

# Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Price 30p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

# SMASH RACIST LAWS!



**“EVERYTHING HAD to wait until Mendis was out of the country. Now the word is to go out and whack them. It is going to be like Mendis—snatched and deported within 48 hours.”**

So one Home Office official told the *Observer*. And there is little doubt that the deportation of Viraj Mendis signals the stepping up of Tory attacks on immigrants, refugees and the whole black community.

When one hundred police thugs burst into the Church of the Ascension on 18 January and bundled Viraj Mendis off to prison and then to the airport, the Tories were giving a clear message to the black community that we can

now expect:

- **MORE** families broken up as their loved ones are forced to leave the country.
- **MORE** refugees denied asylum in Britain—currently around 8,000 are suffering the uncertainty of waiting to be sent back to persecution and possible death in places like Sri Lanka and Iran.
- **MORE** harassment of the black community with random ID checks and dawn raids on so-

called “illegal” immigrants.

- **MORE** cases like Amir Kabul Khan, currently languishing in Birmingham’s Central Mosque in fear of deportation.

And for every case that makes the news, there are thousands more that don’t. Fifty people a week are deported, mostly without any recourse to a court of law. Those who do get a hearing from British justice soon find out just how racist Britain’s immigration laws are.

The first set of controls, the Aliens Act, was designed to restrict the entry of Jewish immigrants back in the first decade of this century.

But by the 1950s British bosses were crying out for cheap labour. The government encouraged immigration and, lured by promises of a better life, black workers came to Britain to be exploited in the worst jobs going.

By the 1960s things began to change. The bosses, no longer faced with thousands of vacancies to fill, began to blame black people for all society’s problems.

As the economic boom turned to recession, laws were introduced throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s by both Labour and

Tory governments restricting immigration ever further. These were always aimed at black people. Just compare the brutal treatment meted out to Viraj Mendis with the rule-bending that made Zola Budd an instant British citizen!

All capitalist immigration controls are racist. They are there to prevent super-exploited workers and peasants seeking to improve their conditions by moving to the imperialist countries.

But capital is not subject to such restrictions. The bosses’ money roams the stock markets of the world looking for the most profitable investments.

The bosses should not be allowed to get away with restricting the free

movement of workers from country to country, letting us in when it suits them, then throwing us out like unwanted goods.

Nor should we let them blame black people for the problems that the capitalist profit system causes. Far from creating unemployment, low pay and bad housing, black people are their greatest victims.

Workers must reject the official racism that the leaders of our unions and the Labour Party have swallowed for so long. We must take up the fight against all discrimination.

And there is no more urgent task than the building of a national campaign, throughout the labour movement, against all deportations and all immigration controls. ■

**NO MORE DEPORTATIONS!**



# NURSERIES Bosses' problem children

BY CLARE ALEXANDER

NURSERY PROVISION for the under-fives has become a big issue. In the last couple of months trade unions, employers' organisations, the Labour Party and the Government have all issued statements or released reports about childcare.

In January a government Select Committee unanimously called for the number of nursery places for three and four year olds to be doubled at a cost of about £400 million.

After years of slashing the budgets of local authorities—the major providers of nursery education—and encouraging women to see the family as their overwhelming priority, why the apparent change of tune from the Tories?

The Select Committee argued that children need nursery education more and more to counteract the isolation caused by an increase in marriage breakdowns, working parents, smaller families and "the challenge to education that can be created by the worst effects of mass urban housing". They also talked of the needs of working mothers and advocated equal opportunities for women!

However, behind this camouflage of social awareness, the real reason for their current interest is the changing nature of the British labour force. After all, it's hardly a new problem for women. An increasing proportion of the workforce is now made up of women, many of whom have children. These women need some kind of provision for their children before school age, after school hours, in the holidays and when they are ill.

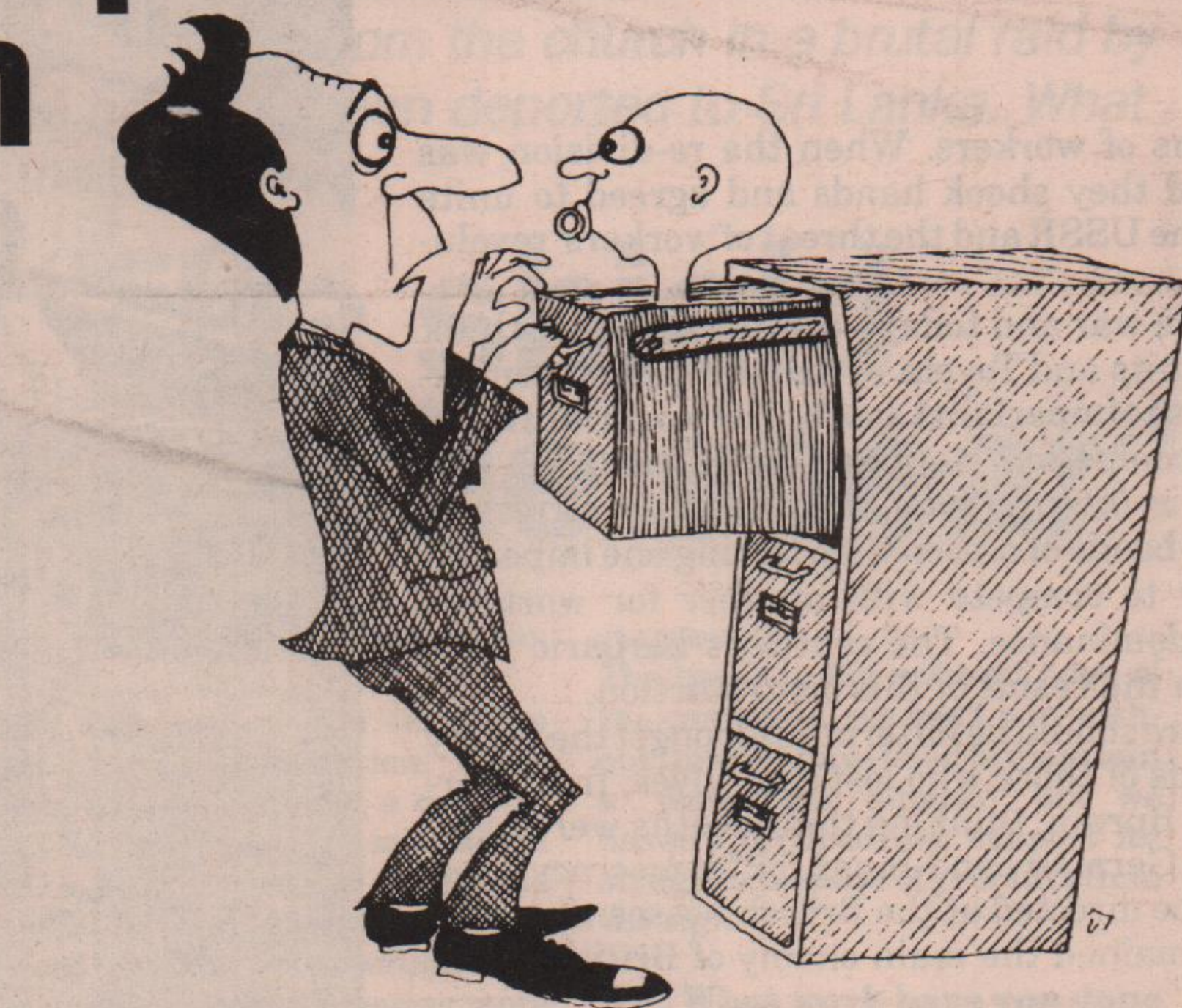
## Provision

A lot of women work part-time to try and meet some of these needs, but they will generally have to find some other provision as well. For the bosses this means that where there is no adequate childcare, women are unable to work longer hours or through the holidays, a problem if they want increased production.

In the future the bosses will be even more reliant on female labour with women taking an estimate 80% of the 900,000 new jobs they hope will be created by 1995. This is because there will not be enough school leavers to fill jobs. The number of school leavers entering the job market is expected to drop by more than 500,000 by the middle of the 1990s, and the number of women aged 25 to 44 is increasing.

In industries like the NHS, where recruitment already takes a large proportion of female school leavers, there simply will not be enough 16 to 18 year olds to employ. So as one supply of cheap labour dries up, the bosses are looking around for another.

Some bosses have already responded to these issues by setting up workplace creches and nurseries, since state provision is hopelessly inadequate. Workplace nurseries are not ideal, but in the absence of any alternative they would appear attractive to many women. But women are currently penalised by having to pay increased tax of up to £1,000 extra a year for the privilege!



The Select Committee made no recommendation on whether this taxation should be removed, but the government have made it clear that they would prefer to give the employers tax incentives for providing nurseries. The Select Committee made 33 proposals in all, including improving reception classes in primary school and improving the pay and conditions of nursery nurses.

So far the government's response has been predictably hypocritical. On the same day that the Select Committee report was announced, the Employment Minister John Patten, who is Chairman (sic) of the Ministerial Group on women's issues, said that:

"Employers in this country must realise that the only way to defuse this demographic timebomb ticking away underneath them is by taking the initiative themselves to support family life and to support mothers who want to work".

He then went on to make it clear that he opposed any "dramatic increase" in the number of workplace nurseries. He commented: "I dread the thought of commuter children". He said that instead of seeing "massive state or employer-provided nurseries", he was in favour of government backing for a new partnership between the voluntary and private sectors. He thought that locally there was a:

"... vast pool of untapped provision among men and women who are at home or who could be at home—and can help set up these sort of services".

So, instead of local authority provision, the work will be done for free by volunteers.

Employment Secretary, Norman Fowler, has suggested that employers get together to provide facilities for childcare. He is against state provision and links this question to Employment Training. His philosophy is that it is the employers' responsibility to train their workers, care for their children and ultimately, in true Tory fashion, determine levels of maternity provision.

Fowler cynically declared that the 1990s "will be the decade of the working woman". His deputy, Patrick Nicholls, had the cheek to say that he hoped that the need for companies to employ women would lead to "an irreversible shift in equal opportunities".

In reality their plans will mean some childcare for women employed in expanding industries with even less state provision available for all. A local "GEC-sponsored" day nursery with big tax incentives for the bosses would

allow for increased exploitation of women workers who would then be expected to work longer hours and overtime if and when higher production was needed. Presumably women leaving their employment, plus women working for small companies and unemployed women, would have no access to these nursery places.

It is essential that the labour movement takes up the fight for full childcare provision. It should be available free to all under fives, not just three and four year olds, state funded and provided under the control of childcare workers and parents.

Childcare is not restricted to daytime nurseries for pre-school children, however, and provision must be made for after school hours, evenings, holidays—in short whenever the parent requires it and whatever the age of the child. The quality of childcare and education must be monitored by the working class, and childcare workers must receive decent wages and conditions.

These measures are essential if women are to be able to work outside the home, itself vital in overcoming their isolation and drawing them fully into the labour movement. ■

# SHEFFIELD The games Labour Councils play

BY STUART CROSTHWAITE

Sheffield Central CLP, in a personal capacity

ONCE HAILED as the capital of the "Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire", Sheffield has been turned into a haven for business development and a place for pioneering Tory plans in local government. Sheffield City Council has completely capitulated to Tory attacks, with 1989 being the second year of a massive three year cuts package. Thousands of jobs are being axed and plans for implementing the Poll Tax are well under way.

In line with Tory plans to turn local government into little more than development corporations working with private bosses, Sheffield City Council put in a bid for a joint venture to stage the World Student Games in 1991.

Since the original Labour Group decision in 1986, the cost to local workers of hosting these games has risen dramatically. As part of this joint City Council/ Chamber of Commerce venture, thousands of local council tenants were "asked" to move to make way for the new complex. In addition, the council has agreed to underwrite possible losses to the tune of £1 million. More significantly, the council has agreed to make up shortfalls in private investment by negotiating thirty year bank loans. Debt charges alone amount to £10.5 million per annum or increases of 49p per week per household on the rates.

The much-publicised "partnership" between private developers and the council is a decidedly unequal one. The Labour Council cannot guarantee the rights and

conditions of workers employed in the building of facilities, yet it has agreed to cover the cost of continuing to run the facilities after the Chamber of Commerce has made its no-risk fast buck.

Neither has there been a guarantee that the new facilities will operate the usual concessionary rates to unemployed people. Of course, Sheffield like other inner cities needs a big increase in sports and leisure facilities. However, the terms and costs of such development should not be dictated by the profiteers of local business but by the needs of the Sheffield working class.

The World Student Games project is only one element of the "partnership" between the council and the Chamber of Commerce. In true business style all negotiations have been done behind closed doors. The District Labour Party has been steam-rolled into endorsing a project in which costs have spiralled and over which they have no control. Likewise, Labour voters have never been presented with the true costs in previous manifestos.

The capitulating Labour councillors have allowed this despite opposition from the majority of Labour Party wards. Not one of these councillors opposed or even abstained on the council vote, which agreed to underwrite the cost of the Games.

It was left to the Democrats to cynically point out the contrast between cuts in social services and the underwriting of the business ventures of private developers. ■

## Marketing health

BY WORKERS POWER  
HEALTH WORKERS

These hospitals will still be mainly financed by the government, but rather than getting a block of money to provide all the necessary local services, they will have to attract money from health authorities, local GPs, insurance companies and private patients by providing certain services—operations, investigations, in-patient care—at attractive rates.

The Tories claim this will allow patients to demand the kind of service they need. In reality GPs and health authorities will block-buy operations in advance from a cheap rate hospital, and the patient will have no choice but to go there, even if it is in a different district miles away.

The Review also proposes to allow hospitals to offer differing levels of service such as private rooms, varied menus and televisions, so that people could choose to pay extra. This is a re-introduction of "pay beds" into NHS hospitals with a first and second class service for patients.

Not all services can be provided by such competing independent units. The hospitals that don't opt out will continue to have cash limits

set by health authorities. They will end up providing all the care which falls through the "enterprise hospital" net.

In these new hospital trusts the Tories want management which is strong and effective. They will be able to set their own pay and conditions for staff. This is a crucial part of the whole Review which was, after all, established in the midst of the disputes over nurses' pay and NHS cuts. "Effective management" means cut-throat bosses on incentive schemes. They will be out to slash wages and conditions as low as possible to make the enterprise, and their bonus, as much money as possible. The Tories say this is not privatisation. Not yet! These independent hospital units, if successful, will be sure targets for privatisation in the 1990s. If the Tories get away with this Review, the impact on pay and conditions will be enormous—locally negotiated settlements are inevitably weaker.

The hospital workers' unions must immediately launch a fight against this Review. In every hospital there should be mass meetings to plan a campaign of action to prevent implementation of any opting out. Links between hospitals must be made by health workers, and a national fight planned. The union leaders will try to keep their alliance with the BMA, the RCN and wet Tories. They must be forced to break from that useless strategy and organise national industrial action to defeat the plans. ■



# FORDS Defend Dagenham jobs

BY SIMON ANDERSON

JANUARY SAW Fords announce the transfer of Sierra production from Dagenham to Genk in Belgium with the loss of over 500 jobs. The company would have us believe that this is because the Dagenham plant is struggling to meet quality, volume and cost targets—apparently because of the complexities of assembling Sierras and Fiestas at the same plant.

For starters, that is their problem, not ours. Secondly, it's not even the real reason. According to the bosses' daily:

"... the UK, and Dagenham in particular, have been a significant source of recent labour unrest..." (Financial Times 17 Jan 89)

Ford workers will remember that the key strings in the last pay deal concerned flexibility—strings which they refused to accept. That refusal, combined with fierce resistance to local imposition of flexibility, was something Ford would eventually move against.

By moving production to Belgium Ford hoped to get their way over flexible working. They have the advantage there of Belgian legislation which allows night and weekend shifts and seasonal patterns of production—the most attractive (for the bosses) such legislation in Europe. However this has yet to be tested in battle with the Belgian car workers. Like British car workers they are being

targetted for the company's productivity plans.

In response to the Ford plans the union leaders have been desperate to demonstrate their loyalty to the bosses. Jack Adams, national TGWU officer, has offered to help improve productivity at Dagenham, saying that the unions wanted to remove any obstacle which would stop Ford keeping Sierra production there. Jimmy Airlie argued that Fords were obliged to keep the Sierra at Dagenham since 43% of the European sales of the car were in Britain. Bryan Gould (local Labour MP) has echoed these sentiments saying it is bad news for the British motor industry. For them, British jobs are being stolen by Belgian workers. This is rubbish, and plays straight into Fords' hands by setting British and Belgian workers against each other in a scramble to be more "flexible".

By announcing the move Ford has got the union leaders to try and introduce the flexibility which Dagenham workers resisted in their two week strike last year. Airlie has already said that the unions were not planning industrial action as part of their campaign to keep Sierra production. Instead they are planning joint training and "personal development" for manual workers to promote collaboration with management and increase productivity. Ford workers must stand firm

against these attempts by Adams and Airlie to foist flexible working on them in competition with their Belgian counterparts. They must link up with continental car workers to present a united resistance to Fords' flexible working plans and to prevent any job losses.

