

# Workers power

British section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

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Number 160 October 1992

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Price 40p/10p strikers Solidarity price £1

- **STERLING PLUMMETS . . .**
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■ **MAJOR, Lamont and the entire Tory government are in deep trouble. Their economic policy is in ruins. Even normally loyal Tory papers are swarming like sharks around the Cabinet.**

The cause of all this is the collapse of sterling and the ever lengthening recession.

In September British membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) at 2.95 German Marks to the pound was unceremoniously abandoned. The pound plummeted, reflecting both the deep crisis surrounding the Maastricht treaty and the weakness of the British economy.

## Destroyed

In the same month thousands of jobs were destroyed each day by the ongoing recession. British Aerospace, the country's biggest manufacturing group, Ford and a host of other manufacturing and retail giants announced massive job losses. And there is still no sign of the promised "upturn".

Major and Lamont talk about the recession and the collapse of sterling as if they were natural disasters. "Nothing to do with us" is the message—it's the world economy, the Bundesbank, "fault lines in the system", that are to blame.

But the recession and the collapse of sterling are man-made disasters, inevitable in the crazy system where profits are more important than the needs of ordinary people.

The economy is not growing because investment is not profitable. Investment is not profitable because the cost of borrowing money is high. Interest rates are high to combat inflation. Inflation is endemic because the whole rotten system is propped up by massive debts, by money that literally does not exist.

In the early 1980s the British bosses, led by Thatcher, encouraged a deep recession to "weed out" inefficient firms and discipline the labour force. Only the leanest and fittest, those with the lowest wage costs and highest productivity would survive.

## Dependent

The policy destroyed large parts of British industry. Far from making Britain "strong and competitive" it became increasingly dependent on imports as its industrial base with-

# Make them pay!

ered.

The Major/Lamont economic policy that now lies in ruins was based on the idea that the Tories could ignore this reality. Britain could carry out the same "counter-inflationary" policy, with high interest rates restricting investment, as EC top dogs Germany and France. It ignored the fact that this would only deepen the recession.

Unfortunately for the Tory leaders, the bankers and big businessmen who play the world's currency markets did not ignore these facts. Sterling was forced out of the ERM, its value has plummeted and, with it, inflation is set to rise.

No-one knows what Tory economic policy is anymore, not even Major and Lamont. A coalition of Thatcherite and Tories in the House of Lords plus sections of the manufacturing bosses have been urging the Tories to lower interest rates, let the pound fall further and reflate the economy.

Major and Lamont have no inten-

tion of repeating the "Lawson miracle", an expansion based on debt which ended in disaster. Indeed they cannot. They already face a massive public sector debt. Instead they look set to reach for the one sure weapon they know how to use: massive public spending cuts.

Direct in the firing line will be the pay cheques of public sector workers. The "pound in your pocket" now buys 13% less on the world market than it did a month ago and is still going down.

## Dearer

Everything will be dearer, from Spanish holidays to Danish Bacon. But millions of public sector workers will be told to take an effective pay cut. A 2% limit is in the offing even though inflation is predicted to rise.

Benefits for the unemployed, the old, the sick and the poor will all come under the axe. And the public services, education, health, and



Dealers make a killing as major's policies are shattered



transport will suffer yet more cuts. The Tories are once again lining up working people to pay for the bosses' crisis.

There is only one way that workers can avoid being made to pay for the recession and the sterling crisis: that is to organise a fightback now.

They must not expect any lead to come from our "leaders" in the Labour and trade union movement. Labour leader John Smith and union barons like Bill Jordan have backed the main planks of the Tories' ERM policies to the hilt. They have called for a "National Recovery Programme" but can only waffle meaninglessly when asked where the money to pay for it is to be found.

Revolutionary socialists have an answer to that question. Was it our imaginations, or did the Tories not spend £10 billion to prop up sterling? What about the hundreds of billions that changed hands on the day the markets hammered sterling? And what about the cool £10

million that one currency dealer alone boasted about making from that day's speculation?

There is plenty of money to pay for the things the bosses want. Our answer is to take that wealth out their bank accounts and use it to provide services and jobs for millions of workers. Make the bosses pay for their own crisis.

The vicious cycle of recession and devaluation can only be broken by attacking the system that causes it.

A government that really acted in the interests of the working class would immediately act to control all currency movements and make speculation illegal. It would nationalise the banks, building societies and finance houses. It would nationalise, under workers' control, the major businesses and pour public spending into a plan drawn up by working class people themselves, to provide jobs, services, houses and a safe environment.

## Capitalism

It couldn't do any of this without challenging the foundations of capitalism itself. That is why John Smith and company have no alternative to Major when it comes to the crisis in the economy.

And that is why we have to build real opposition to the Tories, outside parliament, in the streets, factories, housing estates, offices, dole queues and colleges. We need a political party committed to making the bosses pay for the crisis, not the workers. We need a socialist party committed not to propping up the capitalist system, but to its revolutionary overthrow. ■



## NEWHAM

**T**HE NATIONAL executive of the local government workers' union, Nalگو, ordered its members in Newham to abandon their long running strike and return to work. This was without an agreement with the Labour council over the strike's central demand of no compulsory redundancies.

This miserable treachery triggered a swift and angry response from rank and file workers. More than 200 Nalگو members, including strikers from Islington and Camden as well as Newham, besieged the union's national office, demanding to see Nalگو general secretary, Alan Jinkinson. When there was nowhere left in the building for him to hide, he appeared and admitted that he had struck a secret deal with the council's leadership.

A militant lobby of the union's emergency committee on 28 September forced the leadership to retreat. They authorised a further ballot in Newham, but refused to rescind the order to return to work. As we go to press the results of this ballot are not known.

Jinkinson's betrayal came only a week after he had boasted of "a magnificent victory for Nalگو and for the whole trade union move-

## BROAD LEFT CONFERENCE

**I**N EARLY October Nalگو's Broad Left (BL) met to discuss "The Employers' Offensive: How We Fight Against It". The publicity for the conference claimed that by building links from below the BL could "carry the argument for a real national strategy against the employers' offensive... and put maximum pressure on our leaders to fight back now."

The need for a national fight back is glaringly obvious (see reports this page). But more than just pressure on the leadership is needed. Everywhere it is busy sabotaging action. It needs to be fought by an organised rank and file movement. The BL want none of this.

Dominated by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the BL has continued in the role of a left pressure group on the leadership. At the conference reports were given from many of those currently involved in action. But when it came to debating a strategy for linking those struggles and developing a national fight the SWP had no answers.

The resolution from the steering committee (packed full of SWPers) and the manifesto for the BL were vacuous anti-Tory statements with no outline of the steps necessary to unite the struggles and begin to defeat the treacherous leadership. Three amendments from Workers Power, on building rank and file links, developing strike committees, democratising the BL itself and using the planned national day of action on 4 November as a launch pad for further national action, were all voted down by the SWP.

So, at a time of substantial strike action in Nalگو the BL has no strategy for relating those strikes or unifying them. Instead it looks very much as though the decision to adopt a manifesto is a prelude to the SWP standing a BL candidate at next year's annual conference. This will really get the council bosses and the Nalگو bureaucrats sweating!

Workers Power will continue its fight, inside and outside the BL, to build a rank and file movement in Nalگو. The present wave of militancy won't last forever. Now is the time to mobilise for national action. Now is the time to organise and mobilise the rank and file to fight for it. ■

# Council workers in action

ment." The occasion for his empty eloquence was the Court of Appeal ruling which overthrew a High Court decision that the strike was illegal.

The Labour council had taken the strikers to court to get the action called off. The High Court judge obliged the council by declaring the all-out indefinite strike in Newham was illegal because branch officials had argued for a "yes" vote in the July ballot on strike action across the branch!

The dispute between Nalگو and Newham dates back to last January when the council tried to sack three workers in the Poll Tax office. After months of selective solidarity action, which failed to budge the council an inch, the branch leadership agreed to ballot on borough-wide strike action.

Nalگو's national leaders agreed at the annual conference to authorise full strike pay. The bureaucracy were partially motivated by their fear of Labour councils destroying the cosy relations between Nalگو officials and council bosses. But the major reason for their unusual generosity towards militant strikers was to strengthen their control of the strike by being its paymasters.

Whatever the outcome of the dispute there are vital lessons for every militant in Nalگو. The actions of the council, in using scab agencies, using Tory anti-union laws and imposing compulsory redundancies, show that local government workers employed by Labour councils in the 1990s are facing the axe not the "dented shield". More cuts are on their way. Every council worker must be ready to fight La-

bour when it imposes them.

