

Workers power

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Tories on the run

NOW IS THE TIME TO FIGHT!

THE TORIES are on the run! High interest and mortgage rates put them on the defensive. But the Poll Tax rebellion and the Mid-Staffs election defeat have combined to knock them sideways.

Thatcher loyalists are criticising party policy in public; Tory councillors are resigning in droves. The government has been forced to rummage around for emergency concessions over the Poll Tax.

We have got the best chance for years to finish them off with a knock-out blow.

There is no mystery about the new anger or the action on the streets. Poll Tax rates have been set with an average increase of 30% over what people paid in rates. Two years ago a £40,000 mortgage cost £267 a month; now it has shot up to £420 a month. Council house tenants have been punished by massive rent rises thanks to the Tories' slashing of central government grants to local councils.

Add to this increased charges for electricity, transport and prescriptions and it's not hard to see why thou-

sands have taken to the streets. Millions more have said enough is enough.

Tory MPs whose seats were "safe" have seen their own supporters besiege Tory councillors in Town Halls.

All this seething resentment has benefitted Labour. They stand high in the polls, higher than at any time in the last 15 years. They command a 23% lead and enjoyed the biggest ever post-war by-election swing to them when they trounced Thatcher in Mid-Staffs. But it would be tragic if we let the protest go off the boil in the belief that we can wait for Labour to be elected some time in 1992.

By then we will have had two years of the Poll Tax in England and Wales and three years in Scotland. This will have been with Labour's blessing—they have distanced themselves from any mass campaign of defiance.

Kinnock has openly denounced anti-Poll Tax demonstrations and branded their leaders "Toytown revolutionaries"—language straight from Murdoch's gutter press.

Four times Labour's NEC has rejected even a national

rally against the Poll Tax! Instead they ask us to put ads in the local papers.

Even if we waited for 1992, Labour's alternative to the Poll Tax is by no means what we need. They have shied away from a steeply progressive tax on the rich. And whatever they introduced would still take another two years or more to come into effect.

This attitude is of a piece with Labour's whole feeble alternative programme. To date the best they have come up with is to promise a small increase in pensions, an uprating of child-benefit in line with inflation and a £2.80 an hour minimum wage.

All this would cost £11 billion to be paid for out of increased taxes. This is peanuts! Thatcher sold off public assets worth more than this in the first five years of her rule, never mind all the cuts in welfare we've suffered.

Kinnock hasn't put much energy into firming up his promises—he fears provoking an attack from the bosses for spending too much of their money. And anyway his front bench team is too busy. Not

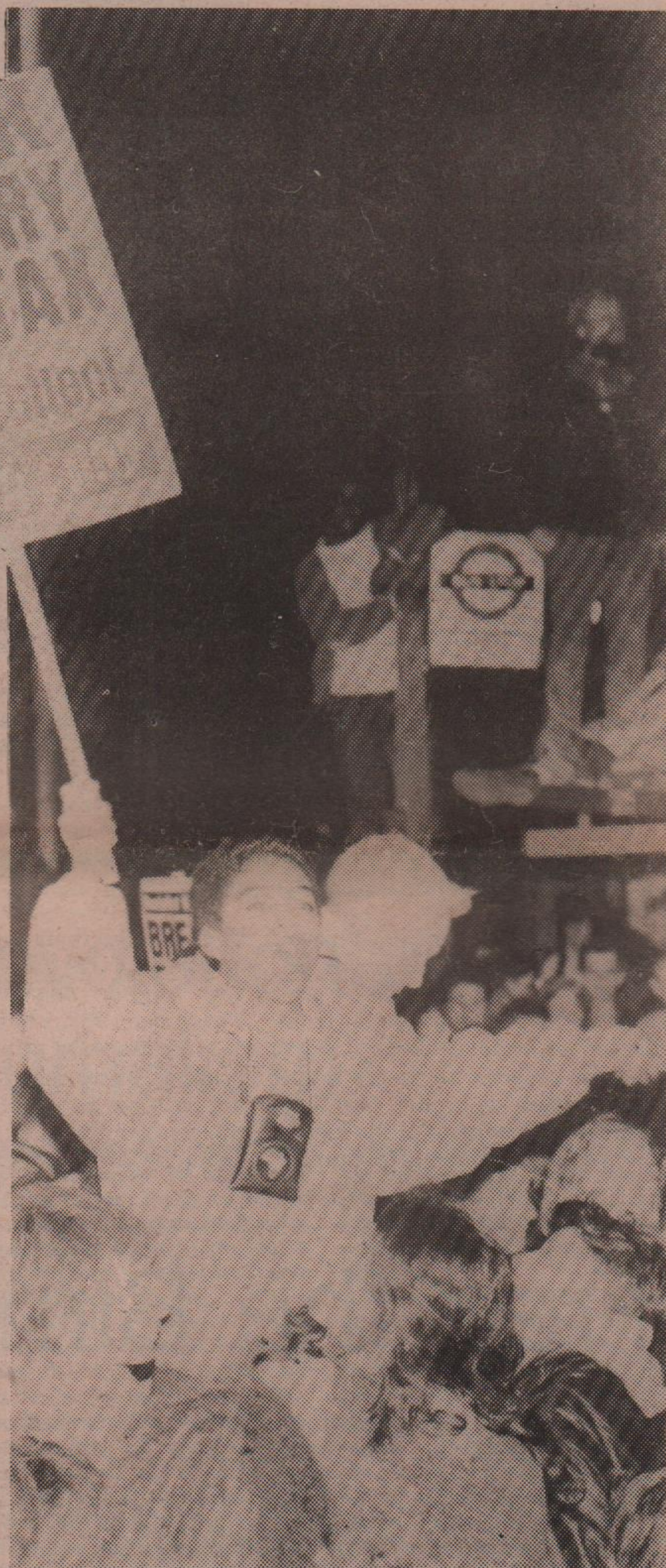
speaking to rallies against the Poll Tax but attending high-powered seminars with Britain's bosses, reassuring them of their determination to give them more for investment and capital allowances.

We have got a job to do. We have to turn the Tories' retreat into a rout. For that we need to mobilise and channel the anger of millions against the Poll Tax. We have to force the Labour councils not to implement the tax, not to collect it and not to prosecute those who refuse to pay.

We should demand that Labour's leaders come out of the cosy confines of their business breakfasts with the CBI and head a mass campaign to get the Poll Tax wiped off the statute books now.

The best way to put this pressure on Kinnock is for the working class to go forward and build the protests on the streets into mass strike action against the Tax.

A General Strike would send the Tories reeling. It would bring Thatcher's third term to a full stop. It would open up the possibility of winning back everything they have taken from us over the last decade.



Workers Power

STRIKE AGAINST THE POLL TAX!

● Now turn to pages 6, 8 and 9

STUDENTS HAVE fared badly under the Tories. College budgets have been cut to the bone. Business sponsorship of courses has elevated commercial considerations over academic ones. The seats of learning have been ever more subordinated to the money-grubbing values of the capitalist market place.

Now the limited right that existed to a grant (very limited by the discretionary awards' system) for higher education is in the final stage of being abolished by the Tories. Loans are to take the place of grants. A higher education, which should be the automatic right of all youth, free of charge with living grants paid by the state, is something the Tories are fiercely opposed to.

Exclude

They are out to exclude working class youth from the universities and, increasingly, the polytechnics. Despite the inequalities of the old system, working class youth were able to get into higher education in greater numbers during the post-war boom. The Tories, repulsive toffs that they are, always resented this.

By introducing loans in place of grants they are trying to get their way. Working class youth will be less able to repay than the pampered children of the bosses and even those of the middle class. Working class parents will be hard pressed to help their children. Better off families will face far fewer problems. At most they might have to cut down on their use of a second car or give up one of their three holidays abroad each year.

The loans legislation is an obscenity. It has run into difficulties. The banks have indicated fears about its workability, but this reflects their real worry that they won't make enough profits from the system.

The House of Lords has thrown out a few of the more vicious aspects of the bill, such as the proposal to cut housing benefits from students who have taken out loans and the proposal to charge interest on loans to under 18s. They granted an extension of the repayment time for students on courses

STUDENTS Fight the loans!



that run for longer than four years.

These amendments are trivial. Not one of them challenges the principle behind the Education (Students Loans) Bill—that we are to have no right whatsoever to a subsidised, let alone free, higher education.

Students have mobilised against the loans. But their anger has been defused by the NUS leadership. The mighty demonstration of November 1988, when thousands of students were attacked by the police on Westminster Bridge, was not built on. As usual it met with the condemnation of Kinnock; as usual he attacked the students'

violence, ignoring those responsible for it—for the police. He was echoed, and has been ever since, by his acolytes in the National Union of Students (NUS).

Harmless

They have done nothing beyond the odd call for a harmless protest. Decisive action, occupations, beginning in the militant colleges and spread right across the country, has been consistently opposed by the NUS bureaucrats. Where actions have taken place the NUS leaders have kept them isolated, the better to sabotage them. No-

where have they sought to link the fight against loans with the forces of the labour movement. At the Easter NUS conference the incoming leadership looks set to become even more feeble in its response to the attack on its members.

The introduction of loans is a class issue. It must be fought as such. Militant action, a national occupation, must be our response. We must build links with the labour movement in this struggle. Every student can start to do this now by getting stuck into the anti-Poll Tax rebellion.

But to put paid to the Tories' whole scheme for transforming education students have to do more than just fight. They have to re-arm themselves to understand why education is now in such a mess, why colleges are in a record state of financial disarray, why freedom to study and freedom of choice is not available to us.

It is because education exists, and will continue to do so even if Kinnock is elected, to serve the needs of the exploiters, the needs of capitalism. The banner of revolutionary communism needs to be raised high in the student movement and thousands must be won to it. Only when education is under student and workers' control, only when the state itself is run by the working class, will the right of free education for all become a reality.

For too long the left in the student movement, including supposed revolutionaries in the Socialist Workers Party and *Socialist Organiser*, have played the game of electoral manoeuvres at NUS conferences. They have failed to put forward the ideas of revolutionary communism and organise the thousands of rank and file students around them. This has allowed the right wing to make enormous gains in the battle of ideas.

We must counter those gains, and take the battle of ideas to the enemy. In the fight to defeat the loans we must fight to win the student ranks to a revolutionary communist party.■

Free the Birmingham 6

LAST WEEK the Home Secretary, David Waddington, announced another police inquiry into the case of the Birmingham Six.

Following the release of the Guildford Four and the inquiry into the West Midlands Police Serious Crime Squad, it was clearly only a question of time before they were forced to review the convictions. Already the six have had their status reduced from Category A (top security) to B and they have all been moved to prisons in the Midlands, nearer to their families.

The decision to call a new investigation now is obviously aimed at pre-empting any renewed demands for action which will undoubtedly follow the release this week of a new edition of Chris Mullins' book about the bombings *Error of Judgement*.

It also coincides with a drama documentary by Granada Television which will name five IRA men said to have carried out the bombings of the two public houses in Birmingham in 1974.

The six—Patrick Hill, Hugh Callaghan, John Walker, Richard McIlkenny, Gerry Hunter and Billy Power—have all stated that they will only leave prison if their conviction is quashed. They will not accept parole.

The labour movement must take

up the call for their unconditional release. As with the Guildford Four this is not simply a case of a "miscarriage of justice". It is in the words of Paul Hill, one of the Guildford Four, "an example to the Irish community and a method of terrorising the Irish community".

While we also demand the unconditional and immediate release of all those such as the Winchester Three and Tottenham Three, who have been incarcerated on the basis of uncorroborated confessions and frame-ups, we cannot leave it at

that.

Britain has no right to rule, occupy and repress the Irish people. Their resistance, including the armed struggle of the IRA, is justified and should be supported by British workers.

We therefore demand the release of all political prisoners in British jails and fight to expose not just the police and judges involved in the Birmingham Six case but the whole British establishment which maintains and upholds the reactionary Northern Ireland state.■

STAC conference

A NATIONAL Stop the Amendment Campaign (STAC) meeting, held in London on 17 March, re-affirmed its strategy of a single issue campaign, limited to defending existing abortion rights.

The meeting voted down a motion from Sheffield National Abortion Campaign (NAC) which called for a united campaign against all the attacks posed by the Embryo Bill and in favour of a woman's right to choose.

Workers Power supporters argued that the Sheffield motion

should be passed. The strategy being put forward by STAC, as well as ignoring attacks on women's rights caused by restrictions on donor insemination, is a purely defensive one, limiting itself to preserving existing gains.

A positive campaign for the right to choose could mobilise thousands of working class women and put paid to the repeated attacks on our existing and inadequate rights. The STAC campaign threw away the opportunity to build such a campaign.■

What future for Black Sections?

LAST SATURDAY saw the seventh, and possibly last, annual conference of the Labour Party Black Sections. The pathetic turn out (sixty) suggested that many have already voted with their feet following the NEC's decision not to put the Black Socialist Society proposals to the Labour Party Conference for voting.

The key debate at this conference was the future of Black Sections. The National Committee stuck to its proposal that we had no choice but to accept the Socialist Society option.

While reassuring us that secret negotiations were underway with the party leadership which would allow such a society to be "black only", Bernie Grant insisted that it was the only way forward and that "a Black Section was off the agenda".

He didn't have everything his own way. Splits in the National Committee emerged during the course of the debate. There was growing support for going back to the original position of fighting for recognition on the same terms as the women's or youth organisations. Some Black Sections' members drew the lesson that the more you give in to the Labour Party leadership, the more they will take.

Today's demand for a Socialist Society is a million miles away from 1984 when waves of militant black activists fought to win the Labour leadership to the key demand of the acceptance of Black Sections and the right of black members to caucus within the party.

It is not Kinnock who has made concessions but the Black Sections all along the line. In the process, they have lost most of the activists drawn into fighting racism within the Labour Party. In the event the vote for the Socialist Society option was only narrowly passed.

However it is the paralysis caused by those who want to negotiate with the Labour leadership at all costs which remains an obstacle to mobilising black and white workers in the Labour Party in the fight against racism.

Potentially useful resolutions were passed on the fight against fascism, in support of a mass non-payment campaign against the Poll Tax and on the need for a continent-wide anti-racist movement in support of the rights of migrant and immigrant workers following 1992. But these they will remain of little value unless militants turn themselves out to organising workers, inside and outside the party, in a practical struggle against racism and fascism.■

Revolutionary History

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Defend Arthur Scargill!

EDITORIAL

TONY BENN once described the *Daily Mirror* as the most despicable bosses' paper of them all. It pretends to be a friend of the workers' movement, the better to attack and weaken it. Benn was 100% right on this question.

The latest victim of the *Mirror's* poisonous propaganda is Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Scargill stands accused of accepting money from Libya and the USSR, using some of that money to pay off his mortgage and asking Libya to secure firearms for his personal use.

With these allegations the *Mirror* has manufactured a witch-hunt against Scargill. The *Mirror's* owner, Robert Maxwell, is acting in concert with the Labour leadership and certain elements in the NUM itself, notably the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) faction led by George Bolton.

"Get Scargill" is the unifying slogan of these people. There are numerous reasons why this alliance has decided to launch an attack. Kinnock wants to make sure that Scargill is blocked from getting anywhere near a position of influence, perhaps as an MP, inside the Labour Party.

George Bolton, hopeful that the NUM presidency will one day come his way, is cheering on the pack. He believes that Scargill represents an old fashioned tradition inside the union. For old fashioned, read militant. In line with Kinnock's remodelling of the Labour Party as a safe bosses' party, Bolton is determined to remodel the union as a bastion of moderation, to reunite with the scabs of the Union of Democratic Miners (UDM), and to ensure that the NUM is a petal in Labour's rose, not a thorn in Kinnock's side.

Their common hatred of Scargill reflects a hatred of the great Miners' Strike of 1984-85.

Scargill has, in our view, made many mistakes. He is a left reformist not a revolutionary communist. He adheres to the rules of the trade union and Labour Party bureaucratic club.

Nevertheless, he has always defended the Great Strike. He has never denounced the activists who fought brave battles on the picket lines and he opposed the efforts to end the strike engineered by none other than George Bolton and Kim Howells, Labour MP and former South Wales NUM official.

These people, on the fifth anniversary of the strike's

end, are celebrating its defeat. In attacking Scargill this unsavoury alliance of millionaires, "communists" and Labour leaders is attempting to discredit the strike, the thousands of miners and their families who sacrificed so much to defend their jobs and every worker who supported the strike.

In answer to this "trial by newspaper" every worker must raise the cry, hands off Arthur Scargill, hands off the NUM, don't trample on the memory of the Great Strike! The miners' strike was a tremendous opportunity to defeat Thatcher and everything she stands for. It wasn't taken because the leaders of the labour movement, Kinnock amongst them, stabbed the miners in the back. Now they are twisting the knife.

What of the charges themselves? Our criticism of Scargill is simply that he has been too defensive in relation to them. He should take this opportunity to defend the strike by giving a bold answer to those charges.

On the question of receiving money from Libya and the USSR we would reply that the miners had every right to accept such money, just as they were right to accept money from the filthy rich capitalist Paul Getty. The miners were not playing cricket with the Tories. The government had passed laws cutting off benefits to strikers' families. They stole every penny the union had through court sequestration orders. They instructed the police to arrest miners who, dressed as Father Christmas, were taking collections of toys on the streets!

In these circumstances every miner was fighting for survival. Every penny, from wherever, should have been taken and used to keep the strike going, as long as no harmful conditions were attached. There is no evidence whatsoever that any such conditions were placed.

The charge that Scargill used the money to pay off his mortgage is the one that Maxwell and co are using to slander the man. The facts are somewhat different. Even the *Mirror* was obliged to point out that Scargill paid the loan back out of his own savings within four days of borrowing the money.

But there is a more fundamental point to be made here. The house he lives in, like that of NUM Secretary Peter Heathfield, is NUM property. All NUM

property was under threat of seizure by the courts at the time these transactions were made. Herbert Brewer was appointed official receiver to track down and steal all NUM assets. He is the man who declared "I am the NUM". Faced with this legally sanctioned thievery all sorts of transactions were necessary by union officials to protect funds.

We believe an inquiry is unnecessary. But if NUM members feel that an inquiry is needed then it should be convened from rank and file miners who were on strike. By calling for an independent inquiry run by the socialist lawyers of the Haldane Society Scargill hopes to clear his name without having to launch a libel court case that he cannot afford. He is right to avoid the courts. Their actions in the strike showed whose side they were on. They are bosses' courts and would jump at the chance to penalise Scargill.