Only in this way can car workers in both Dagenham and Genk safeguard their interests at Fords' expense, and not at the expense of their fellow workers in other countries. ■

## REINSTATE MICK GOSLING!

**FORD BOSSES at Dagenham have victimised and sacked Mick Gosling, the chair of the TGWU 1/1107 branch. He was placed on trumped up charges related to his activities as a union activist, and has been held responsible for three "unconditional stoppages" on the Sierra production line.**

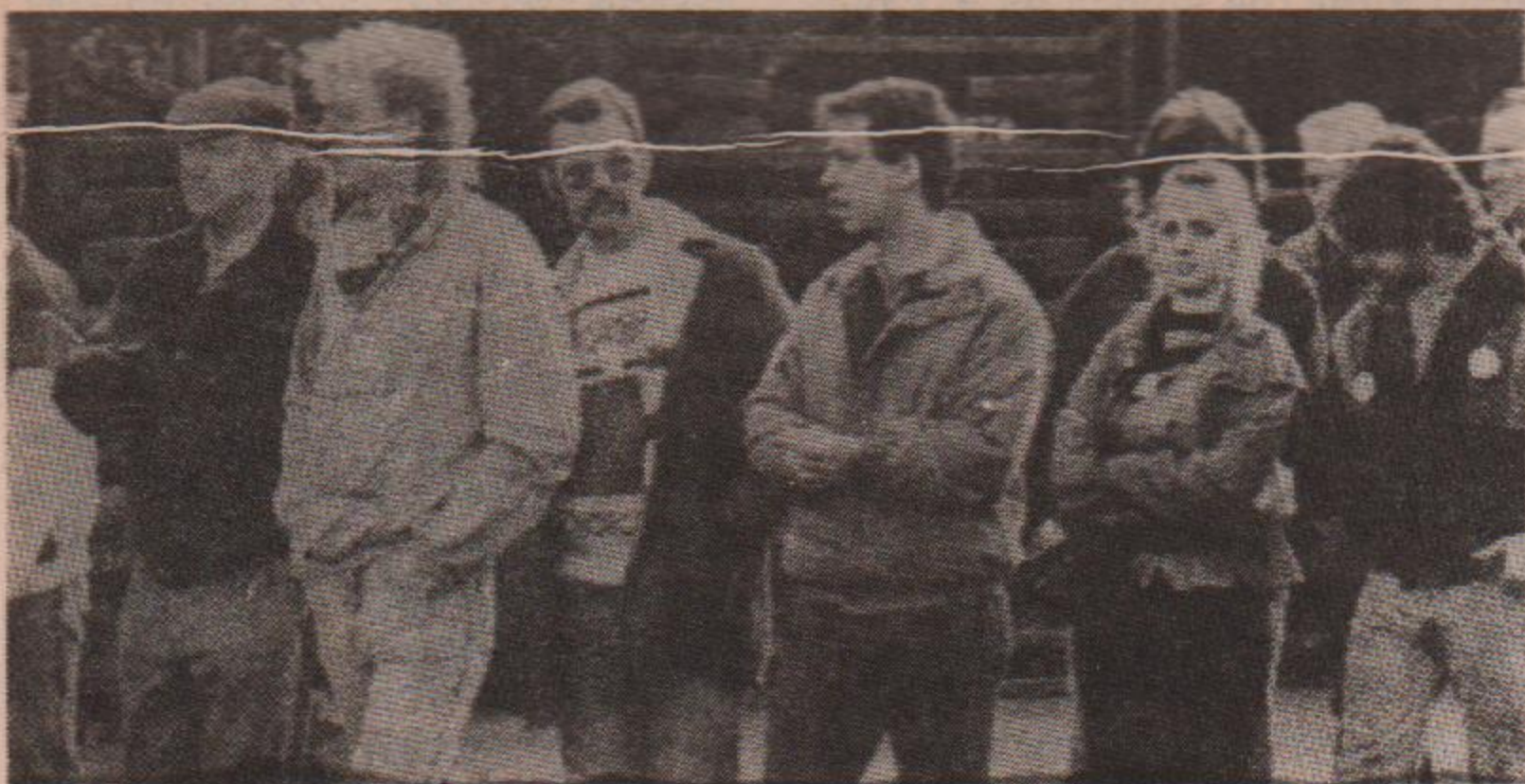
**It was the unofficial stoppages of Dagenham Assembly plant workers which led to the official strike last February. As a result of that strike the Ford bosses had to rethink their pay deal, even though in the end the union bureaucracy sold the strikers short.**

**If Ford get away with sacking a militant union leader at Dagenham it would be a major victory in their plans for increased flexibility. It would also weaken the response to the proposed job cuts.**

**Ford workers must organise strike action for the immediate reinstatement of Mick Gosling. Other workers should demonstrate their solidarity through resolutions and messages of support.**

**Send copies of resolutions and messages of support to:**

**Steve Riley  
Branch Secretary  
27 Courtland Grove  
Thamesmead  
London SE28**



Dagenham workers after the strike

## Women for socialism

WORKING CLASS women face a barrage of attacks from the Tories and the bosses. Cuts in social services, an increase in part-time over full-time work, the imposition of the Poll Tax, insufficient childcare provision—all this increases the burden on women.

At the same time, the possibility of organising to fight these attacks exists. Working class women formed the backbone of anti-Poll Tax unions on many Scottish estates. Women are an increasing percentage of trade union members. Nurses and textile workers are just two of the groups of women workers involved in industrial action last year.

But while this potential exists, organisations of socialist women have declined. Although women are still fighting for their rights in the Labour Party (see Letters page 15),

overall participation has fallen. There has been no conference of socialist feminists for a decade. The women's movement has fragmented. *Outwrite*, the anti-imperialist women's paper shut down at the end of 1988.

Will the "Women for Socialism" Conference in London on 25-26 February provide a chance to reverse this trend and build a leadership to organise a fightback amongst working class women? This looks unlikely. The "Women for Socialism" advertising leaflet says the organisers:

"... aim to form a policy-developing and non-bureaucratic bridge between established political parties and the feminist movement".

This sounds like a perspective of writing a policy document for the Labour Party which will be promptly binned by the Kinnockite leadership!

We do need to revive the fight for women's rights and women's liberation. But what we don't need is to revive the disastrous "socialist feminist" tradition. In the miners' strike when thousands of working class women were mobilised and organised, the socialist feminists argued for networks, links with other campaigns and building Labour Party Women's Sections. That was totally inadequate. Links are useful when they are based on building joint action in defence of women's interests. They are time wasting and demoralising if all they do is pool frustration and write alternative policy documents which no one acts upon.

Socialist feminism has been seen in practice in local government women's committees. From promoting equal opportunities policies with no resources to carry them out, many were turned into agents of the councils in carrying out cuts.

The "Women for Socialism" Conference should assess the lessons of these experiences. Workers Power will be arguing that women workers need a fighting movement around a revolutionary action programme. ■

● See page 9



## SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

### Tory transport chaos

HORRIFIC DISASTERS like the Clapham Junction crash and the Kings Cross fire have highlighted the crisis of Britain's transport system. But these tragedies only begin to suggest the damage done by the systematic rundown of railway, bus and coach services in the name of "market forces".

Ten years of spending cuts, deregulation and wholesale privatisation have taken their heavy toll in the worsening conditions for both workers and travellers on public transport. In addition the assault on public transport has further restricted the mobility of the young, the old, the poor and especially working class women with children as fares have shot up and bus routes disappeared.

Especially in the big cities and the boom towns of the south east the deterioration of public transport has increased traffic congestion, noise and air pollution. While traffic crawls at an average 11 mph in London, its roads are literally cracking under the strain of unrestricted heavy lorry traffic.

The Tories have made their goals clear. In the government's *Transport Policy: Aims and Objectives* they stress the drive to "... increase efficiency and reduce real costs ... by policies to increase competition and to decrease the role of the public sector".

In other words costs are being cut to the bare bone to make individual transport enterprises profitable.

The Tories have pursued their agenda for transport with ruthless determination. Between 1979 and 1987 the number of workers in the bus and coach industry fell by more than 42,000. In the same period British Rail's workforce was slashed by 30%.

In the four years since the Tories created London Regional Transport (LRT) they have got rid of 13,000 jobs on the underground. Even though LRT's terrible cleaning and safety standards caused the Kings Cross fire they carried on cutting station and cleaning staff.

The Tories have, however, increased real investment in one area: road building. They have used the tax system to encourage further reliance on the private car. No other country offers such extensive tax incentives for personal and company car ownership.

The subsidies range up to £2 billion per year; nearly four times the government's total allocation to British Rail. Through cutting BR's investment programme and boosting tax incentives for road haulage firms the Tories have pushed more and more freight from rail to road.

Some of the consequences of letting market forces rip through public transport have provoked disquiet even amongst the bosses. The *Financial Times* recently condemned the Tories' management of the London tube and contrasted it to the heavily subsidised rail and tube networks of other European capitals and US cities.

It is one thing when working class mothers and pensioners are left to rot on the isolated estates and new towns. But it is another thing entirely when "market forces" begin to prevent the smooth functioning of the profit system itself.

Thatcher's project is to reopen the state-capitalist sectors of the economy to profitable private in-

vestment. But the whole purpose of state ownership and planning under capitalism was to maintain the profit system in general by suppressing the profit motive in sectors where no individual capitalist could run, plan and expand the industry profitably. The entire history of public transport in Britain shows that, left to its own devices, capital is incapable of either the investment or centralised planning needed to get its labour force and its produce from A to B.

The bosses as a class have relied on the state to inject vast sums into transport. In the absence of this kind of money all the illogicality of production for profit instead of need is revealed. At present, for example, demand for rail transport is increasing rapidly.

But supply remains limited, as BR's lack of investment has left it with a skeleton rail network and pre-war rolling stock. So market forces dictate that fares must rise to keep people off the trains! This makes sense to capitalist economics and nonsense to the millions of workers who have no choice but to catch a train to work.

The fact that capitalist planning, state capitalist ownership and subsidy are the norm in many imperialist countries has convinced Labour's policy-makers that with the transport crisis they are on a winner. Hordes of future transport planners for Kinnock's brave new world are beavering away on schemes for cheap fares, new rail networks etc. Who could accuse them of socialist radicalism when they are simply trying to copy Germany and the USA?

But Thatcherism is the bosses' choice because they cannot and will not foot the bill for the kind of state spending required to meet even the basic needs for decent public transport. "Where does the money come from?" is a question on which many a Labourite planner's dream has come to grief. Unprepared to attack the wealth of the employing class, Labour's transport plans will always remain on the drawing board.

For revolutionary Marxists state ownership and planning are required to meet the needs of workers. Even the barest need for safe and efficient transport to the workplace, the shopping centre, the school and the hospital need planning and investment on a scale the capitalists will not provide.

We need to take transport out of the hands of the profit makers and put it in the hands of those whose lives and livelihoods depend on it. This means nationalising, without compensation, the rail, tube, bus and air transport industries. It means placing them under workers' control. It means drawing up a workers' plan for a cheap, safe integrated planning system that will put to work all the technological innovations which capitalism allows to lie idle.

And to achieve this we will have to make the bosses pay. By expropriating the banks and major industries the working class can release the wealth and social power not just to mend a decaying transport system. It can transform the function of transport to meet the human and leisure needs of the mass of people, in the context of the socialist transformation of society as a whole. ■



TOWARDS THE end of last year the magazine the *New Statesman/Society* (NSS) launched Charter 88. Taking its name from the Czechoslovakian human rights campaign, Charter 77, the new Charter is an appeal for the preservation and extension of British democracy.

In the words of NSS, Charter 88 claims support "far beyond the ranks of the 'left' however broadly defined". The initial list of signatories reflects this support. It includes a smattering of left wing academics like Perry Anderson and Ralph Milliband, right wing union leaders like Gavin Laird (AEU) and John Ellis (CPSA) and Social and Liberal Democrat figures like Roy Jenkins and Michael Meadowcroft.

To prove its broadness, the list inevitably includes a motley collection of showbiz personalities, clerics and the ubiquitous, self-publicising "socialists" of the Hilary Wainwright stripe, who sign anything that will get them a mention in the *Guardian*.

Charter 88 represents the anguish of middle class liberalism in Thatcher's Britain. As her onslaught on civil liberties has gathered pace—and started hitting not just steelworkers, miners, printers and other striking workers, but all sorts of people—the liberals of the left and right have started to get worried. Moreover, they all believe that Kinnock's Labour Party is not going to be able to win an election and stop the onslaught.

### Attacks

Revolutionary socialists and militant workers do need to struggle against Thatcher's anti-democratic attacks. In fact these attacks, beginning with the anti-union laws of 1980 and today carrying on with the introduction of football ID cards, have all been directed primarily at the working class. Yet many of Charter 88's signatories were vigorous supporters of Thatcher's attacks on workers' rights.

Roy Jenkins and his Liberal Party allies applauded the transformation of Nottingham into a no-go area for striking miners in 1984 and tried to outdo the Tories in their support for police violence against the strikers. So we need to be very wary of a campaign on democracy that not only includes such characters but is actually dominated by them.

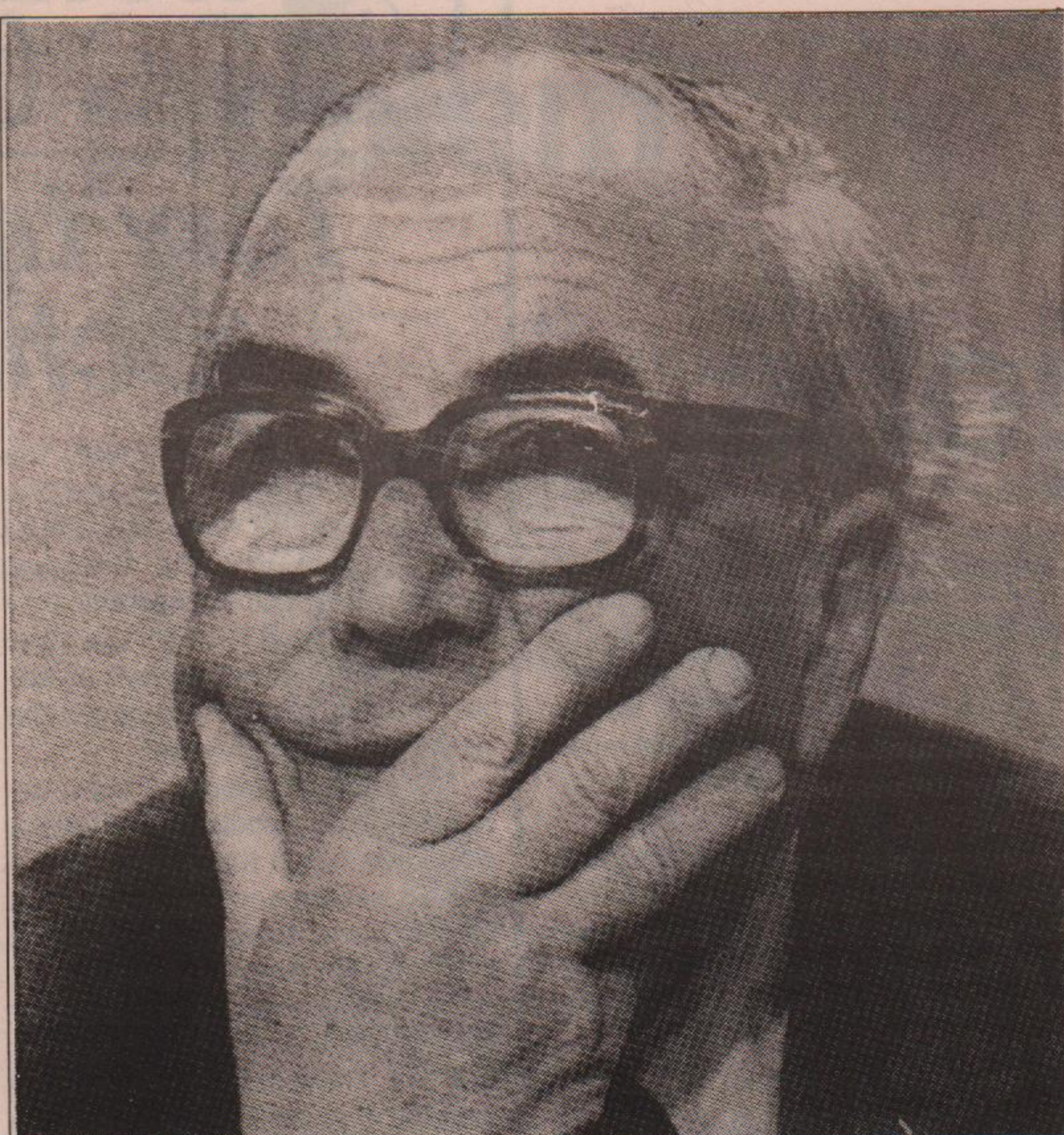
The nature of Charter 88 flows from its refusal to see the question of democracy in class terms. Its concern is with the middle class individual not the collective interests of the working class. As a campaign it is united by its belief "... that British society stands in need of a constitution which protects individual rights and institutions of a modern and pluralist democracy".

### Lofty ideals

This constitution should include freedom of association, freedom from discrimination, freedom from detention without trial and other supposedly inalienable rights. Such lofty ideals and noble sentiments have to be translated into actual rights for particular people. And here we can see just how hollow Charter 88's claims to be really concerned with democracy are.

Freedom from detention without trial means, in Britain, being for the scrapping of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Yet Charter 88 is silent on this because many of its signatories support the PTA and one of them, Roy Jenkins, introduced the Act when he was a Labour Home Secretary!

Thus the actual right of Irish



Roy Jenkins, architect of the PTA—a born again democrat?

# Their democracy and ours

*Pompous in tone but cowardly in content, Charter 88 has provoked a debate inside Labour's ranks on proportional representation, pacts with the Democrats and the virtue of a written constitution. Julian Scholefield assesses the significance of the debate*

people to be free from detention without trial is ignored. And, needless to say, Britain's totally undemocratic rule over Northern Ireland does not get mentioned at all!

### Discrimination

The same hollowness is evident in the call for freedom from discrimination. In Britain racist discrimination is embodied in, amongst other things, the immigration laws. A consistent democrat would be in favour of scrapping them. Not so many of the sponsors of Charter 88, who favour the maintenance of immigration controls.

The democracy of this Charter is not only hollow and abstract. It is cowardly and inconsistent. The proposed constitution falls well short of even a call for a democratic republic.

Thus in place of a call to abolish the House of Lords we find a plea for its reform into a "democratic, non-hereditary second chamber". Yet we are not told how it will be made "democratic" or indeed why there needs to be a second chamber at all.

The Charter wants to "Ensure the independence of a reformed judiciary". Yet there is no mention of electing judges, of peoples' courts or of the accountability of the judiciary. These cowardly evasions are echoed in the call for a Bill of Rights—rights to be granted by a monarchy and interpreted by unelected judges.