Most important is the lesson not only of Newham, but of the other council workers' strikes all over the country. To win in the face of cuts, to defend jobs, services and wages, there needs to be co-ordinated action across boroughs and across council unions. While many of the disputes are local in origin, their causes are national.

We need a national response, which means linking the Newham strikers to other Nalگو members in London and beyond. It means building a rank and file movement in the union that can either force the leadership to act or organise action independently and overthrow that leadership if it won't fight. ■

## SHEFFIELD

**S**HEFFIELD CITY council has pushed through a £7 million cuts budget in the wake of disastrous losses after the World Student Games fiasco. Next year it is faced with the possibility of £40 million cuts. Swimming baths will close, clothing grants for schoolchildren will be cut, and charges will be introduced for home helps.

On top of this the council has forced through plans to sack up to 700 workers and make the rest of its workforce take six days unpaid annual leave this year. That is what the American bosses call a "giveback", and it's no surprise to find John Smith's Labour Party pioneering such anti-working class practices in local government.

Over 8,000 Sheffield council workers struck for a day in the face of the council's action. Workers Power supporters fought for a campaign of strike action and a democratic cross-union strike committee. But Nalگو members rejected calls for stepping up the action after their leaders orchestrated a campaign to accept the pay cut involved in the unpaid leave.

None of this guarantees an end to the job losses, and with Sheffield council in deep financial trouble it is sure to come back for more next year, safe in the knowledge that Nalگو leaders are prepared to do their utmost to ensure their own members "share the burden". ■

**T**HE RESIDENTIAL social workers' strike in Sheffield remains solid as it enters its fourth month. The strike has forced the closure of a scab unit set up by the Labour council using a private "consultant" and agency workers drafted in from outside areas.

This unit was set up deliberately to undermine the action without any regard to the health, safety and welfare of the children who were dumped there.

It is another example of how far a supposedly "socialist" council is willing to go to keep costs down.

At the moment the strikers cannot rely on local support. A ballot of field workers in housing and social services for supportive strike action was lost 900 to 600. In a disgraceful attack the strike was denounced by the local Nalگو full-timer. This took place at a special general meeting of local authority Nalگو workers to debate the response to the council's financial crisis.

The strikers were criticised for withholding services by being on strike for improved training and pay!

The residential workers are seeking to co-ordinate their action with similar workers in other areas. A national delegate meeting of residential workers is being held and instead of waiting to see how or whether the Sheffield workers win, this local action needs to grow into a national strike with national leadership. ■

## POLYTECHNICS

**O**N 3 JULY polytechnic employers made a final pay offer to administration workers in Nalگو of 4.3%. Immediately Nalگو members in colleges and polytechnics around the country began voting for strike action, for the first time in 15 years.

The anger at the pathetic pay offer is understandable. In the last four years Nalگو members have had to cope with an increase of just under 50% in student numbers. Their working conditions have seriously deteriorated. They have seen their workloads increase and range of responsibilities be extended. All of this has occurred against the background of no substantial pay increases and no increase in staffing levels over the last four years.

Since the ballots national strikes

have taken place on 20 August and 29/30 September. A further three day strike is planned but the executive have not named the day yet. In addition sectional action has broken out at colleges around the country.

There is a real opportunity to build a cross union strike in the polytechnic sector with the government attacking Natfhe and Nupe members. Natfhe are balloting on action against a 3.9% offer and Nupe members face the threat of privatisation. Joint action committees on the site should be built now while the struggle is on.

At Manchester Poly we have been working closely with Natfhe, Nupe and NUS members. During the September action students from Manchester Area NUS produced joint leaflets with us, joined our picket lines and asked students to support

the strike and not cross picket lines. Plans are underway to include representatives from the other three unions on our strike committee to involve them in the planned three day action.

The most vital task facing us is to prevent the Nalگو bureaucracy squandering the militancy that has built up. The danger of selective action is that it wears us out, while allowing the bosses to ride out the storm.

We need cross union strike committees on every site and a determined fight for an all out indefinite strike until our demands for a £1,000 or 10% pay increase (whichever is bigger), a 35 hour week, an adult wage at 18, a minimum 25 days for leave and improved leave for long serving workers are won in full. ■

## BRITISH RAIL

# Defend Manchester guards

**B**RITISH RAIL (BR) management is on the offensive against railway workers like never before.

Four local Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers' Union (RMT) guards' representatives from Manchester Piccadilly depot have been sacked for attempting to defend a local agreement with management.

The agreement prevented drivers in training from being pre-rostered to do guards' duties in the event of other guards being available.

The RMT Executive Council's response to the walkout by nearly all the guards at Piccadilly, following the sackings on 2 August, was to instruct members to go back to work pending a national ballot of all guards. Now the RMT bureaucrats have run away even from this option after management threatened the union with a court injunction—even though BR later admitted that the strike was not illegal!

Not surprisingly BR bosses in other areas have seized their chance. Union reps at Ashford (Kent), Eastleigh (Hampshire) and Willesden (London) Signal and Telecommunications depots have been threatened with a similar fate to the Manchester guards if they continue to defend what re-

mains of already decimated conditions of service and local agreements. This is a measure of management's confidence which flows from an increasingly cowardly and bankrupt union leadership.

Nationally the RMT leaders (and their counterparts in ASLEF and TSSA) have never been serious about opposing privatisation.

In ASLEF's case, despite a formal conference position of opposition to privatisation, the motions it submitted to this year's TUC and Labour Party conferences contain calls for "fundamental statutory safeguards before any franchises can go ahead" and "a new deal for BR so it can compete against private enterprise train operators" (like the anti-union Stagecoach company perhaps?).

Similar fudged and defeatist sentiments are now being touted by the RMT leadership. Its own conference motion to go for a ballot for industrial action is contradicted by RMT News Issue 14 which spells out the bureaucrats' real position. It calls for guarantees that private operators and franchisers will be required to show how they intend to provide investment. It accepts the concept of the sale of stations. Hardly the

stuff of resolute opposition!

The hard truth is that our leaderships have already accepted privatisation by refusing to fight the break-up of BR into business sectors earlier this year and by agreeing to see profit centres included in "a new machinery of negotiation".

Fullick, Knapp and the rest of the bureaucrats at national executive level failed to fight the sell-off of BR Hotels, BR Engineering Ltd, Travelers Fare and the jobs that went with privatisation. No wonder railway workers are worried sick about their jobs and futures with "leaders" like this.

The fact that effective union reps at Manchester are now being hounded out of the workplace, and others threatened with a similar fate, is an attack on railway trade unionism in general. The bosses want to break the unions altogether to make sections of the railway more attractive to private bidders. They must not be allowed to succeed!

The Manchester guards are attempting to speak at as many meetings around the country as they can to win wider support as well as trying to get an RMT Special Delegate Meeting called. They are building for

a national railworkers' meeting in Manchester to discuss the way forward in their dispute. These initiatives must receive maximum rank and file support from railworkers of all grades.

We need a rank and file movement on the rail that can put the maximum pressure on the union leaders and organise action independently of them whenever necessary. We need national strike action to secure the full reinstatement of the Manchester 4 and wage a genuine struggle against privatisation and calculated union busting.

### Messages of support to

RMT, Unity House, Euston Road, London NW1

and

RMT Manchester No.1 Branch  
c/o 7 Frampton Road  
Clayton, Manchester M11

Cheques/Donations payable to:  
Manchester Piccadilly Guards  
Hardship Fund



# LONDON HOSPITALS

# Strike against closure plans

ON THE day 120 student nurses started their training at Bloomsbury College of Nursing the *Guardian* revealed plans to close down the Middlesex Hospital. Those students will be lucky if they have a hospital to get their ward experience in, let alone one to work in when they qualify!

Charles Marshall, the new Chief Executive of UCH/Middlesex Hospitals is trying to beat the punch of the Tomlinson report by proposing the merger of the UCH and Middlesex, on the existing UCH site. He sees:

"... the chance to address our immediate financial problems in the context of a progressive, realistically sized development which could provide a model for the future provision of health care and medical education and research in London."

In other words, the plan is to cut beds and jobs to try and keep Bloomsbury & Islington afloat despite the rigours of the internal market.

