of British imperialist rule in Ireland. It blurs the line between progressive and reactionary withdrawal sentiments in the British working class; it downgrades the labour movement in favour of actresses, poets and comedians.

Unfortunately, as Robert Russell learned last month when he was extradited from Eire to the North, there really is not much time to laugh fighting to free your country. ■

WEST BANK Intifadah must go on

BY DAVID GREEN

IN A move clearly designed to catch both Israel and the PLO off guard, King Hussein of Jordan announced at the end of July his intention to cut all legal and administrative ties binding the West Bank to the main area under his direct rule east of the River Jordan.

Though united with Jordan in 1950, the West Bank has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. And yet Hussein's move has more than simply symbolic value. What lies behind his decision?

Despite the occupation, Jordan has maintained close economic and administrative links with the West Bank. The announcement has given Hussein the opportunity to carry out a massive "rationalisation" programme—3,500 government employees (mainly civil servants) have been dismissed and over 16,000 have suffered a substantial cut in pay. A \$1.3 billion development plan has been axed, and a Jordanian-Palestinian committee established to finance public services has been abolished. The "withdrawal" therefore has an immediate economic advantage for the Hashemite regime.

Far more importantly in the long-term however are the political consequences of the move. Since 1950, when Hussein's grandfather King Abdullah united both banks of the Jordan, between 60-70% of the population under Hashemite rule have been of Palestinian origin. The Palestinians have had a radicalising effect on Jordanian

politics, forming the backbone of the oppositional movement which came close to toppling Hussein in 1970. This movement was only crushed after "Black September" when the King's troops murdered 2-3,000 Palestinian fighters.

Hussein will have been watching the last nine months of Palestinian revolt on the West Bank with a wary eye, anxious to prevent the new mood of self-assertion spreading to the East Bank of the Jordan as it has spread into Israel itself.

Therefore a central ideological thrust of Hussein's disengagement has been his assertion that "Jordan is not Palestine": a fine admission from the latest in a line of pro-imperialist monarchs who have sought to monopolise all claims to represent the Palestinians.

Also Hussein is clearly so concerned at the wave of radicalisation passing through Palestinian society that the Jordanian parliament has been dissolved, and the 30 West Bank representatives will no longer take their places in that stooze body. Formal authority has been ceded to the PLO to construct an "independent Palestinian state" on the West Bank. But real control still rests with the Israelis.

In the aftermath of Hussein's pull-out the PLO have indicated their willingness to smooth the path to a pro-imperialist solution to the "Palestinian problem". Aplan has emerged, with full backing from Fatah, the dominant tendency within the PLO, calling for the establishment of a token PLO "government-in-exile" and for rec-

ognition of Israel's right to exist within the borders set out in the United Nations' 1947 Partition Plan.

Arafat's deputy, Salah Khalaf, has even gone so far as to state that the new government's "political programme would be very different from the current Palestine national charter". It would effectively abandon its opposition to the inherently racist notion of a specifically Jewish state in Palestine, and condemn the 750,000 Palestinians living within Israel to an unending existence without basic national and democratic rights.

Even the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which traditionally has opposed negotiated solutions falling short of the destruction of the Zionist entity, has embraced the plan. Their reward has already become apparent in proposals that their leader George Habash take a ministerial position in the future government.

At present a government-in-exile could serve only as a tool with which the bourgeois nationalist PLO leadership could pursue their diplomatic ambitions including the commencement of negotiations with Israel itself. For whilst the Likud continues to rule out talks with the PLO, Labour have greeted Salah Khalaf's recent remarks by indicating their preparedness to negotiate if the PLO renounce violence (i.e. resistance) and recognise Israel's right to exist.

What is certain is that such a government would in no way constitute a weapon in the struggle of the Palestinian masses for national liberation. The *intifadah*, the Palestinian uprising, must continue and be extended through the calling of a general strike throughout all territories under Zionist rule to demand an end to the occupation.

Only such a perspective can prevent the creation of an Arab "bantustan" on the West Bank and open the road to the smashing of the Zionist state and the solution of the Palestinian national question on a revolutionary basis. ■

PAKISTAN Don't mourn Zia

BY ANDY BANNISTER

ON 17 AUGUST

President Zia

Haq was killed

when his military

transport plane

blew up in mid-air.

His death was the

occasion for a

sickening display

of hypocrisy from

western "democrats"

and eastern

"communists" alike.

Thatcher said

he had been "the

admiration of the

world over". The

Chinese government

claimed the explosion

had "deprived

Pakistan of an

outstanding

leader and China

of an old and

respected friend".

This is the record

they were

admiring: Zia

overthrew the

elected

government of

Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto in 1977

at the head of

an army coup.

He promised

elections within

90 days. 90

months later

there had

been no

elections. When

Zia had

Bhutto

executed in

1979 his

later

"admirers"

and "old

friends" were

to be heard

issuing the

strongest

protests.

Then Soviet

troops

occupied

Afghanistan.

From being a

butcher,

torturer

and

diplomatic

embarrassment,

Zia

became a

"bulwark

against

communism".

Offers of

aid

flowed in

from the

USA and

British

imperialists.

Zia

pledged

support to

the

reactionary

Islamic

forces

against

the

Afghan

government

and

Pakistan

became

the

chief

military

supply

route and

refugee

base for

the

Afghan

opposition.

What

does

Zia's

death

mean

in

Pakistan?

It

has

temporarily

wrong-

footed the bosses, the army and their imperialist backers. They have declared an emergency and banned all political activity. But there were deep problems facing the Pakistani ruling class even before Zia was killed.

The economy had shown signs of strengthening, though largely on the basis of profit from the illicit arms and drugs trade, boosted by corruption in government. Zia was already preparing to move against sections of the army command who had gained economic power from the years of army rule, thereby threatening to erode his own base.

It was against this background that Zia was to attempt to cloak his rule with electoral legitimacy. In March, 1985 Zia held elections in which all parties were banned! They were widely boycotted and Zia's predictable pawn MK Junejo was elected. Yet Junejo astonished many by challenging Zia over the Afghan question, leading to his unceremonious dismissal in May of this year.

In the meantime, Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan to lead her father's Pakistani People's Party (PPP). Her return prompted mass demonstrations from workers and peasants expecting her to topple Zia immediately. Despite successfully demobilising her supporters there is every possibility that the PPP would win any fair election in Pakistan.

Bhutto is banking on getting the



franchise to run Pakistan from the US/British imperialists. To the masses who remember her father's socialist rhetoric and his nationalisations she is now explaining the virtues of "modern" socialism as advocated by Kinnock and Spain's Felipe Gonzales. To the generals she offers the smoothing words "we have never been against the army".

Pakistani workers and peasants should rejoice at the death of a dictator but should not be fooled by the pro-capitalist politics of the PPP if they are to settle accounts with the system that gave birth to Zia, with the local bosses and their imperialist backers. A workers' party must be built on a revolutionary programme. The Pakistani workers must seize the opportunity presented by Zia's death to reconstruct the nation under their own leadership. ■

Burma's military regime is in crisis.