On the monarchy, itself, the

Charter is silent. Prerogative is to be subject to the rule of law but the royals, their powers of decree, their control of an unelected Privy Council and their decisive influence over the armed forces are left untouched.

In other words this supposedly democratic Charter deliberately leaves intact one of Britain's most undemocratic institutions. The monarchy, the apparatus of Bonapartist rule—that is non-parliamentary, dictatorial rule—which the bourgeoisie have maintained for any emergencies that arise in the course of political class struggle, does not get so much as a mention.

The root of all of this cowardice stems from the commitment of Charter 88 to bourgeois democracy. Democratic rights are not approached from the standpoint of whose class interest they serve nor how they are to be fought for and by whom.

### Scabs

The freedom of workers to strike and picket means for us the freedom to deny scabs the right to work. The defence of the right to strike means defying the rule of law, much cherished by Charter 88.

In place of this class approach, Charter 88 merely pledges itself to a "new constitutional settlement". It harks back to the old "conventions of compromise and tolerance". If only we have a written constitution then "people can at least stand on a firm constitutional ground".

The supporters of the Charter hope that such a constitutional settlement can be achieved through public pressure. Their strategy is to build a popular front, an all-class alliance in which the working class is a subordinate partner.

What they forget is that Thatcher is a class warrior, committed to the interests of the capitalist class. Since the Tories took power capitalism has not been able to afford the old consensus politics of "compromise". Thatcher has had to beat down workers' resistance in order to attack trade union rights and increasingly neutralise opposition from whatever quarter in order to make capitalism profitable again.

### Onslaught

Only working class action can halt this onslaught. Indeed throughout the history of capitalist society it has been the working class that has fought for and won every extension of democracy. The democratic rights which the Tories are now attacking—the right to strike, to demonstrate, freedom of speech etc, were never achieved by pleading, appeals or passive protest. It was our working class ancestors who won these rights by strikes, mass demonstrations and uprisings.

The original Chartists of the last century were a working class movement for democracy that was well in advance of those who today steal their name. This militant working class tradition Charter 88 rejects for the sake of holding onto its "respectable" but anti-working class allies.

However, if Charter 88 was only an attempt to build a popular front for constitutional reform then it would be doomed to failure from the start. But political developments never take place in a vacuum.

It so happened, that only a few days after the launching of Charter 88, John Evans became the first member of the Labour Party leadership to call openly for an electoral pact with the Democrats. Paddy Ashdown, the Democrats' leader has called for greater co-operation with Labour and Tory wets. When NSS launched Charter 88 it hinted that it would not restrict itself to constitutional issues:

"Charter 88 almost by definition leads on to other great debates about the kind of society we want." (NSS 2 December 88)

### Alliance

Their talk of "a new and historic reforming alliance of citizens of the libertarian left and the democratic centre"—a policy now openly and officially embraced by the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain as well—can in reality only mean a Labour/SLD pact.

This is something every class conscious worker should be resolutely opposed to. For Labour Party supporters an electoral pact would clearly be a retreat. The Democrats' policies will not be any better than Labour's. Through the Policy Review Kinnock is assaulting the last remnants of Labour's left wing policies and is quietly rendering the party programme virtually indistinguishable from that of the Democrats.

But Marxists do not distinguish the Labour Party from the Democrats and the Tories on the basis of the political programmes they offer. In that sense all three parties are bourgeois parties. They all implement pro-capitalist policies if and when they are in government.

What makes the Labour Party a workers' party, albeit a bourgeois

workers' party, is its organic link with the bedrock organisations of the working class—the trade unions.

The Democrats, on the other hand, do not even claim to represent the interests of the working class. The SLD is an openly bourgeois party. The danger of a Labour/SLD pact is that it would let Labour off the hook and allow it—claiming that Democrat support has to be maintained—to launch ever more vicious attacks on the working class.

We do not believe Labour can serve the interests of the working class in any real sense. But we argue that they should be put to the test of office to prove this in practice to the workers who in their millions still look to Labour.

A pact between Labour and the openly bourgeois Democrats would only serve to obstruct this essential task.

To facilitate their plans for a pact, Charter 88 have called for electoral reform. The Charter calls for a "fair electoral system of proportional representation". The Labour right led by Hattersley have opposed proportional representation on the grounds that it will obstruct strong government.

They happily ignore the fact that the present first-past-the-post system effectively renders the votes of working class people in Tory majority areas useless. The left of the party including Benn and Skinner echo this opposition to proportional representation.

### Different

On this question revolutionaries take a very different view. We are not in favour of electoral systems that effectively disenfranchise whole sections of the working class. Nor are we in favour of ones that guarantee strong government—Labour or Tory. Strong governments of bourgeois parties, even bourgeois workers' parties, are better placed to attack the working class.

So we favour proportional representation because, even in bourgeois terms, it is a more consistently democratic method of election. More importantly, it introduces more accurately into parliament and government the class divisions in society and the divisions between the factions of the bourgeoisie. We are against papering over the cracks in capitalist society by means of an unfair electoral system.

However the really noteworthy feature of the debate around Charter 88, pacts and proportional representation, is its irrelevance to the tasks in hand. It is a diversion from these tasks, which are not constitutional in the sense Charter 88 mean it.

### Mobilising

The tasks today of socialists and class conscious workers are all to do with mobilising class action to halt the Tory attacks on every front, including that of democratic rights. They are to do with directing that action towards a struggle for the only constitution that can guarantee real democracy for the mass of people—the constitution of a workers' republic based on direct workers' power.

Britain has no need of a democratic revolution first, to get rid of the negative elements of its constitution. It needs a socialist revolution since the undemocratic institutions in Britain exist as a means to defend the capitalist economic system. The programme of socialist revolution, not a half-baked Charter for a bill of rights, is therefore our answer to those looking for a way to stop Thatcher.



# Perestroika's newest convert

AS THE West European left gets gloomier about its own prospects so its hopes grow in Mikhail Gorbachev saving the day for socialism. The latest, but doubtless not the last, convert to Gorbachevism is one time "streetfighting man", Tariq Ali.

Tariq Ali has sniffed the heady atmosphere of the Moscow intelligentsia courtesy of official visits arranged by the Soviet writers' union. He liked what he saw. He has discovered that the political revolution is proceeding in the Soviet Union and being master-minded by Gorbachev himself.

Gorbachev's job is "to complete the political revolution (which is already underway)". He sneers at revolutionaries who would only be happy: "... if the changes in the

Soviet Union had been brought about by a gigantic movement of the Soviet working class and had revived the old organs of political power—the soviets—with totally new blood. *That would have been very nice, but it didn't happen that way*" (our emphasis).

Instead we are witnessing a revolution from above, Ali argues, and ought to readjust our sights accordingly. For Ali, Gorbachev is giving voice to revolutionary Marxism. Of Gorbachev's January 1987 speech he writes:

"This was the voice of the cantankerous old man in the British Museum who was working on texts which were designed to set humanity on the road to self-emancipation."

The key, he argues, is to make

**Revolution from Above: Where is the Soviet Union Going?**  
by Tariq Ali  
(Century Hutchinson £3.95)

BY JOHN HUNT

sure Gorbachev succeeds. The logic of this is spelt out:

"what is at stake now is to maintain mass support while engaging in delicate manoeuvre at the top to neutralise the opposition."

For Tariq Ali, the political revolution becomes a well executed political manoeuvre cheered on by the working masses if possible.

The Soviet bureaucracy has perfected the art of lulling the critical faculties of its official guests. They obviously found Tariq Ali easy meat. He praises as sensible a proposal by Shmelev to sell off the gold reserves and stock the shops with cheap consumer goods to win support for reforms.

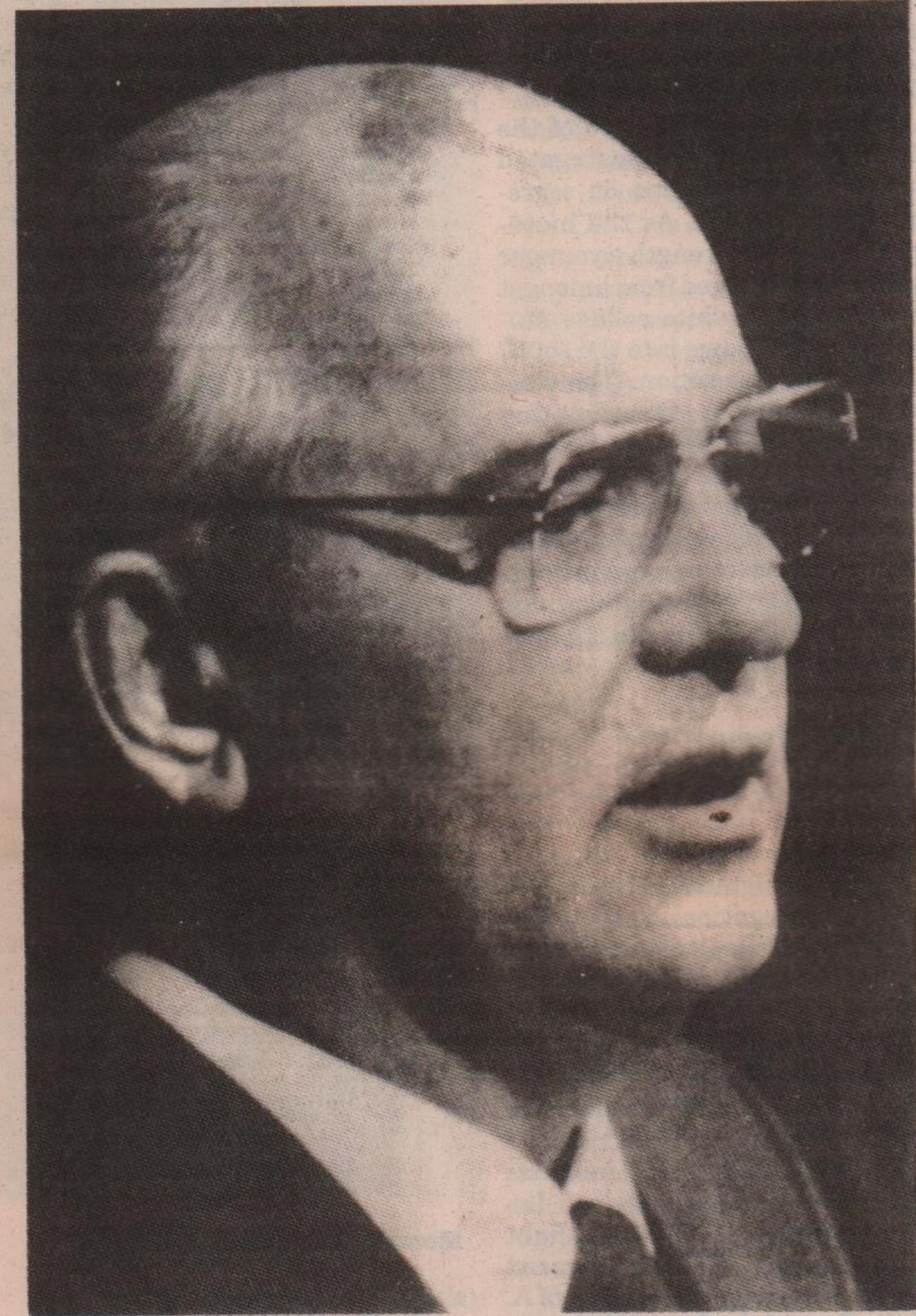
Ali chooses to ignore that Shmelev is an extreme marketeer who sees this device as a way of keeping the masses quiet while subsidies are ended and prices forced right up. The effects of such measures on the working class, the attacks that workers face at the hands of Gorbachev, are of no concern to perestroika's newest convert.

In reality the power of the bureaucratic apparatus cannot be broken simply by Ali's recipe of "refounding the CPSU by changing its functions".

Even less can the working class make a political revolution—and that means taking political power directly into its own hands—except by rebuilding new soviets to organise the seizure of power from the bureaucracy. But that's not what Ali means by political revolution as we've seen.

Tariq Ali acknowledges Isaac Deutscher as the greatest political influence on him. He is right. Back in 1953, when Stalin died and was replaced by Malenkov, Deutscher too pronounced that the political revolution had begun. As he put it: "What Malenkov's government is carrying out now is precisely the 'limited revolution' envisaged by Trotsky."

In Russia after Stalin, even if



THIS BOOK, by two leading members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), sets out to prove three things. The Labour Party is, and always was, a reformist party; its politics are conditioned by, and always betray, the working class struggle; revolutionary socialists cannot work within it under any conditions.

Cliff and Gluckstein have no trouble demonstrating that there never was any "golden age" of Labour to which working class militants can look back for inspiration. Countless examples are available from its founding in 1900 as the Labour Representation Committee to the strikes in the 1980s, and they are used to good effect.

They show the failure of the Labour Party to even struggle consistently for reforms. None of this, however, firmly proves the main conclusion of the book: the need for revolutionary socialists to "be outside the Labour Party". (emphasis in original)

In fact the arguments to back this up are conjured up from the tactical advice given by Lenin to the young British Communist Party (CP) in 1920 (to apply for affiliation), and an analogy with the Independent Labour Party (ILP) made by Trotsky in 1925.

In the 1920s the Labour Party rejected CP affiliation, though not without a fight, and an anti-communist witch-hunt ensued. The CP did

## Catalogue of betrayal

**The Labour Party — A Marxist History**  
by Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein  
(Bookmarks £7.95)

BY SIMON MACINTOSH

make gains and the Labour Leadership had to dissolve 27 Constituency Labour Parties that refused to knuckle under (a fact justifiably contrasted to the poor fight put up by *Militant* in the early eighties). But the authors maintain that the witch-hunt "soon put paid to any idea that revolutionaries could lead from inside the party". (emphasis in original)

In fact the witch-hunts, then and since, prove nothing of the sort. All they show is that reformist leaders are implacably hostile to revolutionary ideas and will fight them with every means at their disposal.

But, as the authors themselves say on the next page; "to the ultra-left, failure proves that *all intervention must be shunned*". (emphasis in original)

This is effectively the position of the modern SWP as far as the struggle between the working class base and the leadership of the Labour

Party is concerned. To justify it, they have to ignore not only Trotsky's discussions of entry work in the 1930s but the actual experience of the group Cliff founded. The Socialist Review Group, the precursor of today's SWP, actually spent the first decade of its existence trying to "lead from inside the party". As it is, a mere footnote explains how Cliff and co carried out "entrism" inside the Labour Party. This did not involve a public declaration of revolutionary intent...

Only by reducing the role of his own group literally to a footnote of history, can Cliff get away with his blithe assertions about "entrism".

And as the footnote reveals, Cliff's "entrism", like that of the precursors to *Militant* and the WRP, was opportunistic to the core. It never involved an open fight for revolutionary politics in the Labour Party.

All the rotten adaptations of today's entrists: *Militant*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Briefing* etc, are the legitimate offspring of the experience of centrist Trotskyism in the 1950s.

As a guide to the history of Labour betrayals this book is a useful weapon. As a guide to action, without a serious accounting of revolutionary intervention into the Labour Party, it is hopelessly flawed. ■

there was a counter-coup, it could only prove a brief episode, because economic progress;

"... has at last brought within the hands of the people a measure of well-being which makes possible an orderly winding-up of Stalinism and a gradual democratic evolution".

Thirty-six years onwards, Tariq Ali is making exactly the same claims.

He claims his book is a "left intervention" into current Soviet debates. At a time when Gorbachev is prepared to partially mobilise popular support against the more entrenched elements in the bureaucratic apparatus and when there is a new thirst for political debate, the Soviet workers need more than to be told "follow the leader". And the western left can do without another credulous letter from Moscow. ■

## MAPANTSULA



"PANIC"—a small time pick-pocket, sneak thief and all round louse (*Mapantsula* means a wide-boy)—has no time for work or politics. He lives off his girlfriend, gets drunk, fights and has an almost equal contempt for everyone.

As he tries to survive in the cracks of South African society he is gradually squeezed out by events. His individual conflicts with the law, his neighbours and his girlfriend's growing political awareness are overtaken by the increasingly bitter battle between the apartheid state and the township resistance.

When he is arrested he himself becomes the battleground between his interrogators and the "comrades" with whom he reluctantly shares his cell. Intercut with scenes of his life on the outside, the effect is more than simply dramatic tension. The choices he has to make are presented not as the product of free will but as the result of forces—class forces—brought to bear on him against his will.

The whole film is a brilliant evocation of black life in South Africa—from both sides of the iron bars that are its defining feature. It shows not just the how, but the why of politicisation. It manages this without a hint of preaching or an ounce of agitprop. See it!

# 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 worldwide.

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!



IN THE mid 1950s the US economy was booming. Yet despite their formal legal rights and the Fair Employment Laws enacted during the war blacks had little share of the boom. In the northern cities they remained amongst the poorest workers; in the south Jim Crow laws and segregation ruled as they had done since the 1880s.

The great upsurge of US labour after the war had been curbed by anti-union laws. Black workers had to struggle against the racism of the union bureaucrats and large sections of white workers to make their voices heard. In this situation it was the bourgeois reformist and church organisations which came to the fore in the first wave of the post war black struggle.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) fought a series of test cases in the courts against the southern Jim Crow laws. The 1954 Brown vs Board of Education ruling, which outlawed segregation in schools, was the first victory in this campaign. It sparked both a racist backlash and fifteen years of mass struggle which were to rock US capitalism to its foundations.

In December 1955 the NAACP launched a boycott of the racist bus service in Montgomery, Alabama. Here blacks had to enter buses separately, sit separately and give up their seats to white people.

In the mass demonstrations and repression that preceded the Supreme Court victory in November 1956 Martin Luther King came to the fore as the main black reformist leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

A college trained Baptist minister, King advocated Gandhi's strategy of non-violent protest action in the face of police brutality and racist murder. He helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) which in the aftermath of the Montgomery boycott led boycotts all over the southern states.