However, the current inquiry is not the best way of determining the truth from the standpoint of those who unreservedly supported the strike. It is quite possible that to protect the NUM's assets union officials had to act outside the framework of the anti-union laws. Revealing this could leave them open to prosecution. We are against any such information getting into the hands of the bosses.

Finally, the charge about firearms is really a piece of tabloid drama-mongering. Scargill denies the charge. But what should be said is that all workers should have the democratic right to bear arms. The fact that in Britain they are not is an anti-democratic law, favouring the bosses who can get gun licenses with no problems at all.

For all of these reasons we repeat that the charges amount to a witch-hunt. They should be treated as such. The real inquiry we need is one that investigates the links between shady millionaires like Maxwell and the Labour leadership and asks why "communists" like George Bolton and Labour MPs like Kim Howells, are prepared to tolerate these links. ■

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Maxwell's mouth piece



BACK IN the 1960s Robert Maxwell was Labour MP for Buckingham. His claim to fame was that he had won the seat on one of the most right wing election platforms ever.

In particular he stood for the sale of council houses, in order to give people "greater choice". This is the essence of Maxwell's brand of "socialism". He stands for socialism with a capitalist face! In response to a journalist who asked him if socialism stood for capitalism he explained:

"And capitalism. What's wrong with that. In other words my way of doing business, my way of running the Labour Party, is now very successful all over the world."

Thatcher has described Maxwell as really "one of us". She was right. He is very much one of them—one of the millionaire capitalists who rule and ruin the lives of the work-

ing class. No wonder he could describe Thatcher as "a great Prime Minister. Without her I wouldn't be where I am".

After losing the Buckingham seat he turned his attention full time to building up the publishing empire now known as Maxwell Communication Corporation plc.

One of the more notorious publishing ventures of this company is a series on world leaders. A stream of books hailing the achievements of Ceausescu, Honecker, Husak and Jaruzelski were churned out. In all of them Maxwell ensured that prefaces written by him lavished praise on these bureaucratic despots. Ceausescu was praised for his "tireless activity for the good of your country" while Honecker, a month before he was placed under house arrest, was described as "a reformer all his life".

Maxwell's rewards for this servile propaganda on behalf of Stalinism included plenty of dosh and a bevy of lucrative contracts. According to *Who's Who* he was also thanked with a doctorate of science from Moscow university, and the *Stara Planina*—one of the Bulgarian People's Republic's most prestigious awards!

Back in 1984 Maxwell added the Mirror Group Newspapers Ltd to his vast collection of enterprises. It gave him what he wanted most—power within the Labour Party and power to shape people's thoughts and opinions. And he has used it to help Neil Kinnock re-shape the Labour Party as a safe bet for the capitalist class.

As soon as he took over the paper he set about using it to undermine the striking miners' morale. He backed Kinnock's attacks on Liverpool City council and on *Militant*. As he explained in a recent interview:

"I take delight and some pride in having got rid of the militants out of the labour movement."

Today he is continuing this work by witch-hunting Arthur Scargill. Scargill is a natural target for Maxwell. Like every boss Maxwell hates the trade unions. He has sacked thousands of his own workers, used the anti-union laws against them and locked out journalists fighting for union recognition.

No wonder he thinks that Thatcher's greatest achievement has been to tame the unions.

Given his record, given his brazen hostility to the working class, workers should have no truck with his latest campaign against Scargill. He is not to be trusted an inch. He should be driven out of the labour movement altogether. ■

Revolutionary journalism?

MAXWELL'S *Daily Mirror* has been used systematically by the right wing of the Labour Party to witch-hunt Scargill and other militants. Most journalists who had any shred of integrity have already either left the paper or been sacked.

But Paul Foot, a member of the Socialist Workers Party, is currently speaking at anti-Poll Tax rallies as a "*Daily Mirror* journalist"! Workers should demand that he uses his

column in the *Mirror* to denounce his boss openly. If he doesn't his silence will amount to the condoning of Maxwell's witch-hunt—which now extends to those fighting the Poll Tax.

If Foot fails this basic test of solidarity then he should be roundly condemned by every decent militant for putting his job, and his own fat salary, before the interests of the working class. ■

SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS IN THE EASTERN BLOC

WORKERS ACROSS Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are building new, independent unions and committees. Many still face repression and all are hampered by their very limited resources—they need money, printing presses, computers and faxes. These fledgling groups need the support of all workers—not only to help provide the material necessities, but also to organise fighting solidarity. Direct links with workers' organisations in the west are vital if Soviet and East European workers are to be warned of the realities of the "free market".

The Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) is pledged to building such links. Tours of East European and Soviet workers are planned over the next few months—get them invited to to speak at your union branch or

workplace! If possible get speakers invited to your union's national conference this year.

Trade unions, Labour Party branches and student groups should pass resolutions of support for CSWEB and affiliate to it. Contact CSWEB at the address below for speakers.

Next national CSWEB Steering Committee (all members and delegates welcome):

Saturday 28 April, 6.30pm, LSE, Houghton Street, Holborn, London WC1.

Affiliation:
Organisations £10 large, £5 small
Individual membership:
Waged £5, Unwaged £2

CSWEB c/o 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

Retreats, sell outs and it's new realism

AMBULANCES



SELL OUTS are always sickening. Roger Poole's betrayal of ambulance workers who had fought for six months was especially so.

Poole will claim a victory on two fronts. He will trumpet the fact that he has won an improved pay deal for his members. He will also celebrate the fact that they voted by an 81% majority to accept this deal. He is lying.

Behind the 17.6% two year rise which Poole says he has negotiated lurk the real figures, in hard cash, that ambulance workers will receive. Accident and emergency staff will get a £34.17 rise up to April 1991, while day staff will get £24.87. This is much nearer to the 13% rise that management say they have conceded.

Worse, with inflation set to soar, the real value of these wages will plummet. The rise won't even begin to help low paid ambulance workers keep pace with prices.

So why did Poole get so much support for his sell out? Throughout the dispute he has exercised firm control over his members. His early talk of winning parity with the firefighters was probably prompted by his own job of racing around the country putting out the fires of militancy whenever and wherever they flared up!

During the dispute he kept the militants isolated by undermining any attempts to build working class solidarity, by emphasising the strategy of winning public support through "moderate" behaviour rather than effective industrial action. He cited the ambulance workers as a special case rather than as part of a working class facing a common enemy and requiring a united fightback. This strategy kept the dispute isolated from other workers and led to demoralisation amongst the crews who spent month after month with buckets and petitions.

Poole's tactics also helped him prevent the militant minority from organising itself into a force that could counter the army and police scabbing, let alone challenge his sell out. Throughout the dispute that minority was itself fragmented and unclear on how to counter Poole's strategy. In the absence of such an organ-

ised challenge it is not surprising that the majority of ambulance workers felt that after six months there was nothing else to do but accept the management's offer.

Ambulance workers will soon find out the true worth of their deal. They also face new attacks as the bosses begin to restructure and reorganise the service. Already at Mill Hill in London management have imposed a severely anti-social rota system without any consultation.

Across the country they will use the provision for a 2% productivity increase to push through local deals and break national pay bargaining.

All of this must be organised against and fought. In a few areas

local rank and file organisation did develop. Such bodies must be maintained and extended throughout the country.

The objectives of the ambulance workers must not be pay formulas designed to facilitate no-strike deals, but massive pay increases protected from inflation by a sliding scale of wages—a 1% rise in pay for every 1% rise in a cost of living index calculated by the working class and its organisations.

And they must fight for these goals with the methods of class struggle, up to and including all out strikes. This is the way to halt the management offensive, protect national bargaining rights and end low pay. ■

FORD

THE FIGHT at Ford against management's deskilling drive was sabotaged when electricians were ordered back by their union, the EETPU.

The return to work followed the TGWU organised scabbing on AEU and EETPU picket lines at Ford's Halewood complex on Merseyside. Management had reopened the plant after a seven week lock-out of unskilled workers, on condition that individual shop floor workers took over the jobs of the skilled workers on strike. A letter from Rothwell threatened to suspend anyone who blacked broken machinery or refused to co-operate with management, and TGWU convenors backed them up.

Even the *Financial Times* gloated how: "For the first time in the Halewood plant's thirty year history workers yesterday crossed picket lines."

A majority of EETPU members had voted to stay out, despite the scabbing, but their union leaders ordered the strike to be confined to five of Ford's 21 plants with a return to work at the rest. Later that week the EETPU abandoned the dispute completely.

While Hammond posed as a champion of craft-workers' privileges he and national officer Lew Britz cynically stage-managed a sectional dispute. Its conduct and defeat have damaged the prospects for a united fight against the bosses' plans for speed ups, an end to demarcation, and the further weakening of stew-

ards' organisation.

For the moment Ford's bosses have won their gamble and inflicted a defeat on workers that could have repercussions throughout the car industry. Hammond and co, however, are hardly the only villains in this fiasco. From autumn last year the bureaucrats of the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC), led by the TGWU's Jack Adams and the AEU's Jimmy Airlie, threw away every opportunity to win a much larger pay rise and a 35 hour week with no strings attached.

After months of fruitless talks with Ford's management, marked by a number of unofficial walkouts, Adams and Airlie finally called a national ballot in late November. This returned a thumping 80% majority in favour of a strike, a bigger margin than in 1988. Instead of swiftly organising a shutdown of the whole combine the NJNC returned to the bargaining table for another month.

Ford's bosses bided their time and then offered a paltry improvement on pay to 10.2% for most line-workers. Officially, the bureaucrats urged rejection of this complex and deceptive deal, but in practice did nothing to campaign against it. In the meantime the anger had subsided and the bosses' propaganda machine was busily selling the offer to the semi-skilled sections.

The Halewood maintenance workers' strike, which triggered the closure of the complex and the eventual halt to production at the South-

Last summer a strike wave produced a number of partial but important victories for the working class on the issue of pay. What these struggles did not do, however, was to dislodge the right wing, new realist leaders of the major unions.

No rank and file movement capable of stopping sell outs, overcoming the leadership's strategy of fragmented, selective action or, in the case of the dockers, preventing the sabotage of the struggle, was built.

The absence of such a movement ensured that we had an autumn and winter of defused and demobilised discontent. The action of the ambulance workers, and the thousands who supported them, was needlessly dissipated. Manoeuvres by the bureaucrats at Ford blocked an all out strike and allowed sectional divisions to re-appear after years of solidarity. The engineers' campaign has been turned into a marathon and its goal of the 35 hour week for all has been cynically shelved.

As a new round of pay negotiations looms all workers must learn from these events. A rank and file movement against the bureaucracy needs to be built. For this to happen workers need to break from the politics of their leaders, the politics of reformism. They need to be won to an uncompromising policy of class struggle—to the politics of revolutionary communism.

The struggles we analyse here show why.

RAIL

BRITISH RAIL's three unions, the NUR, ASLEF and the TSSA, have rejected the management's pay offer for this year. Fears of a repeat of last year's train strikes are likely to give the new Minister for Transport, Cecil Parkinson, a few sleepless nights.

Management are still set on restructuring pay bargaining in the industry by introducing local deals. They have offered 8%, and a cut in

hours subject to stringent productivity improvements. Quite rightly the unions have described this as "completely unacceptable".

Instead they are pushing for a "substantial rise", with reports of 10.2%, the figure won at Ford, being the objective. This just won't do.

The phrase, "a substantial rise", is classic bureaucrat-speak. By not naming a figure the leaders give themselves the leeway to concoct all sorts of deals with the bosses and pass them off as substantial.

The members themselves should decide what pay rise they need at mass meetings and specially convened conferences of delegates elected from such meetings. By not doing this the bureaucrats establish their control of negotiations from the outset.

This was a key lesson of last year's dispute when the eventual deal of 8.8% was concluded over the heads of the rank and file and did little to help the many thousands of low paid railworkers. This must not happen again.

Nor must the disunity between the unions be allowed to re-emerge. All three unions concluded separate deals last year and bickering between officials obstructed fighting unity.

To win this year's campaign, and wipe the smile off the face of Thatcher's favourite minister, railworkers across the unions must begin to organise joint committees in preparation for a battle. And to win this battle resolutions must flood into each of the unions' headquarters demanding all out indefinite strike action, not, as happened last year, fragmented one day strikes by the NUR alone.

An all out strike by the three unions will bring British Rail quickly to its knees, ensure a pay deal that will massively improve the living standards of all railworkers, and put paid to the bosses' plans to break up the union by scrapping national bargaining. ■

ampton van plant, was left in complete isolation. National officers exerted more and more pressure for a return to work.

The newly formed national craft stewards' committee proved unable to spread the fight to other plants on a sustained basis. Even at Halewood, AEU members never won the argument for a united struggle with the semi-skilled workers in the TGWU, who faced five weeks without pay.

The debacle at Ford has underscored the urgent need to forge an industrial union structure capable of overcoming the sectional divisions which the past six months have only reinforced. The dispute has also highlighted the inadequacy of the existing stewards' organisation to wage an unstinting fight against both the bosses and the union bureaucracies. At Dagenham TGWU stewards stamped on last autumn's unofficial strikes, succumbing to management's threats of a transfer of production to Belgium.

Despite the defeat there is likely to be more resistance on a local basis as Ford's bosses pull their productivity strings. In order to win, any section taking action will need to spread the fight across the whole of the workforce in the plant and then across the combine.

This will mean confrontation with the Tories' anti-union laws, the national bureaucracies and some stewards, but it is a fight which must be had as Ford gears up for 1992. ■

witch hunts . . .

MANCHESTER

IF YOU are against the cuts, against the Poll Tax and prepared to fight the Tories, you are unwelcome in Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. That is the message given to six members of Hulme ward by the Greater Manchester (City) Party and the Central Constituency.

The six have been suspended, pending an enquiry by North West Regional Office, for alleged "unconstitutional behaviour". They have not been told what this behaviour was. Yet the trial is underway. It's like being taken to court, prosecuted and sentenced without knowing what crime you are supposed to have committed. In other words it is a classic witch-hunt.

Constitutional niceties are not the real issue. The background to the attempted purge is the record Hulme ward has in fighting the right wing council in Manchester.

Members of the ward are in the forefront of the Hulme Anti-Poll Tax Union which is committed to non-payment, non-collection and non-implementation of the tax. This has brought the ward into a collision course with the council which is committed to fining non-payers of the tax.

At the same time the ward has a record of struggle against the cuts pushed through by Manchester City council. Quite rightly the ward, and the six accused, have stood firmly for a spending policy that meets the needs of Hulme's workers. The area has some of the poorest housing and highest unemployment levels in Manchester. It needs more money not more cuts.

Perhaps if the six had confined their principles to a bit of resolution-mongering the right wing would have tolerated them. But as real socialists the Hulme six were determined to turn words into deeds.

In a perfectly constitutional manner they tried to select their own candidate for the council and get rid of the pro-cuts sitting councillor, Dave Lunts. For this they have had to endure the City Party barring selected candidates from being shortlisted, having the ward itself temporarily suspended and the prospect of Dave Lunts imposed upon them.

Now six ward members have been suspended in a final attempt by the right wing to get their way. At an enquiry meeting the six (out of ten called before it) refused to participate until charges were laid down, in writing, against them. They now face expulsion.

While the accused have not been told why they face charges the local newspaper, the *Manchester Evening News*, seems to have plenty of information from the right wing. "Workers Power six are barred" it explained, citing unspecified acts of intimidation as the pretext for the suspensions.

It is not intimidation to want to select a councillor who will oppose the cuts and Poll Tax. It is not intimidation to fight tooth and nail against the council's £26 million cuts package which will lead to ever greater deprivation in Hulme.

All the six are guilty of fighting for the interests of the working class.

And the right wing can be sure that their undemocratic manoeuvres, their use of the gutter press to attack members of their own party, and their cheap attempt

at a witch hunt, will not intimidate the six. When the ward was suspended it's members fought on and forced the right to retreat.

This latest act of intimidation against socialists will meet with the same response. And this time round it will be linked in with the mass anger of Hulme's workers against the Poll Tax and the cuts.

Every socialist in Manchester and beyond should support this fight. The six must be defended. ■

PUBLIC MEETING
NO WITCH-HUNTS IN HULME!
Hulme Library,
8-00pm, Tuesday 10 April
● No cuts! ● No Poll Tax!

ENGINEERS

AS THE Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union's (CSEU) campaign for the 35 hour week drags on into its eighth month it is increasingly clear that it's the members, not the bosses, that Jordan is determined to wear down.

His strategy of rolling selective strikes aimed at getting firms to break with the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) and sign separate agreements, eventually forcing the EEF to see sense, has clearly failed.

The union claims that some fifty plants covering 66,000 workers have won a reduction in the working week. Nowhere has the goal of a 35 hour week been won. The 37 hour week has been, in every case, at the expense of hard won conditions and productivity concessions.

The deal recommended, by the CSEU leadership, at British Aerospace (BAe), where sections of workers had been on strike for 18 weeks, is almost identical to the proposals the EEF put forward in 1987. Then they were rightly thrown out by rank and file opposition despite Jordan wanting to accept.

The CSEU leadership, while claiming that BAe is "pivotal" to the "Drive for 35 hours" campaign, have forced Preston strikers back to work after a much disputed "show of hands" vote in favour of the sell out. The officials took three shows of hands before they announced the decision in favour.

Chester's meeting, which was held the same day saw the majority of the shop stewards, who favoured rejection, being prevented by the officials from recommending it from the platform. The meeting voted to accept, after pressure from Jordan and Airlie.

Yet the same package was rejected by BAe workers at Warton and Salmesbury. There, engineers were suspended in their hundreds for refusing to cover Preston work—but they were not brought out on strike.

Last week Kingston overwhelmingly rejected the company's "final documents" at a mass meeting of nearly 1,000 strikers. But as far as the national leaders are concerned BAe has conceded a 37 hour week. So Kingston is on its own.

The leadership's lack of stomach for a fight makes it all the more difficult for the Kingston workers to win concessions from BAe. It makes it virtually impossible for those BAe workers who are not on strike and have not got even a 37 hour deal, to get anything!