Julian Scholefield explains the background and argues that neither the "Burmese Way" nor the plans of the liberal opposition can break imperialism's stranglehold on the country

SUSTAINED MASS mobilisations in Burma have rocked the decrepit military regime. Burma's rulers have responded alternately with promises of reform and with further savage repression.

Last month the aged General Ne Win, ruler for 26 years, resigned as Chairman of the ruling party, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), only to be followed 18 days later by his replacement Sein Lwin. Now, civilian President Maung Maung is seeking to stave off the popular revolt. On the one hand he pledges to call a special party congress and hold a referendum on allowing more than one party. On the other, he unleashes the military to continue its massacre of demonstrators and political prisoners.

The BSPP ran into crisis in August as demonstrations begun by students spread to most areas and most sections of the population including both workers and the middle class. Demonstrators demanded economic and political reform. Young people risked death as they threw themselves against the military.

Maung's promised reforms are a last ditch attempt to placate this mass discontent. But even if he pursues his course towards a multi-party state, and this is by no means certain, it will not solve the crisis facing Burma's economy.

The recent uprisings were sparked off by a 400% rise in the price of rice—a staple for many Burmese. Last September the Ne Win government tried to offset an inflationary spiral by abolishing the three largest banknotes—25,35 and 75 kyats. Overnight 75% of all money in circulation was made worthless, in an attempt to curb the profits of Burma's black marketeers. Their trade had caused unofficial inflation to be triple that of the official figure of 5%. These measures provoked the widespread protests which have swept through Burma ever since.

Today Burma is plunged into an even deeper economic crisis. Rice exports, Burma's leading foreign exchange earner, have been virtually wiped out this year due to the fall in commodity prices on the world market. Burma has been unable to extricate itself from economic dependence on imperialism; it is indebted to the tune of \$3 billion. The United Nations has declared Burma a "least developed nation"—among the poorest 15 countries in the world. The western media has seized on this opportunity to expose yet again that "socialism" doesn't work. *The Daily Mail* talked of "the blight Burma shares with Brent"!

Indeed the present Burmese regime has claimed the mantle of socialism—hence the ruling party's name. The economic policies of the BSPP since the army, under General Ne Win, seized power in 1962 have been officially called the "Burmese Way of Socialism".

In reality the Burmese military and the bourgeoisie have used the name socialism ever since achieving formal independence from Britain in 1948 as a device for winning popular support for their policies. These were aimed at developing Burma's own indigenous capitalism free from economic dependence on world imperialism.

The present crisis exposes the failure of the Burmese ruling class to carry out this task successfully. It was hardly surprising that

Burma's post independence rulers talked in anti-imperialist terms. Britain's colonial rule meant that Burma supplied oil to the Empire and to grow rice. It was administered by the Indian Civil Service. No wonder that Le Nu, the first Burmese Prime Minister declared:

"The wealth of Burma has been enjoyed firstly by the big British capitalists, next the Indian capitalists, and next the Chinese capitalists. The Burmese are at the bottom, in poverty, and have to be content with the left-over and chewed-over bones and scraps from the table of foreign capitalist." (*Towards Peace and Democracy*, p2, Le Nu 1948)

Indeed Burma's 1947 draft constitution states:

"Private property may be limited or expropriated if the public interest so requires." (Section 30)

The intention of Burma's new rulers was to carry through industrialisation and the unification of the Burmese nation, protected from foreign interference. They wished to develop their own Burmese capitalism.

But the Burmese bourgeoisie was too weak to do this on its own; hence the military takeover in 1962 and an even greater role for the state in the "Burmese way". All foreign firms, banks and private Burmese companies were nationalised. Prices were fixed bureaucratically. Low prices were imposed on peasant agricultural produce. The BSPP sought to use these measures to force greater productivity from Burmese workers. There was not even a semblance of workers' democracy allowed. The regime's answer to disaffected national minorities and all other opposition was continuing repression. Far from being a form of socialism, the "Burmese way" was a form of state capitalism.

Burma did not become, as *Militant* claims, a degenerate workers' state like those of Eastern Europe. Despite the massive nationalisation

Today Burma is plunged into an even deeper economic crisis. Rice exports, Burma's leading foreign exchange earner, have been virtually wiped out this year. Burma has been unable to extricate itself from economic dependence on imperialism; it is indebted to the tune of \$3 billion. The western media has seized on this opportunity to expose yet again that "socialism" doesn't work. The Daily Mail talked of "the blight Burma shares with Brent"!

of the BSPP, or by a new leadership emerging from the opposition. It would mean more price hikes through deregulation, further attacks on wages as the imperialists sought to rake in superprofits, and the turning over of state run assets to be run for profit.

None of the existing oppositions, however, have a programme which could take Burma forward and truly challenge imperialism's stranglehold.

The recent demonstrations have been led by clandestine student organisations, in particular, the umbrella All-Burma Students Democratic Association.

The Association has pushed militant tactics, and in many towns the students have sought and gained open support from the working class. It has tried to distance itself from openly pro-imperialist policies by declaring its opposition to "dependence on foreign powers". But it has put its faith in winning support from dis-

The Burmese way crumbles



Monks in Rangoon protest—but Buddhism spells danger for masses

forward either. The imperialist powers are still casting around for a suitable candidate amongst the forces ranged against the old regime. However, the imperialists fear the continuation of mass action which could witness further mobilisations by the working class. If it is necessary to stave off revolution, they will stick with the BSPP.

For the masses of Burma, economic "liberalisation" would mean further exploitation whether carried out by a pro-imperialist wing

affected officers and finding a benevolent wing amongst the military.

As the mass mobilisations developed, middle class professionals became increasingly prominent within the opposition as have Buddhist monks. At the end of August, Mandalay was reported to be in the hands of a "council of monks" and Taroy was being run by a "peoples' democratic front". Opposition leaders were calling for an "interim government" prior to holding a general election. These

opening the door to imperialism and to super exploitation of the already oppressed groups.

Another component of the opposition is the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Burma (CPB) which commands a guerrilla army of some 14,000. Its programme, however, is limited to achieving bourgeois democracy—a multi-party system, freedom of speech, assembly and worship, self-government for the national minorities and so forth. Its economic programme stays firmly within the bounds of capitalism, calling for loans, not only to small traders and peasants, but to factory owners!

A reformist and thoroughly pro-capitalist programme like this can do little to liberate the oppressed and exploited masses of Burma from the root cause of their continued misery, oppression and exploitation—the continued domination of their country by world imperialism.

The "Burmese way" of autarchic state capitalist development was no way out. "Liberalisation" as supported by the opposition including the CPB, will bring further exploitation at the hands of world imperialism. Even a period of temporary growth and an "economic miracle" would not succeed in permanently raising the country and the majority of its people out of the unending spiral of poverty and crises that imperialism imposes on the semi-colonial world.

But there is an alternative road—that of permanent revolution. This means uniting the rural masses of Burma with the much smaller, but powerful Burmese working-class around a programme which is both committed to resolving the most burning national and democratic demands as well as smashing the entire system which gives rise to this oppression and misery—capitalism and imperialism.