By Autumn 1993 the main UCH block will be closed for refurbish-

BY A MIDDLESEX/UCH WORKER

ment. Eventually, a new block will be built nearby, and the Middlesex closed forever. How many beds will go? Anything up to 500! How many jobs will be lost? As many as 1500. Middlesex and UCH staff will be forced to compete against each other for those jobs that are left.

The last round of cuts in the summer were the worst ever in Bloomsbury, with 125 beds and 140 jobs lost. The latest proposals go much further, cut much deeper. And if they are to be stopped, we have to launch the biggest fight Bloomsbury has ever seen.

### Opposed

The summer cuts were opposed with one-day protest strikes. Health workers won some small concessions from management, but the cuts went through anyway. They closed all the beds that they wanted to. One-day strikes weren't enough to derail management's plans. The jobs have gone for ever.

One-day protest strikes will certainly not stop the closure of the Middlesex or UCH. Nor would they have a chance of stopping the implementation of the Tomlinson Report due to be published on 17 October. If the leaks are true, Londoners will see four major hospitals closed: St. Thomas's, Bart's, UCH/Middlesex, and Charing Cross. An already strained health service will be devastated.

There should be a campaign against the cuts with the aim of



London Day of Action; 21 August

winning indefinite strike action until the closure plans and the whole Tomlinson report are withdrawn, and there is a massive injection of funds.

Health workers cannot afford to be diverted into a campaign just to "Save the Middlesex", "Save Bart's"

or "Save UCH". That would be playing straight into the Government's hands. They would love it if workers and patients were divided amongst themselves, all pleading a special case for each hospital. It is a London-wide attack, and demands a London-wide response.

Of course, the campaign must start in the hospitals affected. But it cannot stop there. A campaign to save the threatened hospitals will be enormously strengthened by linking up with other hospitals in London. That must be the goal, and strike action is the strongest weapon health workers possess.

The unions must organise strike action against the cuts. But they won't do it if we leave it to the union leaders. They will only move if the rank and file make it too uncomfortable for them to remain sitting on their hands.

The London Health Workers' Co-ordinating Committee was set up to build for the action on 21 August, because the bureaucrats wouldn't. The Committee has continued to meet and agreed that it will support all health workers in their local fights and campaign for action across London to stop all the cuts and the Tomlinson Report. The Committee will continue to put pressure on the union leaders to act, but where they refuse it will

try to lead and co-ordinate a campaign of the rank and file to stop the devastation of the health service.

The Committee has called a shop stewards' and activists' Conference to discuss the Tomlinson Report and to work out a strategy to fight it. This conference should be the start of a vigorous campaign to build a strong and confident rank and file movement of health workers committed to striking against the cuts and for a massive injection of funds.

### Defeats

It is not an easy task because health workers have suffered a number of defeats over the years. But there have been some signs of militancy. The action on 21 August was a small success for the rank and file. This must be built on.

It is no good thinking that London-wide action will pop up spontaneously as the SWP likes to think. They have argued against a London Co-ordinating Committee and for simply "building in the workplace"—suggesting that a co-ordinating committee is no more than a shadow bureaucracy!

We need an organisation that is committed to building the links between activists, campaigning amongst the rank and file and preparing them for the time when they have to organise action themselves because the leaders have refused to do so. All health worker activists should argue at their union branch, shop stewards' committee or action committee to send delegates to the conference on 31 October.

Every hospital needs a democratic action committee, involving all health workers in the struggle, to win strike action. It must meet regularly, and produce a bulletin to keep everyone informed. Every section should meet, and send a delegate to the committees.

That way health workers can take control out of the hands of the bureaucrats and organise the kind of action that will win. ■

## LETTER

Sheffield Workers Power received the letter, printed below, from the River Don Stampings Dispute Committee.

Dear Colleagues,

The workers of River Don Stampings would like to express their deepest thanks and gratitude for your donation and support. You will be pleased to know that the management have now finally withdrawn their enforced proposals and the strike has come to a successful conclusion.

It is nice to know that people still care about their fellow workers especially during these days when any dispute is isolated by legal restrictions. Your help and the support of all the trade unionists forced the management to realise that we were not going to return to work due to personal hardship. Like most engineering companies we have suffered mass redundancies, lay-offs and watched as our working rights and conditions slowly eroded away. This latest attempt by the management was the last straw—there was no alternative but to strike!

We do not condone strike action but during a short period at the sharp end the help and support we have received from people like you has been brilliant. We cannot thank you enough.

Yours fraternally,  
River Don Stampings Dispute Committee.

Workers at River Don Stampings were on strike against the bosses' attempts to impose changes in working practices and times and undermine trade union rights in the plant. The strike was successful. We think the workers sticking together and fighting shows the value of strike action and why, in the face of attacks from the bosses, it should not only be condoned but actively fought for by every worker under attack.

## STUDENTS Make NUS leaders fight

THE TORIES are set to launch a major attack on students. Not content with having replaced compulsory grants with loans, they are now proposing a "graduate tax". This will charge graduates a higher rate of income tax so that their loan and college fees are repaid direct.

At the same time, John Patten, the Tory education minister, is planning a new law to do away with 100% membership of student unions.

The Tories want to save money on the cost of funding NUS and to force student union services to be tendered out to private firms. But it's not just the money they are worrying about. In the face of terrible overcrowding and appalling facilities in further and higher education, the Tories want to weaken student unions and reduce the potential for organised resistance like the wave of occupations last year.

The NUS leaders, after their refusal to lead a national campaign of occupations last year, are falling in line with the Tory proposals. They told us last year to "wait for Labour" to win the election rather than fight. Now their "strategy" is in tatters, so they are abandoning even the pretence of resistance.

They are busily dropping campaigning activity. They have themselves attacked NUS democracy by pushing for the abolition of NUS winter conference and the axing of local Area NUS organisations. Sheffield University Students' Union has sub-

mitted a document to Patten supporting services being funded by the college institutions rather than the union and for campaigning activity to be removed from state funding. This is completely in line with the Tories' aims. NUS have come forward with no proposals to fight the graduate tax.

The NUS bureaucrats may be able to keep themselves in their cushy positions by going along with the Tory proposals but students can't afford to be so "flexible".

We need a campaign of occupations up and down the country against overcrowding and underfunding, in defence of NUS, for the complete withdrawal of the graduate tax proposals, and for full living grants for all.

Students must link up with the college workforces and unions at a rank and file level to fight the tendering out of services through joint committees, co-ordinating occupations and strikes. We must demand the maintenance of state funding, but also launch a fighting fund now based on student contributions to ensure that our struggle is not made completely dependent on Tory money.

Above all we need to hold our leaders to account. All NUS officials should be elected at union general meetings and should receive the average income of the students they represent. They should be subject to immediate recall. If they don't fight, they should be forced to make way for those who will. ■

London Health Workers  
Co-ordinating Committee

**After Tomlinson?**  
Conference  
10am-4pm, 31 October 1992  
Camden Town Hall,  
Euston Road  
Nearest Tubes:  
Euston, Kings Cross

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The devaluation of sterling and the destruction of Tory economic policy represented far more than a little local difficulty for the British ruling class. They were symptoms of a wider malaise in world capitalism, yet another crack opened up in the "new world order". Paul Morris examines the causes and consequences of the Euro-currency crisis.

**"AS THE POLITICAL storm rises in Europe, we should all bear in mind the single world crisis of the 1990s to which everything else relates . . . The world crisis is testing to destruction businesses, institutions and governments . . . The world crisis is also a political one. We do not know what European governments will be put in power by the events of the 1990s, but they will certainly be very different from those of today."**

These words were not written by some crazed leader of an ultra-left sect. They were written by William Rees-Mogg, former *Times* editor and Tory establishment grandee, in the immediate aftermath of the sterling crisis. Rees-Mogg's panic-stricken catastrophism expressed the feelings of a whole section of the British ruling class which saw the bottom drop out of its world during late September.

### Standpoint

To understand the situation from a working class standpoint we should, like Rees-Mogg, start from a global view. Developments in the world economy and their effects on the politics of individual nation states are the key to explaining the crisis and charting a socialist answer to it.

The fact is that 1992, the year of the completion of the European single market, has dealt a serious blow to the European imperialists' plans for further economic and political unification.

The limits to the economic unification process were clearly displayed at Maastricht. The Maastricht Treaty, drawn up in December 1991, set a timetable for the creation of a single currency for the single market. The European bosses set themselves a common series of economic criteria—so called "convergence" criteria—which would lay a stable basis for the single currency.