The mass popularity of King's strategy of non-violence was due to the fact that, in this period, it appeared to work. Against the most glaring injustices of segregation US imperialism was prepared to use its legal and military apparatus. But this "defence" of the blacks had very real limits. Where black revolt threatened to go beyond non-violence the state apparatus was quickly directed against it.

In 1957 two black boys aged seven and nine were convicted of raping a white girl in Monroe, North Carolina. She had kissed one of them on the cheek. For this they got fourteen years jail.

Robert Williams organised a defence campaign which forced the courts to release the boys. Then he led a working class based branch of the NAACP in a mass campaign of direct action against the segre-

## BLACK STRUGGLE IN THE

In the 1960s the struggle for black civil rights rocked US capitalism to its foundations. The article traces the limitations of both reformism and separatism—the political strategies which dominated the black struggle in Britain today. **Laura Williams and Colin Lloyd** trace the roots of the struggle in the USA and the development of the struggle against it: from non-violence to armed struggle.

gated library and swimming pool. In response the police and Klan launched a racist terror campaign against Monroe's black ghetto.

An ex-serviceman, Williams then used the cover of a local rifle club to build an armed black militia which successfully routed the racists. He spelled out the lesson, as true today as then:

"The racist whites consider themselves superior beings, therefore they are not willing to exchange their superior lives for inferior ones. They are most vicious and violent when they can practice violence with impunity".

Unfortunately it was a lesson learned very slowly by black workers over the next decade. But US imperialism was not slow to realise the implications. The FBI framed Williams. He fled underground and eventually to exile in Cuba.

The mainstream black movement now focused its attention on the goal of a Civil Rights Bill. It launched mass voter registration

# From civil rights to black power

campaigns in the south. In some counties there was not a single black voter despite a black population in the South of 78%. The Jim Crow laws, had simply disenfranchised countless black people.

This was the period too of the "freedom rides" on segregated buses, and the sit-ins at segregated restaurants. As the movement gathered strength a younger leadership emerged from amongst the black and white college students drafted down into the south to organise the action. The Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee (SNCC), led by Stokely Carmichael, came to the fore. It stretched the idea of non-violence to the limits, organising hundreds of people in direct action, confronting the police, suffering beatings and murder in the fight to organise southern blacks.

### Trade unions

At the same time the movement was making itself heard within the trade unions. The AFL and CIO had amalgamated in 1955 on an anti-segregationist policy. But in reality it failed to lead a single fight against employment discrimination, failed to conduct a campaign to recruit black workers and tolerated "Jim Crow locals"; separate black and white branches in southern towns.

In 1960 black trade unionists founded the Negro American Labour Council (NALC) to fight within the AFL-CIO for anti-racist action. Under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, the only black on the AFL-CIO executive, it remained within the bounds of his reformist trade unionism. Yet it was attacked by the bureaucracy. It reflected the mood of black workers when it called for a "March on Washington" modelled on the aborted 1941 planned march.

King, who had evolved more and more to a social reformist position under the impact of struggle, threw the weight of the SCLC behind the march. King and Randolph agreed that it should demand the enactment of the Civil Rights Bill and added a fair employment clause to the Bill.

Despite condemnation from the AFL-CIO the March attracted 250,000 in August 1963 where King delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech. Within a year the Bill was law. But black liberation was a long way from being won.

In Selma, Alabama in 1965 a voter registration drive was met with murderous repression from the local sheriff. He called in the National Guard. Two activists were killed and hundreds jailed. In response came the militant Selma to Montgomery march which united not only the existing forces but also drew in the official trade union movement. The marchers won



Memphis sanitation strike 1968

a new Voter Registration Act, finally granting the right of blacks to vote, more than a century after the abolition of slavery.

What was the nature of these victories? Certainly they were the most radical civil rights laws ever enacted in the USA. The Civil Rights Act guaranteed voting rights, equal access to education, and no employment discrimination. It would be wrong to think, however, that the racist US ruling class had gone daft or that the "liberal" Kennedy/Johnson administrations were committed to eradicating racism.

In fact the reforms coincided with the project of the leaders of the US bosses. They were being dragged deeper and deeper into the Vietnam War and realised that black people would constitute a formidable second front if they continued to be denied simple democratic rights. But events immediately revealed the limits of bourgeois reforms. They showed that no measure of legal equality and civil rights within capitalism can overcome the oppression and super-exploitation suffered daily by the mass of black workers.

No sooner had the Act been passed than Watts, the Los Angeles black ghetto erupted. None of the civil rights legislation, nor the

## Roots of black oppression

THE ROOTS of black oppression in the USA lie in the experience of slavery

Slave labour in the Caribbean and North America was one of the ways the early capitalists gathered enough wealth to set the capitalist system on its feet. Marxists call this "primitive accumulation" because its methods (piracy, slavery, land grabbing, hoarding) were not the normal way of making profits once capitalism was a fully fledged and dominant system.

In this early period slaves from West Africa were captured, branded, herded into suffocating slave-ships, "broker" in a three year "seasoning" period, then set to a lifetime's work on sugar and tobacco plantations. Bought and sold, raped and murdered at the will of their masters, fifteen to twenty million Africans suffered this fate between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When the American capitalists made a revolution against British rule they did it under the banners of freedom and democracy. But this was not to extend to blacks, despite their support for the independence struggle.

Under the US constitution black people were regarded as only "three-fifths human". Slavery remained in the southern states. Here a mass slave labour force was needed to work the cotton plantations which had sprung up to service the European and North American industrial revolution.

### Backward

But the success of the southern landowners in squeezing profits from the blood and sweat of slaves backfired. It left a whole sector of America economically backward, a drag on the northern industrialists and the small settler farmers in the west. When the northern and western states entered a civil war against the southern Confederacy of slave-owning states it was to free American capitalism from its fetters. It was not a war against slavery.

Despite masses of escaped slaves flocking to join the Union armies the northern capitalists did their best to keep them out. Only in 1863, two years after the war had started, did Lincoln proclaim the emancipation of slaves and begin

recruitment into the army. Even then blacks were paid only half as much as white soldiers, and the measure was prompted by the need to break the deadlock in the war and prepare the ground for a northern advance.

Freedom and given citizenship and the vote, but without land or money; this was the position of black people after the American Civil War. During the "reconstruction" of the south black people were given various rights and encouraged to become sharecropping farmers. Through this the most radical bourgeois politicians in the north hoped to destroy the economic strength of the southern plantation owners.

But by the 1880s it was clear that, like the War of Independence, the Civil War had done little to alleviate the plight of black people. Faced with the massive economic power of the south, the northern capitalists gave the southern states the right to control their own affairs. As the USA developed into a modern imperialist country it unleashed a wave of state racism against southern blacks. In 1883 the Civil Rights Act was revoked by the Supreme Court.

The southern states introduced vicious apartheid laws known as "Jim Crow". Blacks were forcibly segregated in every sphere; laundries, trains, libraries and housing neighbourhoods. The Jim Crow laws were enforced by lynchings organised by the local sheriffs with the Ku Klux Klan, an organisation that developed more and more into a fascist outfit during the twentieth century.

They ensured blacks could not exercise their right to vote. At the same time the "free" black farmers were systematically ruined by sharecropping. Twenty-five years after the abolition of slavery most blacks in the south were slaves to their own debts.

All over the world racism spread virulently at the end of the nineteenth century. Racism is rooted in the emergence of bourgeois nations. It reached its highpoint in the imperialist epoch when the division of the world into competing nation states became more and more at odds with the existence of an international economy and labour market. The imperialist heartlands became a living hell for

those people designated inferior or alien "races" by the reactionary national chauvinism of the capitalists.

Yet the twentieth century also opened up the potential road to freedom for US blacks. The whole history of black slavery had also been a history of slave revolt. Gabriel Prosser (1800), Denmark Vesey (1822) and Nat Turner (1833) organised successive attempts at mass armed insurrection against the white slave-owners. All were executed when their inevitably isolated revolts were crushed or betrayed. The imperialist epoch, which had enshrined racial oppression in "democratic" America also created a black and white working class which could overthrow imperialism and racial oppression altogether.

### Proletarians

Between the 1900s and the end of World War Two millions of blacks were drawn into the cities and industries of the northern states. No longer share-cropping farmers but black proletarians, they brought a tradition of resistance and revolt into the economic struggles of the unskilled workers.

World War Two gave a massive impetus to the flow of black workers into the cities and the strategic industries. Despite racism a fighting unity in the workplace developed. So did the anger of black workers and soldiers conscripted to fight a war for "democracy" when so little "democracy" applied to millions of US blacks.

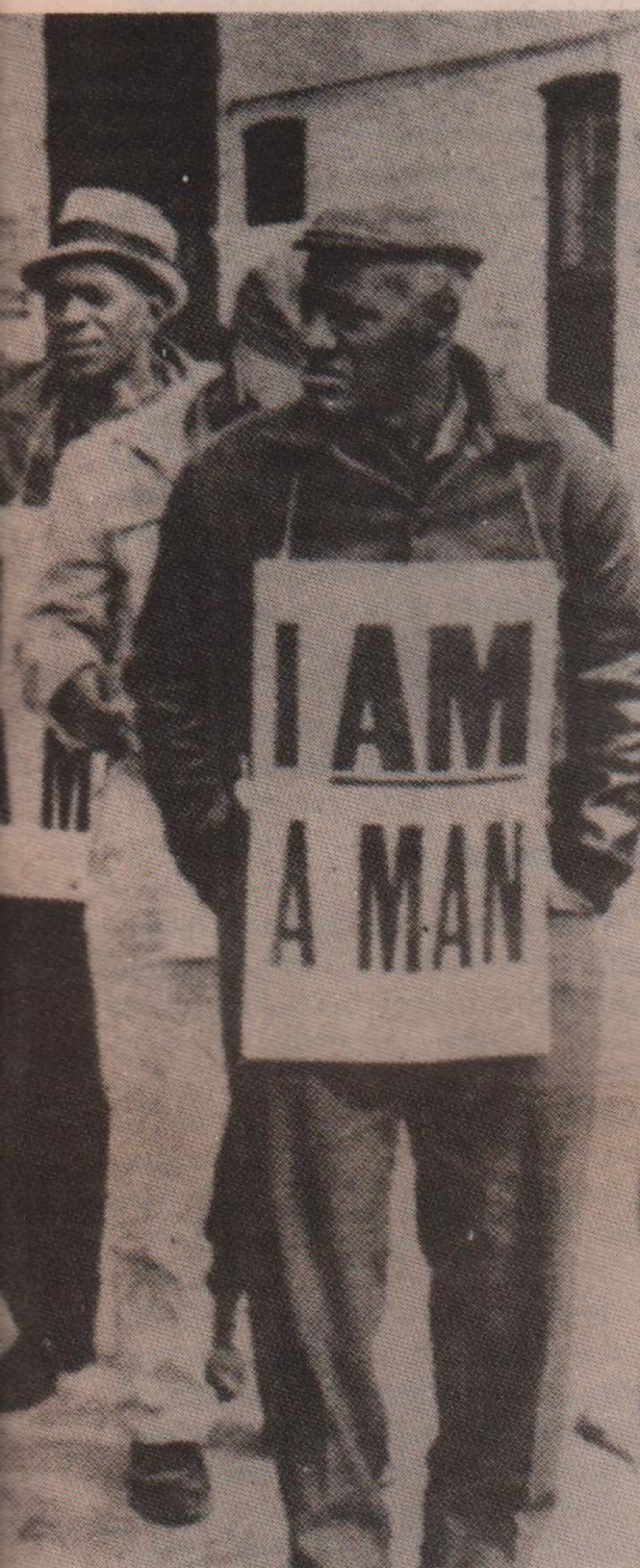
A. Philip Randolph threw his union, the largely black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, into a mass agitation against Jim Crow, racism in the American Federation of Labour (AFL) and segregation in the army and defence industries. Faced with a threatened "March on Washington" by thousands of black workers in 1941 President Roosevelt enacted a whole series of anti-discrimination measures, including a Fair Employment Committee.

This legal reform set the scene for the mass struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. The black proletariat had demonstrated its presence and its fighting spirit. It had put on the agenda not just revolt, but black liberation. ■



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# Civil Rights Power



they have become mayors and governors of important state machines in America, sitting atop a dungheap of corruption, police racism and abject poverty.

Tragically the radical opposition to these sell-outs was ensnared by various forms of separatism and black nationalism. The black radicals, understandably suspicious of the racist traditions and practice of the unions, were unable to develop a class strategy to combat and defeat their oppression.

Revolutionary communists, whilst opposing nationalism, support the right of self-determination, up to and including secession, for oppressed nations. Thus throughout the 1940s and 1950s Marxists supported the national liberation struggles in Africa and Asia which became the inspiration for US black nationalism.

But black people in the USA did not develop a national consciousness embodied in a struggle for a black nation. From the second Comintern Congress in 1920 to the mid-thirties the communist movement debated whether or not US blacks were in the process of achieving national consciousness.

In its ultra-left period (1929-33) the US Communist Party called for a separate black state in the southern USA where black people were the overwhelming majority. Trotsky, whilst rejecting this call, argued that if material conditions of oppression produced a mass national consciousness amongst black people, Marxists would be bound to support their right of self-determination.

Throughout the whole inter-war period however, material conditions had done the opposite. Mass migration, proletarianisation and integration had firmly bound the fate of America's twenty million blacks with the struggle of the whole US working class for socialism.

Acute crisis and social upheaval might change this, and once again, pose the national question for the black people of the USA. Today, however, it would be wrong and dangerous to equate the struggle for black liberation with the struggle for black self-determination.

Despite their heroism the story of the black radicals of the late 1960s is an object lesson in the uselessness of separatism as a strategy for the racially oppressed.

During the pre-1964 period Black Nationalism had been represented chiefly by Elijah Muhammad's "Nation of Islam". Muhammad combined the call for a separate black nation in the USA and fierce anti-communist rhetoric with a radical rejection of the integrationist project. He was a firm supporter of black capitalism.

One of the Nation's most radical leaders, Malcolm X, broke with Muhammad in 1964 and embraced an ever more radical view of the need for direct action and armed self-organisation. Against King's strategy of lobbying the bourgeoisie and mobilising black trade unionists to pressure them, Malcolm X argued:

"Any time you find somebody today who's afraid of the word revolution, get him out of your way. He's living in the wrong era... He hasn't awakened yet. This is the era of revolution."

Essentially a revolutionary nationalist, Malcolm evolved more and more towards the idea of class struggle and the overthrow of capitalism. After visiting Ghana and Algeria he began a critique of black nationalism that was cut short by his assassination in 1965.

Under Stokely Carmichael's leadership the SNCC too embraced black nationalism, formulating the

Black Power slogan in 1966. But what did Black Power mean? To many it summed up the positive expression of power felt by black workers and youth as they took on the bosses and the police. Not integration into Uncle Sam's USA, with its gathering war effort in Vietnam and its endemic racism, but rejection of the whole system.

To Carmichael and his followers, however, it meant separating the black struggle from white society as a whole, rejecting the white workers as allies, making the class struggle subordinate to the black national struggle, and totally ignoring the struggles of the oppressed within the black population. "The only position for women in the SNCC" said Carmichael, "is prone". Not only the white student anti-racists but many black women were driven out of the SNCC in the late 1960s, thus ensuring its collapse.

The Black Panthers emerged in 1966. Unlike the SNCC they tried to root themselves firmly within the black working class, if not in the factory then in the ghetto communities. They took up Malcolm X's slogan; "By any means necessary" and found the means in armed resistance to police racism. They quickly gained popularity amongst the exploited and oppressed black communities through their audacious armed actions combined with welfare and self-help projects. But in replacing Martin Luther King's non-violence with a strategy of isolated armed struggle they sowed the seeds of their own defeat.

## Murdered

In response to the growth and effectiveness of the Panthers the FBI organised a massive "Counter Intelligence Program". One by one the Panthers were murdered or framed by the US state. Many heroic fighters are in US jails, still resisting, torture and solitary confinement. Having failed to organise the black masses independently, or to look for links with black and white workers in the factories—despite their socialist rhetoric—the Panthers were crushed just as effectively as the slave owners crushed the revolts of the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile in the Detroit car plants a series of black rank and file groups emerged, called "Revolutionary Union Movements". Nationalist in inspiration the RUMs, eventually organised as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW). But they adopted wildcat strike action as their main tactic. They shut down the plants repeatedly in 1969 over equal pay, job discrimination and representation in the United Auto Workers union.

Again, despite embracing one element of a strategy against bourgeois integrationism, this movement was crippled by its separatist politics. Many white rank and file workers supported their demands and actions. But they were excluded from the LRBW and the League's leadership saw no place for them within the struggle for black liberation.

At the crucial moments the employers were able to pick off strike leaders with the union's help. Without a fight alongside white rank and file workers to take control of the UAW from the bureaucrats the LRBW was soon marginalised in the factories.

These experiences highlighted that just as nationalism had become obsolete so had its organisational concomitant, a separate black political party. The US working class needs a workers' party

Continued on page 10

# IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



## Marxism or feminism?

**MARXISTS ARE** consistent fighters for women's liberation. We believe that the complete equality of women can only be achieved through the creation of a society in which the private home is no longer a prison in which women toil to maintain the family; a society in which the labour of all is directed towards meeting the needs of all. In other words socialism is the precondition for the full liberation of women.

We do not conclude from this that the organisation of women to fight for their specific and immediate needs has to be put off until socialism has been achieved. We do not tell women class-fighters to "wait until after the revolution" for the achievement of their demands.

Battles for equal pay, better childcare, free abortion and contraceptive services should be part of the immediate struggle of the working class. They must be waged as part of a fight for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

But revolutionary Marxists are not feminists. There is a fundamental flaw with all strands of feminism which means its adherents cannot lead the struggle for women's liberation to a successful conclusion.