In answer to the calls for special party congresses and "interim governments" socialists call for a convocation of a sovereign constituent assembly, elected on the basis of universal suffrage. At the same time, recognising that democratic measures in themselves will not free the nation from capitalist domination, the revolutionary programme must call for the mobilisation of the working class in factory committees, workers' councils and armed militia and for seizing state power. The factories and estates, far from being handed over to private capitalists and landowners, must be taken over and run by urban and rural workers themselves. Credit and technology must be made available to small peasants to help increase production. There must be a guarantee of self-determination for the national minorities; but far from advocating the further fragmentation of the country, revolutionaries call for spreading the socialist revolution throughout the region, and establishing a socialist federation of South East Asia.

The most urgent task facing the Burmese masses today is the building of a Trotskyist party which is committed to fighting for such a revolutionary programme. ■



the MRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

ARBEITERMACHT/ARBEITERSTANDPUNKT

German language summer school a success

THE MRCI held its biggest ever German Language Summer School in Vienna this August. Representatives from Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Federal Republic of Germany) and the Arbeiterstandpunkt group (Austria) met for three days for an intensive discussion of marxist theory. A number of supporters and representatives from Workers Power were also present.

The school focused on two major themes. The first was the question of womens' oppression, with sessions covering the origins of the subjugation of women, the nature of sexual oppression and the theories and role of modern feminism.

The final day of the school covered the theme of imperialism, examining in detail the theories of Lenin, Luxemburg and Hilferding on the development of monopoly capitalism and the domination of the planet by the major capitalist powers.

The school undoubtedly marked an important stage in the development of the MRCI in Germany and Austria, in both numerical and ideological terms. The political gains registered in Vienna will enable both groups to go forward with renewed vigour in the struggle for the programme of communism. ■

IRISH WORKERS GROUP

The fight against extradition

IN BELFAST and Dublin members of the Irish Workers Group (IWG) have been marching alongside Sinn Fein supporters in the recent demonstrations against repression and selling their paper *Class Struggle* to the marchers.

The IWG's paper is sharply critical of the strategy of the Sinn Fein led Anti-Extradition Campaign. *Class Struggle* openly counterposes the strategy of working class centred action as against the republicans' priority of courting an alliance with the bourgeois nationalist Fianna Fail. This party in government has now implemented the law which, for the first time, denies republicans immunity from extradition for political offences.

Robert Russell was extradited back to the H-Blocks at Long Kesh in the early hours of 27 August. Tragically the republican led demonstrations in that crucial week failed to rally any large forces, least of all support from the ranks of Fianna Fail. The task of communists remains to fight to put working class forces and action in the vanguard of the struggle against pro-imperialist repression North and South. ■

POUVOIR OUVRIER

A new journal in October

Pouvoir Ouvrier, journal of the French section of the MRCI, is due out in October. Articles include: the situation in the French class struggle; the Left and Gorbachev; the politics of Lutte Ouvriere; the French trade unions and how revolutionaries should work in them; Trotsky on the fight against fascism in the 1930s; the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation; MRCI theses on Afghanistan; the liberation struggle in New Caledonia (Kanaky) and more...

Copies of *Pouvoir Ouvrier* can be obtained from Workers Power (£1 + 25p p+p) or direct from:

Stenberg H, BP166, 75564 Paris Cedex 12, France.

MRCI

Latin American work

AT THE Workers Power Summer School an appeal was made to raise funds for the MRCI's work in Latin America. If our contacts and discussions with the comrades of Guia Obrera and Poder Obrero are to go forward and culminate in these organisations joining the MRCI then increasing sums of money will be needed to facilitate regular meetings. The heightened political crisis in Peru emphasises the urgency of this work. The appeal raised £1,560, a marvellous achievement.

Also on a fund raising note MRCI members were pleased to be amongst those who helped organise an Eleuterio Gutierrez benefit in July. Eleuterio is a Bolivian miner and Trotskyist who has been framed by his employers and sent down. His real crime is that he fought to defend the miners against the bosses' attacks. The benefit was a great success. It was thoroughly enjoyed by the many people who attended it and raised more than £800 to help Eleuterio's family and cover his legal fees. ■

The Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

The MRCI
Arbeiterstandpunkt (Austria)
Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany)
Irish Workers Group
Pouvoir Ouvrier (France)
Workers Power Group (Britain)

Fraternal groups:
Poder Obrero (Peru)
Guia Obrera (Bolivia)
These groups are in the process of discussions with the MRCI with the aim of becoming affiliated sections.

PERU



Workers clash with Garcia's police during mass strike

Revolutionary crisis looms

BY DIEGO MOCAR

ALL THE signs indicate that Peru is entering a revolutionary period. Alan Garcia's government is in deep crisis—alienated both from the bourgeoisie and from the popular masses that brought it to power.

The economic crisis deepens daily, with rampant inflation, an investment strike and the flight of capital abroad. Inflation this year will reach 500%. In July alone the rise was 30%. With the government wage restrictions this means a 20% cut in real wages for Peruvian workers. The country's dollar reserves have simply melted away. The economic collapse reveals that the Peruvian bourgeoisie has lost faith in the APRA "strong man".

More and more bourgeois support is being given to the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa's "Democratic Front" (Frente Democrático—FREDMO) which combines demagogic attacks on Garcia's dictatorial style with the advocacy of neo-liberal, Thatcherite economic policies. "Neo-liberalism" in backward countries means opening up their markets to imperialist penetration, abandoning state subsidies for industry and consumers and selling off state sector industries and services. These policies have been applied with vicious results by Pinochet in Chile and more recently by Paz Estenssoro in Bolivia. In Peru there is one important difference. Pinochet and Paz could carry out these policies only after defeating their working class. The Peruvian working class is as yet unbeaten.

The Peruvian proletariat has responded to the galloping inflation and Garcia's wage restriction with a wave of strikes. Peru's miners came out on an unprecedented two month national strike. Teachers, transport workers and even the police force struck as well. As a result the ANP (National Popular Assembly) and the Peruvian Trade Union Congress (CGTP) called a two day general strike on 19 and 20 July. But like every reformist union bureaucracy they delayed the implementation of the strike until the miners and teachers' unions had struck a rotten com-

promise with Garcia.

The major force in the Peruvian workers and peasants' movements, the Izquierda Unida (IU—United Left), is trying to make itself the centre for an electoral popular front. This reflects the strength of stalinism's influence in the IU. Its first national congress is due to take place in October. The leadership has produced a document that clearly outlines this project.

"The anti-imperialist and non-aligned Democratic government of Izquierda Unida will on the road towards socialism have to respond to specific urgent and deepgoing popular expectations and also to difficult objective circumstances both on a national and an international level. For these reasons it must base itself not only on the popular and professional forces organised in the IU but also on the broadest unity of all those social and political forces that have an anti-imperialist and democratic vision."

PODER OBRERO

In particular the statement appeals to that mythical beast so long sought by Latin American stalinism, the "patriotic military". It promises not only to respect the "deep patriotic consciousness" of the military but to ensure that the resources for military equipment will be generously available.