From the earliest agreements at NEI-Parsons, Smiths and Rolls Royce to the deals at BAe, Jordan has signalled his willingness to settle for 37 hours on terms that were favourable to the bosses—phased reduction in hours, productivity and flexibility concessions.

The demand for the 35 hour week without strings was never taken seriously by the CSEU bureaucrats. With each successive settlement at 37 hours, not only has the "Drive for 35" been further undermined but the likelihood of a national agreement has receded further.

The earmarking of Lucas and Weir for the next round of action does not indicate a shift in gear for the campaign. Far from it. The results of the ballots are not likely until late April with action not getting underway possibly until May.

Jordan's claim that no company, "however big or small", will escape the campaign is of little comfort to those workers the bureaucrats have relegated to the sidelines of the campaign—their job being to keep the weekly levies

rolling in.

The domino effect is not working. Despite the Hillington agreement at Rolls Royce (Glasgow) before Christmas, this has not led to other Rolls Royce plants following suit. Any pressure that has come to bear on the bosses has been dissipated by premature "sell out" agreements.

This is the reality of their fight for the shorter working week! When Jordan says companies have the choice between conflict or co-operation, what he really means is that the CSEU would rather sit down and negotiate than prosecute the fight for the 35 hour week.

The stranglehold of the bureaucracy over the campaign must be broken.

To ensure victory the strikers need to break out of their current isolation, spread the action throughout the combine and control the action through their own strike committees, elected from, and accountable to, mass meetings.

Immediately militants must address mass meetings at the Lucas and Weir factories and win them to immediate strike action.

This could then be used as the lever to bust through the CSEU's strategy of selective strikes and local deals and fight for a national strike. Only such a perspective is capable of forcing the employers back towards a national agreement without strings. ■



SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Boring but functional

YOU COULD tell it was a boring budget. Instead of tax cuts or the price of cigarettes all the talk of was of charities and how well the football clubs did out of it. The press had to try and liven it up by thinking of as many puns on the Chancellor's name as possible.

But boring was functional given the state of British capitalism. Too many give-aways and the City would have panicked, certain that the Tories had lost the will to fight inflation. Too much take-back and Chancellor Major would have been blamed for throwing the economy headlong into a full blown recession instead of allowing it to crawl there all by itself as it is doing at the moment.

The fact is that UK plc would be in a full recession now if it was not for the continued strength of the European and, to a lesser extent, US economies which are sucking in British exports. Nevertheless even this is not enough to stop the decline in UK manufacturing output.

For most of 1989 it was flat as a pancake as firms felt the impact of a decline in domestic demand and got rid of stocks rather than continue to expand production. Then in January of this year production fell for the fourth consecutive month and the level is only 1% higher than a year ago.

Most commentators forecast that by the end of this year manufacturing levels will be 1% less than at the beginning. Of course, the situation is uneven between sectors. Textiles, footwear and construction are

in a sustained decline, while transport equipment and pharmaceuticals are still strong. They remain competitive in the international market place.

Taken as a whole the picture is gloomy for Britain's bosses. It is not simply that their thriving businesses are being constrained by government measures designed to hold back demand for their products. The underlying structural problems of British capitalism are pulling the bosses down too.

Take productivity performance. Just over a year ago productivity in manufacturing was growing at an annual rate of around 5%; in January 1990 it was growing at 0.6% per annum. Unit labour costs are now rising at over 7% a year as compared to 3% in January 1989.

Partly this is due to the ability of the trade unions to take advantage of falling unemployment and a skills shortage to keep wage settlements up. Partly it is a result of the failure of Britain's capitalists to invest sufficiently in new machinery and thereby increase productivity.

Either way British capitalism is falling further and further behind its rivals. This continues to undermine the bosses' confidence in Thatcher and the Tories and raises the stakes in the coming pay round between management and the unions. Future budgets won't have any option but to confront these problems. This will give Major the chance to prove he is more than just a bore. ■

Tokyo takes a tumble

EVENTS IN Eastern Europe occupy centre stage. It is therefore easy to lose sight of the little drama that is being played out in the wings: the slide in the Japanese stock markets. Since December the value of shares traded in Tokyo has plummeted by a quarter. The Nikkei index, now under 30,000, is at its lowest for a year.

The script has been sitting around on someone's desk for years waiting for a suitable producer. A booming Tokyo stock market during the 1980s defied all rational expectations. One day the bubble would burst, companies would go bust and the effect would reverberate around the rest of the world's stock markets causing a major world recession. It might make a good soap opera but life does not quite pan out like that.

The short term economic reasons for the fall are not hard to discern. For years Japanese imperialism has been sweeping all before it in world trade. The power of its export industries have earned their multi-nationals massive surplus capital. Much has been invested or lent abroad, some directed at purchasing stocks and shares and buying up scarce land.

Over time Japanese shares became overvalued. That is, the percentage dividend earned on the value of each share was very small indeed. Under normal circumstances it would be possible to earn a better rate of return by investing in government bonds. But for many decades the close ties between business and government in Japan has involved keeping interest rates very low (i.e. keeping down the cost to industry of borrowing capital for investment) and so this option was not a plausible one.

But in recent months this has changed. In late March the Bank of Japan raised its basic lending rate

for the fourth time in less than a year. At 7.4% they are a full 2% up on December 1989. So, the cost of borrowing to finance take-overs has increased, giving a severe blow to the assumption of an ever increasing level of share prices; and at the new rates government bonds now look a better and safer bet than equities (stocks and shares).

But the rise in bank lending rates needs explaining. The cause goes back to the decision in 1986 of the world's major imperialists to pressure Japan to reflate its own domestic economy. Their aim was to keep the world recovery alive without worsening the trade gap between Japan and the rest of the world. This was undertaken increasing imports into Japan and, over time, boosting inflation with it.

This trade stabilisation went some way to weakening the value of Japan's currency as demand for it (to pay for Japanese goods) stabilised too. Now the yen is at a three year low against the dollar and the interest rate rises are also intended to make it more attractive again.

Will the dramatic fall in share values derail the post-1982 world recovery? There is every reason to be cautious. Wiping out about \$1 billion worth of paper values can be a corrective mechanism. Only if the shock waves extended into the banking system, and really did wipe out the surpluses of major multinationals, would the effect be generalised.

Japanese profits remain strong and the economy is set to grow by over 4% this year. Certainly, there will be some cut back on investment plans at home and abroad. In the medium term this will exacerbate the problem of Japan acting as the world's banker when, given the situation in Eastern Europe, the thirst for surplus capital is seemingly unquenchable. ■

Down but not out

After the by-election in Mid-Staffordshire speculation about the future of Thatcher and Thatcherism is mounting. Mark Abram analyses the issues at the heart of the Tories troubles.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY leaders are elected exclusively by Tory MPs in Committee Room 14 of the House of Commons. The government's present catalogue of woes is focusing attention once more on that room.

Peter Walker's new found desire to spend time with his family and the resignations of a crop of other senior ministers underline Thatcher's growing isolation inside the party ranks.

Even newspapers which for so long treated her as a goddess are having their faith stretched to breaking point. "Thatcher is now the issue", screamed the fanatically pro-Tory London *Evening Standard*, after the Mid-Staffordshire defeat.

The whispered doubts that accompanied the unsuccessful challenge to her leadership in November by the hapless Anthony Meyer are growing louder. Can Thatcher make it to the next election? More importantly, has Thatcherism exhausted its role for the British bosses?

Onslaught

The Economist recently summarised the virtues for the capitalists of "early and middle-aged Thatcherism: smaller government, lower taxes, and above all the insistence that people and companies should be responsible for the consequences of their own actions."

We can add: the curbing of democratic rights, the massive strengthening of the police and above all the legal attacks on the trade unions, designed to eradicate effective rank and file action and so weaken the ability of the working class to resist the bosses' onslaught of the 1980s. All these brought substantial benefits to the employers by way of increased profits and productivity in the wake of the 1979-82 recession.

Despite the persistent unpopularity of the Tories and Thatcher within the working class, and even the majority of the population, the Tories were able to secure re-election twice. They achieved this by taking advantage of the split in the Labour Party after 1981 and promoting the rise of the SDP and Liberal Alliance to fragment the anti-Tory vote.

Failure

In addition they carried through economic policies that would construct a Tory voting base in the middle class and top third of the working class. Real wages rose by 28% between 1979 and 1988, council house sales provided a cheap path to property ownership and discount shares in privatised industries have given a couple of million people a "nice little earner" with very little risk attached.

Since 1987, however, third term Thatcherism has been an abysmal failure. The roots of this go back to 1986 and the debate in the Tory Party between the so-called "radicals" and the "consolidators". The latter wanted to build and deepen the policy changes already made. The radicals, the real free market liberals, wanted to push on and on with ever more changes.

The Poll Tax was the radicals' flagship, closely followed by the introduction of the market into the NHS, further rounds of privatisation (including water and electricity) and another batch of anti-union



"After Mid-Staffordshire I'd better put this bottle back in the cellar!"

laws. The "radicals", with Thatcher at the helm, won out and pressed on. Meanwhile Lawson, in his 1988 budget, cut taxes even more to further promote the consumer-led economic recovery of British capitalism.

These policies have proved deeply unpopular not only with the working class but also with large sections of "natural" Tory supporters, many of whom, in a narrow financial sense, did well out of the Tories in the first two terms of office. The Poll Tax rebellion has spread south of the border and reached beyond the metropolitan centres of the working class into the Tory shires. A real mass movement has emerged. Tory councillors have even resigned in several areas.

The NHS "reforms" have fused the professions into a bloc determined to water down the proposals as much as possible. The anger of the overwhelming majority of the population who use the NHS is transparent in every opinion poll taken on the issue. In addition the de-nationalisation of the public utilities has proven unpopular with the public and even large sections of Britain's bosses regard the prospect of increased charges for basic energy and water as an unwelcome burden.

The attitude of the Tories to

training and education, to transport policy and industrial investment strategies are all felt to be, and in reality are, undermining the ability of British capitalism to compete successfully with its international rivals.

Thatcher has managed to make a hash of the one thing that the Tories prided themselves on: the state of the economy

On a range of policy issues the radical Thatcherites stand accused, even by their own backers, as having succumbed to dogma. Free-market ideas have been extended beyond what is functional and rational from the point of view of the capitalist class.

As if all this was not bad enough Thatcher has managed to make a hash of the one thing that the Tories prided themselves on: the state of the economy. No longer able to plausibly blame Labour for this the Tories are deeply compromised by presiding over a high inflation, high interest rate economy. The

effects of this on the electorate are obvious enough as millions of property owners are being squeezed by crushing mortgage repayments.

Beyond this lie more fundamental considerations about the overall structure and health of British capitalism.

The statistics clearly reveal that the so-called "supply-side miracle" has been a mirage. Thatcher's policies have strengthened the position of a few major British multinationals in the European and world economy by tearing down exchange controls and encouraging investment abroad. But the reverse side of this has been a severe decline in manufacturing within the UK itself.

Whereas business investment has grown by 37.4% in the Thatcher years, gross investment in industry and agriculture actually fell by 8.4%. Investment in services (overwhelmingly in banking, finance and business services) expanded by a massive 93.1%. Over the last half decade while a small number of export-oriented firms have been doing well imports have far outstripped exports (by three to one), causing a huge trade deficit that exceeded £20 billion last year.

Frustration

The bosses' disquiet with the Tories over the economy is linked inextricably to their frustration and anger with Thatcher over the issue of Britain's relations with Europe and the EC. Thatcher's outlook is completely at odds with virtually every section of business opinion in Britain. The vast bulk of British trade is carried out with the EC. The future of British manufacturing capital lies within a growing and barrier-free Europe. The big spate of foreign investment in Britain, such as the Japanese assembly plants, has also been undertaken with an eye to Britain's place within the EC.

In the last year there has been a huge lobby to try and secure Britain's early entry into the EMS, the EC's common currency regulation system. But Thatcher is infamous for dragging her feet over every aspect of policy which leads in the direction of a common European outlook and set of interests.

This is not simply xenophobia. It reflects the schizophrenic position of British capitalism; the bulk of its trade in manufacturing and services is with Europe, but British overseas investment (which forms a higher proportion of GNP than for any other imperialist power) is overwhelmingly directed at the USA. Hence, Thatcher constantly intervenes to retard any policy which logically leads in the direction of defining a set of common EC interests against the USA.

This diversity of economic interests—between investment and trade, between Europe and America, between manufacture and services, between the City and industry—have weakened ties between different sectors of the British capitalist class. As a consequence it is difficult for it to forge a common set of political and economic objectives.

Thatcher's future as Tory leader has to be seen in this broad economic and political context. Of the handful of possible successors to her as leader of the Tories the one most feted by the media is Michael Heseltine. Since he left the Cabinet in 1986 he has used his immense personal wealth to conduct a high profile campaign for the hearts and minds of the Tory faithful in the shires and to construct an alternative manifesto for Toryism.

Preaching undying loyalty to Thatcher herself, so long as she chooses to stay, he is a Thatcherite

on a whole number of issues. There is no disagreement between them on foreign policy and defence. He has been as fervent as her in dismantling the major pillars of welfare; he has even gone further than most Thatcherites in advocating "work for dole" schemes. On economic policy he is very "dry" and recently advocated that the Bank of England be given independence so that it could more effectively fight the "battle against inflation".

Disgruntled

His attractiveness both to the bosses and to those whose horizons only extend as far as getting the Tories re-elected is evident: his "One Nation" Tory rhetoric pleases the latter. His strategy for state intervention in industrial investment and training pleases disgruntled sections of the bosses. He can be sold as a "caring" leader to the nation and as an efficient capitalist politician to the bosses.

On Europe and industry he has argued for a complete integration into the process of 1992 and beyond and even espoused the idea of a pan-European elected Senate with limited powers over national parliaments. His plans for Japanese-style state and business co-ordination of investment strategies are even more well known.

Heseltine, then, is certainly a front runner to succeed Thatcher. Some 51 out of 76 Tory MPs who were recently canvassed and expressed a preference said that Heseltine was their choice. They know that Howe and Tebbit would be liabilities, while Hurd and Baker, the possible compromise candidates, lack the charisma that is needed in the media dominated world of capitalist politics.

There is enormous dissatisfaction in the Tory Party; a quarter of them have said they want Thatcher to go now. However, there is no full-scale flight from her yet.

She has said she wants to lead them into the next election and the party will undoubtedly give her one year at most to see if the current economic policies can produce the low inflation, low interest rates and stable growth that she promises. In the same time span they will give her the chance to modify the radicalism that is proving so unpopular and pragmatically adopt some of the policies (on EMS, infrastructure) that will please the bosses.

Anger

It is a gamble, since anger at the Poll Tax and a working class still capable of defending itself on the wages' front, as last year's summer strikes demonstrated, could both upset the applecart. And, if Thatcher's problems multiply the Tory mandarins will come knocking on her door to tell her to go. After all, the Tory MPs elect the leader and they have a material interest in securing their re-election not being hammered by a rejuvenated Labour Party.

There was a time when keeping the flame of free market Thatcherism burning bright, even if it meant the risk of losing an election, was justified politically from the point of view of the ruling class.

Today this is by no means the case. When *The Economist* states that "it would not be the end of the world if the Labour party were to form the next government" the signs of change are clear. Labour is no longer such a risk to the "gains" of the Thatcher era. For the remainder of this parliament the antics of Tory back-benchers in Committee Room 14 could well take on a significance not seen since 1975. ■

BORIS YELTSIN has built up quite a reputation for himself over the last few years as the scourge of the most conservative and privileged sections of the bureaucracy. This has led many inside and outside the USSR to dub him a left alternative to Gorbachev. This book makes it far easier for us to see beyond his populist rhetoric and discern the real political character of the man.

Our Boris makes no attempt to hide the fact that he was always a self-willed and ruthless individual. He regales us with stories of his youthful strength in sport, of how he saved lost college pals from the jaws of death single handed, and how these indomitable characteristics were transferred to his later career in bureaucratic management.

His success as Sverdlovsk party boss and as a top manager in the construction industry were the result of his own flair for bureaucratic bullying. As he says with characteristic immodesty: "I was listened to and obeyed, and thanks to that, it seems to me, every enterprise functioned better."

Rise to power

Yeltsin rose through the bureaucratic ranks from regional party secretary to ministerial work, central committee membership and eventually candidate membership of the Politburo and Moscow party boss. But there is little evidence of Yeltsin the democrat in this rise to power. When Moscow needed a new mayor Yeltsin went and checked on four likely candidates in their workplaces and appointed the one he thought fit!

This journey through the *nom-enklatura* was made in close liaison with Mikhail Gorbachev. Both had a common background, and record of co-operation in managing the party apparatus in important provinces. Both shared the same mounting frustration at what seemed to them to be the incompetence and indolence of the central party state apparatus.

What emerges from Yeltsin's explanation of his fall from grace is, to a large extent, an account of the souring of his personal relations with Gorbachev. After the first year of *perestroika* Yeltsin became intolerant of the failure to replace the old with the new at the top of the state apparatus. The decisive levers of power remained in the hands of the functionaries left over from the Brezhnev era. Moreover, Gorbachev is, in Yeltsin's eyes, unwilling to break with them.

Power corrupts Gorbachev who, according to Yeltsin, became ever more out of touch with reality:

"He fell more and more into the grip of the processes of power, the urge to be in control, and he wanted to feel that power, every minute and permanently."

Corruption

He despaired of Gorbachev who failed to back up his fight against the corrupt Moscow party mafia that had flourished under his Brezhnevite predecessor, Grishin. Yet the more he denounced corruption and unearned wealth, the more openly he appealed for popular support to help clean up the city, the more he got the backing of large sections of the masses.

Among the most interesting aspects of the book are the insights he gives into the political and private life of the top ranks of the bureaucracy. As a candidate member of the Politburo he was entitled to a mansion staffed with three cooks, three waitresses, a housemaid and a gardener with his own team of under-gardeners. For Gorbachev even this is

President in the making?

Against the Grain
by Boris Yeltsin
Jonathan Cape, £12.95
Reviewed by John Hunt

emerges from his autobiography. In an earlier period Yeltsin had derided Gorbachev for paying too much attention to the economics of *perestroika* and not enough on political reform within the apparatus. In this book, however, he stridently recommends to Gorbachev the views of Shmelyov and Popov.