"Feminism" describes the theory and practice of both the modern petit bourgeois-dominated Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) and their ancestors; the suffrage movements and liberal women's rights campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The unifying idea held by all feminists is that there is a separate "woman question", distinct from other questions of inequality, exploitation and oppression. Feminism necessarily rejects the idea that the woman question is, fundamentally, a class question.

## Isolated

For working class women, however, oppression is based on fundamental features of capitalist society. The isolated family unit is the only place where children can be raised and workers fed and maintained. It is the unit needed by capitalism to reproduce labour power. The bulk of household work is done by women, whether or not they have jobs outside the home. Where women do carry out paid work they get lower wages, worse conditions and are still expected to treat the family and its maintenance as their main priority.

Unless the private drudgery of housework can be destroyed through the provision of collective childcare, laundries, eating places and the like, women will remain unable to fully participate in work, political and social life outside the home. And this socialisation of housework cannot be achieved under capitalism. It challenges the most fundamental social, economic and ideological features of society.

Any strategy for women's liberation which would solve these fundamental questions for the working class women must include the struggle against capitalism itself.

Feminists of the modern WLM offer a strategy for liberation that is not based on united proletarian class struggle. The radical feminist wing of the WLM set the agenda in the 1970s with their argument that women's oppression transcended particular class societies and flowed from the exploitation and oppression of all women by all men. Women exist as a distinct caste or class for the radical feminists. Men are the

enemy and the fight for liberation has to be directed against them. Class differences amongst men are ignored.

For radical feminists this system of oppression, patriarchy, is based upon the power of men within the family and the state.

The violence of men against women plus the threat of such violence, is the method by which men keep women enslaved. Thus the principal targets of the radical feminists are the supposed symbols of male power—pomography and cultural sexism. By ruling out any united struggle with male workers against the bosses they offer no way forward for working class women at all. Their strategy of separatism condemns them to the periphery of the real liberation struggles that involve women all over the world.

In reaction to this many WLM activists who regarded themselves as socialists and feminists tried to fuse the theory of patriarchy with various forms of socialism. "Socialist feminism" shared with the radicals the view that Marxism had not provided an explanation of women's oppression. So, while socialism was alright to explain class society, feminism was necessary to deal with sexual oppression.

## Ignored

Socialist feminism correctly identified the existence of women's oppression before capitalism. But they ignored the fact that pre-capitalist societies were class societies too. They dismissed the work of the early Marxists, in particular Engels, because they were based on outdated 19th century research. In fact despite new discoveries about the history of pre-capitalist societies Engels' basic idea remains valid. Women's oppression originates with the emergence of private property.

This was never just a theoretical mistake. The socialist feminists never seriously tried to mobilise working class women around working class demands. Such mobilisations always pose the question of unity with working class men. But socialist feminism favoured an "autonomous women's movement"; namely one free from the political influence of the "male dominated left" and separated from the equally "male dominated" labour movement.

Against this Marxists fight for women's caucuses in the workers' organisations and for a proletarian women's movement linked politically and organisationally to the workers' movement.

With the crisis of the WLM in the late 1970s many socialist feminists took refuge in the reformist labour movement. However they concentrated on winning the Labour Party and unions to better policies for women within capitalism.

In particular many of these activists found their way into local government women's committees and equal opportunities campaigns inside the unions.

But in the face of the Tories' relentless attacks on local government, the unions and the working class these powerless organisations were unable to lift a finger in defence of working class women's interests, let alone fight for women's liberation.

Socialist feminism, like radical feminism, has nothing to offer the masses of working class women. Both have failed the test of the class struggle in the 1970s and 1980s. Marxism, not feminism, provides the way forward. ■





# The longest war

## THE CAUSE OF LABOUR?

THE NEW Labour Party document, *Towards a United Ireland*, came out towards the end of last year. It claims to be a socialist programme for ending "violence, poverty and division" in Ireland. It is nothing of the sort.

The document begins by setting out the party's apparent commitment to the goal of a united Ireland. This is the aim which any consistent democrat must endorse. For, as the first paragraph of the document states correctly: "It is an aspiration which is shared by the vast majority of Irish people..."

However this commitment is immediately made conditional. Unification, we are told, must have the consent of a majority of the population of Northern Ireland.

To many the Party's policy may seem sensible. Surely a majority of both states would need to favour unification—surely this is the only democratic solution? But to pose the issue in this way ignores the fundamental nature of the six county state. To examine this question it is necessary to look briefly at the founding of the Northern Ireland statelet itself.

In 1918, in the last election held throughout the whole of Ireland, Sinn Fein received a massive majority in favour of independence, underlining the desire for unity across the 32 counties. Britain, refusing to accept this democratic decision, chose to partition Ireland. In 1920-21 they created an entirely artificial state—Northern Ireland.

Three of Ulster's counties were excluded from the new state. The reason: the majority of the inhabitants were staunchly pro-independence. The new state's borders were drawn simply to ensure a protestant majority. For the protestant population in the North privileges in housing and employment were and are carefully maintained by the British to shore up continued loyalty to their imperialist domination of the six counties. In short, Northern Ireland is a gerrymandered state, sectarian to the core.

Labour's claim that no group should be allowed to exercise a veto on policies designed to win consent for unification is therefore a sham. If a majority of the six counties' population must consent to unity, the loyalists have as thoroughgoing a veto as it is possible to have.

Labour find support for their view in Article 1(c) of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which also makes unity dependent on loyalist consent. They even have the temerity to see the Article as "... an endorsement... of the Labour Party's policy".

This turns reality on its head. Labour has endorsed the Tories' entire strategy, approving the Agreement, the main function of which has been to co-ordinate repression against nationalists fighting British rule.

Since the signing of the Agreement, the Dublin government has become ever more craven in its collaboration with the occupying forces and with Westminster. The Ryan case certainly indicates that Dublin needs, at times, to placate nationalist opinion. But extradi-

tion, the jailing of republicans and strict censorship are permanent features of the southern state.

The attitude of Kinnock and company to the Agreement is but one feature of *bipartisanship*: the pro-imperialist attitude towards Ireland that Labour has always shared with the Tories. Whilst opposing partition back in 1921, Labour also vigorously opposed Irish independence. In 1969 it was a Labour government that sent the troops in and then introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) which has been used to harass the Irish community in Britain ever since. During the hunger strikes Labour backed the murderous policies of the Tory government.

In moments of crisis they are reliable servants of British imperialism, prepared to back military and judicial repression to secure the continued domination of Ireland and the security of the six county state. *Towards a United Ireland* expressly continues Labour's support for repression. Non-jury trials are to be continued, but with three unaccountable judges instead of one.

Whilst the document opposes the PTA, Kinnock put a three line whip on Labour MPs back in December to stop them voting against the Act. A commitment on paper to civil rights and democracy is undermined by the assertion that in certain circumstances consent could be measured more easily "if direct rule still existed". And we are told that in the absence of a system of devolved government, "political representatives... will regrettably continue to have no direct role in executive decision making".

And just in case anyone was wondering how Labour's policy on Direct Rule is to differ from the Tories, Kinnock makes it abundantly clear in his introduction to the document: "Force has to be used to counter and address violence". The methods and trappings of military repression are to remain intact.

So Labour continues to defend the sectarian six county state and the brutal occupation that this involves. But are they at least committed to reform?

In fact *Towards a United Ireland* only proposes a "reduction" in the differential rate of unemployment between Catholics and Protestants, refusing to overcome chronic job discrimination by taking control over hiring and firing out of the hands of the local Orange bosses. And an entirely utopian Keynesian policy of increased public spending is proposed to overcome the chronic stagnation of the Northern Ireland economy. But, as the document itself admits, these economic policies are not simply a result of Tory monetarist policies, but are "endemic".

What Labour will not address is the real reason for these endemic problems—the domination of Ireland by British and US finance capital. That is why Britain has divided Ireland. It is why consistent democrats and socialists must oppose that domination in all its forms, most importantly by campaigning to get the troops out now. ■

PRESIDENT RAUL Alfonsín of Argentina looks set to unleash a new wave of repression in the wake of last month's guerrilla attack on the Tablada barracks in Buenos Aires.

Over sixty armed guerrillas smashed into the Third Infantry regiment's headquarters and fought for nearly two days before suffering defeat at the hands of the police and army. Over thirty of the attackers were killed.

Evidence points to a left guerrilla organisation, heavily infiltrated by agent provocateurs from the state intelligence organisation, SIDE. The attack has given Alfonsín an excuse to reintegrate the hated army chiefs into the running of internal security.

Two days after the attack, the president issued an emergency decree setting up the National Security Council. It will include top military officers and is charged with drawing up a "strategy for anti-subversive action".

### Contrast

The speedy response of the army chiefs and Alfonsín to this attack was in sharp contrast to the way they handled the three right wing military coup attempts launched in the last twenty months.

There was no retaliation last December after Colonel Seineldin led an army mutiny. Instead, Chief of Staff Caridi used the opportunity to ask for better pay and conditions for the army and the end of trials of army officers involved in the "dirty war" of the 1970s—when countless opponents of the regime were murdered.

For most of his presidency, Alfonsín has managed to keep a distance between himself and the army. The army was deeply unpopular after the terror of the previous military regime, when

# ARGENTINA Repression strengthens the military

BY JOAN MAYER

thousands of Argentinians became desaparecidos—the disappeared.

But Alfonsín's Radical (Civic Union) Party government is in trouble. It presides over a country where inflation is running at 300%. Unemployment is growing too. Peronist unions have been leading a strike wave that involves dock, rail and postal workers.

Alfonsín fears that his protegee, Angeloz, will lose next May's presidential election to the Peronist candidate Menem. He is hoping that his new rapprochement with the military will alter the balance of forces.

While the Argentinian working class can expect only increased repression from the current government and military, they cannot expect better from a Peronist president.

The Peronist strategy, following the charismatic president of the 1940s and 1950s, is to build popular support for strong—that is, repressive—government. Peronism appeals to the masses by identifying with the poor and oppressed against the rich.

But in power, it steadfastly refuses to break the rule of the capitalist class. On the contrary, Peronism's history is one of demagogic

populist nationalism combined with the subordination of the working class to the interests of capitalism.

The crying need is for a leadership in the working class which can challenge the Peronists, break their hold on the unions and build an independent revolutionary working class party.

Tragically, sections of the Argentinian left have turned their backs on that road and embraced guerrillism as an alternative. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the Montoneros adopted urban guerrilla warfare as a strategy for revolution in Argentina.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) encouraged this fatal strategy when it was in its guerrillaist phase. Guerrillism played straight into the hands of Argentine reaction. The years following the defeat of the ERP and the Montoneros saw the unleashing of the death squads.

### Guerrillism

This latest expression of guerrillism could lead to the same end. The Sandinistas have given a boost to the guerrilla strategy throughout Latin America. It has been suggested that the leader of the attack was Enrique Gorriaran, a former leader of the ERP who later fought for the Sandinistas.

Whatever the truth of this, the incident shows once again that this is a strategy for defeat. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista government presides over a capitalist country, hemmed in by imperialism.

The consequences of guerrillism in the heavily industrialised and urbanised countries of South America are even more disastrous. Thus, while we condemn Alfonsín's double standard of concessions to the army and brutality against the left, we are for a complete break from guerrillism as a strategy.

The working class of Argentina, not an elite guerrilla band acting on its behalf, is the key to putting an end to the repeated threats of a military coup. An urgent task facing the working class is the building of a workers' militia and the breaking up of the bosses' army. ■



Alleged ERP guerrillas being led away from the Tablada barracks

Continued from page 9 that encompasses all sections and that, as part of its general revolutionary programme, inscribes the fight for black liberation on its banner. While special organisations, and even black proletarian movements and united fronts, may prove essential in the course of the struggle, a separate party will be a diversion and an obstacle.

By the early 1970s the period of radical black struggle was over. With the vanguard victimised, jailed or murdered the door was open for all kinds of charlatans to posture as self appointed leaders. Do-nothing cultural nationalists vied with pro-Democratic Party integrationists in the rhetoric of struggle. But the struggle itself had been defeated and derailed.

The struggle came up against the limits of what capitalism would

grant peacefully. Neither integrationists nor revolutionary separatists could chart a way forward. The integrationism of the Jacksons and the Andrew Youngs remained bourgeois integrationism. It offered nothing to the mass of black workers and poor except a few crumbs from the table of the newly rich and "integrated" black bosses. The separatists managed to separate the most radical black fighters from the only force in society that can bring about an end to black oppression; the working class.

Between 1954 and 1970 the black struggle in the USA encompassed everything from cross-class, peaceful protest and pleading with the President to armed, insurrection and mass unofficial strike action. By mobilising hundreds of thousands at the height of America's boom and the Cold War it demon-

strated that the specially oppressed can play a leading role in the class struggle.

It demonstrated the bankruptcy of all forms of separatism for the militant fighters amongst the racially oppressed. It showed the need and possibility of revolutionary unity between black and white workers. Most of all it demonstrated the need for a party and programme that unites the struggles of the oppressed with the fight against the capitalist system. For it is that system which is the source of their oppression and there is no road to black liberation in the USA other than through working class power.

In future articles we will look at the position of the US left on the black struggle and examine the legacy of defeat in the 1970s.



AFTER YET another election rigged by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in July last year. President Salinas took power and was inaugurated in December. Promises were made of a new democratic era, but the municipal elections soon after showed an abstention rate of 65% and the usual high degree of fraud.

Minimum wages have decreased 50% in the last ten years. Spending on health and education has slipped to amongst the lowest in all Latin America. Homelessness in Mexico City rose permanently after the 1985 earthquake. Many of those peasants who have not left the land and swollen the shanty town populations have now turned to production of crops for export, with Mexico having to import corn and beans.

The economic package unveiled by Salinas in December heralded further attacks on workers and peasants. Devaluation of one peso a day against the dollar in the first six months of 1989, higher interest rates and renegotiation of the \$104 billion foreign debt were Salinas' answer to Mexico's problems. In exchange for a price freeze on essential services and goods for this period the corporatist Mexican Workers Confederation (CTM) accepted an increase of 8% on the minimum wage, taking it to £2 a day in Mexico City.

But only days after that the Chamber of Deputies was invaded by public servants demanding a 100% wage increase. They chanted "Death to the PRI" as Pedro Aspe, the Minister of Finance, was announcing a plan for a further \$7 billion loan. Nationalist rhetoric from bourgeois opposition parties—protesting that the 1989

## MEXICO

# Oil workers' leaders held

Tim O'Halloran explains the background to the arrests

budget pandered to foreign bankers—was still ringing in his ears as he departed to plead with the bankers in Washington just before Christmas.

The PRI's austerity program has had some measure of success, although of course at the expense of the workers and peasants. The annual rate of inflation in 1987 was 159.2%, while government indices show that the rate for 1988 was 51.7%. Increasing unrest on the wages front means that the 1989 target of 18% will prove difficult.

Given the need for the ruling PRI to impose its economic package, it soon had to attack its populist and working class base in the CTM. The first major rupture has been with the arrest of the leaders of the Oil Workers Union (STPRM). This is due to the central role oil has in the Mexican economy and the consequent privileged position held by oil workers (oil amounts to 45% of Mexico's exports). In March 1988 the national minimum wage was raised by 3%, but oil workers' wage packets increased by 80%.

Over 35 oil workers' leaders have been arrested, the most prominent among them being Joaquin Hernandez Galicia, the president of the STPRM and the most powerful union boss in the CTM. His power derives not only from his control of the oil workers but also the STPRM's business interests which control 40% of drilling contracts and 50% of other state oil company (Pemex) contracts. Another of those arrested was Sergio Bolanos, an industrialist who fronted for Hernandez and the STPRM.

Hernandez split from supporting Salinas in last year's presidential election, advising his members to vote for whoever they pleased. It is thought that many of their votes went to Cuauhtemoc Cardenas who led a split in the PRI on a program of bourgeois nationalism and rhetorical anti-imperialism.

The immediate response was a partial strike by STPRM members and a few tough words from Fidel Velazquez, boss of the CTM. Six out of the country's nine refineries shut down and 6,000 oil workers

demonstrated in Mexico City, calling for Hernandez's release. Petrol supplies were hit and troops guarded state-owned oil installations. Later on the notoriously corrupt STPRM General Secretary Salvador Bragan Comacho called on the oil workers to return to work.

Hernandez has been charged with murder, gun running and resisting arrest and he has claimed that the confession read out in court was made as a result of threats to his family. There are rumours that he has been offered a deal in which he will receive a relatively short prison sentence in return for dropping his opposition to Salinas.

There are other murder charges being prepared, relating to a town mayor and union official murdered in 1983 in a PRI power struggle. £30 million worth of assets in accounts held by Hernandez and 50 other union leaders have been



seized. Hernandez, Bragan, Bolanos and others are said to have salted away about \$3.2 billion in New York banks and the Mexican Attorney General has asked US authorities to freeze them.

The ex-leader of the Mexico City branch of the musicians union, Venustiano Lopez Rey, has been arrested for corruption, stockpiling weapons and threatening behaviour, after being removed from office by a majority of the 3,000 members.

The extent of the corruption and gangsterism among CTM leaders is serving as a good pretext for Salinas to attack union organisation as such, just as it served in the past as a means of controlling it. The economic crisis is fragmenting the Mexican bourgeoisie and its ruling instrument, the PRI.

What is needed in Mexico is not only an independent revolutionary workers party but also a democratic trade union movement controlled by the rank and file. The schisms in the PRI and the undermining of the corrupt gangsters who have been running the CTM open up possibilities for the Mexican workers and peasants to move forward and construct these necessary instruments in the class war.

In the process they must settle accounts once and for all with the union leaders who have grown rich from their corporatist arrangement with the bosses. ■

## JAMAICA

# In the grip of the IMF

AS JAMAICANS go to the polls on 9 February Michael Manley's People's National Party (PNP) looks set to take power from Edward Seaga's Jamaican Labour Party (JLP).