It is clear that the IU will do all it can to sabotage effective workers' resistance to Garcia. To the left of IU stand two serious forces; the Maoist guerrilla organisation Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and the Unified Mariateguista Party (PUM). Sendero is continuing and extending its guerrilla campaign and has mass influence amongst the students and sections of shanty-town dwellers in Lima. But its elitist guerrilla strategy as

well as its own stages theory and bizarre version of the popular front means that its actions disrupt and destroy the class struggle of Peru's workers and poor peasants.

The PUM, a centrist party with a powerful reformist current apparently turned to the left at its latest conference (July). There the left wing faction (known as the "Libyans") led by Senator Javier Diez Canseco won the majority over the right-wing (known as the "Foxes") led by Santiago Pedriaglo.

Despite the left's majority on the Central Committee they immediately put forward as leader Eduardo Caceres Valdivia, who openly voices an electoral strategy for gaining office and who advocates closer links with the stalinist Peruvian Communist Party. Thus the "left turn" appears to be illusory. In fact the PUM appears to be evolving steadily in the direction of becoming a reformist, bourgeois workers party.

One organisation in Peru, albeit a small one, has been advocating a clear revolutionary response to Garcia and the military. Poder Obrero, with whom the MRCI is in fraternal discussions, has argued for a militant class struggle response. During July's strikes it called for mass mobilisations, road blockages and a national strike committee to take the struggle out of the hands of the sabotaging bureaucrats.

It called for the transformation of the National Popular Assembly into an organ of power for the working class and poor peasants—one in which the delegates would be elected by rank and file assemblies in factories, shanty towns and in the villages and remain answerable to and recallable by them. Poder Obrero argued for the formation of self-defence organisations of the workers and poor peasants.

Electoralism and the popular front are a trap for the Peruvian masses. Only direct, open, uncompromising class struggle against Garcia's austerity and repression can open the way to the real solution to Peru's crisis: working class power in alliance with the poor peasants. ■

EASTERN EUROPE

Workers defy
"market socialism"

Eastern Europe is aflame with workers' revolt, writes **John Hunt**. As the bureaucrats embrace the "market" workers refuse to pay the price.

FROM SZCZECIN on the Baltic to Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast the working class of Eastern Europe is aflame. Strikes have hit Yugoslavia over the last three months. For the second time in four months strikes have erupted in Poland. Miners have struck in southern Hungary. In addition street demonstrations in Prague and the Soviet Baltic republics reflect a new confidence to defy the authorities.

The renewed mobilisations have their roots in a common political and economic crisis that is gripping the stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe. The conflicts within the Kremlin bureaucracy have doubtless boosted the confidence of oppositionists as well as restraining the more repressive elements in the bureaucracy. But the intervention of the working class has been triggered primarily by economic hardships. These have been produced by the market orientated "reforms" that are in vogue amongst the ruling bureaucracies and their hired experts.

State ownership of industry and planned production are the very foundations of real socialism. Only on the basis of these measures, which abolish the workings of the capitalist "market" can society be transformed to meet the needs of many instead of the profits of a few.

In Eastern Europe, a layer of bureaucrats leeches off the post-capitalist property relations blocking the transition to socialism. But without active workers' democracy, planning inevitably leads to stagnation. One by one the ruling bureaucrats of Eastern Europe embraced the "market" as a way out of the blind alley of bureaucratic planning. Now the workers are waking up to the disastrous results.

The market has been given greatest license in Yugoslavia and it is there that its devastating effects have been most severely felt. Inflation last year ran at 170%, eating into real wages and triggering strikes and demonstrations this July. Workers besieged the State Parliament demanding immediate wage increases and price controls. In the meantime, as the economy continues to deteriorate, the various bureaucracies that run Yugoslavia's component federal states fall out with each other over who should pay most for the crisis.

The Hungarian regime has also travelled the path of "marketisation". And the bitter fruits are there to see. The economy has slowed down dramatically — it actually shrunk in both 1980 and 1983 — foreign debt continues to mount and at least 200,000 are officially categorised as "temporarily unem-



Poland: striking workers at the Lenin Shipyards

ployed". Declining living standards and mounting fears of redundancy have twice this year prompted Hungarian miners to strike. The August strikes were prompted by market-inspired cuts in bonus rates: miners take home pay fell below sick pay rates.

But it is in Poland that the clash between the working class and the plans of the "reformers" has taken its sharpest form. Ever since his coup in 1981 Jaruzelski's regime has been set on paying off Poland's foreign debt and reviving its economy. This has been done primarily through massive increases in prices and the removal of subsidies.

This attempt to let market forces rip has further undermined the already miserable living standards of the Polish workers. Inflation is now running at close on 60% while wage rises have nowhere near kept pace. In addition the debt strapped economy (Poland's debt at present stands at \$40 billion) has become incapable of providing elementary goods except to those prepared and able to queue long hours or trade on the black market.

Twice this year Polish workers' anger has boiled over. In April and May the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk and the Nowa Huta Steel mill near Krakow occupied against price increases and for the recognition of Solidarnosc. The Nowa Huta occupation was broken up by riot police. The Lenin Shipyard was besieged and starved into submission. This time round the strikes started with the miners in the Manifest Lipcowy Mine and quickly spread to transport workers in Wroclaw and then to port and bus workers in Szczecin. Only at this point did traditional Solidarnosc strongholds such as the Lenin Shipyards and Nowa Huta begin to seriously discuss action.

It is significant that the Polish miners triggered the present round of struggle. They are traditionally a highly paid and relatively privileged group of workers as they have tended to be in all the stalinist bureaucratic regimes. They were slow to be drawn into action in the battles of 1980-81 yet proved the most tenacious fighters against Jaruzelski in the weeks after his December 1981 crackdowns. The mines in the south of Poland were amongst the last bastions to fall to

the repressive forces. The depth of Poland's economic crisis is revealed by the fact that even these workers are now saying their conditions are intolerable. The potential for the Polish workers to take the regime by the throat is underlined by the fact that coal exports are Poland's main source of hard currency earnings.

While there was little centralised co-ordination of the strike wave, a series of common demands were raised for improvements in pay and conditions, the reinstatement of sacked workers and the recognition of Solidarnosc. In Szczecin dockers also raised the demand for "political pluralism". By all accounts the lead was taken by younger workers who had not been directly involved in the Solidarnosc mobilisations of 1980-81. They are straining for a show-down with the regime, free from the

slashing plans. Meanwhile the general economic crisis of the regimes is mounting. The decisive battles are still to come. Even where the working class has not yet taken action for its own direct interests the general political crisis is opening the road for it to do so. Thousands marked the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in rallies and demonstrations. In the Baltic republics there has been a wave of mass protests marking the anniversary of the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939. In the Baltic republics there is the highest officially reported incidence of strike activity in the USSR.

Everywhere in Eastern Europe workers need to build a coordinated leadership to direct the struggle. There is no immediate evidence of such a potential proletarian leadership as yet existing at a national level in either Hungary or Yugoslavia. In Poland the situation is different but marked by its own particular problems.