These two are extreme free market economists, who have little time for political democracy. It is now clear that Boris is convinced that private property is the key to

insufficient. In addition to his two large southern *dachas* and a new large one outside Moscow he has ordered a new town house to be built for himself in the leafy Lenin Hills. Less spectacular but more symptomatic, Yeltsin claims that in Moscow some 40,000 are entitled to special rations. This is the world of privilege and power that closed ranks against Yeltsin.

His political weaknesses and instability are displayed in the manner in which he reacted to his increasing isolation within the ruling circles. On 12 September 1987 he penned a letter to Gorbachev resigning from his Moscow and Politburo posts. No major showdown with Gorbachev had taken place, no weighty political testament laid down; merely the reflection that "somehow everything had accumulated gradually and imperceptibly". In short, it was the decision of a maverick bureaucrat.

Despite claiming he had widespread support for a drastic pruning of the apparatus he recalls that:

"Naturally, I made no effort, in any way, to organise a group of supporters from among those members of the central committee whose thinking and assessment of the state of affairs in the party and its leadership concurred with mine. The mere thought of any such thing struck me then—and still does—as blasphemous."

He seemed destined for the political wilderness.

Attacked

But much has changed for Yeltsin since his letter to Gorbachev. The more the establishment attacked him the more his standing grew in the eyes of the masses. This allowed him to overcome bureaucratic attempts to keep him off the ballot paper in Moscow in the 1989 elections, and achieve a famous victory.

The book itself is light on political doctrine, concentrating as it does on the world of personalities and anecdotes. It is significant that the nationalities issue merits but half a paragraph, while the miners' strikes of 1989 get no mention at all. Nevertheless, under the impact of events his politics too have evolved.

By the end of the book he does come clean with a few proposals of his own. To start with, he reaffirms his opposition to those who want a multi-party system and defends, instead, a programme of renewal conducted through a renovated Communist Party of the Soviet Union in collaboration with society at large.

On the economic front any readers who expect him to be "left" are in for a big shock. His populist rhetoric against privilege convinced many in the past that he was somehow a radical egalitarian socialist. As recently as last year, for example, Boris Kagarlitsky wrote of Yeltsin that he was "simply a populist and a moralist" who was "very closely tied to the rejection of capitalist methods of modernisation." (*Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* No.2 1989)

This is not the Yeltsin that

regenerating the fossilised system of the USSR:

"If one accepts the private ownership of property, then this means the collapse of the main buttress which supports the state's monopoly of property ownership and everything which stems from that; the power of the state; the alienation of the state from the individual and his labour and so on."

His moralistic egalitarianism is given a different gloss too. He is not against inequalities as such, only those that are not "earned" and privately owned. It appears, too, that he is tottering on the brink of born-again Christianity. As he puts it:

"I am convinced that the mo-

ment is coming when the church, with its message of eternal, universal values, will come to the aid of our society."

And what does Soviet society need help against in Yeltsin's new gospel? None other than socialism itself. For him the USSR is now

"... practically the only country on earth which is trying to enter the twenty-first century with an obsolete nineteenth century ideology; that we are the last inhabitants of a country defeated by socialism..."

Little wonder then that this book has been rushed to the printers by publishing houses throughout the west; it's no surprise that he is feted in all the major cities of the capitalist world. They wish to strengthen their links with the conqueror of the Moscow and Sverdlovsk electors and the potential powerful President of the Russian Republic within the USSR.

All this should fortify us in the struggle to prevent the reawakened Soviet working class allowing itself to fall in behind this maverick demagogue whose bullying bureaucratic style—learnt in the Stalin school—will be put to the service of restoring capitalism against the Soviet workers. ■



The anguish and the anger

THE VIETNAM war continues to be a popular subject in Hollywood.

"Born on the Fourth of July" is one of the latest offerings and has been praised in some pretty reactionary places. The *Daily Mail* says it is "the story they never dared tell before. The film could purge a nation's guilt".

Don't let any of this put you off seeing this film.

Oliver Stone's work is based on the autobiographical book of the same name, by a disabled Vietnam veteran Ron Kovic. Despite *The Daily Mail*, it is no way an apology for the Vietnam War. In fact it isn't even a film about Vietnam, but rather what happened to one GI as a result of his experiences there.

The film takes us through Kovic's life, from war obsessed youngster to "all American" teenager with the determination to win at everything. He volunteers for the Marines so that he can go out to Vietnam to "stop the commies". Kovic starts out believing it is "better to be dead than red". But this war leaves him disabled rather than dead and believing in very little at all.

Paralysed by gunshot wounds,

Kovic comes home to a world of anti-war protesters, underfunded veterans' hospitals and family and friends who want to pretend that everything is OK yet knowing that nothing will ever be the same again.

The scenes in the New York veterans' hospital where Kovic is taken after the battle are the most disturbing in the movie, playing as they do, on our own fear of paralysis, of neglect and of helplessness.

His black nurses present a sharp challenge to his jingoistic ravings when they tell him that the real struggle is here: "it's about Detroit and Newark. Why should we fight for rights over there when there's none here?"

His mother wants him to be like he used to be and refuses to face up to what has happened to his life. Dejected and desperate, the depth of his loneliness and desire to be loved is gripping. Throughout Tom Cruise as Kovic remains extraordinarily convincing.

At first cynicism overwhelms Kovic. "There's no God and no country, just me and this wheelchair for the rest of my life." Then he gropes his way to an understanding of the war and he

becomes an active opponent of it.

There is no sudden conversion by immersion in a political milieu. Rather it begins as a personal struggle to "find himself", rediscovering his sexuality while in Mexico.

He gradually comes to terms with his own actions in Vietnam. He turns his back on drugs as a means of escape from the cruelty of an uncaring world.

Instead he finds strength through collective action and the discovery that there is a common enemy—the American government.

The scenes of the 1972 Republican Party Convention with Nixon extolling the virtues of the so-called "democratic west" while his heavies beat up protesting Vietnam vets in wheelchairs speaks volumes about US hypocrisy in the war.

In the final scene, however, at the 1976 Democratic Convention, Kovic wheels himself triumphantly onto the stage as guest of honour, and effectively endorses the Democratic Party, the party which first sent troops in and supported the war completely. Kovic's personal courage is thus not matched by his political insight. Like all Hollywood's anti-Vietnam War films it is anti-war, not anti-imperialist. Still, Kovic's story, the strength of Stone's direction and the inspiring performance from Tom Cruise are memorable. Don't miss it. ■

Born on the Fourth of July
Director Oliver Stone
Reviewed by Bridget O'Shea

☆ How to beat the Tories

OVER THE next two months there is every possibility that we can defeat the Poll Tax. With the Tories divided, with the whole working class facing the same attack, with one million non-payers in Scotland and with thousands on the streets of England and Wales, an offensive to smash the tax can and should be launched now.

Yet the forces at the forefront of opposition to the Poll Tax are, in their different ways, following strategies that could lead to such. The Labour Party are the main culprits, arguing for compliance with the law, passive protest today and a Labour vote in the general election.

On the other hand the *Militant* led All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, urges mass non-payment, but it is offering no strategy beyond this that can stop the Poll Tax dead in the months ahead.

Labour's position was summed up by Roy Hattersley when he described Mid-Staffordshire as "the constituency where the Poll Tax was destroyed". This will come as a surprise to the voters there, who will be soon be receiving hefty bills.

Labour is telling all of its supporters to pay their bills. Its only crumb of comfort for those who cannot afford to pay is the suggestion that they consult debt counsellors. The working class must bear the cost of the Poll Tax until Labour has the chance to contest a general election. The party's electoral fortunes take precedence over the lives and livelihoods of the people it claims to represent.

Labour is silent on what workers should do if it loses that election. Given that Labour councils will be sending out some of the highest bills, given that in Scotland such councils are already overseeing warrant sales, this is a pertinent question. Their actions over the next two years could very easily alienate thousands of workers.

Even if we followed Kinnock's advice and Labour did get in, there is no guarantee that we would get compensation for the money taken from us under the Poll Tax. We will foot the bill for Labour's electoral success. And there is little possibility that we would get a fairer local tax from Labour. Already shadow ministers are talking about keeping the Poll Tax with some amendments. According to Hattersley it will stay, but "with radical changes". Nowhere has a Labour leader said that they will replace the Poll Tax with the only possible fair alternative, a progressive tax on the rich.

As for Labour's "campaign" against the Poll Tax, it stands as much chance of winning as a donkey in the Grand National. The NEC has repeatedly refused to call any mass rallies or demonstrations against the Poll Tax. Instead they have put adverts in the press and called on people to do the same. The thirty MPs who have said they will back non-payers have been denounced by the leadership.

None of this will budge the Tories an inch. But then it is not intended to. All Labour cares about is proving to the bosses that it is a responsible party. As Kinnock argued against those demanding the party do something:

"It is the inescapable truth that we who seek through democracy, the power to rule by law, cannot pick and choose which laws we obey."

The argument will prove persuasive with many workers. It appeals to their democratic instincts. But it is wrong. The rule of law is not neutral. It is class based. It is framed to defend the rule of the capitalists.

Labour's touching commitment to abide by the rule of law is not shared by the capitalists when it comes to

their economic interests. When Labour in office has introduced even the most minimal progressive reforms the bosses have used their economic power to undermine the reforms through withdrawing money from the country, and engineering runs on the pound. The bosses use their economic power to avoid or change laws they dislike.

In cases like the Kings Cross fire or the *Marchioness* disasters it is quite obvious that bosses blatantly ignore the law and literally get away with murder.

We must use our own power to defy unjust laws. The most effective action we can take is to hit the bosses' pockets through strike action, much of which is illegal under Tory anti-union laws. We must physically defend ourselves from warrant sales, defence which will be illegal as the bailiffs enter with 'legal' rights to steal our possessions. We must put our class interests above their right to rule through their laws. And we must demand the Labour Party does so too.

At a minimum we must win from the party a commitment to non-implementation by the councils, support for those refusing to pay and the reversal of the NEC's decision not call for mass rallies and demos against the tax.

In contrast to Labour's legalism we fully support the All Britain Federation's call for mass non-payment. The organisation of non-payment in Scotland, still holding up after a year of the tax, is proof that workers are ready to defy the Tory law.

But on its own mass non-payment will not smash the tax. Scotland is proof of this too. Despite the non-payment and despite the resistance to warrant sales, the tax is still there.

Back in November at the Federation's founding conference *Militant* rejected our resolutions calling for general strike action, but paid lip service to the idea that some unspecified industrial action might be necessary. Now even the lip service has gone.

Militant's position, echoed recently by Tony Benn, is that a Gandhi style campaign of civil disobedience will beat the tax. Steve Nally, the Federation's secretary spelled this out in *Militant*. Predicting ten million non-payers he asked:

"How could they carry on with the Poll Tax in the face of that?" and added: "All we have to do is stand firm and united for non-payment and we can defeat them."

For good measure *Militant* have recently shelved their call for a one day general strike in favour of demanding an immediate general election.

This strategy will not defeat the tax. A long drawn out campaign of civil disobedience leaves the initiative with the enemy, who will not hesitate to use this to their full advantage. In Scotland they will step up their warrant sales' drive to intimidate non-payers.

In England and Wales they will not hesitate to imprison them. After all, during the last ten years of Tory rule 4,000 people have been imprisoned for non-payment of their rates.

Non-payment, non-implementation and non-collection are vital elements of the campaign against the Poll Tax. They can rally resistance. They can promote the formation of councils of action committed to fighting the tax, defending non-payers. But more, much more is needed if victory is to be won.

Strike action is the key to that victory. The Poll Tax is an attack on the whole working class. The anger is there. A general strike is needed to turn this anger into action. It can be the broadside that will sink

Thatcher's third term flagship. Every effort must be directed to getting it off the ground over the next two months.

Militant would argue that they cannot call such an action. Certainly we recognise that in the first place the demand for a general strike needs to be raised on the TUC. They should have called for such a strike on 2 April. They didn't so we must begin agitation for one to be called for 1 May, the day of international working class solidarity.

Doubtless the Congress House clique will refuse. The matter doesn't end there. Rank and file action has delivered strikes in a whole number of industries and services over the last year. Serious rank and file agitation around an issue that is now on every workers' mind could achieve a lot.

In Sheffield the Crookesmoor anti-Poll Tax union, which has a solid base in the working class estates, is proposing to the local federation a city-wide general strike on 1 May. Other federations and unions should build on the mobilisation for 31 March and make similar calls. Turn May Day into anti-Poll Tax day!

At the same time there are numerous flashpoints amongst local government workers that offer the opportunity of building links and launching strike action. Hackney's joint shop stewards' committee called a strike for 5 April. Manchester housing workers and Sheffield NALGO have been in dispute over implementation of the Poll Tax. With anti-Poll Tax unions being formed in a growing number of workplaces there is a real basis for linking these struggles together, forming real councils of action and building for strike action.

We must not allow any of this anger to go off the boil. We mustn't allow it to be diverted into a series of fragmented disputes over sectional issues. We must not leave the non-payers to wage a long drawn out struggle in the face of intensified legal attacks.

Serious agitation for a general strike on May Day could result in mass action. And that could lay the basis for an indefinite general strike to smash the Poll Tax. In every anti-Poll Tax union, trade union, community organisation, local Labour Party and in the national Federation, agitation for this sort of action should be top the agenda.

We can win this one. Let's not waste the chance. ■

DESPERATE TIMES require desperate remedies. And the mass revolt that hit England and Wales in March certainly made the Tories desperate to deflect attention from their vicious and unfair Poll Tax.

Their remedy was to play the "red scare" card, a "hot button" tactic, according to Central Office. By claiming that the anger of thousands of ordinary people was all the work of a handful of Trotskyists, bent on mindless violence, they sought to frighten protesters from going to meetings and lobbies.

Supporters of *Militant*, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the anarchists and Workers Power, were supposed to be racing around the country with CB radios and hit squads, turning every lobby into a punch up with the police. This fanciful scenario was painted in vivid detail by every newspaper after violent scenes occurred outside a number of town halls, notably Hackney and Lambeth.

No matter that the numbers of people demonstrating considerably outstripped the combined forces of the left in Britain, we "outside agitators" were stirring up the trouble. No matter that the left, like 36 million other people, are going to be

"THE COMMUNITY Charge will be popular", yelled Thatcher in the House of Commons. Hitler said the same thing about forced labour camps. They didn't catch on either.

The Poll Tax is one of the most hated pieces of legislation ever.

☆ The reb

Thousands upon thousands of people have already delivered their verdict on it. Even Tory loyalists

THE GREAT POLL TAX ROBBER



☆ Violence – who is

hit by the Poll Tax, we were using the demonstrations "for our own purposes". All of this is guff. To give it the slightest shred of credibility was to give the Tories exactly what they wanted—a diversion. Kinnock duly obliged them by denouncing the demonstrators.

In going along with the Tory's red scare, a tactic that even *The Economist* described as Central Office's "weapon of last resort", Labour's leaders were also signalling to the bosses that they were determined to oppose any militant fight against the Poll Tax.

What is our reply to the charges? Certainly violence has occurred on a number of demos. The blame for this lies firmly at the door of the police. In Thatcher's Britain the right to demonstrate has been hemmed in by all sorts of legal restrictions. Demonstrations are collective actions that create feelings of confidence and solidarity amongst people taking part. After a big demo people know they are not alone in their struggle against injustice. This

is why our rulers have tried to restrict them.

Thatcher has gone even further than limiting our right to take to the streets. Over the last eleven years she has re-equipped and reorganised the police to enable them to smash up working class demos, pickets and lobbies, in military style.

In every case of violence it is these highly paid thugs who are to blame. It doesn't matter who you are, if you are protesting on the streets you are fair game for being pushed around, bullied and often battered by the police. This is what thousands of miners, printworkers, seafarers and now Poll Tax protesters have all quickly found out.

It is not that these workers for some sudden unknown reason, or on the say so of a handful of Trotskyists, turn into violent maniacs. It is the police and their deliberate provocations, their brutal behaviour, their determination to render our action ineffective, that cause the violence.

They have the truncheons and

Rebellion on the streets

have squealed under its impact. Councillors in the shires have resigned. Crusty colonels have

handed back their OBEs. Doves of Conservative voters in Mid-Staffordshire have switched to Labour.

The Poll Tax promises to bump up inflation to over 9% in the spring. The unified business rate that comes with the tax will result in the destruction of 50,000 of Thatcher's much vaunted small businesses. In the land that Major forgot, Scotland, the Tories have already been forced into a humiliating climbdown over retrospective rebate concessions.

Behind all of this turmoil lies one simple fact. The Poll Tax is the most severe and unified attack on the living standards of the working class, and indeed sections of the middle class, for years. After carefully avoiding provoking a generalised response from the working class for eleven years, the Tories decided they were strong enough to go for broke. Now we have the chance to break them.

Thatcher had promised that the tax would be more fair than the rates. Yet it is estimated that it will lead to a 30% rise in what people have to shell out.

The Poll Tax looks set to average £370 per person. The average predicted by the Tory Environment minister, Chris Patten, was £278. But even the £370 figure disguises the larger bills facing inner city workers.

In the most deprived boroughs of London, such as Hackney and Haringey, bills will be £499 and £572 respectively. Lambeth has estimated that to meet its budget requirements it will need to set the tax at a staggering £640. Other cities face similarly high levels; £425 in Manchester, £450 in Newcastle.

As councils try to keep the tax as low as they can local services will be subject to even greater cuts. Manchester is implementing a £28 million cuts package. Newham in London is discussing £17.6 million worth of cuts, Newcastle £5 million.

Faced with the choice of a crippling high Poll Tax or the prospect of £30 to £40 million cuts a number of Liverpool Councillors have declared that they will vote against setting a tax at all. Labour's Keve Coombes, leader of the council, has threatened that if they refuse to set a tax, the payment of council

workers' wages will be stopped.

The new budget proposals adopted by councils will mean job losses, education cuts, the closing down of meals-on-wheels services, an end to recreational and library services, and a drastic deterioration in the provision and maintenance of houses.

True to form the Tories, with their usual propaganda about "profligate Labour councils", are refusing to subsidise the local councils. Since 1979 they have cut £46 billion in central government grants. They see the the Poll Tax as a means of reducing their contribution yet further.

All over the country Anti-Poll Tax Unions and Federations have had a flood of new recruits over the past two months as the reality of the tax became clear to millions of workers.