After eight years in power Seaga's government has come under mounting opposition to its attacks on the Jamaican workers and peasants. Food and fuel shortages have been accompanied by repeated attempts to drive down the living standards of the masses. Today wage levels are well below subsistence levels.

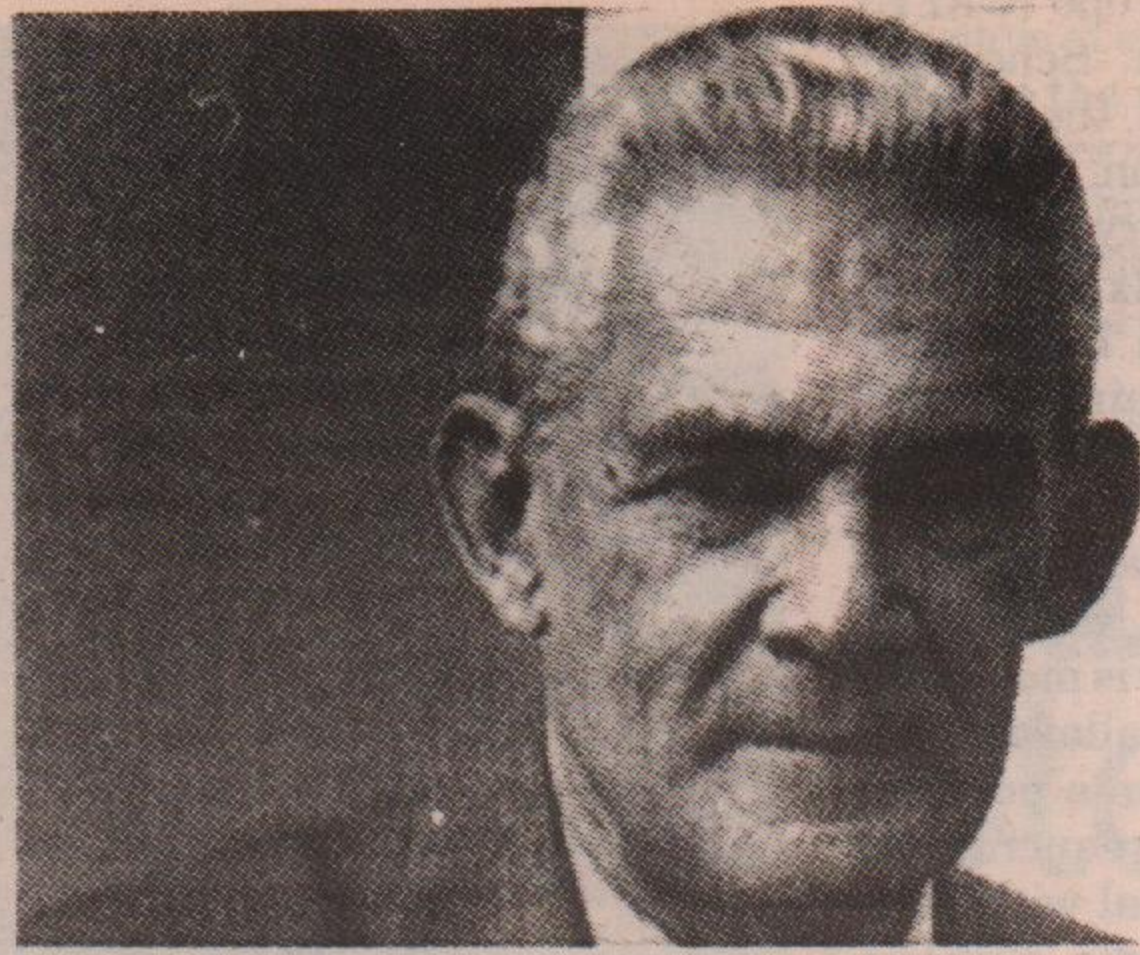
The Seaga government's attempt to increase exploitation forms part of the Jamaican bosses' strategy for attracting more foreign investment to Jamaica.

Yet despite Seaga's achievements in this area, the US controlled International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank are far from satisfied. Indeed in 1988 the IMF demanded the extension of an existing freeze on wages to November 1989. Another IMF demand is for more cuts to an already inadequate public spending programme.

Encouraged by the success of imposing earlier rounds of austerity on the masses, last August the government felt confident enough to force these new conditions on the labour movement. The results severely undercut Seaga's electoral support.

Then Hurricane Gilbert hit the island last year causing millions of dollars of destruction to the island economy. The USA saw this as one last desperate chance to keep Manley out of office and bolster the flagging popularity of the JLP. Washington's clear message to the Jamaican people is that substantial aid can be expected from the USA, but only if Seaga is returned to power.

Seaga along with Eugenia Charles of Dominica, has been the main agent of imperialism in the region.



Michael Manley

Both supported the US invasion of Grenada. Seaga greeted Bush's election victory with a call for "the same strong relations between Washington and Kingston that characterised the Reagan years".

The aim of the USA's involvement in the process of recovery after Hurricane Gilbert is clearly to open up the Jamaican economy to further US investment. Hence the US has come up with a \$10 million direct loan. Repayment of the interest rates alone will represent a massive burden for the Jamaican masses.

Since the snap election was called, much of the mounting unrest has been diverted into electioneering. Large sections of the Jamaican electorate are putting off the fight and waiting for Manley's PNP to take power. They hope that Manley will resume the struggle for "social justice" at home and "non-alignment" abroad for which he became famous in the late 1960s and 1970s.

When Manley's PNP government lost power in the 1980 general election he had been engaged in a limited but prolonged struggle with

the IMF and World Bank. He attempted to introduce a number of social reforms ("people's programmes") instead of the austerity of the IMF. More decisively, Manley threatened to break the Jamaican economy from its trade dependency on the USA.

His attempt to establish an independent "third way" for Jamaica was frustrated as it rapidly ran up against its own limitations. It consisted of the bourgeois nationalist programme typical of reformism in the semi-colonies: import and exchange controls, limited nationalisations and attempts at regional economic co-operation to counter imperialist pressure.

All this, Manley argued, could bring about the transformation of Jamaica without resorting to revolutionary methods or the eventual expropriation of capitalism on the Castro model. In the end the failure to wage a consistent fight against imperialism was the real downfall of the PNP.

Such a fight would have required not only the expropriation of the imperialist companies and banks

but the mobilisation of the masses in workers councils and an armed workers militia.

But it was precisely when the masses themselves took to the streets against the IMF, in huge strike waves in the dying days of the last PNP government, that Manley unleashed the army to smash them.

Today the illusions of the masses in the PNP are even more ill-founded. faced with Reaganite foreign policy in the 1980s the PNP has turned sharply to the right. Manley's campaigning has encapsulated the mood of "new realism". "All socialists since the great 1970s have to rethink strategy" he has said.

Following this logic he has deprecated the anti-imperialist rhetoric as well as his claim to fight for social justice for the poor. But despite Manley's recent signals that he is ready to comply with US capitalism, Washington is not impressed.

The USA fears that the Jamaican masses, mobilised around illusions in a PNP government, could once again become a road block to imperialism's designs for the region. It is something that Bush is fighting to avoid.

According to *The Gleaner* (3 January 89) Washington is indicating that "the PNP would encounter strong opposition from the IMF if it tried to change economic and social conditions by reintroducing import controls, reviving Caribbean Community (CARICOM) trade and taking steps to stop further devaluations."

Washington is keeping an eye on both its economic and strategic interests in Jamaica. US investment in 1980 represented a net outflow of private direct investment of about \$12 million. In addition much of US oil passes through the Caribbean.

US capital is eagerly awaiting a Seaga victory, tempted by government guarantees of \$100 million in insurance cover for investors willing to rebuild parts of the island. But a Jamaica rebuilt by capitalist bloodsuckers will never guarantee the livelihood of the masses. Only the expropriation of imperialist and Jamaican bosses alike can do this. And that is something Manley's PNP has no intention of carrying out. ■

## MEXICAN LEFTIST KIDNAPPED

JOSE Ramon Garcia Gomez, a leader of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT-Mexican section of the USFI) was kidnapped on 16 December 1988. He was a former PRT candidate for mayor of the town of Cuautla and organiser of the Peoples' Defence Committees created after Salinas' presidential victory.

On the day he disappeared undercover police had his house under surveillance. This is just one of a series of illegal detentions by the police aimed at smashing opposition to Salinas. There are an estimated 800 "disappeared" in Mexico.

Mass rallies and hunger strikes have been held to call for José Ramon's immediate release. Workers' organisations in Britain should send telegrams immediately to the Mexican Embassy and:

Carlos Salinas de Gortari  
Presidente Constitucional  
Estados Unidos Mexicanos  
Palacio Nacional  
Mexico DF  
Mexico



# the MRCI

## NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

### IRISH WORKERS GROUP

## False strategies on parade

THE RIGHT wing and minority Irish Labour Party, with the support of the trade union bureaucracy, is set to expel completely the Militant Tendency, which has developed to a strength of about 200 among the party's 5000 members since 1972. The IWG alone on the left has fought for an open democratic campaign to be built for their defence. But with only one month left till the Labour Conference, *Militant* has gone it alone and confined their defence to diplomatic protest within the official organisations.

Meanwhile the Cliffite SWM has taken a new step down the road of economism, openly arguing that Southern Ireland is now "fully independent" and no longer economically exploited by imperialism. The IWG has replied in *Class Struggle* articles and at public meetings, by arguing that the South remains a semi-colony, albeit relatively developed.

The Sinn Fein 28 January Conference made a turn to building an all-Ireland "mass movement" which hopes to exploit the reservoir of populist nationalism in the South. The IWG, however, rejects as an empty abstraction their call for southern workers to struggle with all other classes for "national self-determination, political, social, economic and cultural". This perspective can mobilise no real class forces against either imperialist repression or the capitalist offensive. ■

### POUVOIR OUVRIER

## The fight against fascism in France

THE FASCISTS are still very active in France. The wave of brutal racist attacks—mainly by skinheads—is growing. During November and December last year the FN organised two demonstrations in Paris, the first in favour of the death penalty and the second against the wave of public sector strikes that were taking place.

Although the French section of the USFI has recently congratulated itself on its supposed fight for mass mobilisations against the FN, (*International Viewpoint* 23.1.89) the truth is somewhat different. The whole of the French left has been silent on the issue for the last six months. To meet the threat of skinhead attacks and to warn workers and youth about the danger represented by the FN, members of Pouvoir Ouvrier (PO) in St Brieuc (Brittany) have organised an anti-fascist committee. Together with a dozen or so local anti-fascist youth PO produced 1,500 copies of a leaflet which was given out at local schools.

Building on work done by PO in 1985 when a FN meeting was stopped, our comrades organised a fifty strong meeting on 20 January. The meeting formally launched the anti-fascist committee and set itself the task of spreading its roots into the local labour movement and organising to stop the fascists. This is an example for the French left to follow. ■

### ARBEITERSTANDPUNKT

## Austrian USFI in crisis

WHOLE SECTIONS of the Austrian left are in crisis. In particular the Austrian section of the USFI, SOAL, is facing disintegration. More and more the organisation has been dissolving itself into the Green Party. But against the policy of liquidation an opposition to the SOAL leadership emerged last summer.

From the very beginning of the opposition's life Arbeiterstandpunkt, the Austrian section of the MRCI, tried to convince the comrades that the dissolution into the Greens flowed from the whole centrist politics of the USFI itself. A complete break from this centrism was necessary if the opposition was to develop in a revolutionary direction.

At the time of the conference in December, the opposition itself split into two wings. One section, echoing the "proletarianisation" policies of the SWP(US), believed that a turn to the working class, in and of itself, was the way forward. Of course a turn to the working class is vital, but separated from the question of programme it is not an alternative to the bankruptcy of the USFI. The SWP(US) is living proof of this, having renounced Trotskyism and courted Castro for years now. Without a complete political break from centrism the danger is that the comrades will simply become isolated and demoralised if they get into the factories.

The other wing of the opposition understood this problem more clearly and took up the arguments of our organisation. At the conference itself, however, the majority favoured the orientation to the Greens. With many of the members left as passive observers of the debate by the SOAL leadership the likelihood is that both wings of the opposition will soon find it pointless to remain inside the USFI. In that event we will redouble our efforts to win as many comrades as possible to the Austrian section of the MRCI and we are confident that we will strengthen our ranks as a result. ■

### 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.

# Opening the iron curtain?

A FLURRY of diplomatic activity in the long-running Vienna Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe brought a new year agreement covering increased East-West trade and "human rights" issues.

These measures will not bring big changes in themselves, but they reveal the direction of Gorbachev's strategy. Liberalisers in the Eastern Bloc countries will get more support, western investment and trade will be encouraged and "market" forces will increasingly be allowed to determine levels and type of production and, most significantly, wage and price levels.

The Soviet bureaucracy simply cannot afford to rule in the old way. As the USA jacked up the cost of each round of new military technology, the burden of arms spending on the Soviet economy increased. Added to this, the problems of bureaucratic planning have brought stagnation and inertia to the economies of the USSR and its satellites.

### Withdrawal

Defence spending takes up between 18 and 19% of the Soviet Gross National Product (GNP). It is therefore essential for Moscow to cut arms spending. Gorbachev's speech to the UN in December promised to cut the Soviet Armed Forces by half a million, including pulling 240,000 troops out of Eastern Europe and the western border areas of the USSR. East Germany, Hungary and Poland have also been cutting military spending. The next round of talks in Vienna will be the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CAFE) conference in March. Shevardnadze has confirmed that whatever the reciprocation, the SAF will be cutting artillery as part of the withdrawal of six divisions. Already plans are in hand for a tank division and an aircraft regiment to move out of Hungary in the spring.

At first sight political liberalisation appears to be developing equally fast. Hungary is moving to a multi-party system allowing ten or more people to form a political party. The Polish bureaucracy is attempting to do a deal with Solidarnosc. Western radio stations are no longer jammed. Czechoslovak demonstrators chant "Gorbachev is watching" at riot police, and anticipate that the old style party bosses can't hold out much longer.

## Solidarnosc's social contract

A NEW "social contract" between Solidarnosc and the Polish bureaucracy will mean a sustained attack on Polish workers' living standards. After strikes swept Poland last August, confirming that Polish workers were once again prepared to fight bureaucratic rule, General Jaruzelski decided on a new strategy of co-optation.

In return for legalisation, the existing leadership of Solidarnosc is prepared to promise to stay within the law and act "responsibly" in industrial disputes. The Polish Prime Minister spelt out what the government would expect—a two year no-strike deal! Most immediately, the

The past role of Soviet troops in crushing the mass revolts in East Germany, Hungary and Czechoslovakia means that East European workers will be justifiably pleased to see a proportion of Soviet troops off their backs. The stifling of political life under the Stalinist regimes mean they will also welcome even limited opportunities for freedom of speech and political activity. But they would be very wrong to believe that the Stalinist regimes will grant them any real political freedom or improve their economic situation.

The Stalinist bureaucracies cannot co-exist with workers' democracy. Their power and privilege rests on their ability to politically rule over the working class and plunder the post-capitalist economies. Cosmetic reforms designed to win favour with the west will be shortlived and will not substantially improve the lot of the mass of the working class. At the first signs of a real challenge to their rule by a movement for proletarian democracy vicious repression will be meted out by the bureaucracy.

The bureaucracies will make the working class pay for economic liberalisation as well. Already in Hungary inflation is running at 17% and more price rises are promised to help pay Hungary's debts to the west which are running at \$13.7 billion. The most "westernised" of the East European nations, Yugoslavia, is in severe crisis with a foreign debt of \$22 billion, 15% unemployment, 250% inflation and its central government in a state of complete paralysis.

Key sections of the European and US ruling classes are rubbing

their hands at the thought of the increased areas for investment and profitable trade that are opening up for them as a result of the crisis in Eastern Europe. *The Economist* argued that plans for 1992 in the EEC ought to include a new policy on Europe's "heartland". Such a strategy would include trading agreements and investment programmes which favoured those countries—in particular Hungary and Poland—which moved fastest along the road to liberalisation and in particular "on the private sector becoming bigger and better".

### Repression

The East European working class finds yet again that its fate is being decided over its head. It faces on the one hand continued repression at the hands of the bureaucracy who, despite all the talk of *glasnost*, will meet strikes and demonstrations with batons and water cannons. It faces continued attacks on its living standards as "market pressures" are introduced.

The road of political revolution can alone lead to real workers' democracy, workers' control over production and a genuinely socialist planned economy. This means building independent working class organisations and a revolutionary party committed to freeing the planned economy from its present bureaucratic chains. This will prevent the grasping imperialist multi-nationals from taking an important step towards their strategic goal of restoring capitalism in Eastern Europe and the USSR and subjecting the workers of those countries to ruthless exploitation. ■



Glasnost in action

### Jaruzelski wage freeze!

The "official" Polish trade union, the OPZZ have taken advantage of Walesa's compromise to do a neat side-step to the left. Fearing a mass exodus from his own bureaucratic outfit OPZZ leader Miodowicz promised to fight the budget cuts and demanded that wages should keep pace with inflation.

Polish workers have to assert their right to form their own independent trade unions—not to allow the bureaucracy to decide which strait-jacketed outfits can be tolerated. Most immediately, they need to oppose the new deal and organise rank and file resistance to wage and social benefit cuts. They must also organise against all wings of the Solidarnosc leadership who are bent on either compromise with the Stalinists or pro-capitalist, restorationist schemes to solve Poland's economic crisis. ■

ruling Communist Party bosses want co-operation with a budget which will bring in social spending cuts and hold wages down while prices rise.

But the reactionary Walesa leadership of Solidarnosc is under challenge from sections of the rank and file. There was sharp criticism of the decision of the Solidarnosc executive to go along with the new pact. Inflation is running at 60%, the prices of some consumer essentials have tripled. In January, textile workers struck for a pay rise, and for the legalisation of the union. But a legal Solidarnosc under Walesa's leadership will end up policing a



**THIS MONTH** marks the tenth anniversary of the Iranian revolution. In 1979 the Shah of Iran—an imperialist backed dictator—was overthrown as a result of a massive general strike, street demonstrations of over a million people and a spontaneous armed insurrection.