While the Polish strikers demanded the recognition of Solidarnosc in truth Solidarnosc itself is in deep crisis. Leading intellectuals in its ranks, like Jacek Kuron, have been opposing strikes and outright opposition to the regime throughout the year. Earlier this year he wrote in the Solidarnosc journal *Tygodnik Mazowse*

"A spontaneous explosion of social anger is increasingly likely. In the present conditions Polish society will not benefit from this. Our situation will, perhaps, be made even worse, and that is certainly going to cost us dear".

Instead during the April/May strikes Kuron held out for a coalition government of representatives of the regime and individuals who enjoyed the confidence of Solidarnosc and the church. The open parting of the ways between the Polish working class and the likes of Kuron is rooted in the fact that social democratic intellectuals like Kuron actually support the very market reforms that Jaruzelski favours and that workers are under attack from. They look to a combination of the market and Gorbachev's reforms to solve Poland's present crisis. Outright resistance by the Polish workers runs directly counter to that project.

The Catholic hierarchy has also

put all its weight behind trying to stop working class resistance. This time round it used its hold over Walesa to keep the Lenin Shipyard out of the battle for as long as possible. At the end of the first week Walesa was still praying for a signal for talks from Jaruzelski and hoping the Catholic church could pave the way for those talks. On the Friday he announced:

"We support the other strikers and, although we would like to avoid the strike, we will start one if the Solidarity claim is not dealt with by Monday. In fact, I will probably declare a strike in the whole Gdansk region. The men want to strike immediately."

As depots and mines were being surrounded elsewhere Walesa, the bishop's man, held the Lenin Shipyard back. When, inevitably, the regime refused his olive branch, the Lenin Shipyard was occupied but the call for a Gdansk wide strike did not materialise.

In the face of such treachery and misleadership at the top of Solidarnosc it is vitally necessary that those who want to defend working class interests are won to the building of a party committed to a political revolution that will overthrow the bureaucracy and replace it with the rule of the workers through their own workers' councils. That political revolution would scrap "marketisation" and replace them with a plan directly in the hands of the producers themselves and geared to meet their needs. Only a party armed with such a programme could explain the roots of the bureaucracy's crises and offer a road of struggle to those who are prepared to lead.

The alternative is a profound political crisis in the ranks of the East European working class. The social democratic influenced intelligentsia and the stalinist regimes are sold on varieties of market orientated reform.

The danger is that in response the workers will rally to more conservative sections of the bureaucracy, or, in the absence of a Trotskyist intervention, become prey to varieties of nationalist, religious ideas or even in the case of the youth to cynicism and despair.

A wave of nationalism is sweeping Eastern Europe. Whilst the struggle against national oppression is an integral part of the programme of political revolution workers should shun the reactionary nationalist sentiments that both stalinist leaders and pro-capitalist oppositionists are encouraging.

In Poland, Hungary, Rumania and the Baltic republics nationalism threatens to divert the workers from settling accounts with their bureaucratic overlords. However it is in Yugoslavia that this threat is most immediate. Serbian party boss Milosevic has been orchestrating a campaign to reintegrate the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and the majority Albanian Kosovo into Serbia. There is every possibility that the Yugoslav stalinists will try to divert the crisis of "market socialism" into an anti-Albanian pogrom.

Workers in Eastern Europe face a common crisis and a common enemy. In the face of this they need a common internationalist programme. In the battle against the impact of the market, against reactionary and diversionary nationalism, and against bureaucratic privilege and repression they must build new revolutionary communist parties. Only then can millions of workers learn again that the socialism of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky is the means for the liberation of humanity, not the guarantee of their oppression and poverty. ■

Revolution and Counter-revolution in Poland

These agreed by
Gruppe Arbeitermacht
Irish Workers Group
Workers Power
1982

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pessimism that Solidarnosc's defeat has bred amongst some older workers.

The lack of centralised coordination allowed the regime to use its mighty apparatus of repression to isolate the strike centres and pick them off one by one. Mines and bus depots who had been amongst the first out were being forced back to work as other workers, Gdansk shipworkers for example, were beginning to take action.

This widespread resistance to the impact of "marketisation" tells us much about the shape of the major battles that are still to come. The working class has not suffered a major reverse in these present rounds of battle. Neither have the ruling bureaucracies been forced to drop their wage cutting and job



John Smith / IFL

Eric's illusions

BY CHRIS RAMSEY

THREE STRANDS run through this collection of speeches, articles, reviews and interviews by Eric Heffer. The first is a belief that socialism equals

"public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange (in various forms) with a serious element of planning but with the working people in basic control".

Second is a deep-seated attachment to parliament and governmental office as a way of achieving this socialism. The third strand is an unshakeable attachment to the Labour Party as the vehicle of social change.

Each of these themes is embroidered with honest support for militant class struggle. Heffer believes that such struggles ought not to be wished away as an embarrassment to Labour's election chances. Nevertheless his argument rests on the legitimacy of extra-parliamentary activity as a "British democratic tradition". Indeed "Extra-parliamentary activity should not be seen as the alternative to Parliament but as part of the same process". Which process? Heffer's answer is: "...discussion, vote-getting and parliamentary action" in order to "transform capitalist society into a socialist one".

This commitment to the peaceful overthrow of capitalism flows from Heffer's political past. Expelled from the pro-Moscow Communist Party in 1948, he sees the only choice as being between "peaceful transformation" and the bureaucratic straight-jacket of stalinism. He chooses the former without being able to answer the

Forward to socialism
by Eric Heffer MP
(Labour Party supporters
of the Benn/Heffer
campaign" 50p)

crucial question — is it possible? In Heffer's words:

"Can socialism be achieved by democratic means? My firm answer is that we must try".

Previous attempts to use these means, most notably Chile in the early 1970s, have ended in a bloody catastrophe for the working class and Heffer knows it. He states

"let us try the democratic road but without any illusions that we will succeed and be prepared to use the strength of the labour movement to defend our gains and defeat potential aggressors."

Yet this formulation avoids the crucial issue. Real power does not rest with Parliament but with the army, police chiefs, civil servants and unelected judges who act directly in the interests of the capitalist class. And the real economic power in society rests with the capitalists themselves, who are not shy in using it to brow beat even the mildest of reformist governments (Wilson in 1975).

Heffer recognises, albeit implicitly, that the full force of the capitalist state will be unleashed against any "left-wing" Labour government. He should draw the logical conclusions and state unambiguously that only the arming of the working-class and the forcible destruction of the state can clear the way for the construction of socialism. To remain silent on this question is to mislead the working class about the realities of capital-

ist society. It ill-prepares them for any coup — no matter how "British".

Heffer's strategy dictates his attitudes to the Labour Party. For him, the history of the Labour party is divided into three distinct stages. In the early years, the party was "not fully socialist". "Socialism" arrived with the acceptance of a new constitution, incorporating the famous "clause IV". Now, socialism is under threat again from "revisionism", spurred on by Labour's third defeat at the hands of Thatcher.