Rallies and lobbies have attracted hundreds and thousands. In Chesterfield 1,000 people came to hear Tony Benn and Tommy Sheridan, chair of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. After the red scare witch-hunts and hullabaloo over violence, 500 local people attended a rally in Hackney. In Leicester 600 turned out to lobby the council. Sheffield has booked twenty coaches to send down to the national demo.

And of course the much publicised rural revolt has brought thousands onto the streets in Truro, Stroud, Gloucester, Bury St Edmunds and countless other small towns.

All of this goes alongside the continued campaign of mass non-payment in Scotland. At least one million people are not paying in Scotland. In Glasgow alone there are 350,000 refusing to pay.

This anger is justified. What is needed is a campaign to turn it into effective action. The All Britain Federation could do this by immediately convening an emergency recall conference, open to delegates from all Anti-Poll Tax Unions, democratically run and open to resolutions and amendments from delegating bodies. Local federations should likewise convene their own special conferences.

The task of all such gatherings must be to thrash out a strategy that can win, that can smash the Poll Tax once and for all.

ers punched a policeman with the response: "In fact the paper was *Socialist Worker*!"

At a time when bosses' papers were blaming the SWP for the Hackney events these are disgraceful things to say, as disgraceful as Kinnock's attack on the whole left. The police are let off the hook. The left are blamed for the violence.

The so-called revolutionaries of *Militant* prefer to establish their credentials with Kinnock by attacking their left wing rivals, by declaring that they, and the All Britain Federation that they dominate, are against "any resort to violence". They are set against preparing the working class to meet the violence of the state with their own organised physical defence.

Neither Kinnock, nor the working class, will thank them for this pacifism. Kinnock will still expel them and the working class will quickly find that they have no use for those who preach the message of peace in the face of Tory class warriors, special squads of riot police and thieving bailiffs. Our message, of organised defence, on the other hand, will become a rallying cry for all those who mean business in fighting and defeating the Poll Tax.

against the Poll Tax. In response to bailiffs attempting to come into our homes and steal our possessions anti-Poll Tax unions should organise the mass defence of workers' homes.

If we do not link the question of non-payment to the organisation of such resistance then we are guilty of leaving workers unprepared and undefended against the consequences of their refusal to pay the Poll Tax. Our criticism of *Militant* is that they are precisely guilty of this.

In the face of the recent witch-hunt against the demonstrators they have conducted a shameful retreat. Instead of blaming the police they have conducted their own witch-hunt against the left, in particular the SWP.

Ken Smith, from *Militant's* press office, dissociated their paper from violence and told journalists: "There are people who like a good ruck with the police, such as the Class War and the SWP". In their own press they have answered the charge that one of their paper sell-

EAT TAX RY!



Workers Power

to blame?

batons, the armoured helmets, the horses, dogs and the riot shields. And they love to use them. Especially against workers, especially against black people, especially against the left.

In the face of all this we say that if we are serious about winning our struggles we have to organise to defend ourselves and our right to take effective action. This does not mean that we support any old violence. We would argue against youth who, in desperation at their miserable plight in Thatcher's Britain, hurl missiles and smash windows. We do not equate this spontaneous anger with the organised violence of the state. We simply recognise that it is not effective, it does not serve a useful purpose.

We do support the organised defence, carried out with whatever force is necessary, of our demos, pickets and lobbies. This should be done through the building of trained and disciplined defence squads.

The issue of physical defence is raised directly in the campaign

IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM



The dangers of self-management

THE NEW workers' organisations which have sprung up throughout the disintegrating Stalinist system face fundamental questions. At first the demands for free trade unions, for the right to strike, for the right to form political parties, occupied the foreground. The conquest of these rights, in full or in part, has pushed another question to the fore, one that will decide the whole fate of the present movement. What to do about the economy?

The terrible stagnation, chaos and dictatorship workers experience daily in the workplace have deeply discredited the very idea of a centrally planned economy for millions of working people. Workers do not experience the plan as their own conscious direction of economic life to meet the needs of themselves and their families. Rather it appears as the centralised command economy—"them telling us what to do".

Faced with this Stalinist version of planning workers have taken up the demand of "workers' self-management" of the enterprises, of industries and regions, demanding autonomy from the bureaucratic plan.

Fragmentation

The origins of the demands for self-management go back to earlier crises of Stalinism. In Yugoslavia in 1950 the Tito-led Yugoslav Communist Party, then in conflict with the Kremlin, set up a system of workers' self-management of the enterprises. The purpose was not to open the road to working class power over the economy as a whole, let alone over the state. Quite the reverse. Its purpose was to co-opt the support of workers against the threats and pressure of the Kremlin and simultaneously to act as a counterweight to the greatly increased relations with capitalism that Tito had inaugurated. The new system led to a diminution in the role of central planning. Yugoslav self-management led to a fragmentation of the national and even the regional economies with inefficient duplication and hoarding of resources. In addition it led to the creation of a large local and factory level bureaucracy.

Self-management was later raised in Poland. The workers' in 1956 revolt brought to power a "reforming" wing of the bureaucracy under Gomulka. Workers' councils formed in the revolution had briefly established considerable control over management, wages and bonus payments. But the workers' council movement did not establish an independent national leadership through a democratic congress of councils. As a result the bureaucracy took on this task and created a Conference of Workers' Self-Management (KSR), dominated by party and official trade union bureaucrats. Over the next few years the workers' councils were first isolated, then incorporated and finally totally bureaucratized. By not taking on the level of state-wide economic planning and political control the workers' council movement proved no match for the centralised bureaucratic and political management.

In 1980-81 with the creation of the Solidarnosc movement the ideas of self-management re-emerged. Self-management councils were formed but their relationship to the existing centralised plan was still unclear.

Today the ideas of "self-management" have been taken up by Russian workers, such as the miners of the Donbas and the

Kuzbass. The reasons for the spontaneous desire of workers to manage their own factories, mines and offices are clear enough. But the call for "self-management" has also received enthusiastic support from pro-capitalist reformers like Aganbegyan and Zaslavskaya. These people insist on the need for the economic independence of the enterprises—linked only by the market.

Market

The tying of this to self-management, to control of each enterprise by its own labour collective, plays a double role. Firstly it co-opts the workers into the disintegration of the plan and the triumph of market principles. Thereafter it forces each isolated labour collective into competition with every other enterprise. The workers must rationalise, increase productivity, cut back on the workforce, accept foreign and domestic investment from non-state sources—all in order to help "their" enterprise survive.

But can self-management be progressive in any way? If workers take the road of isolated self-managed co-operatives, it will prove a disaster. Enterprises can only relate to each other in one of two ways. Either through the market and the operation of the law of value, or through planning agreements which decide the allocation of resources. If the market and the law of value predominate in relations between them then sooner or later the vast majority of these enterprises will return to private ownership. Indeed the first step is already a move towards capitalism whereby the property of the whole working class becomes the property of specific groups of workers. Some worker co-operators will rapidly become share holders. Others will lose their jobs. In short, the surviving firms will become joint stock companies. Unemployment, lack of social security and above all exploitation will return.

Democratically

Rather than take this road of dismantling or attempting to ignore the centralised plan, the way forward must be to transform it democratically from below. Only a state-wide plan can allocate resources and produce what is needed rather than what is dictated by the profit motive of the market. To control such a centralised plan and direct it to meet the needs of the masses requires a democratic workers' state which places the state and the planning under the control of the producers themselves.

A plan must "command", that is apportion resources. Of course, not every decision must be taken centrally. At regional, local and plant level there must be spheres of competence and room for manoeuvre.

But the "commands" of the plan must have been democratically arrived at. Local, regional and national factory councils and workers' soviets must freely discuss alternatives and make the decisions. Thus workers will be able to manage not only their own immediate workplace but social production itself. Workers must reject the theories of self-management. They must demand instead workers' management of the plant, the industry and the plan. And to accomplish this they will have to seize political power from the bureaucratic caste, liberals and conservatives, bureaucratic planners and marketising reformers.

THE LONGEST WAR

Connolly's nationalism

APRIL 1990 marks the 74th anniversary of the Easter Rising. James Connolly was executed by the British for his part in the uprising and so began a struggle over his political legacy that is unfinished. What did Connolly really stand for? What aims did he have when he and his comrades entered Dublin's General Post Office that Easter Monday?

Connolly came to Ireland in 1896 from Scotland, the son of Irish parents, and joined the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP). The ISRP's strident declarations for an independent Irish republic distinguished it from every other faction of the socialist movement. Most so-called socialists in England and Scotland thought it a betrayal of "socialist internationalism", to even consider supporting national independence for Ireland.

Struggle

Furthermore, Connolly placed the working class at the centre of the struggle for Irish freedom. In 1899 he argued that:

"If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist republic, your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords... England would rule you to your ruin."

Despite this seemingly clear cut recognition of the distinct interests of the working class and the national bourgeoisie, Connolly harboured a mistaken idea of how the struggle for socialism and for national independence could be achieved.

He believed that Irish history had an inherent movement towards socialism. He believed that the English conquest had destroyed an egalitarian communal clan system and implanted an alien system of private property together with national oppression. For him the modern national struggle was in essence about recovering these communal property forms. Nationalism and socialism were inextricably locked together.

This led him to deny that the Irish bourgeois class ever had any progressive role to play since it was attached to private property. Contrary to Marxism, Connolly suggested that the struggle to build a nation state was the goal of propertyless classes rather than the aspiring capitalist class.

So when he was faced with examples of revolutionary nationalism (Wolfe Tone, Emmet) he denied that they were champions of bourgeois interests and saw them

as precursors of modern socialism.

Connolly was thus blind to the limits of revolutionary nationalism under whose leadership the Irish masses were being roused against England. He mistakenly thought in the 1890s that bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalist influence was getting weaker.

In fact, as an Irish commercial farming class grew in the aftermath of land settlements, the hold of the Catholic bourgeoisie was getting stronger—as was the movement for Home Rule. Since Connolly thought that any form of bourgeois national independence was impossible he had no tactics with which to break the working class from fatal illusions in the nationalists.

Yet by 1912, faced with the force of the Home Rule movement, Connolly simply fell in behind the national bourgeoisie. He hoped that Home Rule would allow a framework within which Irish labour could strengthen itself on a 32-county basis.

With the outbreak of the First World War Connolly believed the perspectives for revolution in Ireland were entirely transformed. But sadly his dramatic turn to planning a nationalist insurrection did not mark any attempt to reassert the independence of the working class. Impatient to use the chance of the war to strike at England, he adopted a democratic programme of national revolution in place of the struggle to overthrow capitalism, believing that the two were identical.

Militia

The practical consequences in the Easter uprising were clear enough. Connolly placed his workers' militia under the military orders and the political banner of the non-working class revolutionary nationalists—the Irish Volunteers and the IRB, led by Pearse.

Connolly's much acclaimed slogan: The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour, the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland", embodied a profound confusion, based on a populist misconception of the nation. As a slogan it served to liquidate the political independence of the working class into revolutionary nationalism.

As Connolly once remarked of Wolfe Tone:

"Apostles of freedom are ever idolised when dead, but crucified when living."

We do not need to idolise Connolly to appreciate his strength; but unless we criticise his errors revolutionary Marxism will continue to be marginalised in the Irish labour movement. ■

Let Lithuania go!

Socialists must support the right of Lithuania to independent statehood. But, as Clare Heath explains, independence may prove a chimera.

LITHUANIA'S DECLARATION of independence brings the prospect of the Soviet "Disunion" a step nearer. The three Baltic republics may soon be followed by Georgia, Moldavia, and even the Ukraine, in moves towards secession.

The USSR includes hundreds of nationalities and 14 non-Russian republics. It is far from the truly voluntary federation which Lenin and Trotsky attempted to build in the early 1920s. The republics are ruled direct from Moscow.

All major decisions effecting the economy, defence and foreign policy emanate from the Kremlin. With Gorbachev's new presidential powers there is even greater scope for direct Moscow rule over all aspects of government. Moscow's reaction to Lithuania reveals this domination.

If Lithuania or any other small republics do leave the USSR what future do they have? As the Kremlin keeps reminding us, Lithuania is a tiny place, slightly smaller than Scotland. Its 3.7 million people make up about 1.5% of the total Soviet population.

Trading

The economy of Lithuania is highly integrated with the rest of the USSR. Meat and dairy products together with some electrical goods are manufactured for distribution primarily within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It currently has minimal trading links with the west, and only 12 joint stock companies.

Lithuania is dependent upon the USSR for all of its oil and gas, (97% of its total energy supply) plus cars and metals. Its industries require many components only supplied by the USSR.

If Lithuania were to become completely separate from the USSR and pursue the pro-capitalist policies of its present nationalist leaders it would be far from "independent". It would aim to set up a federation with Latvia and Estonia with a common currency tied in turn to Finland.

But Finland's relative prosperity has been based in large measure on its special access to trade with the USSR. A hasty break with the USSR would deprive Lithuania of this possibility.

In this case it would have to turn to US, European and Japanese imperialism for help. Yet the Baltics come way down their list for aid and assistance. The small aid packages and cautious intervention by the west in Eastern Europe suggests that there are not huge sums of money floating around to rescue Lithuania from the debris of "communism". The US debt already commands much of the available loan capital of Japan. Europe's biggest paymaster is West Germany, already stretched to cover its obligations to the DDR.

An independent capitalist Lithuania will be forced to depend on the crumbs from the imperialists' table. They would not add up to much of a meal. Its relatively high-tech cassette recorders, presently enjoying monopoly status in the USSR, would not find a place on the street markets of the west. If it were to become reliant upon the west for energy, production costs and living costs would rise dramatically. The workers would suffer as Lithuania fell into semi-colonial servitude; not a Finland

but a Republic of Ireland at best.

Revolutionaries do not want to see the break up of the Soviet Union into separate states. We recognise that the fullest development of the productive forces to meet human need is best done within the largest possible unitary state, providing the bureaucracy is overthrown.

Moreover, the unity of the working class across national, ethnic and republic boundaries is a prerequisite for the building of socialism. The working class is not a "nation-builder" and nationalism, as an ideology of the bourgeoisie only serves to divide the working class.

But the nationalism of the oppressed cannot be wished away so long as oppression exists. Calls for "unity" of the working class will fall on deaf ears if they are addressed to workers who feel that their national rights have been trampled on by another nation. They will be particularly hard of hearing if the calls for workers' unity come from the very nation that is seen as the oppressor.

It was an understanding of this reality which led Lenin to support

for workers to unite in opposition to a common enemy in the Kremlin.

It is necessary to relate to the prevailing consciousness and activity of the working class. We cannot ignore the national question and wish it would not confuse the anti-bureaucratic struggle. We have to relate to its concrete expressions.

In opposition to national oppression we support the right of every nationality to defend its own language, culture and education. We oppose all discrimination in jobs, social provision such as housing, and democratic rights such as voting.

For each republic we defend the right of the workers to determine their own destiny. We advocate remaining within the Soviet Union in order to fight the Kremlin and the republic-level bureaucracy in common with workers throughout the union. We seek to transform the USSR into a voluntary and free federation of workers' states.

But where this does not satisfy an oppressed nationality or republic we must relate to their demands for self-determination and secession. This is the case today in Lithuania. The majority of the workers, along with the local bureaucracy and intelligentsia, have decided that their future will be better without the rule of Moscow. Understandably they are not content with "autonomy". They have had that for years and it has meant national oppression; they have the right to independence written into the USSR constitution and it has meant Great Russian chauvinism. Now, nothing short of independence will satisfy the fears and suspicions of the majority.

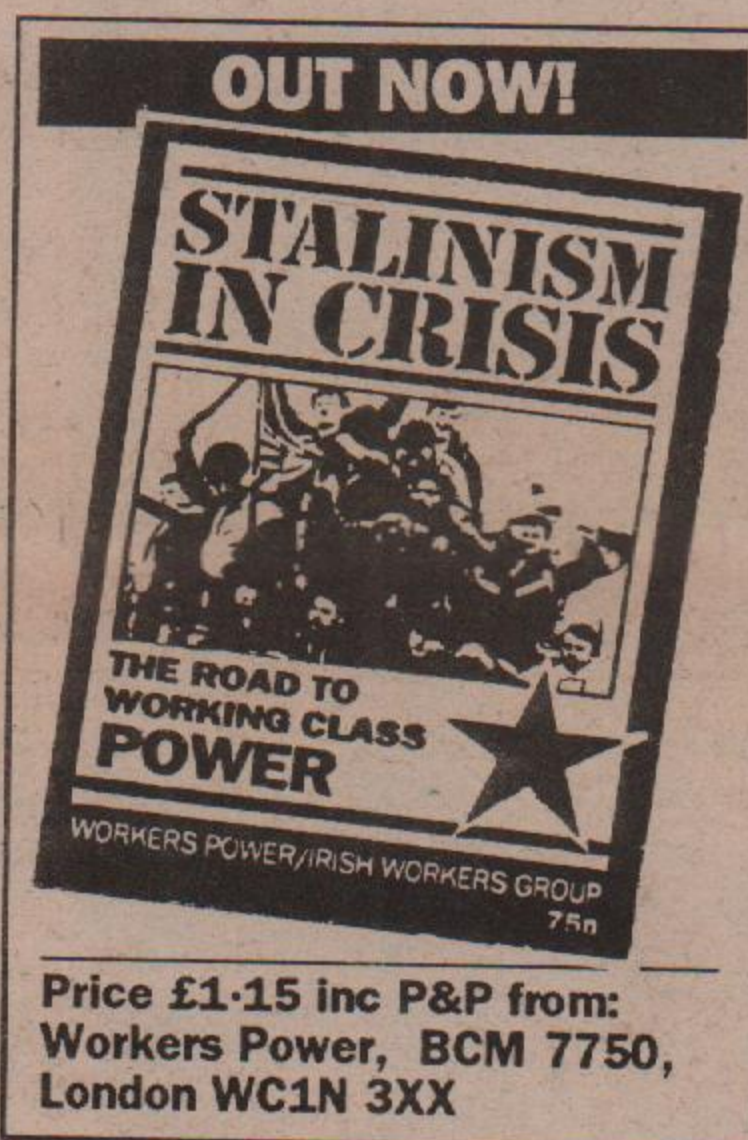
Allies

We must support their fight against the Kremlin. If we were to say "no" we would force the Lithuanian workers into the arms of their local bureaucracy who they wrongly see as their allies. To break this alliance revolutionaries must advocate an independent republic. But this must be based, not on the continued rule of the bureaucracy or of a restored bourgeoisie, but on a democratic workers' council state.