In doing so they signalled to the weaker imperialist economies and the semi-colonial states of the European Community (EC) that their future lay on a second, lower tier of an

## ERM in crisis

THE DRAMA unfolded like a Shakespearean tragedy, each of the political leaders compelled to act out the consequences of the "fatal flaw" in their national economy.

The Bundesbank, faced with the inflationary costs of unification, signalled its determination to keep interest rates high. This created a linked but two-fold imbalance on the world currency markets. It exacerbated the contradiction between the ERM currencies as a whole and the dollar. At the same time it exacerbated the contradiction within the ERM between the Mark and every weak or potentially weak currency.

The resulting weeks of speculation confirmed with dramatic accuracy the Leninist understanding of the relationship of the imperialist state to imperialist finance capital. The state is nothing more than a committee for managing the affairs of the imperialist bosses.

In the face of the speculation all the "solemn and binding" agreements between the European governments were shattered, along with the last remnants of John Major's economic strategy.

Much has been made of the role of "speculators" in the crisis. But all the speculators do is look after the money of the really big bosses.

Over £20 billion was reportedly spent in the vain attempt to prop up the pound. But compared to the

£100 billion traded every day in London's currency markets alone this was peanuts.

If the actions of the currency speculators personified the power of the multinational finance capitalists over the most powerful national governments in general, the actions of the Bundesbank personified it in particular in Germany.

Kohl, acting in the interests of the ERM, finally attempted to politically pressure the Bundesbank into an interest rate cut to prevent the need for an orderly realignment (devaluation of all other currencies against the Mark). Bundesbank boss Schlesinger favoured the orderly realignment and put pressure on the Euro finance ministers for it.

Grudgingly the Bundesbank gave way to Kohl, but immediately delivered a snub to the politicians. The cut was limited to 0.25% and the markets were given the go-ahead to attack the pound and other weak currencies.

Instead of Kohl's plan to subordinate the interests of the German economy to maintaining the ERM, and instead of Schlesinger's orderly realignment plan to protect the ERM, the ERM itself effectively collapsed in spectacular disorder.

It foundered quite simply on the irreconcilability of the short term economic interests of the imperialist rivals who lead the EC. ■

imperialist Europe. Ireland, Greece and Portugal had little chance of meeting the convergence criteria by 1996, the target year for the planned push to a single currency.

The Maastricht negotiations also revealed the limits of political convergence between EC imperialisms.

EC President Jaques Delors outlined his vision of a united Europe in his 1989 plan: a Federal Europe, with national sovereignty partly ceded to a supra-national bourgeois-democratic state machine and with social equality enshrined in international law.

This social-democratic utopia was ripped up before his eyes at Maastricht, not only at the behest of British Tories, but with the collusion of most of the European bosses' governments. Like so many previous "visions" of peaceful, democratic in-

ter-imperialist collaboration it proved to be a fairy tale to delude the workers.

Instead the Europe designed at Maastricht was one where, if elements of national sovereignty were ceded, it would be to an unelected Council and Commission. Here the major imperialists could horse-trade with each other behind the backs of the European workers. The Social Charter became the neutered and effectively optional "Social Chapter" of the Maastricht Treaty.

Nevertheless the central thrust of Maastricht remained: the creation of a single currency. Without this the single market would become a sloped playing field, operating to the advantage of more efficient German imperialism. The major imperialist powers committed themselves to a medium

# AFTER ERM TURMOIL Only the workers can unite Europe

term strategy of low inflation, low borrowing and low public spending in order to facilitate "convergence" with the standards of German imperialism.

However this central element of Maastricht itself immediately began to come unstuck. Denmark's referendum in June narrowly failed to ratify the treaty. The EC rulers planned to re-negotiate a series of exemptions for Denmark and re-take the vote. The British Tory leadership, still unable to unite the major sections of the British bourgeoisie behind its EC strategy, hedged its bets after the Danish vote by deferring parliamentary ratification. The Irish bourgeoisie allowed its Maastricht referendum to become embroiled in the issue of abortion rights and exemptions from EC international law.

Seeking to kickstart the process of ratification, and thereby split the anti-European domestic right wing, France's President Mitterrand called a referendum on the Maastricht treaty.

This was a miscalculation. Signs that this referendum could go against Maastricht, thus really and permanently killing off the treaty, focused the attention of the world's money markets on Europe, leading to the partial collapse of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in the week before the referendum.

### Devaluation

A run on the Italian Lire forced massive interest rate rises and a formal devaluation before Italy suspended its membership of the ERM. A similar process led to the suspension of Britain's membership, an effective 10% devaluation of Sterling, and a 5% devaluation of the Spanish Peseta. Simultaneously currency runs and devaluations occurred in some of the weaker economies on the EC's periphery, notably Sweden.

The process of Britain's exit from the mechanism was the occasion for a diplomatic split, which rumbles on,

between London and Bonn.

Despite the narrow yes vote in the French referendum, the French Franc became the focus for currency speculation, but in contrast to the weaker currencies its link with the Mark was saved by massive German intervention and an interest rate rise.

As a result of these events, not only the Maastricht ratification process but the whole ERM mechanism on which it was based is in disarray. The economic policies of Britain and Italy lie in ruins.

### Limitations

To understand these events it is necessary to understand the purpose, and the limitations, of the whole project of the pro-EC European bosses.

The single market put into place via the Single European Act (due to be fully implemented by 31 December 1992) was the result of a new impetus given to the objective process of economic integration by the recovery of the mid 1980s. The single market removes all non-tariff barriers to trade—barriers like differential taxation, safety and insurance legislation etc. These barriers proliferated during the economic crises of the 1970s, and were all the more conspicuous because of the removal of all tariff barriers (import controls etc) in 1968.

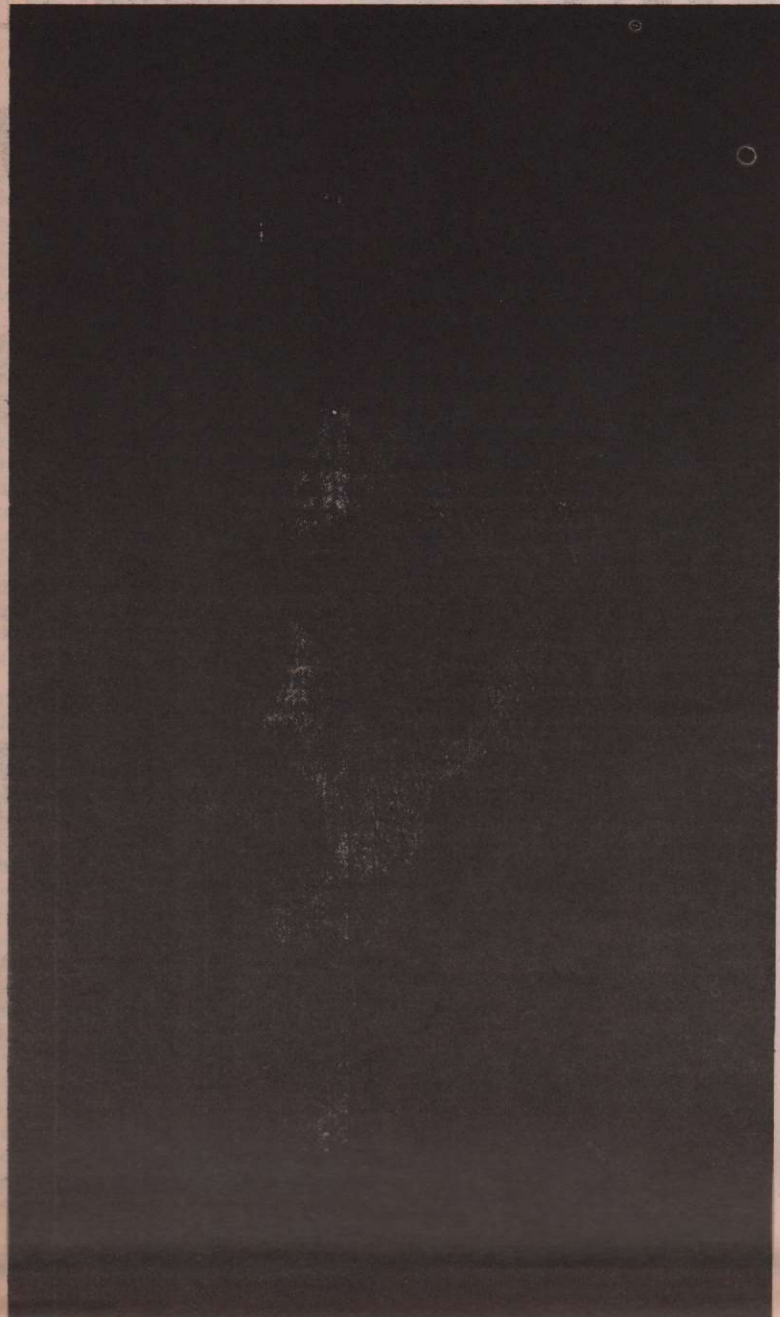
By creating the single market, the European imperialists exposed starkly the unevenness of the European economy. The "German bloc" of countries (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) remain the strongest productively. Since the early 1980s Mitterrand's France had tied itself to them by following its counter-inflationary strategy. A really open European market would expose the weaker imperialisms and the semi-colonies to the more competitive industries of the central EC powers.