The revolution dealt a real blow to imperialism's control of the Gulf. It raised the hopes of the Iranian masses that their democratic aspirations could be fulfilled and their exploitation by imperialism ended. The Islamic leadership of the mass movement, personified by Khomeini, rapidly betrayed those hopes.

In successive stages a bloody counter-revolution, under the auspices of the Islamic Republic, crushed the workers' organisations, repressed the national movements, particularly the Kurds, and decimated the left. In the period from June 1981 through to 1982 some 20,000 political prisoners, mainly of the left and of the popular Islamic Mojahedin, were executed as clerical reaction tightened its grip and enforced brutal Islamic law on every sector of Iranian society.

### Rallying

At the same time the regime warded off internal crisis by rallying the masses behind the war effort against Iraq. The war, which began in 1980 as a legitimate defence of the remaining gains of the revolution against an imperialist backed invasion, was transformed into a reactionary holy war by the mullahs

After Iraq had been driven from Iranian territory the mullahs kept the slaughter going in order to deflect the masses' attention from the growing economic crisis that was engulfing Iran.

Towards the end of the war, developing mass discontent and imperialist pressure led a faction of the Iranian ruling class—led by Rafsanjani, the Speaker in the *Majlis* (parliament) and head of the armed forces—to settle the conflict.

They wanted to prepare for the re-integration of capitalist Iran into western imperialism's sphere of exploitation. The war had achieved nothing, except the continued survival of the Iranian regime. It left over one million Iranians dead. Their sacrifice is now commemorated by a fountain that spurts artificial blood in Tehran's major cemetery.

But Rafsanjani is unable to chart a smooth course to the establishment of a stable, pro-imperialist regime. Since Iran accepted the UN's ceasefire proposals in the autumn, the internal political crisis has sharpened dramatically. The clearest evidence of this is the wave of executions implemented by the regime and authorised by Rafsanjani.

### Brutality

With characteristic brutality, between three and five thousand political prisoners have been executed in the past four months. In one case hundreds died when the regime's revolutionary guards deliberately caused an explosion in Tehran's Bastille, the notorious Evin prison.

The objective of the regime was to slaughter its opponents in advance of the promised amnesty for prisoners to mark the revolution's tenth anniversary. Far from being an example of indiscriminate slaughter—as sections of the western press portray it—the present repression has very clear political aims. Iran is confronted with a profound economic and political

## IRAN



# Stop the executions!

Thousands of prisoners have been slaughtered in the latest wave of executions in Iran. Mark Hoskisson explains the background to the terror

crisis that threatens to develop into a new revolutionary situation.

The economy was devastated by the war. While oil production was maintained to service the war effort, it was geared wholly to the export market. Industry is running at a mere 30% of its capacity. Daily price rises are the norm. Rations allow one and a half pounds of meat per family per month. Needless to say, the black market is booming.

### Blackouts

In the major cities electricity blackouts are a regular occurrence, having doubled in frequency since the summer. And, despite Iran's massive oil industry, the country is obliged to import all of its oil-based products.

To deal with this crisis the Rafsanjani wing of the bourgeoisie—Rafsanjani himself is a millionaire landowner and property speculator—has a clear capitalist project of reconstruction. Rafsanjani has argued that the regime has got to:

“... give up some of the short-sightedness, some of our excesses and some of the crude aspects... of the early stages of the revolution”.

In practice this means handing imperialism lucrative contracts for reconstruction projects, allowing unrestricted foreign investment and backing Iran's growing band of private sector capitalists to the hilt. A clear sign of the times is that import restrictions have been lifted on twenty types of products. Economic neo-liberalism is finding favour with many of Iran's clerics.

The problem for Rafsanjani, however, is that his pro-imperialist policies are being opposed from within the ruling class and its clerical representatives. The so-called radicals around the Prime Minister, Hussein Moussavi, and Khomeini's designated heir, the Ayatollah Montazeri, are bitterly hostile to Rafsanjani's “pragmatist” faction. This conflict has provoked the present round of execu-

tions.

The “radicals” favour a state-capitalist solution to Iran's crisis. They preach Islamic self-reliance, argue for the extension of nationalised industry and countenance trading links with the degenerate workers' states.

They have demagogically championed the poor and concentrated particularly on the plight of demobilised soldiers. Montazeri himself has tried to become a figurehead for the opposition to the present wave of executions. In an open letter to the nation he wrote:

“I declare my opposition to these sentences, and I am sure there are a good number of people in this country who would share this with me.”

Montazeri—now effectively

under house arrest—and the “radicals” fear that once Khomeini is dead Rafsanjani will launch a power struggle and smash all opposition. It is fear of this prospect that has prompted a man who wholly endorsed the butchery of 1981-82, to oppose the executions.

While some of the executions have been directed against the “radicals”—including a relative of Montazeri—the main target has been the left and the Mojahedin. In particular the Stalinists of the Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen (majority) have suffered heavy losses. Some 700 Tudeh Party members have been killed so far.

The motivation for this wholesale destruction of the left is clear. Rafsanjani fears that after the death of Khomeini an alliance of

the Stalinists and the “radicals”—capable of mobilising working class support—could prove a serious obstacle to his programme of imperialist financed, capitalist reconstruction. The executions are designed to smash the political organisations that could serve as the backbone of such an alliance.

We totally condemn the present round of executions and call for international working class action in defence of the leftists being murdered. However, it has to be said, the Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen (majority) have, through their Stalinist policies, paved the way to their own destruction.

### Murderous

In 1981-82 they hailed Khomeini's regime as an “anti-imperialist government” gave full backing to its murderous campaign against the Mojahedin and Fedayeen (minority).

They actually assisted the regime in its repression, informing on its rival leftists and sending them—inside and outside Iran—to their deaths. Our defence of the Stalinists against repression in no way blinds us to their crimes.

In the present crisis and in the struggles ahead the Iranian masses need to be broken entirely from their illusions in the Stalinists and the “radicals” within the clergy. Ten years after the February insurrection a new revolution is needed.

The lessons of 1979 and since must be learnt. The Iranian revolution does not need—indeed it cannot have—a purely democratic stage. This stageism, advocated by the Stalinists and most of the “left” Stalinists, like the Fedayeen (minority), is a noose around the neck of the proletariat.

The working class, led by a revolutionary Trotskyist party, needs to rebuild organisations like the *shoras* (councils) that flowered during the 1979 revolution. It needs to develop them into organisations for working class power, into soviets.

Only with the triumph of workers' power in Iran can the hopes raised by the last revolution be fulfilled. Any other strategy will lead to more repression, bloodshed and exploitation at the hands of domestic and imperialist capital, whichever Islamic faction wins the power struggle after Khomeini's death. ■

## ITALY Steel workers revolt

BY DAVE GREEN

IN A show of strength that terrified the Italian government, the steelworkers of Naples took to the streets on 5 January. Thousands brought the city to a standstill, as strikers unloaded tonnes of coal, blocking the streets. Buses and buildings were set ablaze as workers besieged the railway station. Wisely for them the police kept their distance.

The strike of the steelworkers (known in Italy as “Yellow-hats”) was in direct response to the decision of the European Commission on 21 December to cut off their subsidy to the Italian state steel industry unless the melting shop at Naples' Bagnoli plant is shut by July this year.

And militancy has certainly brought results. The government in Rome, sensing the depth of opposition to the closure, has deferred a decision until June, incurring the wrath of their paymasters in Brussels.

The Bagnoli steelworks is the heart of the economy in Naples, a city of widespread poverty, deprivation and unemployment. Its workforce has already been subjected to savage attacks—falling from around 8000 in the 1970s to 3000 today.

The history of Bagnoli speaks volumes about the anarchy and wastefulness of the capitalist system, which puts profit before production for need.

In the late 1970s the Italian bosses hoped to develop domestic steel production. They got the European Community to agree to fund the installation of two new blast furnaces and a modern rolling mill.

But the European bosses soon found it impossible to run their respective steel industries at a suitable profit whilst maintaining surplus productive capacity. Closures followed in Britain, France, Belgium and West Germany. When Bagnoli re-opened after a year of redevelopment, only one of the new

furnaces was allowed to operate!

The current closure threat was the last straw for Bagnoli workers and fuelled their rage on 5 January. But Neapolitan workers must not be led by the Italian Communist Party (one of the most right wing of Europe's Stalinist parties) into reliance on the bosses.

The Christian Democrat/Socialist coalition government may prefer disapproval in Brussels to rioting in Naples in the short term, but Bagnoli is costing them around £700 million per year, and they cannot afford financially or politically to risk alienating their European partners for good. They have therefore only deferred a final decision on Bagnoli to buy breathing space.

“Socialist” Deputy Prime Minister Gianni De Michelis has stated that the decision on the melting shop belongs not to the workers themselves but to Rome, and will be made on the basis of whether it would be economic to retain it. It doesn't take an economic genius to guess what their decision will be.

The Yellow-hats realise that it is not over yet, and have called a four hour general strike for 31 January to keep the pressure on.

Now is the time for the Italian working class, with a proud tradition of militant class struggle, to launch a campaign for workers' control of steel production and a planned economy in place of the chaos of capitalism. ■



# Anarchism: the politics of despair

LENIN ONCE said that anarchism was a punishment visited on the labour movement for its opportunism. The last few years have seen a distinct revival of anarchism amongst youth eager to fight back against Thatcher but thoroughly disillusioned in the official labour movement leaders who have cowered in the face of her attacks. Meanwhile most so-called Trotskyists have been tailing left reformism, failing to offer a perspective and tactics for a fightback.

The result has been the growth of groups like the Direct Action Movement (DAM) and its recent splinter the Anarchist Workers Group (AWG). These claim an orientation to the working class movement and proclaim their commitment to a revolution to destroy capitalism. Yet anarchism despite its flaming rhetoric has never been able to develop a strategy to destroy capitalism.

## Critique

Anarchism's first major spokesman, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, penned a stinging critique of early capitalism in the 1840s. In his book *What is property?* he answered this question with the famous reply, "Property is theft!" But Proudhon did not condemn all property as theft, only that held by the big capitalists, whose system of large scale production had ruined the small capitalist, shopkeeper and artisan alike. Equally he condemned the state, especially the democratic republic as a fraud that had deceived the people.

"Politics" held no solution to the problems of society. Proudhon, after the manner of the utopian socialists had an idea, a scheme, that could act as a basis for reorganising society "from the bottom up". His proposals for "mutualism"—fair exchange and self-help amongst small scale producers—was in essence an idealised description of petty commodity production absolutely unrealisable in modern capitalist society. In other words anarchism was—and remains to this day—based on a petit bourgeois utopia.

## Reactionary

In his approach to politics Proudhon showed his most reactionary side. He urged the toilers to have nothing to do with political action—"universal suffrage is counter-revolution" he commented. The state was a great force for evil and should be shunned. It is a very comforting notion for the bourgeoisie if the workers are told to keep out of politics and to leave the state alone—that is, to leave it in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Proudhon's individualism made him detest organised class struggle. In an "Address to the electors of Doubs" during the 1848 revolution in France he wrote:

"Workers hold out your hands to your employers, and you employers do not deliberately repulse the advances of those who were your wage earners."

Proudhon's "political" actions, which involved coquetting with Louis Napoleon after 1851 and persuading the French workers' organisations to remain strictly non-political, discredited him. But he was soon to be replaced by an altogether more radical figure, Mikhail Bakunin.

Bakunin took Proudhon's passive anti-statism and gave it an active, indeed violent twist. In addition he dropped Proudhon's economic individualism and called himself a collectivist or communist. Consistent thinking was not Bakunin's strong point however. He called for collective ownership of the means of production, for the



Pierre Joseph Proudhon

"equalisation of classes", and for the absolute freedom of the individual all at the same time.

Above all he saw the state and religion as the source of all inequality and slavery. Both had to be abolished. This could only be done by destructive or violent means, by the exercise of spontaneous revolutionary energy.

Bakunin became a bitter foe of Marx and Engels. He had little or no faith in the industrial proletariat which seemed to him to lack the necessary destructive and desperate energy. He opposed any calls for concentrating capitalist property in the hands of the state. He opposed participation in politics and thus effectively any real struggle within capitalist society short of the revolution. He vehemently rejected Marx's doctrine of the proletarian dictatorship.

In *State and Anarchy* (1871) he concluded:

Upon the Pan-Germanic banner [he means Marx and the German communists] is inscribed: the conservation and strengthening of the state at all costs; on the socialist revolutionary banner is inscribed in characters of blood, in letters of fire: the abolition of all states, the destruction of bourgeois civilisation, free organisation from the bottom to the top by the help of free associations, the organisation of the working populace freed from all trammels, the organisation of the whole of emancipated humanity, the creation of a new human world."

Marx had no disagreement with Bakunin that in this new world where all exploitation had ceased there would be no state. Marx defined the state as, in the final analysis, special bodies of armed men at the service of a class of exploiters, in capitalist society the bourgeoisie. The actual coercive power at the service of the bourgeoisie had to be smashed during a social revolution by the proletariat.

This was not the abolition of the

state proclaimed by Bakunin but the seizure of political (state) power by the proletariat. Marx argued for this strategy not out of a fit of authoritarianism, but out of a recognition of the objective requirements of the class struggle.

Firstly the overthrow of the bourgeoisie can never be a spontaneous mass action with no leadership involved. It requires the concentration of armed force against the bourgeois state and its simultaneous replacement with a power (state) sufficient to crush bourgeois counter-revolution and to protect the revolution against outside intervention. All this requires preparation, prior political struggles to win the masses to a conscious plan of action. The organisation necessary to prepare for the seizure of power and to carry it out is none other than a political party, a revolutionary communist (Bolshevik) party.

## State

The kind of state that the proletariat needs to carry out the expropriation of the capitalists and to crush their resistance or revolts is nothing other than the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Of course this state is different to all previous states. It is based on the direct democracy of the toilers exercised through soviets, workers' councils. It arms the majority classes, the workers and the rural toilers and is not an instrument of class rule over and against them. It is a weapon of the masses wielded by them against counter-revolution.

In this sense it is, as Lenin described, a "semi-state", transitional to the withering away of the state altogether. As counter-revolution recedes and as planned social production progressively reduces inequality then in Engels' words:

"State intervention in social relations becomes in one domain after another superfluous . . . the government of persons is replaced

by the administration of things and the conduct of the processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It dies out."

Anarchism's failure to understand the immediate objective of the social revolution, the proletarian dictatorship, and its rejection of party organisation, that is the need for a leadership, for a combination of democracy with centralism, means that it plays a fatal role in the later phases of a revolutionary crisis.

Anarchism's weaknesses are partly concealed in spontaneous, mass uprisings that mark the beginning of a revolutionary period. But the more the question of the seizure of power is posed, the more disorganising and disruptive does anarchism become. When it is a matter of disorganising the bourgeois state and its armed forces communists and anarchists can often march side by side. But any need for an orderly retreat, any need for manoeuvre or restraint, that is, tasks that require discipline, find the anarchists directionless.

It is this inherent weakness of anarchism when faced with the final struggle with the bourgeois state and its unwillingness to support or defend a workers' state that has led to its disastrous role in the great revolutions of the twentieth century.

The Bolsheviks' ruthless repression of the sailors' mutiny of Kronstadt in 1921 is often seized on by anarchists as "proof" of the counter-revolutionary nature of Marxism. It is vital to see the Kronstadt events in their historical perspective. The young workers' state had just emerged from a bloody civil war against the White reactionaries. The harsh political and economic necessities of War Communism began to alienate forces who had fought alongside the Red Army in the Civil War. The peasants' land was now secure. The richer peasants turned hostile to the Bolshevik requisitions of grain. Workers in the cities became ever more demoralised in the face of food and fuel shortages.

## Distinguish

Failing to distinguish between a capitalist state based on the exploitation of the working class and a workers' state struggling to consolidate its rule in abominably difficult conditions, the anarchists encouraged the armed rising of the Kronstadt sailors. These sailors were now largely peasant in class composition and deprived of their leaders of 1917 who had gone off to fight in the Civil War.

If the rising had not been crushed the way would have been opened for imperialist intervention, a further period of civil war and reactionary peasant uprisings against the government. The Kronstadters were not conscious counter-revolutionaries, but they were backward and demoralised elements "strike-breaking" in the struggle against capitalism. Their crushing was a cruel necessity, not an act of counter-revolution by the Bolsheviks.

During the Spanish Civil War, anarchism developed mass influence through its trade union federation, the CNT. Again their failure to understand the nature of the state led to tragic consequences for the working class.

In 1936 Spanish workers seized the factories and peasants seized the land. But political power had not passed into the hands of workers' councils. A "democratic" capitalist republic existed alongside factory and peasant committees, an official army alongside popular militias. Throughout the Civil War the Stalinist PCE fought to secure

bourgeois rule under the slogan "First win the war". They sought to stabilise capitalist rule by ending workers' control in the factories and undermining the power of the militias. In short they were trying to carry out a democratic counter-revolution.

The key task facing the proletariat was to seize power in order to defeat the fascist counter-revolution, to unleash the peasants' struggle for land behind the fascist lines, to offer the colonies freedom and shake the morale of Franco's Moroccan troops.

In these circumstances the majority of the powerful anarchist movement proved helpless. It supported the Popular Front government of the Stalinists, social democrats and bourgeoisie. The centrist POUM and sections of the anarchist left however refused to go all the way in dissolving the revolutionary committees, in disarming the workers' militias and restoring (bourgeois) discipline in the army. Strongest in Barcelona, they became a target for the Stalinists.

## Treacherously

In 1937 the Stalinists launched their counter-offensive, attacking the telephone exchange in Barcelona. As workers responded with a general strike, an insurrection was vital. But instead the anarchist leaders treacherously entered the bourgeois government and ordered a return to work.