Within any independent state minority nationalities must be guaranteed full rights. Ethnic Russians and Poles within Lithuania should have full and equal democratic and language rights and be able to form autonomous areas if they wish.

Within Lithuania a revolutionary Trotskyist party armed with this programme would bloc with the nationalists in their confrontation with Moscow, including fighting Soviet troops sent in to crush the independent republic. But Trotskyists would also seek to build workers' councils to oppose the programme of the present leaders of the national struggle—the fight must be for workers independence and political revolution.

We would wage a determined struggle against the nationalists if and when they move to dismantle the state owned property relations and restore capitalism. We would not hesitate to demand support from the workers of the entire USSR for such a struggle and unconditional aid from Moscow itself. ■



OUT THIS MONTH!

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Divisions

The position of revolutionaries today must be to follow the method of Lenin and Trotsky. Within the degenerate workers' states the bureaucracy continues to foster and manipulate national divisions in an attempt to divide working class opposition to themselves. It is not sufficient for us to point out these bureaucratic tactics and call

EAST GERMAN ELECTIONS

The East German workers stampeded for unification and voted for the parties which could bring it soonest. Just back from the GDR, Michael Kaien of ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria) looks at the consequences of the result and Richard Brenner of Workers Power looks at how the left fared.

The price of unity

many in the GDR about what reunification and capitalism would mean; namely, unemployment rising from 70,000 to two million by 1991, homelessness, inflation, massive rent increases, and huge cuts in subsidised facilities like nurseries.

What do the results mean for

the plans of German capitalism? Obviously the moves towards the restoration of capitalism in the GDR have taken a big step forward. The victory of the Alliance will allow further steps in this direction to be taken in an orderly manner. On the immediate agenda is monetary and economic

union. This will entail the Bundesbank taking effective charge of the banking system in the East. Kohl wants this to happen by July.

Smoothing the path towards capitalism involves purging the state apparatus of any "unreliable" elements from its Stalinist days who might try and block or delay this process. It also means an army and police force committed to defending this project and reliable enough to enforce it. Once this is achieved the bourgeois counter-revolution will have been completed.

This bourgeois state will then proceed to dismantle the remaining proletarian property forms—the state monopoly of foreign trade and the central planning apparatus. After this private property can be restored, through privatisations, worker-management buy-outs and the setting up of joint companies with imperialist capital. In the GDR it will not take long, with a bourgeoisie already in place next door, to put private property in the means of production in a commanding position in the economy.

Factors

The pace of restoration and unification will only be retarded by the weight of international factors. Germany holds a strategic position at the heart of the NATO alliance. It is therefore essential to reach an agreement between the imperialist powers and the Soviet Union on the precise terms of unification. Kohl clearly sees this as a slightly longer term process coming out of the "four plus two" talks (USA, USSR, Britain and France plus the "two" Germanies).

While the Soviet Union is in too weak a position to insist that Germany pulls out of NATO it will probably compromise on this if the price is right—which would include a provision for loans from Germany. The imperialists themselves have expressed a willingness to allow Soviet troops to remain in the East for a period. They clearly see them as a force for "stability", that is, as a force to prevent any local opposition to restoration in Eastern Europe generally.

The West German imperialists still have a few hurdles to clear, however, before they achieve success. They need to ensure a two-thirds majority in parliament to push through the constitutional changes in the GDR. They want to use Article 23 of the West German constitution as the means of directly absorbing the GDR in to the Federation.

If this happens it will deprive seven of the smaller parties of their 34 seats won under the East German election law. It will also extend to the East the notorious anti-left measures, like the Berufsverbot, under which leftists can be sacked at will from public sector jobs.

The Social Democrats at the moment say they are against this, preferring to use a different Ar-

ticle to debate a new constitution. But how long they will stick to this is another question. They have already declared, through their deputy chairman, "In view of the difficult problems facing our country we are ready to open immediate talks with the Christian Democratic Union", while at the same time ruling out any co-operation with the PDS.

Junior

Despite this anti-PDS stance it would be wrong to imagine, as many in the GDR still do, that the PDS is committed to defending nationalised property and opposed to capitalist restoration. Modrow and other PDS leaders have accepted reunification on a capitalist basis, a process which will involve the privatisation of the huge VEB state enterprises.

But the PDS wants to slow the reunification process down to allow it to negotiate with Bonn on behalf of its real base, the old bureaucratic layer of industrial and state officialdom. The PDS aims only to preserve the privileges of the bureaucracy but now as junior partners to the West German ruling class.

Clearly the East German workers face a number of attacks on their newly won rights. For all his promises Kohl will not be able to prevent the massive disruptions, unemployment, layoffs and rising prices of food, transport and rents which will come with the restoration of capitalism. Already some East Berliners have had a foretaste of the free market—with West Germans arriving and introducing themselves as their new landlords on the basis that their property had been expropriated after 1945!

The war has not been lost. Only the first battle. A conscious revolutionary minority needs to rally the advanced militants as it becomes increasingly clear what restoration means in practice. We must demand that the SPD and the PDS have no truck with any Alliance-led government.

Oppose

They must be forced to use their votes in parliament to block any change in the constitution which aids this restoration and any other measures directed against the workers. They must table pro-working class legislation in the current parliament and dare the Alliance to oppose it in front of the workers who voted for them.

The workers themselves must be mobilised to struggle against every attack on their living standards or their security of employment. The demonstrations must be restarted this time against any attempt to make the workers pay for the bosses' plans.

A revolutionary party must be forged that not only struggles against the restoration of capitalism but against the legacy of police state Stalinism that has so discredited the name of socialism in the eyes of the workers. ■

THE WEST German bourgeoisie is still celebrating the results of the 19 March elections in the East. Their chosen vehicle, the "Alliance for Germany", swept to a clear victory with 48% of the vote.

The Social Democrats received only 22% while the "Party of Democratic Socialism" (PDS), the former (now renamed) ruling Stalinist party, confounded western expectations and polled 16% of the votes.

One factor determined the outcome of these elections—the desire for unification with the Federal Republic (FRG). While both the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in West Germany poured money and resources into supporting their parties, it was the unequivocal promise of immediate unification and a flood of Deutschmarks "within months" which swung the East Germans behind Chancellor Kohl's sister party.

Above all it was the manual workers, especially in the south, who voted heavily in favour of the Alliance; between 55% and 60% voted this way. The industrial areas of the south were the most economically disadvantaged under the Ullbricht-Honecker dictatorship. The relative and deliberate impoverishment of Dresden and Leipzig, by comparison with Berlin, discredited all the parties of the left.

Contrast

The traditional elites of the GDR, the intelligentsia, white collar workers and bureaucrats, in contrast, largely voted for the PDS believing this party would maintain their privileges and protect their jobs. Only 33% of these sectors voted for the Alliance.

The Social Democrats managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Earlier this year they seemed in a commanding position. But their leader in the FRG, Oscar Lafontaine, played on chauvinist resentment at the "privileged" treatment of East German refugees, while in the East they campaigned on a "Yes to capitalist reunification, but slowly!" platform. This was hardly likely to outbid Kohl or reassure those who feared for the consequences of unification.

The PDS did pick up more support than had first been expected. Undoubtedly this was a result of it relating to the genuine fears of



Leipzig worker reads the election results

existing members of the hated Stasi secret police are described by the Spartacists as "witch-hunts".

Paralysed by the dangers of capitalist counter-revolution, they suspend all practical demands for workers' revolution against the bureaucracy. Absurdly, the SpAD claims that the Soviet troops are "the only force defending the GDR". But how? And what are they defending?

Spartacist public meetings carefully avoided any mention of British, French and West German imperialist support for the continued presence of Soviet troops even following reunification "until the position has stabilised".

The SpAD has been built in an utterly opportunist fashion, consciously blurring the distinction between Stalinism and Trotskyism, adapting to the Stalinist/reformist ideology prevalent on the left in the GDR and abandoning Trotsky's programme of political revolution. As the LRCI's comrades in the GDR have warned honest SpAD members, their party is built on sand. SpAD militants committed to the ideas of Trotskyism should salvage what they can before their fragile party collapses completely. They should turn to the LRCI. ■

garding the level of support they have built up since November, the workers of the GDR were clearly unimpressed with their heavily Stalinised version of Trotskyism.

The Spartacists received a mere 2,600 votes or 0.02% This put them on an equal footing with the German Beer Drinkers' Union, proving that cow-towing to the PDS and making drinking and driving legal are equally popular.

Posing as "defenders of the planned property relations", Spartacist public speakers utterly ignored the forty years of privilege, theft and counter-revolutionary tyranny that Stalinism meant for workers of the GDR. To the SpAD Stalinist control of the existing state apparatus was non-existent even prior to the elections. Conveniently, therefore, it need not be overthrown by the working class. So attacks on former and

Left on the margins

THE FORCES of the left that in some way consciously oppose the restoration of capitalism in the GDR were completely marginalised in the elections. The main left alternative to the PDS was the United Left. This bloc of social democrats, Gorbachevites, anarchists, Christian Socialists and centrists, drew support from sections of the intelligentsia and gained 20,000 votes and one member in the Volkskammer (the East German parliament).

But the GDR workers' first contact with proponents of "Trotskyism" at the ballot box was unfortunately the newly formed Spartacist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD). They ran an energetic campaign distributing thousands of leaflets, especially in Berlin. But, despite the grossly inflated claims and self-aggrandisement of the Spartacists re-

the LRCI

NEWS FROM THE SECTIONS

PODER OBRERO (BOLIVIA)

A new Trotskyist group is founded

ATA weekend conference in March a new organisation of Trotskyists was founded in Bolivia. The new group is called Poder Obrero and integrates comrades from the now dissolved Grupo Obrero Revolucionario (GOR), Guia Obrera and comrades that have broken with the POR of Guillermo Lora.

The new group bases itself on an LRCI document, the "Fundamental Principles of our Programme". At this founding conference Poder Obrero also adopted documents on the Bolivian political situation as well group statutes and perspectives. The latter involve plans for a bi-monthly publication.

This conference represents a small but significant step forward in the struggle to build a revolutionary party in Bolivia, a country with a heroic tradition of proletarian struggles since the war, but also a rotten tradition of centrist degenerate "Trotskyism" established by Lora.

Poder Obrero, in one of its resolutions, declared itself "a sympathising organisation of the LRCI" and "will maintain privileged discussions with it". ■

PODER OBRERO (PERU)

New publication out

ACROSS THE border in Peru the LRCI's section—Poder Obrero—has published the March issue of its paper (No 4). The first part contains articles dealing with the political situation in Peru and the second part looks more specifically with this month's presidential elections. (See page 13).

In the third section of the paper the comrades publish in full the recent resolutions of the LRCI on the Romanian revolution, East Germany, and Poland as well as one on the use of the SAF in Azerbaijan.

There is also a polemic against the positions of the centrist PST and PT groups in Peru who call for unconditional reunification of Germany, without in any way raising working class demands for the defence of planning and its democratic overhaul through political revolution.

In its new more professional format there is no doubt that Poder Obrero's publications are of the highest value in bringing together the nucleus of a Trotskyist cadre in the decade ahead.

For all those who read Spanish we invite you to write to Workers Power for copies (£1 inc P&P). ■

EAST GERMANY

Help LRCI work in the GDR

CHANCELLOR KOHL spared no expense in buying votes in the March elections. The LRCI did not stand candidates but it did invest considerable time and money trying to establish a bridgehead for Trotskyism in the GDR. Since November last year the comrades of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht from West Germany, together with our Austrian and British comrades have carried out regular work inside the GDR. We are now working from a base inside the country itself. This work has involved attending a series of public forums of the left as well as more detailed discussions with groups such as the Communist Alternative and individuals.

In the two weeks up to the election itself hundreds of copies of our Action Programme for the DDR were sold; similar numbers of the first issue of "Arbeitermacht DDR" were also bought. In this the programmes of the United Left, SPD and others were critically examined. A range of our publications attracted keen interest especially, the Theses on Poland from 1982.

Now the elections are over the real work begins. Public forums in Berlin at the beginning and end of April introduce this new phase of work. But we need money. Whether in strong German marks or weak sterling—money is urgently required! We cannot use Ecus unfortunately! Please help us raise the £5,000 we need for our East Germany fund drive to finance travel and publications in the coming months. The right have the initiative at present: help the LRCI take it back.

Send cheques (payable to the LRCI) to:
LRCI, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

OUT THIS MONTH!

TROTSKYIST INTERNATIONAL

Issue No 4 of Trotskyist International, the English language journal of the LRCI is published this month (£2.00 inc P&P). Articles include a major article, "The death agony of Stalinism", plus LRCI resolutions on the Romanian revolution, East Germany and South Africa and our action programme for the GDR elections. Send off for your copy now! ■

The LRCI

ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (Austria), Gruppe Arbeitermacht (Germany), Irish Workers Group, Poder Obrero (Peru), Pouvoir Ouvrier (France), Workers Power Group (Britain)

Poder Obrero (Bolivia) is in the process of discussions with the LRCI with the aim of becoming an affiliated section.

PALESTINE

The price of peace

ISRAEL'S NATIONAL coalition government finally broke up in mid-March over the issue of the "peace process" with the Palestinians. Whatever the outcome of current negotiations to form a new government the pressure will remain for a reactionary settlement of the Palestinian question.

After the imperialist sponsored settlements in southern Africa and the installation of pro-imperialist governments in central and parts of South America, the unresolved Palestine-Israel conflict is the key regional source of political instability for imperialism.

All the major political forces in the region, apart from the Zionists, have signalled their preparedness to make a deal. In November 1988 the PLO finally agreed to explicitly recognise the state of Israel's right to exist. The USA, Israel's chief backer, while still providing financial aid equivalent to 10% of Israel's GDP, has leant harder on Israel to come to the negotiating table.

In the wake of Gorbachev's global retreat US reliance on Israel, as the defender of imperialist interests in the Middle East against the "Soviet threat", has lost most of its urgency.

Reduction

In fact the massive reduction of Soviet aid to many of its former allies in the region (in particular it has cut aid to Syria by 80%) has gone alongside calls on those Arab states seen as traditional defenders of Palestinian rights to pursue a policy of compromise. President Assad of Syria has stated his willingness to have "unprecedented direct talks with Israel" regarding the Golan Heights and has renewed relations with Egypt which were severed after the Camp David Accord in 1977.

But wanting a settlement does not mean that the USA has the Palestinian's interests at heart. In marked contrast to Bush's support for Lithuanian self-determination, the USA has never recognised the right of the Palestinians to their self-determination. But last year the Kremlin and Arab states' retreat and the effect of the continuing *intifadah* on US public opinion and Israel's economy pushed Bush into making a proposal to start talks aimed at exchanging "land for peace".

Israel's Prime Minister Shamir responded by rejecting this path in favour of a proposal in May 1989 for talks with some Palestinians about the holding of elections in the Occupied Territories. These were rejected by the PLO since they were excluded from participating, and such elections would only lead to limited autonomy and exclude East Jerusalem.

The USA turned up the pressure. Secretary of State Baker threatened to withdraw a \$400 million loan to Israel to build houses for Soviet immigrants unless Tel Aviv froze new settlements in the occupied territories. Bush went on record to the effect that not only did he oppose new settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza but also in East Jerusalem (annexed by Israel in 1967).

Refusal to consider the US plans seriously finally led to the break between the Labour and Likud



Imposing peace the Zionist way

BY BRIDGET O'SHEA

halves of the coalition in Israel. Peres' Labour Party wants to pursue a pro-imperialist solution to the Palestine issue, and is prepared to deal with the PLO, even if through Egypt initially. Shamir does not and is under pressure within Likud from even more fanatical Zionists, such as Sharon, who want to press on and on with settlements and annexation.

PLO chief Arafat has shown his ability to keep his organisation wedded to a two state solution based on United Nations resolutions 242 and 338. While Arafat remains under pressure from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and even sections of mainstream Fatah supporters over the failure of the peace process, the leadership within the occupied territories remains desperate for some kind of settlement and so Arafat's grip remains firm. But for how long? The existing co-operation from the PLO and the Arab states cannot be assumed to continue indefinitely.

Jordan and Egypt are facing severe economic difficulties and their workers have begun to hit back at attacks on their living standards, inspired by the Palestinian *intifada*. But this in turn makes them keen to help secure a "land for peace" solution.

Expect

What can the Palestinians expect from a negotiated settlement? In March 1989 the US outlined its policy as follows:

1. A solution based on UN Security council resolutions 242 and 338.
2. The exchange of land for peace.
3. Security for all states in the region.
4. Political rights for the Palestinians.

In reality, this would mean, at best, a semi-autonomous Palestinian entity on the West Bank, subject to the economic, political and military control of Israel. For the Labour Party Zionists it represents the creation of a helpless "Bantustan" where the "surplus" Arab population can be used as a cheap source of labour and a captive market for Israeli goods.

The ability of the PLO leadership to deliver such a shoddy compromise on behalf of the beleaguered Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza rests, ironically,

on the organisation's own bankrupt strategy. Twenty years of guerrilla warfare, and more recently, two long years of the *intifada* have made many despair of ever realising self-determination in the whole of Palestine, including that which is now the state of Israel.

The programme of permanent revolution stands in opposition to the compromises and sell-outs planned by the PLO. Its starting point is the recognition that the Palestinian revolution is intimately linked to the political fate of the surrounding countries. Palestinian workers can form the political vanguard in the whole region, establishing the closest links with the more socially powerful working classes in the surrounding countries.

Defend

While we must defend the guerrilla forces from Israel we cannot share their strategy. This oscillates between negotiations and concessions and individual acts which, though heroic, are all too often doomed to defeat.

In contrast, revolutionaries fight for a strategy based on mass action, the building of trade unions, workers' and peasants' councils and a popular militia. These forces must be used to mobilise the Arab and progressive Jewish workers inside Israel to help break up the Zionist state from within.

On this basis a truly progressive solution can emerge: a socialist republic of Palestine in the whole of the disputed area. Anything less will be selling short the sacrifices the Palestinians have made for generations and condemning them to be prisoners with Zionist warders.