And it was not just a question of strong and weak economies meas-



Italian pensioners protest against austerity drive





Lamont looks on as his economic strategy crumbles

ured statically against each other. Every national economy undergoes a cycle of growth and recession. Without the synchronisation of this cycle there could not be a really stable unified market.

The chosen path out of this problem was an agreement to create a single currency. This would be done via a voluntary agreement by the European imperialists to tether currencies to a central rate and bring them to converge on this rate through a generalised policy of deflation in the weaker economies.

This brought European imperialism up against one of the fundamental contradictions of the imperialist epoch: that between an international economy and the nation state.

Whilst it is possible to legislate for a single market by removing barriers to trade, this involves individual states ratifying a process which is objectively under way in Europe.

However a single currency required an act of will against prevailing objective circumstances: against the narrow interests of the national bourgeoisies and middle-classes, and against the economic balance of forces developing out of Germany's position in relationship to Europe and its world rivals, the USA and Japan.

For Marxists the idea of a "super-imperialism" spanning pre-existing national boundaries is not heretical. Objectively the capitalist economy constantly strives to overcome national boundaries. But the capitalist class can never break free from its existence as an essentially national formation, even in a period like the 1990s when stock markets have become truly internationalised. Transnational forms of capitalist rule have to take the form of imperialist domination, not collaboration. Thus, the only time the European economy has been united under a single political rule was during German imperialist occupation in World War Two.

In 1915 Lenin summed up the Marxist view as to the possibility of

The EEC was designed to prevent imperialist rivalry between Germany and France ever opening up a crack in the anti-Soviet cold war bloc. It also suited US imperialism, which after 1945 vigorously demanded free trade throughout the world.

But once the post war boom had ended, and with it the dollar-gold standard of international currency exchange (1971), the EEC began develop not as a form of US dominance over the world market but as a challenge to that dominance.

Every step towards economic collaboration between the Euro-imperialisms became an act of competition with US imperialism. The more Europe became a zone free of tariffs and "non-tariff barriers", the more effectively it erected the same barriers to US and Japanese goods.

From a world market underpinned by US productive domination, US lending and the dollar, developed its dialectical opposite. By the 1980s the world economy was characterised by growing US debt, the rise of the German Mark as the currency of the European economy, direct economic competition and *de facto* market protectionism between the blocs.

But having set themselves the task uniting Europe, the imperialists could not abolish the internal, *inter-European* imperialist rivalries.

### Subordinate

The Delors Plan was designed to subordinate these economic rivalries to the task of solidifying the economic bloc. Central to that plan was the need for German domestic economic policy to be subordinated to maintaining the ERM and encouraging the levelling out of inequalities between the major imperialisms in Europe. But September 1992 revealed that to be impossible.

German imperialism is ill-suited for the role it has found itself occupying in the EC. It is prevented both by constitutional law and by national bourgeois ideology from assuming a leading political-military role in the united Europe. Its internal political structure (strong regional governments) makes stable bourgeois government possible only by a series of compromises between regional and industrial sectors of the bourgeoisie.

The economic structure of German imperialism contains features which also hamper Germany's ability to be to the European economy what the USA once was to the world (see *Germany after Rostock*, p13).

Added to all this were the effects of German reunification. This was a major factor in exacerbating the tensions within Europe and between Germany and the USA. It also exacerbated divisions within German and the British ruling class politics.

That is why perfectly sane Tory

capitalism overcoming the national state form of its development:

"There is no doubt that the development is going in the direction of a single world trust that will swallow up all enterprises and all states without exception. But the development in this direction is proceeding under such stress, with such convulsions—not only economic but also political, national etc—that before a single world trust will be reached, before the respective national finance capitalists will have formed a world union of 'ultra-imperialism', imperialism will inevitably explode, capitalism will turn into its opposite."

(Lenin, in Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy* Merlin 1987).

We have to understand both the attempt to create a European bloc, and its present failure, as vivid confirmations of Lenin's words.

## No to Maastricht?

Why, since the Danish "No" and the French close shave caused so much panic in the European ruling class, do revolutionaries not advocate a referendum and a no vote throughout Europe?

It is because, in or out of the ERM, in or out of the EC itself, the bosses will have to carry on attacking the working class.

The fact that Major and Lamont are now cooking up one of the harshest rounds of public spending cuts in recent history is proof of this. Committed to the same medium term policy as the ERM participants, but temporarily without the ERM to help them, they are just finding new ways to carry out their strategy.

A "no" to Maastricht or to ERM membership on its own would be no victory for the working class in the fight to defend its jobs and living

standards. And, if the No campaign succeeded in stirring up nationalism, giving the far right an opportunity to launch itself onto the national political stage, tying the workers' organisations to the same aim as Thatcherite Tories and neo-Nazis, it could well prove a step backwards for working class politics. Does our policy of active abstention cut us off from the "real battle"? On the contrary, it allows revolutionary socialists to take part in any mass political debate without giving credibility to one or other wing of the bourgeoisie's political strategies. If a workers' Europe was on offer in any of the parliamentary votes and referendums we would urge workers to vote for it. But it is not. ■

## Europe vs USA

The ERM crisis was not simply the outcome of rivalries within the EC. The French referendum was the immediate focus for the crisis. But another major underlying factor in the crisis was the disparity between German domestic economic policy and that of the USA. Both the USA and Japan have adopted reflationary strategies to end the recession.

Part of US imperialism's reflationary strategy is low interest rates. In a world where the USA could set interest rates and dominate currency markets this would not have been a problem. But the Bundesbank sets interest rates for Europe. Domestic German economic reasons compelled the Bundesbank to keep interest rates high.

The result was a move from the Dollar to the Mark, a long term trend in the world economy which took on the character of an avalanche in September after a desperate US government lowered interest rates still further.

Though this avalanche was to reveal "fault lines" between rival imperialisms in the EC it was essentially the result of the divergence between German and US imperialist interests.

thinkers like Rees-Mogg can now refer to "the collapse of the Soviet half of the world system of authority" as part of the *crisis* of capitalism, whereas only two or three years ago they were greeting it as the *triumph* of capitalism.

The EC is the biggest trading bloc in the world market. It accounts for the largest share of world imports and exports. But beneath that formal predominance lies the fact that the EC is structurally the weakest of the three regional economic blocs that have emerged. Its growth rates were less than the global average throughout the 1980s. Its share of world trade in manufactured goods fell from 45% to 36% between 1973 and 1985.

1992 and Maastricht were designed to overcome this imbalance. Not only did barriers to trade have to be overcome, not only did a single currency and a central bank have to be created, the European bosses had to address the "problem" of high labour costs and high social spending compared to the USA and Japan.

### Onslaught

Influential voices amongst the European and multinational bourgeoisie have been urging a co-ordinated attack on real wages. In order to judge the possibility of a successful onslaught on European wage levels we have to have a clear idea of the balance of class forces in each country.

In Germany that balance still does not yet favour a generalised onslaught. In Britain, unfortunately, it does. France has a decade of wage cutting behind it and includes a vast disenfranchised migrant workforce. Greece and Italy are in the midst of anti-austerity strike waves, which could prove pivotal to the first phase of any Europe wide onslaught (see p12).

In addition, the balance of class forces is not static and does not necessarily revolve around economic factors alone.

In Italy, parts of Germany, France, Belgium and Holland the traditional bourgeois parties are facing a crisis of legitimacy and electoral support. The parliamentary anti-European right is growing, backed up with a small but important rise of the neo-fascist organisations. These factors too have an effect on the ability of the bosses to conduct a strategic and nationwide fight against wages and services.