Clause IV part 4 is the great catch-all that successive generations of left wingers have used to demonstrate Labour's commitment to socialism. But it was designed to be as vague as possible. To Heffer it means social ownership, to Kinnock share ownership!

In reality, as the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin pointed out a long time ago, Clause IV is a concentrated expression of Labour's reformism, embodying as it does a commitment to secure for the workers the public ownership of the means of production. In no way does it represent the political or economic emancipation of the working class.

As opposed to parliamentary reformism of all shades, revolutionaries stress the self-emancipation of the working class. As an instrument for the management of capitalism, the Labour Party remains an obstacle to the only realistic means of attaining socialism: the armed revolution of the workers. Heffer and the Labour left continue to play a dangerous role in concealing this vital fact from workers. ■

Lead us into temptation

THE MORAL MINORITY are on the march. Martin Scorsese's latest film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*

The Last Temptation of Christ
directed by Martin Scorsese

BY DAVE GREEN

Christ has been denounced by Christian fanatics in the USA as "the most evil attack on the Church and the cause of Christ in the history of entertainment". Clearly feeding Christians to the lions for a laugh in ancient Rome's palaces of entertainment is but nothing compared to Scorsese's movie!

The US zealots have so far failed to prevent screenings in numerous American cities, but a mass demonstration of 25,000 outside Universal's headquarters led four major cinema chains to refuse to screen the film.

This hysteria has been prompted by a particular scene in which Christ, naked on the cross and close to death, dreams of making love to Mary Magdalene. To the sanctimonious bigots of the religious right, any manifestation of sexual pleasure is anathema. The present climate of moral reaction has as its goal the stigmatisation and suppression of all forms of sexual expression that do not conform to the Christian "norm".

The norm is, of course, heterosexual intercourse for the purposes of reproduction, within the confines of "holy matrimony".

The furore over the film is the more intense because it is Christ, played by Willem Dafoe, who is shown indulging in a "sinful act". In Christian mythology Christ, as the son of god, is celibate. The "sins of the flesh" are alien to him. The fact that sex is as natural a human function as eating is overlooked by the zealots.

In Britain an alliance of religious leaders, Tory MPs, the "Conservative Family Campaign" and, inevitably, Mary Whitehouse have denounced the film. (And as usual, most of these rednecks have not seen it yet.) So far they have failed to get the film banned by the censor. Alarming, in the

north west, Unit Four Cinemas have bowed in the face of a petition (signed by a mere 2,000

people) raised by a local theology student, and have agreed not to screen the film.

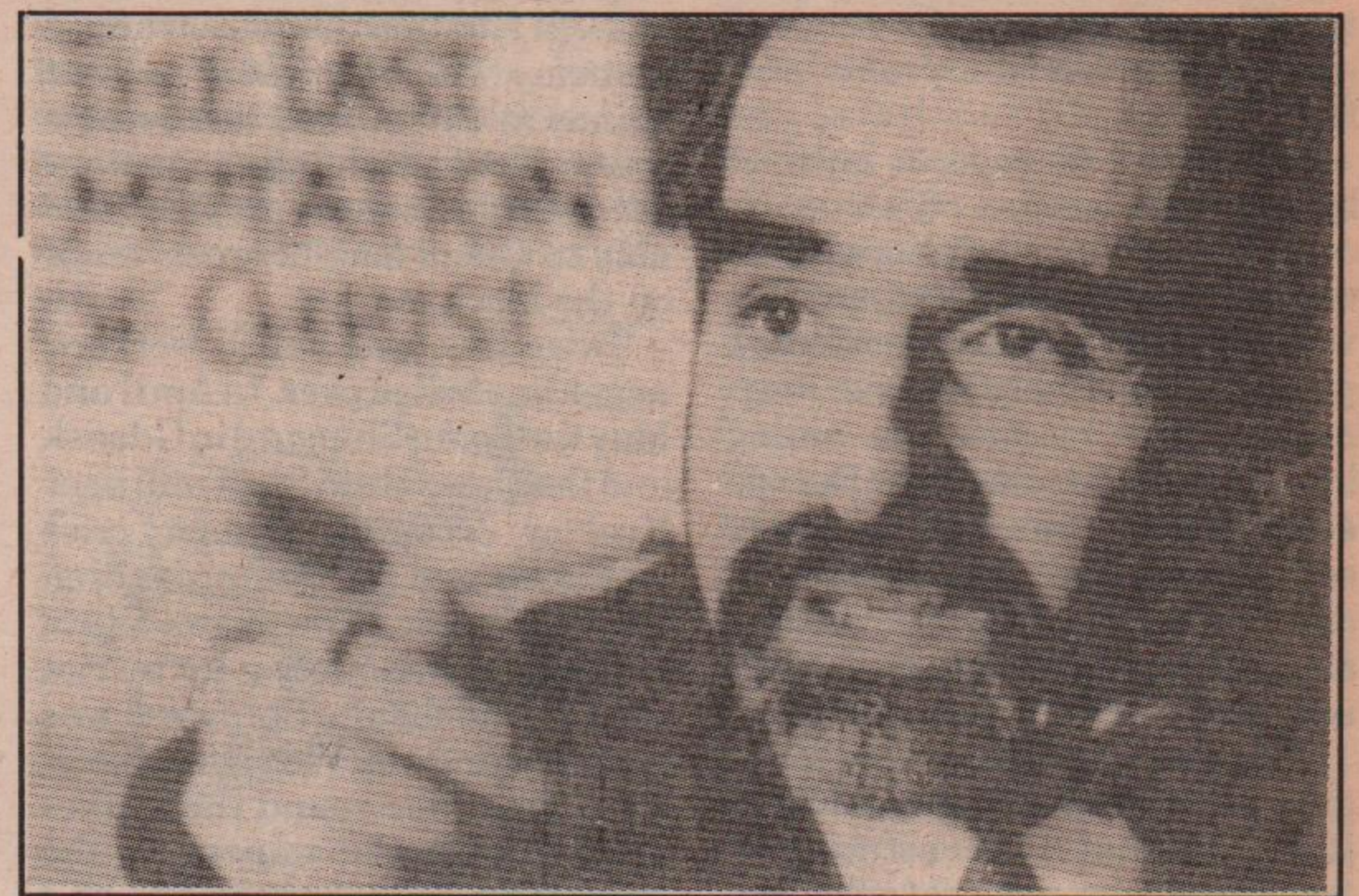
But there is a real threat of a repeat of the 1977 blasphemy prosecution brought privately against *Gay News* for publishing a poem in which Jesus was described engaging in homosexual sex. Judge Alan King-Hamilton, who presided over the 1977 trial, has publicly stated his view that grounds exist for a charge of criminal libel!

Marxists unreservedly condemn any attempt to impose censorship in the arts. We stand for the right of anyone to see this film (even if, as many accounts suggest, it is actually steeped in religious reverence and marred by ham acting). In addition we must demand the abolition of the blasphemy laws. The present fuss over the film should serve to remind us that these laws are no mere historical anomaly, but constitute a real weapon in the hands of reactionaries wishing to impose their particular brand of intolerance on the whole of society.