- Israeli troops out of the Occupied Territories
- Oppose the imperialist project of a West Bank Bantustan
- Smash the Zionist state
- Build workers', village and camp councils to take forward the struggle
- Build a mass defence militia
- Build fighting unity with all Jewish Israeli organisations willing to defend the democratic rights of the Palestinians and oppose repression
- For the right of return of all Palestinians
- For a workers' state in Palestine
- For a socialist united states of the Middle East

I would like to bring greetings from the miners of Peru and also from the Federation that I have the pleasure of leading. My visit to Europe began in Geneva. I have been attending the 46th meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission.

We raised the imprisonment of Victor Taipe (President of the Miners' Federation) who has been tortured and imprisoned in the city of Huancavelica for carrying out his trade union work. We also denounced the killing of 24 miners who have been the victims of the repression by the armed forces, of the para-military death squads and Sendero Luminoso.

The point of our visit here is to explain the principal problems that the Miners in Peru are suffering from and to try and develop a campaign against the repression and the imprisonment of brother Victor Taipe.

Now we want to explain a little bit about the situation of the miners in Peru. There are about 60,000 mineworkers who actually have job stability. There are about 30,000 other miners who work on a short term contract basis. And then there is another important sector of workers about 25,000 strong who are involved in gold prospecting. Mining products represent about 50% of foreign exchange earnings for Peru, so we are a very key economic group in the country.

Every year about one hundred miners die in accidents in the mines, and about 25% of the miners suffer from lung diseases. The mining camps are very isolated from the cities and 40% of the mineworkers in the whole of Peru have no housing. For many of the 60% who do have somewhere to live they live in four metre by four metre rooms with no basic amenities such as water and electricity.

The health service that is provided by the government and the mining businesses is very bad. In the majority of miners' camps there is no education provided except

"They killed our brothers"

On 1 March Jorge Quezada, General Secretary of the National Federation of Miners of Peru visited London as part of a European tour. He spoke in Lambeth to a group of trade unionists about the miners' struggle in Peru. The following is an edited transcript of his opening remarks.



Jorge Quezada

perhaps at the most basic level of primary education.

The situation has got even worse with the general worsening of the economic situation in Peru. In the last year we have had an inflation rate of 2,700% which results in the complete destruction of salaries. This is why we are fighting for collective bargaining at a national level so that we can deal with these important problems of basic salary and conditions of work and life.

In the course of the last year we have carried out three miners' strikes. These have been very combative in the sense that they

have managed to mobilise thousands of people in big marches to the cities to protest. Our brothers have been killed in the course of these marches; they have been assassinated by the security forces. But we have also had to confront a very evil campaign on the part of the mining companies who have tried to link our actions with subversive and terrorist organisations.

To give you an example of the intransigence of the mining companies, the cost of solving the current dispute would be \$25 million but they have preferred to lose \$50 million rather than accede to the unions demands! They know that

to concede these demands would give the miners a very important role, a strategic role in the popular movement in general. What they are afraid of is that they would be allowing us to develop from a trade union force into a strong strategic force in the political development of the whole country.

Unfortunately in Peru there is also another process of violence which affects the level of organisation of the miners. There is a group in Peru called Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and according to them they are carrying out a "revolution". But it is not true because they have killed our brother work-

ers and because they believe that anyone who does not become involved in their guerrilla warfare is a traitor. They have called "armed strikes" in some mining areas, but in their political platform there is not a single union issue relating to workers.

And the way in which they call a strike is totally undemocratic. It does not involve the workers at all in taking the decision. Because the workers have not agreed to take part they have assassinated union leaders in front of the workers. So when we had our congress last year we passed a resolution which condemned the methods of fear that groups like Sendero were using against workers. It is not that as a union group we reject the possibility of a violent change in Peru, but you can only have a revolutionary uprising with the support of the mass of the people.

In the course of our struggles we have made some gains. For instance a law has been passed in Peru for miners' pensions which means that miners are able to retire at an earlier age. We have also achieved for those miners on contract a minimum salary, because previously they were paid less than the minimum necessary to survive.

But so far we have not been able to solve the fundamental problems of living and working conditions for miners and so we are carrying on with our insistence that our demands should be discussed with the mine owners.

We are forming self-defence committees to protect miners against violence in mining the areas. These brigades have to carry arms to protect themselves against people who attack them. The enemies who attack us do not understand words and they attack us first. And we are also demanding in the national strike the freedom of Victor Taipe.

The situation in Peru in the next few months is going to be very difficult. It is very possible that a right wing neo-liberal government will win. But the workers and the popular movement in general will have to get organised to resist this right wing offensive. The union movement and in particular the mining sector is demanding more seriousness from the left wing parties in terms of their commitment to the interests of our people. If they don't manage to take this on board then the popular movement in general will condemn those attitudes.

In our last miners' meeting we agreed that we are a class organisation which will maintain its political independence. We will condemn our class enemies in the right wing FREDEMO coalition and in APRA. But we also call on the left to take more seriously the need for unity and to lead us politically; especially at this time when the socialist movement in the world is going through a great crisis.

It is important for us to carry on this struggle and also to thank all the brothers and sisters from different groups who are supporting us in this struggle. We thank you for all the support and actions taken on behalf of our principal struggle for the release of Victor Taipe. ■

Peru's Thatcher in waiting

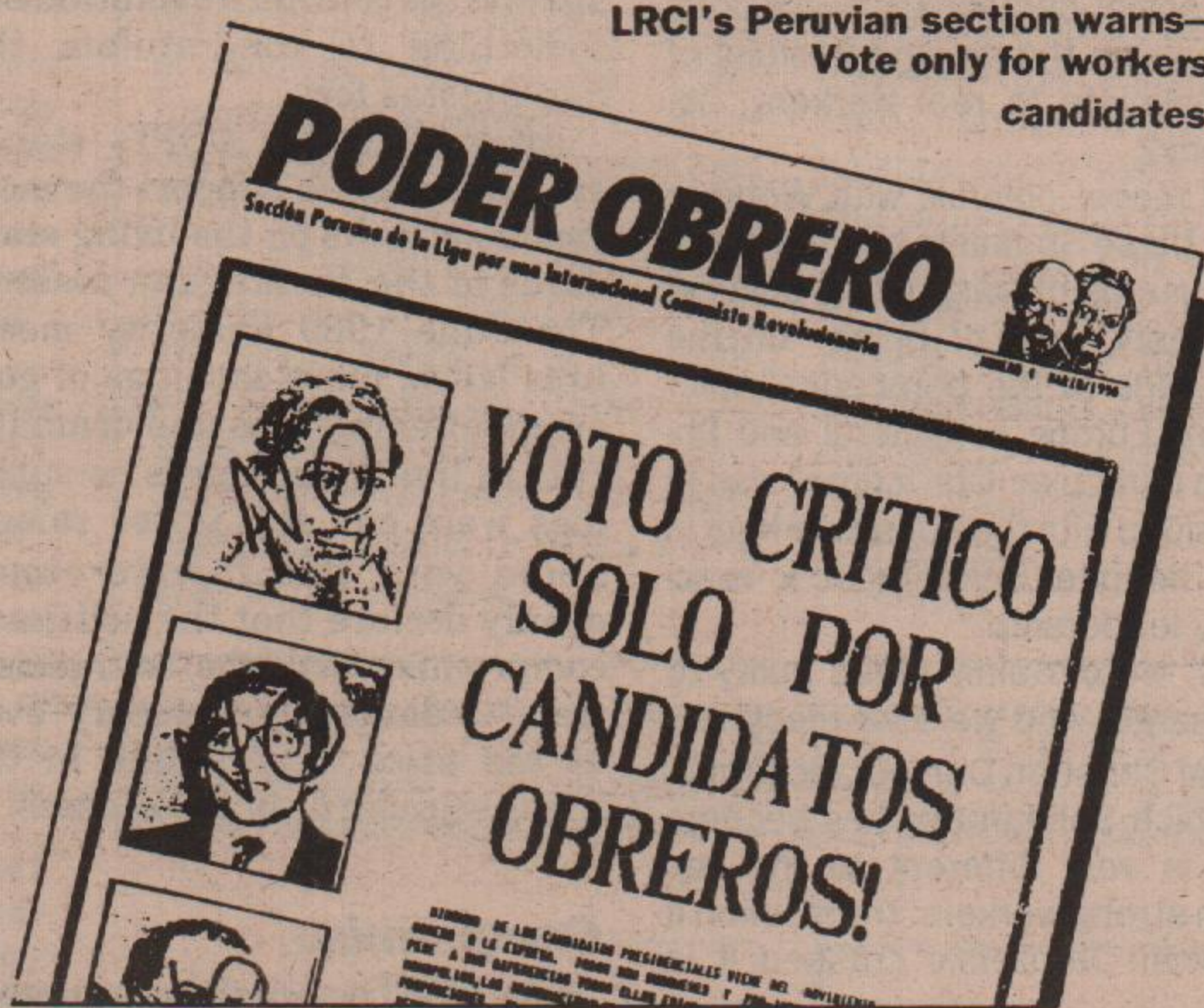
PERU IS once again rocked by a serious strike wave. Dockers, miners, and public sector workers are involved in a series of strikes to try and defend their living standards in a situation of hyper-inflation and increasing repression from the military.

Inflation reached 2775% in 1989 and in the first two months of 1990 it was still rising. As a result, despite numerous workers' struggles, real wages fell by over 50% last year. The Peruvian economy is in deep crisis. Last year its gross domestic product fell by 10%; in the previous year it had already fallen by 8%.

One result has been the complete discrediting of the APRA government of Alan Garcia. On the eve of the elections, now planned for 9 April, one poll gave them as little as 8% of the vote. This was the government which was elected in 1985 with over 45% of the popular vote! However the decline of the bourgeois nationalist Apristas has not led to a growth of the left. The coalition of parties which appears to be heading for a clear victory in the polls is the right wing, neo-liberal coalition FREDEMO, led by Mario Vargas Llosa. This novelist and self-declared admirer of Thatcher and her policies has promised the Peruvian masses a "short sharp shock" to pull Peru out of its economic difficulties.

Such policies are just as much in vogue in Latin America as they are

LRCI's Peruvian section warns—
Vote only for workers' candidates



now in Eastern Europe. Originating from the US "Chicago school" economic advisors, they were first "successfully" implemented in Bolivia after 1986. Here mass sackings of miners and the closure of whole sectors of state industry together with swingeing cuts in education and welfare provision, brought a dramatic drop in inflation and made the economy "safe" for investors. Of course this was at the expense of incredible misery and poverty for the workers and peasants of Bolivia. They are now being carried out in both Argentina and Brazil.

Vargas Llosa offers much the same recipe which aims to reduce inflation to just 10%. This will be achieved by savage cuts in government expenditure—he promises the dismissal of 50,000 government

employees and the abolition of all state subsidies on food and transport which are crucial to the masses attempting to survive on less than subsistence wages. He will tie the Peruvian currency to the dollar. This will have the effect of opening up Peruvian business and industry to the harsh winds of foreign, imperialist competition and will result in the wholesale closure of sections of Peruvian industry.

The fact that a coalition with such a programme is leading the field is a testimony to the failure of the Peruvian left to provide any sort of alternative programme for the masses. The United Left (UL), which originally grouped together all the workers' parties and centrist currents, has shown itself incapable of breaking with electoral cretinism. It failed miserably to mobilise the

workers in a united struggle against the series of attacks and austerity measures imposed by Garcia's government. This squandered the promise of the pre-revolutionary situation, which reached its high point with the general strike of May 1988, and allowed the right wing to harness the desperation of the masses with a supposedly "radical" alternative to hyper-inflation and growing impoverishment.

Alfonso Barrantes, ex-Mayor of Lima and ex-"Marxist", split from the UL denouncing those who advocated violence, that is those sections of the UL who defended the right of workers and peasants to defend themselves against the army and its death squads. He is now standing at the head of the "Socialist Left" (IS) which is neither socialist nor left. The UL is headed by Henry Pease, an impeccable bourgeois politician put there courtesy of the Communist Party and leader of the petit bourgeois, "Movement Towards Socialism" (MAS).

The Peruvian section of the LRCI, Poder Obrero, is intervening in these elections, calling on workers not to vote for any of the bourgeois formations which includes the Barrantes group. They call for a vote for the workers candidates of the UL, but not for Henry Pease and the MAS who should be driven out of the UL. They put forward an action programme of demands both to protect workers' living standards and to struggle for workers power.

If Vargas Llosa wins the elections the working class, the shanty town dwellers and the poor peasants of Peru will all suffer enormous attacks. The task will be to rally the workers and trade unionists to fight back and develop a strategy which can eliminate the very system of capitalism that condemns the masses to permanent and grinding poverty. ■

THE UNITED Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) have been the most slavish and uncritical cheerleaders of the Sandinistas since 1979. They finally declared the Nicaraguan government a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in 1985, a designation that bemused the Ortega regime, consciously committed as they were to defending capitalism!

A fortnight after the recent election defeat for the Sandinistas the USFI published a statement, (*International Viewpoint* No.180) offering their explanation of events. Much of the blame is rightly placed on the imperialist blockade and the Contra war which caused the dramatic social crisis. But they also recognised that the "adjustment policy" (the USFI term for the vicious austerity programme of the FSLN) "assaulted the living standards of the population". This in turn led directly to the victory at the polls for Chamorro's Unified National Opposition (UNO).

For the first time it is admitted, albeit in coded terms, that the mass organisations, the Sandinista trade unions, the defence committees, the women's organisations, were something less than the perfect organs of direct democracy that the USFI had been lauding for the last ten years. In USFI terms they had been "undermined by the social crisis". In fact they have always been powerless bodies of consultation.

The USFI statement goes on to declare:

"Undoubtedly, the existence of parliamentary democracy was

Last month's election victory for the right in Nicaragua ended more than ten years of Sandinista rule. Here John McKee examines the USFI's explanation of this defeat.



Families of Contra victims — their killers are set to find a place in new government

USFI

Learning nothing from defeat

necessary. But we wonder if it was not also necessary to extend the elements of direct democracy in order to consolidate the revolution. That is a democracy that would enable the broad masses to decide the essential economic and social policies".

Why, one might ask, if a healthy dictatorship of the proletariat existed in Nicaragua, was a bourgeois parliamentary form of gov-

ernment necessary?

But leaving this enigma aside, even now the USFI leadership can only "wonder" whether such organisations, as soviets, workers' and peasants' councils are necessary!

But perhaps we should be grateful. Compare this long delayed criticism with what the USFI said less than a year ago on the tenth anniversary of the revolution. In

July 1989 the USFI's French language publication *Inprecor* could declare with all the fervour of the besotted fellow traveller:

"Revolutionary Nicaragua, ten years after the seizure of power, constitutes the most advanced experience of the twentieth century from the point of view of democracy."

And of course the twentieth century includes the early soviet regime in Russia!

The USFI has uncritically hailed every twist and turn of the Sandinista government. First they were against "bourgeois elections" after 1979. Then when the Sandinista's announced they were holding them the USFI pronounced this a great step forward in "socialist democracy".

The fact that bourgeois parties were allowed to function even where they were financed from Washington and were advocating support for the Contras was, for the USFI, not a reason to criticise the FSLN and demand action against the counter-revolution but something to congratulate the Sandinistas for!

After 1985 the USFI's stance even led them to support the most vicious attacks on the living standards of the Nicaraguan masses. The June 1989 austerity measures led to mass sackings of government employees and dramatic cuts in living standards as subsidies were cut and prices raised. Faced with this *Inprecor* could openly declare that the politics of compromise with the bourgeoisie were "undoubtedly necessary" even at the price of a decline in the living standards of the masses!

Compromise

The USFI peddled the argument that this compromise was necessary to give the revolution "a breathing space". After they had decided it was a dictatorship of the proletariat, then this austerity became the equivalent of NEP in Russia in the early 1920's.

The real difference, of course, was that capitalism and the market continued to dominate the Nicaraguan economy and the FSLN government's policies were committed to maintaining this. The FSLN was not making a tactical retreat while it strengthened the basis for a socialist advance. It was in fact undermining the very gains of the revolution and creating confusion and despair amongst the masses.

Could a small country, sur-

rounded and blockaded by imperialism, have done anything else? Are we demanding that it should have introduced "socialism overnight"? No, clearly if in the USSR it was always a reactionary utopia to believe in "socialism in one country", how much more so in tiny Nicaragua.

But the only chance for the Nicaraguan revolution to survive and for the workers and peasants to extend the gains of the revolution was to expropriate the capitalists and the big farmers, and to have ruthlessly suppressed the internal counter-revolution and its organisations. This certainly would have established a workers' state but not socialism.

The immediate task of such a state would have been to defend itself by spreading the revolution throughout Central America and beyond; by example, by agitation and by material support.

Impact

We should not forget the impact that the revolution had in 1979. The fact that within two years El Salvador was gripped by a dramatic revolutionary crisis and that other countries in Central America faced similar political problems, showed the possibility of success for such a perspective, the perspective of permanent revolution.

But this was not the perspective of the FSLN. Again their commitment to capitalism meant they had to seek allies amongst the European imperialists, even appeal to the Democrats in the USA. They had to convince them that they were "safe" to deal with, that they would not "export" revolution. This led progressively to the Sandinistas agreeing to a series of Central American "peace accords" which in fact undermined the revolutionary forces in those countries and their ability to struggle.

After years of defending capitalism, eroding workers' rights and living standards the Sandinistas were rewarded by being thrown out of office by a reactionary imperialist alternative, so disoriented had the masses become. The USFI must take their share of the blame for this. They have for ten years provided left cover for this undermining of the revolution.

In this, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Trotsky's death, the USFI leadership has underlined once again how far it has travelled along the road of centrist degeneration from Trotsky's revolutionary Fourth International. ■

THE LENINIST Shoring up Stalinism

BY ARTHUR MERTON

TIMES ARE hard for those on the left misguided enough to dedicate their lives to serving Stalinism. In Britain *The Leninist* is increasingly staking its claim to Stalinist orthodoxy by insisting that the East European workers are strikebreakers and that their mobilisations are "democratic, largely peaceful, counter-revolutions against bureaucratic socialism".