Added to all this is the recession in the world economy. While Britain's exit from the ERM may allow its economy a small respite from the worst effects of recession, the worst is yet to come for Germany. As the German economy tips into recession, if the German bosses prove incapable of taking on and defeating their workers, what then will happen to the untold billions of speculators' money locked up in Marks? Will it go chasing round the currency markets once again in search of a safer haven and deliver a knockout blow to the ERM?

Finally there is the enormous question of whether a regional imperialist heartland, founded on social peace bought with Keynesian abundance, could inflict a massive attack on the spending power and "social wages" of its working class without risking a slump.

The "post Fordist" model of capitalist accumulation pioneered in the Far East and imitated in the USA's relationship with Latin America is based on a massive economic hinterland of cheap labour and low consumption. The European bourgeoisie still lags far behind its world rivals in relocating productive investment to cheap labour economies.

At the European level the weeks since the ERM crisis have signalled the clear possibility of a two-tier process of integration. Kohl and Mitterrand are threatening to speed up the Maastricht process at the expense of the weaker imperialisms. Britain and Denmark look set to be sidelined along with the semi-colonial economies.

Any of the weaker imperialisms who then wanted to participate in a "narrower but deeper" Maastricht process, would have to redouble their attacks on the domestic working class through spending cuts and attacks on wages.

### Certainty

One thing can be said with certainty. Without a miraculous upturn in the world economy there will not be a single currency for the Europe of the twelve in this century. The ERM crisis was the result of basic and inescapable inter-imperialist rivalries bursting through the wallpaper that the capitalist politicians have tried to paste over the cracks in their system.

Despite all the differences between the circumstances they were written in and those of today the basic truth of Trotsky's words in 1915 shines through:

"A more or less complete economic unification of Europe accomplished from above through an agreement between capitalist governments is a utopia. Along this road matters cannot proceed beyond partial compromises and half measures. But this alone, an economic unification of Europe such as would entail colossal advantages both to the producer and consumer and to the development of culture in general, is becoming a revolutionary task of the European proletariat." (The Peace Programme 1915)

Only the workers can unite Europe in a progressive way. And to do that they have to be won to a fighting strategy, an internationally co-ordinated resistance to the Euro-bosses' offensive, and a real internationalism that says:

- No to the Bosses' Europe!
- No to national chauvinism!
- Neither Maastricht nor "National Sovereignty", but the Socialist United States of Europe!



# WATERLOO 12 SEPTEMBER Nazis smashed!



Police attack anti-fascists

A MAJOR victory against the fascists was won at London's Waterloo Station on 12 September. The Nazi "music" group, Blood and Honour, selected Waterloo as a redirection point for a gig bringing together fascists from all over Europe.

Over 800 anti-fascists, including a significant number of black youth, responded to a call from Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) for a counter-demonstration. The redirection point was secured by AFA stewards, a lively demonstration greeted every fascist who tried to enter the station, and Blood and Honour's publicly announced plan of getting 2,000 Nazis safely to their venue was destroyed. In fact a large number of fascists found themselves in hospital instead. In the end the police were forced to close

the whole station.

Outside the station anti-fascists continued to mete out working class justice to the fascists. Only a massive police operation enabled a few hundred of the fascists to make it to the Yorkshire Grey in Eltham in South East London, a venue they had booked as "The Gods of War Scooter Club".

With the left in Europe faced with the rapid growth of fascist parties, with the fascists in Germany carrying out bloody pogroms in Rostock, the victory at Waterloo provides an important lesson in militant anti-fascism.

There was nothing coincidental about Blood and Honour's attempt to hold their first event in London since 1989 (when they also suffered a setback at the hands of AFA). With the backing of the Brit-

ish National Party (BNP) and the British National Socialist Movement (formerly the British Movement), Blood and Honour were consciously planning to capitalise on the rise of fascism in Europe.

Under these circumstances it was vital that they did not get away with it. AFA was determined to ensure that its policy of No Platform for Fascists was enforced in practice.

Its success in doing this and the demoralisation that this bred amongst the fascists points the way to the methods that the European workers' movement needs to adopt if it is to smash the fascist parties in their countries. There is no substitute for building a working class united front able and willing to impose the policy of No Platform with a vengeance.

## Support

AFA called on the Anti Nazi League (ANL) and the Anti Racist Alliance (ARA) to support the counter-demo. Workers Power supporters leafleted an anti-racist demo in Croydon earlier in the day to get as many people as possible from that demo to Waterloo. Workers at Waterloo Station were leafleted by AFA on the day before the demonstration to inform them of what was happening and appeal for support. A meeting of the Waterloo branch of the railworkers union, RMT, was addressed by AFA speakers earlier

## Drop the charges!

Twenty eight anti-fascists were arrested at Waterloo, many now facing serious charges as a result of the stand they took in opposing fascism. AFA has set up the Waterloo Defendants' Campaign (WDC). It is vital that this campaign is supported by every labour movement organisation and anti-fascist/anti-racist campaign in the country.

The campaign urgently needs people who saw any of the arrests

to come forward as witnesses.

Witnesses should immediately contact the campaign on: 071 738 7586.

Legal costs, and a vigorous campaign to get the charges against the anti-fascists dropped, will cost money. So please send donations with sponsorships to the WDC at: WDC, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

Make cheques/POs payable to: Waterloo Defendants' Campaign.

in the week.

All of these actions contributed to the success of the day. They demonstrated the effectiveness of building AFA as an open, campaigning united front. However, the ANL and ARA failed to deliver significant support for the action on the day despite their nominal support for the event. This was disgraceful.

But it should not be used as an excuse to justify the sectarian approach to these campaigns that the other forces in AFA, Red Action and the Direct Action Movement, have been practicing of late in refusing to support events called by other anti-fascist campaigns (see WP 159).

The victory at Waterloo can be used to build the workers' united front by having proved in practice to the supporters of the ANL and ARA the value of AFA's brand of militant anti-fascism. Squadism—the substitution of clandestine action for mass workers' action—is a dead end. But the organisation of determined anti-fascist defence squads is essential if the united front is to deliver the kind of blow that Waterloo delivered to the fascists. Such squads must be built with the closest possible links to local communities and workers' organisations in every area where the fascists dare to raise their heads.

Members of the ANL should ask themselves, and the Socialist Workers Party leadership, why the ANL mounted only a token mobilisation at Waterloo. What is the value of a "broad alliance" with MPs like Peter Hain and various bands and entertainment stars if it is bought at the price of a consistent refusal to commit the ANL to the policy of No Platform?

How did the supposedly "squadist" AFA manage to mobilise over 800 workers and youth, address the railworkers, bring local trades council and trade union branch delegations to Waterloo? How did it combine this with the biggest physical blow against fascism since the election?

At the forthcoming conference of London AFA it is vital that the organisation turns itself to the task of addressing ANL and ARA supporters in order to show it is the opportunists and careerists who are obstructing anti-fascist unity, not AFA.

Despite the victory at Waterloo there can be no complacency. In a recent council by-election in East London's Millwall ward on the Isle of Dogs, the BNP beat the Tories into fourth place and notched up 20% of the vote (657 to the Tories' 182).

Equally important, given the fascists' attempts to extend their base across the country, is the establishment of a national anti-fascist campaign with a democratic structure, a working class orientation and a clear commitment to the policy of No Platform. London AFA must initiate such a national campaign by calling a national, democratic conference of anti-fascist groups in the immediate future. ■

## AFA Carnival

The AFA organised Unity Carnival on 6 September—a successful event attracting over a thousand people despite driving rain—was marred by undemocratic practices and by incidents of violent and intimidatory behaviour by some AFA stewards.

AFA decided in advance to ban the sale or distribution of political literature at the Carnival outside of a political stalls area. This was an unnecessary and undemocratic limitation on the right of political groups to disseminate their propaganda at what was, after all, a political event.

Furthermore groups that did not book stalls were prevented from selling their literature even in the political area. It was understood that there would be possibilities for negotiation on the day, with groups being able to pay for stalls there and then. In practice this did not happen and groups such as the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe (CAFE) were prevented from giving out leaflets for an anti-fascist demonstration at an anti-fascist "Unity" Carnival.