But the display of intolerance that has arisen over *The Last Temptation* is not an isolated occurrence. It forms one part of a general wave of moral reaction.

This backlash is designed to re-impose values which have been seriously undermined since the 1960s. These values are vital if capitalist society is to maintain one of the conditions of its existence: an atomised, pliant and deferential workforce.

This is the reason for the venomous attacks on anything undermining the "sanctity" of the family and respect for the official institutions, ideologies and (yes) mythologies of capitalist society. This is the reason that the labour movement must stand four-square against bigotry, censorship and "moral" hypocrisy. ■



Scorsese: the mark of the beast?

As soon as this pub closes

As soon as this pub closes
by Chris Aguirre
and Mo Klonsky
(Turnaround £1.00)

EVERY FEW years a new book appears claiming to explain the sometimes bewildering plethora of organisations that make up the British left. The reason is straightforward.

Around the organisations of the far left a milieu inevitably develops of discontented former members, fellow travellers and bemused

on-lookers.

They often share a distaste for the degree of commitment, discipline and hard work required, together with an often understandable revulsion at the bureaucratic methods and regimes existing in many of the left groups. This leads them to reject the need for any form of revolutionary organisation, justifying their own unwillingness to make a contribution to the struggle for a proletarian party.

Anyone fitting the above description will be delighted with this new pamphlet. Written in the

obligatory, tiresome style of a university rag-mag, this miserable publication surveys the various left groups: from trotskysts to stalinists, maoists and beyond. Occasionally the authors stumble into a humorous vein, but mainly the reader must be content with one-sided and deeply personal impressions of the theory and practice of the left.

Where a factual account of the history of the British far left is required, the authors rely almost exclusively on *Workers Power's Death Agony of the Fourth Inter-*

national, which they at least have the decency to acknowledge as "an excellent well researched booklet".

Despite their disdain for what they call the "sects", the authors have a morbid fascination for the internal intrigue and machinations of various organisations. Unfortunately they do not share a similar passion for detail where the British class struggle is concerned, informing us that a certain "Ray Chadwick" (sic) was a leader of the scab UDM. (Ray Chadburn is a leader of Nottinghamshire NUM).

As often happens in politics, the authors' gangrenous scepticism gives way to its opposite—naïve trust in an objective process that

will cure all mankind's problems without the need for individuals to act. The pamphlet concludes that political organisations are "the heart of a heartless world and will disappear only when that world begins to change". This attempt to absolve themselves from any active role in politics other than penning snide documents would be laughable were it not so sad.

Our authors demand that marxist groups should apply "the marxist criticism that social existence determines consciousness" to themselves. We can scarcely disagree. We would only ask that these cynical petit bourgeois might one day deign to do the same. ■

Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

TUC IN CRISIS

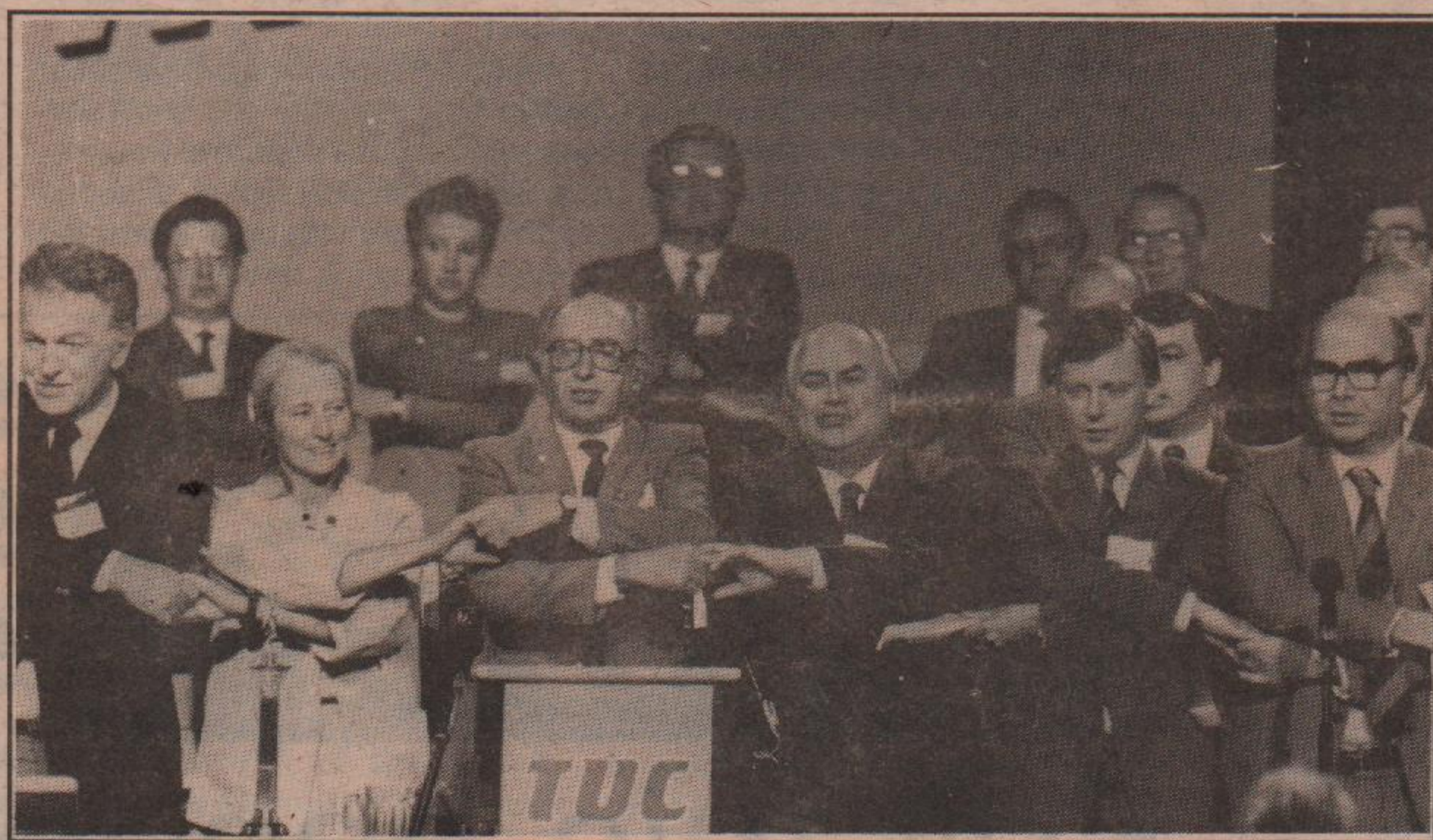
STOP SCAB UNIONISM!

BRITISH TRADE unionism is at an impasse. Cowed by the Tory onslaught and facing a dramatic decline in membership, the TUC leaders are seeking a way out. True to form, they have provided only bureaucratic solutions to this crisis.