This was not just a question of individual betrayers at the top of the anarchist movement. The entire movement was paralysed by the events of 1937. Consistent revolutionaries would have seen the necessity for the working class to establish its own state, relying on armed organs of power to repress the counter-revolution and take genuine control over the economy.

One section of the anarchist movement, the Friends of Durruti, did move towards this, profoundly Marxist, conception of the state, calling for the seizure of power by the working class. But, like the genuine Trotskyists of the Bolshevik-Leninist Group, they wielded too little influence to make a difference. The Spanish Revolution was crushed.

## Counter-revolutionary

In contrast to Russia in 1917, the Spanish workers lacked a revolutionary party capable of leading them in the struggle for power. Official anarchism played a counter-revolutionary role and even the left wing did not complete its evolution to revolutionary communism as so many Russian anarchists did in 1917-21.

In the twentieth century anarchism has fully demonstrated its inability to be anything beyond a despairing rebellion against capitalist society since it cannot pose the question of political leadership clearly. Its hymns to spontaneity and denigration of leadership leaves the existing leaders largely free of any fear of being challenged and replaced. It teaches the workers to leave politics and the state alone.

Its leadership phobia means that it does not train and educate working class cadres. When the question of power or even of decisive political struggle is posed, it becomes disruptive. When the working class has seized power it becomes a plaything of the counter-revolution.

To those anarchists who are serious about defeating the bourgeoisie, therefore, we say turn to revolutionary Trotskyism, turn to Workers Power. ■



# Argos, it's so sleazy

Dear Comrades,

Argos, the catalogue showroom store, brings in the customers on the basis of its cut price goods. What customers don't hear about is the wages and conditions of its workers.

I was taken on for a full-time Christmas sales assistant post. On my first day at work I was told that because of an error on the part of the deputy manager, I could only do part-time work at 15 hours a week. My heart sank. The manager repeatedly guaranteed me full-time work, but this never happened.

For the first four weeks I took home less than £40 a week. Eventually I was put on 30 hours. There was no sign of a union, and as far as I can tell I had no employment rights to do anything against Argos. I was living well below the poverty line. On some occasions I left that cardboard hell in tears.

It became vividly clear how people's relationships at work can be influenced by a competitive, back-biting, hierarchical environment. Every day you see staff putting each other down verbally over trivial little things in front of customers and colleagues.

Once I got talking to some of the other staff, I soon realised that everyone hates the job and the management; yet it all carries on.

Instilled fear seems to stop us all from speaking collectively. Fear of losing our jobs and money.

Also I found out that all the part-time 15 hour workers were women and many had also started the job thinking they were to be full-time staff! What Argos do is advertise for full-time posts with the intention of only taking people on as part-time, so women are working 9-12, 10-1, 11-2 etc. So they have continuous staffing, no breaks, no chance to talk and possibly organise.

People seem too frightened to talk about work problems openly for the obvious fear of losing their

job. It's also a Catch-22 situation as we'd have to find work to transfer to; if we went back on to Income Support, I for instance, would be docked for 13 weeks and receive just £15.65.

This is typical of the abuses that happen in this country day in, day out. There's no such thing as a caring, considerate business person. They should never be trusted, all we are to them are profit figures. So don't let them bury you. Fight by questioning, organising, talking, demonstrating and supporting each other.

A Liverpool Reader

# M1 crash

Dear Workers Power,

The M1 airplane crash highlighted for us what really happens when a local health service has to cope with a major disaster.

The local and national gutter press who only a few months ago were lambasting nurses for striking are now showering us with praise for providing such a fine emergency service. What they failed to point out was what happens to the rest of the service in such a disaster. The cuts have been so great that we couldn't

provide proper cover.

Emergency scans were delayed, social workers were unavailable for the care of the sick and elderly about to be discharged. Hospitals were closed to admissions. One poor man had to wait two days to get his broken leg seen to because he happened to arrive at the same time as the crash victims.

Every health worker involved did their level best to cope but with limited staff and equipment there was only so much we could

# Berkshire witch-hunt

Dear Comrades,

The Kinnockite majority have launched a series of attacks on the left in the local Constituency Labour Party. Questions raised on the minutes of ECs and GCs are fended off by the chair of the party as if they were personal threats. Party rules are flouted in a rush to expel a long serving loyal member for selling *Militant*. And the chairperson of the local party hijacked a public meeting of the Women's Section forcing the meeting to proceed with him as chairman.

An emergency motion from the Women's Section was ruled out of order at the following GC and an "oath of loyalty" motion to Reading Labour Party was put through. In short, democratic debate and decision making has been squashed and it is open season for witch-hunting

the left.

Why is this happening? The left is weaker, numerically and politically, than it was 18 months ago. Since then, the Labour Group of councillors and leading party officers has consolidated its political leadership. In this, they have succeeded to a point where they can denounce opposition to their political leadership as undermining support for Labour control of Reading amongst the electorate.

Emboldened by their position of dominance within the Party, they are attacking the weak forces of the left. If it was a question of winning the vote on the GC, these attacks would be a case of using a sledge-hammer to crack a nut. What they really fear is the left as a possible catalyst for active working class opposition to their policies.

In particular, they are leading a campaign against the Housing Act which concentrates on persuading tenants not to vote for private landlords. Campaigning activity outside their control could result in working class pressure on the Labour councillors to do a lot more; like adopt a policy of no rent increases.

The left may not be in a good position to beat off the attacks or to champion the need for democracy within the party, and accountability to the working class. However, the political arguments must be taken on now; to wait for "better times" would be a recipe for certain defeat.

Yours in comradeship  
V Care, Reading, Berkshire

do. Imagine how we will cope when the plans to shut a further 13 small hospitals are implemented!

What sickened us to the core was the way our managers were right at the front talking to the press. There they were saying how wonderfully we coped and it was them who implemented all the cuts in the first place. It must have been the first time some of them had even ventured into casualty or a ward.

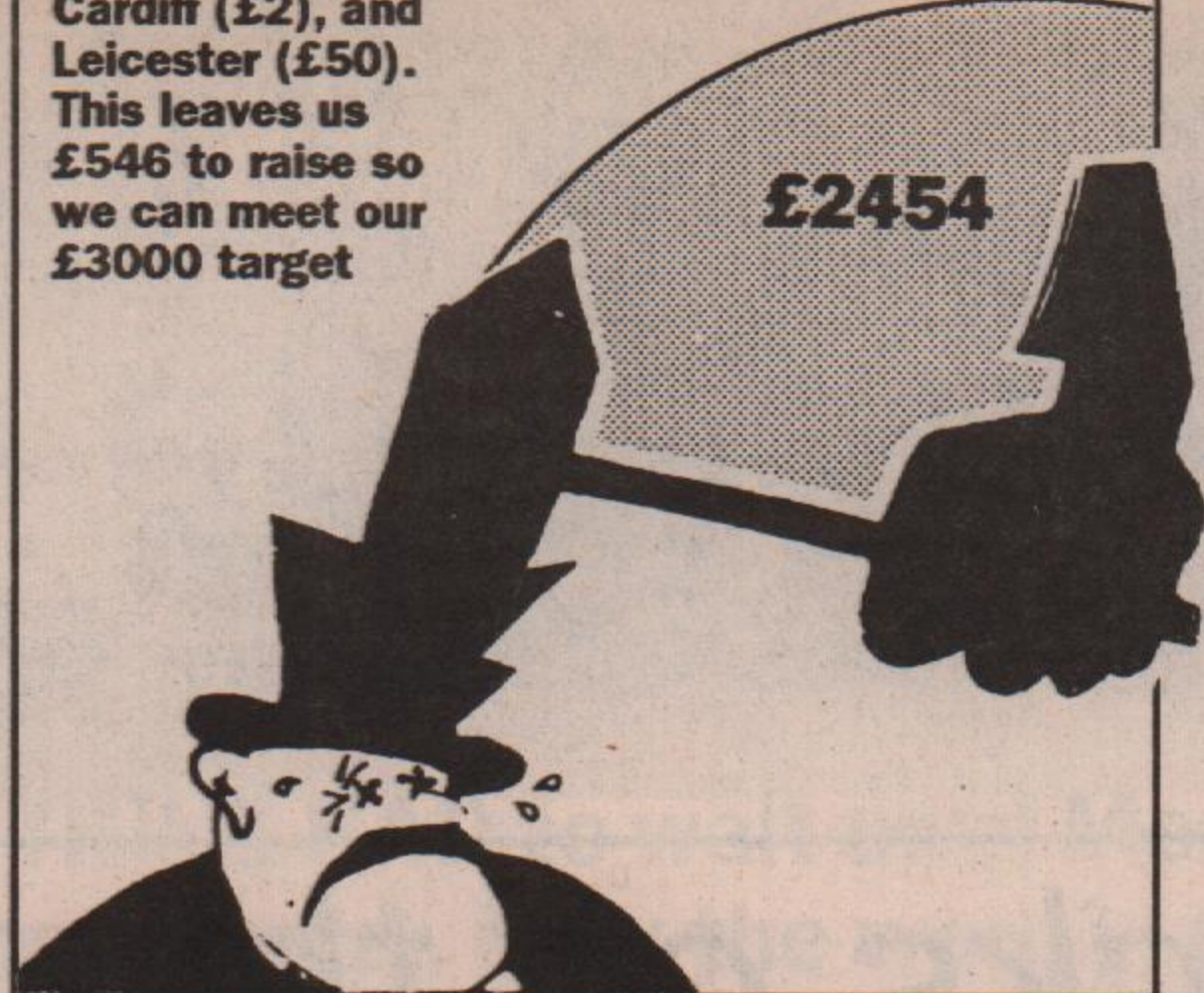
The final straw was when Prince Charles was about to visit the victims, management decided to close casualty to the rest of Leicester!

Leicestershire nurses

## workers power

Fighting Fund

Total received this month, £254  
Thanks to readers in South London (£107), Coventry (£85), North London (£10), Cardiff (£2), and Leicester (£50).  
This leaves us £546 to raise so we can meet our £3000 target



### Red Miner

WORKERS POWER has responded to the increased attacks by British Coal, producing Red Miner bulletins in Warwickshire and South Wales.

In Warwickshire, a Red Miner leaflet was produced for an NUM meeting in Keresley, addressed by Arthur Scargill. It argued a strategy for the fight against privatisation and the continuing need for rank and file militant organisation across the coalfields.

The January issue of the regular South Wales Red Miner focused on the campaign against the closure of Cynheidre and Marine. It spelt out a strategy involving holding meetings of every shift, spreading the fight to the community, demanding action from the South Wales NUM and most importantly winning commitments for solidar-

ity strike action. South Wales Red Miner is distributed in several pits. Contact Workers Power through the box number if you want further details.

### Birmingham success

A GREAT success. That was the verdict on our recent day school in Birmingham. Speakers from Workers Power and the MRCI focussed attention on the crisis of leadership facing the working class movement. A lively debate ensued, stressing the need for a new revolutionary party in Britain and throughout the world.

One young supporter agreed to join Workers Power and others to enter into close discussions as a result of the school, which means a further step forward for our Birmingham branch.

### Briefing misses its target

OH DEAR! The crew who run Labour Briefing have decided to have a stab at Workers Power, obviously as a result of our vigorous intervention at the National Anti-Poll Tax Conference in Newcastle last December.

Unfortunately, their correspondent did not feel able to tackle our central argument: that councils of action made up of delegates from unions, workplaces and estates will be crucial in developing the generalised strike action necessary to defeat the tax. Instead we are told that Workers Power "seemed to be demanding the setting up of soviets as a precondition of any campaign".

It is hardly the most honest of methods to caricature your opponents' positions. But it is evidently less taxing on the brain.

## Meetings this month

### Birmingham:

Public Meeting  
Fight the Poll Tax  
Wednesday 15 February 7-30  
New Imperial Hotel, Temple St

### Cardiff:

Marxist Discussion Group  
The Transitional Programme today  
Monday 6 February 8-00 \*

### Public meeting

Fight the poll tax  
Wednesday 22 February 8-00  
Gower Hotel, Cathays

### Chesterfield:

Public Meeting  
Fight the Poll Tax  
Thursday 23 February 7-30 \*

### Coventry:

Public Meeting  
Fight the Poll Tax  
Tuesday 7 February 8-00  
West Indian Social Club, Spon St

### Leicester:

Marxist Discussion Group  
Dialectical materialism and Marxism  
Thursday 16 February 7-30  
Unemployed Workers' Centre, Charles Street

### Central London:

Public Meeting  
Crisis in Eastern Europe  
Friday 17 February 7-30  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, nr Holborn Tube

### North London:

Marxist Discussion Group  
Guerrillaism and Marxism  
Thursday 16 February 7-30 \*

### South London:

Marxist Discussion Group  
Latin American debt crisis  
Tuesday 7 February 7-30  
The Landor Hotel, Landor Rd, near Clapham North tube

### Marxist Discussion Group

What is Trotskyism?  
Thursday 21 February 7-30  
The Landor Hotel

### Manchester:

Marxist Discussion Group  
Zionism and Palestine  
Tuesday 28 February 7-30 \*

### Oxford:

Public Meeting  
The British class struggle today  
Wednesday 22 February 8-00  
The Town Hall

\* See seller for venue

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# Workers power

British section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International

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## AS SOVIETS LEAVE KABUL

# Afghan mullahs prepare bloodbath

**AS SOVIET troops pull out of Kabul the capitalist media is jubilant. They have labelled the retreat "Russia's Saigon" after the panic stricken US pull-out from the South Vietnamese capital in 1975. But it is a strange "Saigon" which sees the allies of the victors, US and British imperialism, also scrambling to withdraw their diplomats and press.**

Such is the blood-bath being prepared for Kabul by the advancing reactionary forces of the Islamic Mojahedin that even the imperialists fear to remain behind. What lies in store for the workers, teachers, women and PDPA militia-men who cannot retreat to Moscow is not hard to imagine. Slaughter and repression at the hands of Islamic reaction has been the fate of every town captured by the Mojahedin.

While we condemn the imperialists who have armed and backed the Mojahedin the responsibility for this defeat lies squarely with the Soviet bureaucracy.

The Soviet Armed Forces entered Afghanistan in 1980 when the PDPA began to lose ground in the civil war with the counter-revolutionary forces led by the mullahs. It did so not to defend the PDPA's limited reform programme, still less to carry out an East European style social overturn, but to restore stability in its buffer state.

### Concessions

Under the Soviet puppet Najibullah the land reform and women's literacy campaigns were stopped. Numerous, and ultimately fruitless, concessions to Islam were made by the regime.

Having failed to impose military stability in this way the USSR opted for a deal with imperialism and Afghan reaction. It has offered tax incentives to investors and land to the big landlords. It attempted to set up Commissions of National

Reconciliation with the mullahs and the exiled king.

All this has failed, faced with the intransigence of the Mojahedin's imperialist backers. Now the USSR has opted to abandon the Kabul government and the progressive workers and peasants of the country to the mercy of the mullahs.

### Invasion

Workers Power opposed the invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. Unlike those, such as the Spartacist League, who "hailed the Red Army" we warned that the invasion was counter-revolutionary and would only solve the crisis of the PDPA regime on the terms of the Soviet bureaucracy. We have been proven correct. But in the war we have supported Soviet and Afghan troops against the pro-imperialist rebels. The presence of the troops did not alter the fact that in the civil war the victory of the reactionaries had to be prevented. A military united front with the Soviet troops became a necessary tactic to achieve this.

Now we call on workers everywhere to denounce the military retreat, despite the war-weariness of the Soviet troops. Soviet and Pakistani workers must organise internationalist aid, including military aid without strings, to those resisting the Mojahedin.

Afghan workers and progressive forces must fight for a constituent assembly defended by armed workers' and poor peasant militias. They must fight for the nationalisation of all land, land to those who till it, free credit for small farmers,

equal rights for women and the planned industrialisation of Afghanistan.

In a country like Afghanistan such a programme can only succeed with massive international aid and a revolutionary struggle in the whole region to establish a socialist federation of south west Asia.

But the USSR is intent on proving itself a trustworthy partner in "peaceful co-existence" with imperialism all over the world. The Kremlin is prepared to betray any and every progressive struggle to prove this. The Soviet retreat and the nightmare that will result must become the impetus for a political revolutionary struggle in the USSR itself. ■



## More attacks on the unemployed

**THE TORIES** are hammering unemployed people more than ever. They've fiddled the figures so many times that they are virtually meaningless. The unemployment register no longer even includes 16-18 year olds. Yet despite the constant fiddles there are still half a million more people registered unemployed than there were in 1979!

The Tories are now devising more dirty tricks to force even greater numbers off the dole. The DSS has set up flying squads of "snoopers" whose sole purpose is to get people to withdraw their claims.

There is a wealth of evidence to show that many of

the people forced off the register in this way had legitimate claims. Last year alone 90,000 people were "persuaded" to withdraw.

The Employment Training (ET) Scheme is designed to remove another 600,000 from the register to work for their benefits instead. However, despite the glossy advertising campaign many unemployed people have said "No" to ET. Thousands have turned down places or left after only a few days.

The proposed new Social Security Act adds yet another obstacle to the assault course standing between unemployed people and their meagre benefits. Already, in order to qualify for benefit,

unemployed people have to prove that they are available for work.

This means being willing to start work immediately for any number of hours and to be able to organise child-care and give up family responsibilities without notice. Failure to give the "correct answers" to any of the trick questions asked in the "availability to work" test result in benefits being stopped.

Under the new Social Security Act claimants will need to prove that they are "actively seeking work" in order to receive benefits. This could mean frequent, even weekly, checks on the number of jobs claimants are ap-

plying for.

Unemployed people may even have to keep books which record phone calls, replies and interview notifications. The fact that many bosses don't even acknowledge applications is immaterial to the DSS and the Tories.

These attacks must be resisted. Unemployed people need to take the fight into the labour movement and demand that trade unions boycott ET and fight for work or full pay. The fight for a real unemployed workers' union must continue.

The bosses must pay for the unemployment caused by their profit system—not the working class. ■