Within AFA Workers Power opposed the restrictions proposed by Red Action and the Direct Action Movement. We were defeated. However, we agreed to steward the political area, thereby becoming implicated in the ban, despite our opposition to it. This was a mistake. In retrospect we should have made clear that our stewarding role would be confined to helping defend the Carnival against possible fascist attack and ensuring the smooth running of the other aspects of the Carnival.

In addition to these undemocratic actions the Carnival was also marred by heavy handed, intimidatory and violent stewarding directed against the left principally by Red Action members. CAFE members were jostled, a member of the Revolutionary Internationalist League was reportedly head butted and one of our own members, himself an AFA steward in charge of commercial stalls on the day, was physically intimidated.

We have written to Red Action demanding an apology for this incident and have yet to receive a reply. If a reply is not forthcoming we can only assume Red Action is an organisation which condones violence in the labour movement.

Workers Power unequivocally condemns all of these instances of violence and intimidation and makes clear that our comrades took no part in it. We are struggling within AFA to ensure that the campaign dissociates itself from them and takes steps to prevent their repetition. There was no need for such behaviour, no excuse for it. All it does is militate against building AFA as a democratic united front run along the lines of workers democracy. ■

## LABOUR CONFERENCE

# Left floundering

THE SAME media pundits who attacked Labour for extremism in the early 1980s are now accusing it of being too timid. They have a point.

The Tories are in crisis. There is real anger that could be mobilised against Major. Yet Labour, Her Majesty's Opposition, is an echo of the government, not an alternative to it. Last month's conference indicated that things are going to stay that way for some time.

For much of the 1980s the Labour conference was a battleground between the left and the right of the party, a headache for Foot and then Kinnock and a ready source of "loony left" scare stories for the tabloids. But Kinnock tamed the shrew. His regime transformed the party, placing the right wing in total control.

The Economist cynically summed up the new style Labour conference in its report of Blackpool:

"This year the women wore short dresses with gold buttons, not boilersuits. The men wore ties, not earrings. And you could hunt the bars of Blackpool without finding more than a handful of paid up loonies. So far, so quiet."

John Smith can be well satisfied with his first conference as Labour's leader. There was next to no discussion of the party's fourth successive electoral defeat, let alone an analysis of its root cause. The pathetic failure of the party's recruitment drive was explained away with the shameful excuse that mass membership parties are "a thing of the past". The National Executive Committee (NEC) is more right wing than it has ever been. Dennis Skinner lost his seat and Benn, now the only left winger

out of the hands of the bureaucrats and turned into a weapon to enable millions of rank and file trade unionists to exert their pressure on the Labour Party. This will not happen under Smith.

The left are isolated, weak and bereft of any alternative strategy. Their central challenge at Blackpool was over Europe. Their hero of the hour was Bryan Gould. His resignation was hailed by Ken Livingstone as the most significant event in the Labour Party for seven years. Gould favours privatisation, expanding share ownership and transforming Labour into the natural party for high earners. If his act of defiance is the Labour left's glimmer of hope, then heaven help them.

That the left have chosen to make opposition to Maastricht their rallying cry is proof positive of their bankruptcy. Maastricht or no Maastricht, workers face the ravages of capitalism. In or out of Europe workers face the same enemy. A British sovereign parliament is no less anti-democratic and anti-working class than a European one. No anti-German demagoguery from the likes of Dennis Skinner will alter this fact or disguise the left's political impotence.

Smith can rest easy. The working class cannot. Workers are living with the consequences of the recession: mass unemployment, attacks on services and an impending onslaught on wages. Labour is doing nothing to fight that. Exposing this fact, mobilising workers in struggle now and breaking them from the illusions they have in the Labour Party are the tasks of the hour. A campaign for a referendum against Maastricht is a criminal diversion from these tasks. ■

The link, via the block vote, should be defended. But the block vote itself should be democratised, taken

out of the hands of the bureaucrats and turned into a weapon to enable millions of rank and file trade unionists to exert their pressure on the Labour Party. This will not happen under Smith.

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## March and Rally against Racism and Fascism

Saturday October 31st  
Assemble 12.30pm St George's  
Park, Bloxwich

March to Walsall Town Hall  
Organised by Walsall Borough  
Labour Party and sponsored by  
Walsall Trades Council



# The bosses' offensive

**BRITISH CAPITALISM** is staggering from one economic crisis to the next. Despite the defeats the trade unions have suffered they are still a crucial barrier against the bosses' desire to solve their crisis at the expense of the working class.

The bosses have responded to this by shifting the focus of the class struggle within the workplace. Unless they are under dire financial pressure, their aim on the wages front is to hold pay rises down so their total pay bill rises broadly in line with the rate of inflation. They are not yet involved in a frontal assault to drive wages down across the board. In this period their main priority is the introduction of a package of measures to fragment trade union organisation, and to boost profits indirectly.

*Socialist Outlook* has provided a valuable service for trade unionists in producing a brief and clear description of the main elements of

Dave West reviews *The Bosses' Offensive*, a Socialist Outlook pamphlet, Price £1.50

this bosses' offensive.

This pamphlet contains a useful summary of the main points of the anti-union laws, from Harold Wilson to the next Tory bill. Its most useful part is the analysis of new management techniques, commonly (and as the pamphlet points out incorrectly) termed "Japanisation".

The techniques explained include: performance related pay, the moves to individual contracts, the development of work teams, reduction of job demarcation, total quality management, privatisation, compulsory competitive tendering, compulsory opt-ing-out and the shift to a low-pay, part-time workforce.

The pamphlet is well worth its price for this description of the new management methods. But it also claims

to provide the answers the labour movement needs, and that is where its problems start. *Socialist Outlook* is one of a dwindling band of publications still trying to fulfil the role of Trotskyist "advisors" to the Labour and trade union left. Tony Benn, and the lower layers of the trade union bureaucracy who form Benn's remaining base of support, are designated a "class struggle left". A strategic alliance with them is seen as the key to the future development of revolutionary socialism in Britain. The pamphlet is written as advice to these "left" bureaucrats, so its answers are limited to those they will view with sympathy.

The pamphlet's suggested strategy can be summed up in four slogans: defend the links between the unions and the Labour Party; no support for single union sweetheart deals; democratise the unions; build industrial action in defiance of legal restrictions.

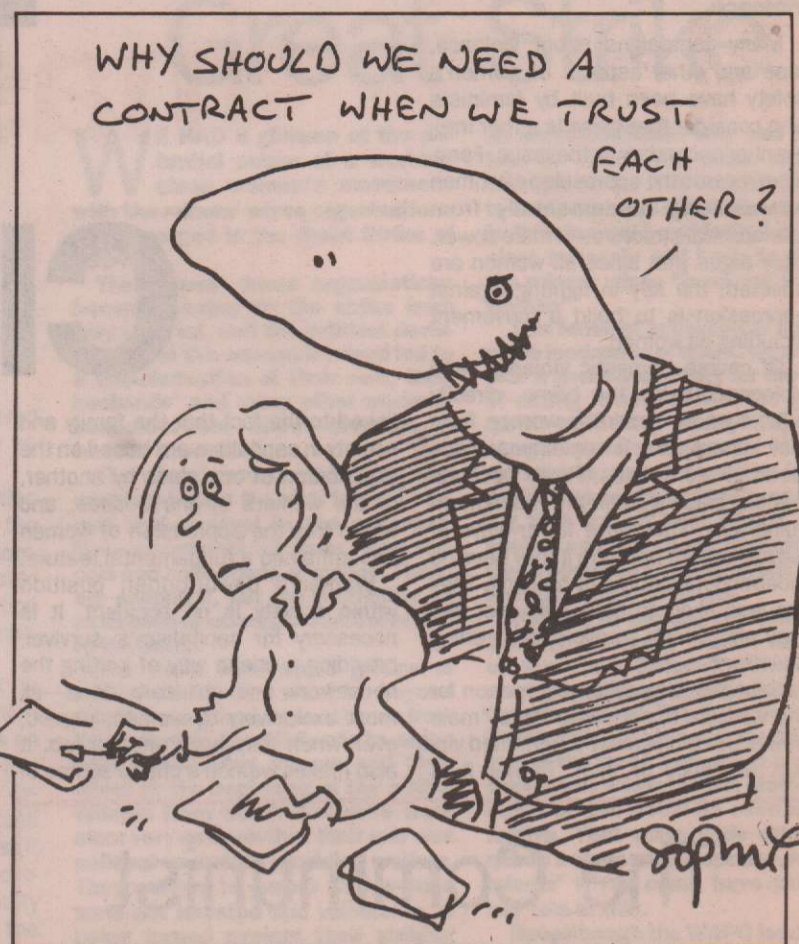
## Insufficient

No revolutionary socialist would disagree with these slogans. But on their own they are completely insufficient. As a finished programme they amount to a nostalgic call for a return to the good old days of the 1970s, not a fighting strategy for the 1990s.