Alongside the introduction of US-style credit card unionism and a barrage of cross-industrial merger proposals, blatant class collaborationist methods have emerged. Unions openly compete for single union deals, offering their services to the bosses in so called "beauty contests". Attempts to present an attractive face to management have led directly to the adoption of "pendulum" (i.e. binding) arbitration and inevitably to no-strike deals.

EETPU's ruthlessness in 'undercutting' its rivals is only the logical outcome of this process, resulting in their refusal to withdraw from single union no-strike deals at Orion and Christian Salvesen. But it is only Hammond's flaunting of the decision of the Bridlington (TUC arbitration) committee in respect of these deals that has incurred the wrath of the General Council. After all, the MSF, GMB and T&G have all been party to beauty contests and are eager to agree single union deals in their own favour wherever possible. They are hardly in a position to oppose such deals in principle!

The charge against the EETPU has therefore simply been that they have breached the rules of the bureaucratic club by not accepting the result of TUC arbitration. Their embracing of the bosses in sweetheart deals is not an issue in the eyes of the General Council since all the bureaucrats are scrambling over each other in a bid to do much the same thing.



Bureaucrats paving the way for scab unions

John Harris (IFL)

By making the rule book the issue for expelling the EETPU the other members of the General Council have demonstrated their unwillingness to tackle the key issue of scab unionism. And in doing this they have allowed other right wing unions like the AEU to throw accusations of rule breaking back in their faces.

Bill Jordan, eager to obstruct the expulsion of the EETPU in order to further his own plans for the merger of the AEU with the electricians, has turned on the T&G claiming that they too have broken the rules.

Apparently the TUC disputes committee instructed the T&G to hand back 200 members at Rover's Cowley plant to the AEU in June 1987. The T&G have not yet complied. According to the logic of rule book diplomacy Jordan could argue that they too should be expelled, or rather, that the EETPU should not.

The EETPU should be expelled at once. But this must not be on the purely technical grounds put forward to date. It should be because since organising, recruiting and herding strikebreakers during the Wapping dispute in 1986

EETPU has been a scab union. Congress must resolve to apply the resources of the movement to break up the EETPU, exposing the scabbing of Hammond and company and guaranteeing full representation to the EETPU members prepared to break from the union.

But the proliferation of no strike deals raises the threat that others will follow the EETPU into fully fledged scab unionism. Attempts by Coca-Cola/Schweppes to breach national agreements on distribution with the T&G have been temporarily withdrawn following an overtime ban and work-to-rule. But the AEU have signed a single-union deal for a projected Coca-Cola plant in Wakefield. The threat clearly remains of future scabbing by the AEU in the likely event of T&G members taking further action in defence of agreed conditions.

This threat is greatly increased by Jordan's intention to form a huge far-right wing general union through merger with the EETPU. Yet the prospect of the electricians finding themselves outside of the TUC after Congress is an obstacle to

Jordan's plans. This explains his opportunist proposal, put to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 22 August that the EETPU remains suspended but that expulsion be avoided. Jordan is stalling. The EETPU must be expelled now. And AEU members must utilise every opportunity at every level of the union to prevent the lash up going ahead.

The crisis of direction of the trade union bureaucracy only shows how deeply unrealistic the much-vaunted policy of "new realism" is. Disputes this year in the hospitals, amongst car workers at Fords and at Yardley's cosmetics factory in Basildon prove yet again that the employers can be forced to back down when confronted with militant class struggle and a united, determined workforce.

The battle against new realism must begin with the driving of scab unionism from the ranks of the labour movement. This obviously requires the expulsion of EETPU from the TUC and the Labour Party. But it also necessitates a campaign against all sweetheart deals with the bosses and for a ban on the concluding of

- Workers on the march in Eastern Europe
- Brent: municipal socialism in crisis
- Workfare: Tories plans for the unemployed

INSIDE

POST: rank and file must take the offensive

POSTAL WORKERS continue to mount resistance to the employers onslaught on their terms and conditions of work. Not only has the membership given a decisive "yes" in the recent industrial action, but at a rank and file level they have engaged in a series of sporadic strikes on the issues of casuals, bonus payments and management's control over the working day. But the overwhelming danger remains that the Union of Communication Workers' (UCW) President, Alan Tuffin, will be allowed to run true to form and successfully sell out this resistance.

Tuffin's "magnificent achievement", the Shorter Working Week Agreement (SWW) paved the way for management's current offensive. It allowed the bosses to increase productivity through cutting meal breaks and introducing more "flexible" working and new technology. In exchange management agreed not to introduce regional pay differentials. What has emerged is that the bosses will use the SWW Agreement where it suits them, and ignore it where it doesn't. Their attempt to introduce Difficult Recruitment Area Supplements (DRAS), to solve their labour shortage in the South East, is in flagrant breach of the agreement.

Rank and file UCW workers recognised that the payments would be not only regionally divisive but extremely repressive since the pay supplements would be based on "merit". Feeling on the issue was running so high that the UCW executive was forced to consider national industrial action against DRAS and the employers postponed implementation until October.

Right up to the last, though, Tuffin has sought talks with the bosses, desperate to avoid a confrontation. He will seek to drag out the dispute and prepare another sell out. That is why postal workers must take the running of the dispute out of the hands of Tuffin

and Co. and organise all out strike action now. Such action should be aimed not only at defeating DRAS, but demanding higher pay for all areas and sections, so that postal workers need not depend on either "merit" payments or the old system of long hours on overtime.

The labour shortage must be met not by recruiting casuals on temporary contracts who can be used to undermine the terms and conditions of permanent workers, but by recruiting new labour on proper union rates and permanent contracts.

Management's current offensive is closely linked to their plans for privatisation so strike action now must also be aimed at reversing these plans. It would be disastrous if the energy and militancy of the postal workers as well as their preparedness to fight, were sapped and wasted by a series of separate disputes, kept isolated by the bureaucrats.

The potential for a united fight is undoubtedly there. The last few months have seen action in areas as diverse as York, Milton Keynes, London and Manchester.

This has been provoked not only by DRAS, but also by the use of casuals, and management's insistence on workers attending "team briefings", which are in fact used by the bosses to undermine the authority of the union and cajole or threaten workers into opposing industrial action.

Now UCW militants need to link together to spread the strikes and extend the national action into all out strike action controlled by strike committees. As workers Power has repeatedly argued in its postal workers bulletins, criticism of Tuffin is not enough, a rank and file organisation of communication workers is needed to stop the officials' sell out, to link workers in different unions throughout the industry and to fight to reverse the privatisations. ■

deals which remove the elementary right for workers to withdraw their labour. It requires the organisation of workers in every industry into class struggle unions, democratically controlled by the rank and file. Whilst the unions remain in the hands of the bureaucracy they will continue to choose collaboration with the bosses over the class struggle of the workers. The tide must be

turned against the class collaborators.

- Expel EETPU!
- Stop the AEU-EETPU merger!
- Down with beauty contests, single union agreements, pendulum arbitration and no strike deals!
- For a single class-struggle union in every industry. For maximum unity against the bosses!