Their analysis of Eastern Europe is only partially based on the undeniable trend towards capitalist restoration that is sweeping the degenerate workers' states. Partially, because for *The Leninist* the mass mobilisations and revolutions which swept away foul despots like Honeker and Ceausescu were, from the very outset, always and inevitably reactionary. Just before the Romanian masses launched their civil war the National Secretary of *The Leninist* declared:

"Yet, whatever the subjective intentions of the masses, objectively what is taking place is a process of counter-revolution through which the rule of capitalism is being restored and the film is being run backwards." (emphasis in original)

This is defeatism of the worst sort. Genuine revolutionaries recognised an element of the masses' subjective intentions—their burning desire to destroy the hated rule of anti-communist Stalinist bureaucracies—as profoundly progressive. The scale of these mobilisations offered the possibility for crystallising an independent workers' movement.

The formation of mass workers' organisations amongst Soviet miners, of workers' committees within the factories of Romania, of strikes and strike committees in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and, to a limited extent, in the GDR, were all living proof of the potential for proletarian

political revolution.

To refuse to recognise this potential could only mean one thing—siding with the Stalinists to defend their rule, against the working class. And a strategy with this at its centre could only strengthen the ability of the forces of counter-revolution and capitalist restoration to mislead the workers.

For all their fulminations against capitalism this is what *The Leninist* recommend. They are and have always been defenders of the Ceausescu and Honekers. They stood with the Stalinist tanks in Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1981 and would do so again today. In each case they express the classic Stalinist view—the working class cannot be trusted as the agent of socialism, the parasitic bureaucracy can. And the working class is then blamed for turning to the reactionary restorationists.

All of this flows from *The Leninist's* confusion of the rule of the bureaucracy with post-capitalist property relations. In their analysis the two are the same and the two must be defended.

True, they have recently castigated Gorbachev and raised, without of course acknowledging Trotsky, the slogan of political revolution. Nobody should be fooled by this verbal radicalism.

Their "political revolution" amounts to a reformist programme. It involves radical reform with the objective of saving the Stalinists and excludes any call for working class independence. Indeed against SOTSPROF campaigns for real unions in the USSR they counterpose the sacred integrity of the state run unions.

They explicitly reject calls to arm

the workers—they might use the guns against the Stalinists. Nowhere do they call for the smashing of the bureaucracy. Instead enlightened elements would "remove the bureaucratic deformations" and "usher in direct soviet democracy". How comrades, given the abiding hostility of the Stalinists to real workers' democracy?

In a recent polemic with Workers Power these Stalinists had the nerve to accuse us of "disgusting political dishonesty" and of being "on the wrong side of the barricades" over Eastern Europe in general and Poland in particular. Our "crime" was to have sided with the Polish workers in 1981 despite Solidarnosc's reactionary leadership.

Well, we certainly plead guilty to this charge. And we also recognise that the Christian Democratic formation which Solidarnosc has become today is very different to the ten million strong workers' trade union it was when Jaruzelski crushed it in 1981.

But as Marxists we fully appreciate that in the course of the class struggle, movements can be transformed and that once progressive movements can succumb to reactionary leaderships.

The real dishonest elements in the labour movement are those with whom *The Leninist* solidarises, the people who presided over what they laughably call "living socialism" in Poland and elsewhere. These people have perpetrated the big lie: that the regime of parasitic plunder, corruption and decay shaped by Stalin and his murderous henchmen had something to do with real socialism, with revolution and with communism. Like all lies, it could only fool the masses for some of the time. That time has passed. ■

Sandinistas, not so bad

Dear comrades,

I read your article on the Sandinista defeat in the March issue with interest. However, there are some fundamental points I disagree with.

Firstly, you state that the "fall in the support for the Sandinistas was, to a considerable extent, a direct consequence of the policies they pursued". While this is no doubt true, particularly with regard to the economic policies, you seem to ignore the context in which this has occurred. On top of the normal problems of a small developing country, the combined effects of the Contra war, the US economic blockade and the denial of aid from multilateral agencies have brought the country to the verge of collapse. I fail to see anything the Sandinistas could have done in these circumstances.

Secondly, you failed to mention the crucial question of the state. The Nicaraguan Revolution smashed the old repressive state. A popular army and militia was created. Any attempt to reverse the gains of the revolution would run up against fierce opposition from this quarter.

Thirdly, on the crucial question of the economy. The implication of your article is that the Sandinistas should have introduced socialism overnight. Even in an advanced industrial nation this would not be possible. In a small, backward

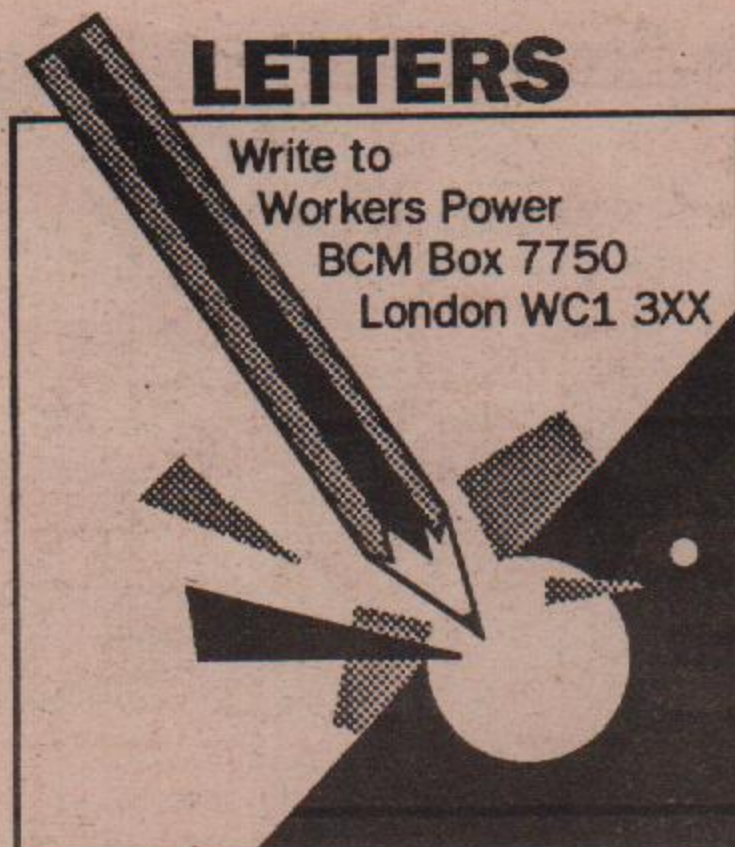
economy such as Nicaragua it is impossible. The material conditions simply do not exist. A small working class and large peasantry run an economy largely dominated by two commodities—coffee and sugar. Surely the crucial lesson of the Russian Revolution was that socialism cannot come about in a backward economy, isolated from the main centres of capitalism.

We would be deluding ourselves if we thought Nicaragua could bypass this process. In a sense, you are right when you say that to run a capitalist economy, "you have to use capitalist measures". However, the crucial thing is for socialists to defend the gains of the Revolution—improved health care and education, land reform and

trade union rights. These basic democratic rights must be protected at all costs.

Finally, no comparison can be made between the Sandinistas and the collapsing Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe. The former are genuinely popular among the masses and even today are the largest single party. I am not a cheerleader of the Sandinistas and do not deny that they have made some mistakes. However, it is crucial to look at the overall balance sheet and not make vague generalisations as you seem to have done.

Yours in solidarity,
A Mason
East Ham
[see facing page]



Swiss up in arms

Dear Comrades,

Recently Switzerland, long renowned as the El Dorado of capitalism and home of social peace, saw the biggest protest demonstrations in its history. Thirty thousand protesters marched through the streets of Berne in early March.

They were protesting at the results of a parliamentary investigation into the activities of the secret service and the political police (BUPO). This showed that behind the facade of democracy and liberty in this country there stood the normal repressive apparatus prepared and waiting to strike if ever bourgeois rule was threatened.

It was revealed that the political police had files on over half a million individuals out of a total population of 6.5 million! These files, which detail all aspects of the dissidents from childhood till death (indeed there was even a special file kept for dead members of the Stalinist "Party of Labour"!), were used to target subjects for surveillance through a whole network of full-time, part-time and freelance spies whose organisation could have taught the Stasi a few lessons.

Some 30,000 individuals, mainly from left wing or other "subversive" groups, were targeted for immediate detention in camps should a serious crisis break out in Switzerland.

Files were also kept on anyone who visited Eastern Europe, even on holiday, on anyone who had contacts in the Eastern bloc and, of course predictably, on all foreign immigrants, "naturally" considered subversive. The files turned out to include such dangerous characters as a Green activist who campaigned in favour of solar energy and a priest who had criticised the growing commercialisation of Christmas in Switzerland!

The demonstration in Berne took place after a resolution from the Social Democrats demanding the abolition of the political police was rejected by parliament. Not only had the Social Democratic MPs all discovered that they had files kept on them for years, but to add insult to injury they discovered that the hotel in Eire, reserved by the Swiss government in case of war and occupation, had no rooms allocated for any of the Social Democratic MP's!

The scandal of the political police has lifted the veil on the real nature of the Swiss state to many who had never questioned its democratic credentials before.

It has resulted in a considerable shift to the left in a country with a tradition of conservatism second to none in Europe. This is something Marxists can and must build on in Switzerland.

L Gessler
Switzerland

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 League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI 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!

Capitalist restoration

Dear Comrades,

A letter from comrade Gelis in your last paper completely ruled out any danger of the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe or elsewhere in no uncertain terms. While this might give the comrade a warm feeling of security in what he obviously finds is an increasingly uncertain world, self-delusion in politics is no substitute for scientific analysis.

The comrade attempts to back up his assertion in a number of ways. First he declares that as the workers have grown up under post-capitalist property relations there is as much chance of these states returning to capitalism as the capitalist west "returning to feudalism". The comrade not only underestimates the corrosive effects of decades of Stalinism in these countries but also misunderstands the nature of the workers' state itself.

The Stalinist bureaucracy robbed the working class of any semblance of political power in the Soviet Union, and never allowed it to have any in Eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc.

Its rule not only blocked the road to socialism but also undermined the very foundations of the workers' state itself as Trotsky constantly pointed out it would. These factors have discredited the post-capitalist property relations in the eyes of the workers.

The events that are unfolding before our eyes are proving once again that unlike the capitalist state, a workers' state, to develop and survive, needs the conscious and active control of the workers over the state and the economy.

This is why comrade Gelis' analogy with feudalism and his confidence in the ability of the Soviet Union and the degenerate workers' states to resist the restoration of capitalism is so much wishful thinking. If nothing else surely the election result in the GDR should prove this to him.

Comrade Gelis ends up arguing that those who think that western capitalism, which cannot sort out the Latin American debt, can buy up half the planet are living in "cloud cuckoo land". Of course only a major imperialist power like Germany will be able both to restore capitalism and improve living standards in a crisis wracked country like the GDR.

But what makes Gelis think that this will be the case throughout the East? Far from it. Restoration will be done on the basis of profitability and super-exploitation where the working class and rural workers will pay the bill. The future for Poland, Hungary Romania etc. if the imperialists get their way, will precisely be that of a Peru, Argentina or a Colombia.

H Johnson
Sussex

Protective legislation? No thank you!

Dear Workers Power,

Whilst the Anarchist Workers Group also opposes the Embryology Bill we disagree with you when you argue "that laws should be enacted which protect the donors of embryos from commercial exploitation" ("Why we oppose the Embryo Bill", Workers Power 128).

Your position can only contribute to the confused belief that the capitalist state can play a progressive role through "protective legislation". We share your concern about commercial exploitation and the need for adequate resources, but we look instead to the collective power of the working class as the only force capable of regulating embryo research in a progressive way.

The Race Relations Act and Sex Discrimination Act have not eradicated racism or women's oppression, so why should state regulation of scientific research be any different?

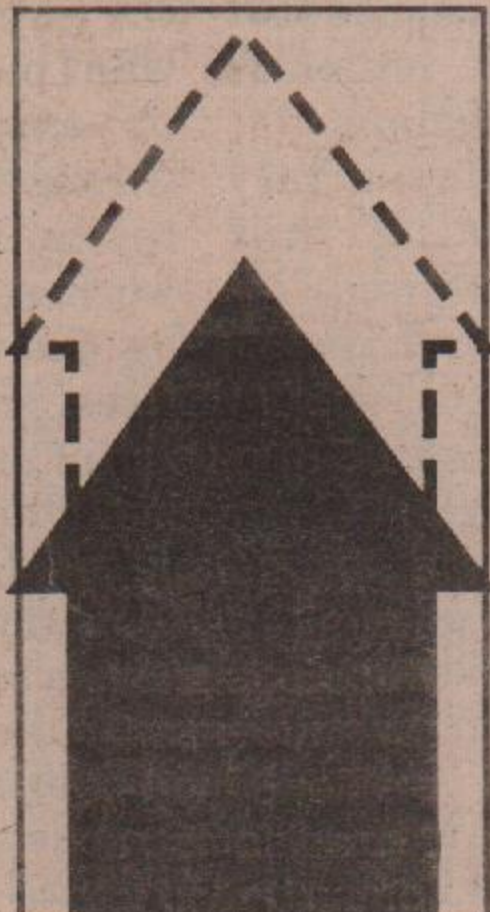
We argue this for two reasons: firstly, we don't believe it is desirable to demand state intervention; secondly, we want to encourage workers to resolve their problems through their own independent action.

Workers must therefore fight to end the industrial and academic secrecy which surrounds scientific research, must take direct action to prevent exploitation and go onto the offensive to force the bosses to concede the necessary resources. If you object that such action is unrealistic you would only reveal a lack of faith in "workers' power" and the ability of our class to transform society.

Yours in solidarity,
Duleep
AWG London branch secretary

workers power

Fighting Fund



£18,004

Thanks this month go to South London readers £144, a Central London supporter £9.40, a West London subscriber £60 and a reader in Madrid £30.

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British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

FOR AN INDEPENDENT WORKERS' STATE LITHUANIA

IN JANUARY Gorbachev scolded Lithuania. Like an angry parent faced with a rebellious teenage child he warned: "You're not going anywhere, you cannot leave the Soviet Union."

Now Gorbachev acts like a jilted husband in a divorce case, combining psychological blackmail with threats of physical force to keep Lithuania within the Soviet family. But this was never a voluntary or happy marriage. Lithuania, along with the other Baltic republics Estonia and Latvia, were dragged to the altar in 1940. As a result of a deal between Hitler and Stalin they were all annexed by the Soviet Union.

Justified

Ever since the Baltic people have had justified national grievances. *Glasnost* after 1987 promoted the growth of various popular fronts in the republics aspiring to fight for national rights. But the complete collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe in 1989 has encouraged nationalist leaders to organise for full independence and secession. Lithuania has taken the lead because of the massive non-Russian majority there.

The hostile response of Gorbachev, however, indicates that he does not view the break up of the USSR in the same way as events in Eastern Europe. He is prepared to tolerate a degree of autonomy, even possibly secession for some of the Soviet republics, but strictly on his terms.

Gorbachev is saying: "you can secede, but first you must get the agreement of the Soviet parliament". The new law he is preparing on mechanisms of secession requires a five year cooling off period and then still has to be agreed by the whole parliament.

Gorbachev has used his newly acquired presidential powers to try and intimidate the Lithuanians into submission. Troop manoeuvres inside and around the capital Vilnius, increased KGB presence along the border, expelling foreign diplomats and confiscating arms—all these measures have been used by a man who promised that force would not be used. There are an estimated 20,000 Soviet troops in Lithuania already and 2,000 additional paratroopers have been sent since independence was declared.

The imperialists have been shown up as real hypocrites on this issue. National independence and self-determination is something they espouse only when it suits them. The USA never recognised the Baltic states as part of the Soviet Union after the 1939 Stalin-Hitler treaty, but Bush has so far refused to recognise the Republic of Lithuania. One US official said that to do so would be "putting a stick in Gorbachev's eye", not a thing Bush wanted to do as he

values collaboration with the Soviet leader.

The imperialists have urged moderation on both sides. Bush warned "It is very important that force not be used. My appeal would be for peaceful resolution". His fear is that the use of force would provoke mass resistance from the Baltic workers and obstruct the way towards a negotiated settlement with the aspiring bourgeoisie of these states.

The Lithuanian people have clearly expressed their wish to leave the Soviet Union. We believe they have the right to carry this wish into action. Workers throughout the Soviet Union (especially the majority Russian workers) should support them and demand that Gorbachev immediately withdraws the troops and recognises the independent state.

Independent

Of course, small states like Lithuania will never be truly independent. Lithuania is currently dependent on the USSR for much of its raw materials and energy supplies. One bureaucrat from the State Planning Committee in Moscow remarked:

"If they want to be independent then real life will begin. No-one's going to sell them oil for thirty little roubles a ton."



Protesters greet Gorbachev on a visit to Vilnius earlier this year

But this is no argument for obstructing the right of the Lithuanian people to determine their own destiny. That economic dependence results in large part from the economic policies of the USSR. It is precisely these kind of imposed policies that have fuelled the nationalism of the Lithuanians.

The Soviet bureaucracy is now promoting still greater nationalism by demanding that each republic be self-sufficient.

The leaders of Sajudis, the nationalist movement in Lithuania, are in favour of independence to pursue the rapid introduction of the market. They aim to restore capitalism.

Does this mean that workers should oppose independence? No. The masses have shown, through petitions, through the election, through participating in

their thousands in demonstrations that they wish to be independent.

The key task for revolutionaries now is to fight for an independent Lithuanian workers' state. The workers must be broken away from the nationalist leaders who want independence in order to exploit the workers through the restoration of capitalism. They will reward workers for their sacrifices by the imposition of price rises, job losses and cuts in social provision.

Lithuanian workers who want independence must fight for their own direct democracy of workers' councils, they must defend the nationalised property against the introduction of private ownership and the market, and draw up their own plan for production to meet their needs.

With this programme the

national struggle can be turned into a successful political revolution against the Moscow and Vilnius bureaucracy, and prevent the counter-revolution planned by the pro-capitalist nationalist leaders.

A healthy workers' state in Lithuania would certainly be isolated and attacked from all sides. But it would also act as a beacon for all workers in the USSR and the republics.

Spreading the political revolution throughout the USSR and Eastern Europe would provide the basis for a new, free federation of workers' states, within which all nationalities were truly guaranteed their rights to self-determination.

For an independent workers' council state of Lithuania! ■

● Now turn to page 10