Arthur Scargill, for example, could and does fight for all these demands. But under Scargill the miners strike was lost—not because of outright betrayal, but because Scargill's strategy remained bureaucratic and sectional.

The pamphlet documents the recomposition of the reserve army of labour as a result of the bosses' offensive. In addition to the four million plus unable to find work, there are an estimated 8 million (predominantly women) on temporary and short-term contracts.

It is little use for socialist activists to ritually recite at every union branch meeting that the only way to



win is by action which breaks the anti-union laws. The experience of the defeats of the past decade have showed that without an effective means to overcome the bosses' agents in our ranks—the trade union bureaucracy—the action we need is difficult or impossible to get.

Building for action which can beat the bosses needs more than pious platitudes about the need to defy the law; it needs concrete arguments about the effective means of carrying forward each individual struggle which breaks out.

The defeats of the past decade have demoralised almost an entire generation of militants in the workplaces. Those who remain are forced into isolation within their own workplace. To transform the unions so they can defend workers in the 1990s this isolation needs to be overcome. We need to build a rank and file movement which links militants within one workplace and across different workplaces, to fight the bureaucrats. Such a rank and file movement will only be built by organised and coherent activity by revolutionary socialists within the unions.

## Strategy

*Socialist Outlook* rejects that strategy. At the recent Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference its supporters had to be dragged kicking and screaming even to recognise the need to work with Broad Lefts in the unions. When it comes to the rank and file movement, a tactic based on the early Communist Party's Minority Movement, the leaders of *Socialist Outlook* all agree that it is a bad idea.

But the militant minority in the unions needs more than just an analysis of the bosses' offensive, and more than just the bare bones of an answer to it: it needs an organisation to start putting that answer into practice. That organisation will have to be built independent of the bureaucracy. *Socialist Outlook's* refusal to recognise this fatally undermines the strategy it advances. ■

## George Novack (1905 - 1992)

George Novack, philosopher and one-time leading member of the Socialist Workers Party (USA), died in New York on 30 July.

Born in a Boston suburb to Jewish parents, Novack seemed cut-out for American middle class life. After studying philosophy at Harvard University he went on to become a publicity agent for a prestigious New York publisher. However the stock market crash of 1929 drew him to Marxism and then to the small nucleus of US Trotskyism. In 1933 he joined the Communist League of America, rapidly becoming one of the "second generation" of leaders along with Joe Hansen.

During the 1930s and 1940s, his main role was as front man for the SWP's Civil Rights Defence Committee. He organised the defence of the SWP leaders indicted under the Smith Act during the war. He later organised the defence of SWP member James Kutcher, "the legless veteran", who successfully struggled against McCarthy's witch-hunt.

Novack's most important function during the 1930s was undoubtedly the organisation of the Commission of Inquiry into the accusations against Trotsky which were raised during the Moscow Trials. In particular, Novack was responsible for persuading US philosopher John Dewey to chair the proceedings and for the general organisation of the Commission's hearings.

In the post-war years the Fourth International became disoriented by the stabilisation of the world economy and by the expansion of Stalinism, and began to fall victim to centrist degeneration. Novack was a key figure in this process and in the organisational splits which followed. During the crucial period 1951-1953 he was a member of the International Secretariat, voting with Pablo—and Gerry Healy—to expel the majority of the French section and approving Pablo's perspectives of im-

minent international civil war that required Trotskyists to sink themselves deep into Stalinist and Labour parties.

As a truly flexible centrist however, when at the end of 1953 the SWP leadership decided that the opposite policy was correct, Novack fell in line. He never questioned the centrism of the FI or of the SWP, and became one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the SWP's pro-Castro line from the 1960s onwards. This presumably explains why he did not leave the SWP, despite its increasingly neo-Stalinist degeneration in the 1980s.

Today, Novack is probably best known for his series of philosophical writings which he began in the 1960s. Drawing on his academic training and a natural talent as a teacher, he produced a series of books in which an avowed Trotskyist tackled basic philosophical questions—amongst others *The Origins of Materialism, Empiricism and its Evolution and Polemics in Marxist Philosophy*. Probably his best book is *An Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, which remains a useful introduction to Marxist dialectics.

Like many centrist theoreticians, Novack was at his best when engaged in an abstract defence of the Marxist classics. His weak political method was revealed, however, whenever real political battle had to be joined. This is particularly revealed in his book on *Democracy and Revolution* and in his writings on Castro, where his undoubted intellect was harnessed to serve the SWP's centrist evasions on the key question of the state and of Stalinism.

Novack will be remembered as a talented Marxist intellectual who, like his comrades in the leadership of the Fourth International, was unable to resist the centrist degeneration of that organisation.

The bad method he learned, and indeed helped develop, in the 1950s, was to taint virtually all his later work, sadly limiting the usefulness of his ambitious programme of writings. ■

# 1917 workers power

# Legacy of the Russian Revolution

A DAY OF DEBATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION ★ TICKETS £5/£1 ★ CRECHE

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# 1992

## Workers Power Meetings

Sheffield: Monday 19 October 7.30pm SCAU West Street: *The rise of nationalism.*

Leicester: Thursday 20 October 7.30pm: *Socialists and the war in Yugoslavia.* See seller for venue.

## CORRECTION

Introducing last month's article on Yugoslavia by Jack Duret we implied that the author was a representative of Yugofax. Whilst Jack Duret has written for Yugofax he does not represent the magazine. We are happy to set the record straight.



**T**HE CAMPAIGN Against Domestic Violence has been built with a clear recognition of the class issues at stake in the struggle against domestic violence.

Many campaigns about violence, rape and other aspects of women's safety have been built by feminists who consider that class is either irrelevant or secondary to the issue. Feminism regards the oppression of women as resulting fundamentally from patriarchal structures of male power. They argue that since all women are affected, the key in fighting against oppression is to build a movement including all women.

Of course domestic violence, and violence outside the home, directly affects and intimidates women from all classes. But it remains a class issue in two senses. Firstly because working class women are much more vulnerable. They have fewer ways of leaving violent partners if they have no independent income or housing. They are less likely to have cars, nor can they afford taxis to avoid threatening situations.

Secondly, the underlying reason for the violence is not some innate "male power", or biologically determined violent tendency of men. Rather it is

linked to the fact that the family and society in capitalism are based on the exploitation of one class by another, of the workers by the bosses, and within this the oppression of women has remained a fundamental feature.

Women's downtrodden position within society is no accident. It is necessary for capitalism's survival, providing a cheap way of getting the housework and childcare done—almost exclusively by women, unpaid, even when they have another job. It also makes women a cheap source of

labour when the bosses need more workers. It divides the workers with the daily propaganda which sets boys against girls, men against women, constantly telling us that women are inferior, weaker, emotional and best suited for jobs in or related to the home.

The violence against women is directly related to the dominant view of women: subordinate, obedient, seen as either nagging wives or sex kittens. All such roles cast women as potential victims of violent attack. The isolation of each family unit, the fact that what goes on in the home is private and not supposed to be talked about, increases this potential.

Domestic violence is a class issue not only because it affects working class women more, but also because to end it requires a fundamental transformation of society to get rid of the system, capitalism, that upholds the oppression of women.

This is why we welcome the chance to work in CADV and to discuss with women about how recognition of the class issues involved should influence our strategy for the campaign, and the wider fight against women's oppression.

### Campaign

CADV faces several problems at the moment. Most importantly, what is the campaign doing and where is it going? There are several practical issues the campaign should focus activity around. Firstly we should continue to campaign for the release of women imprisoned for defending themselves against domestic violence.

The freeing of Kiranjit Ahluwalia in September is a victory, but there are still other women in prison. The change of Kiranjit's conviction to one of manslaughter has not clearly established whether years of abuse constitute provocation, and more cases will have to be fought out in the courts. The law should be changed to ensure that women like Kiranjit cannot be imprisoned for defending themselves.

The second focus of the campaign should be demands on local councils and the government to provide public funding for 24-hour emergency helplines staffed by qualified and trained workers, with a call out service of workers trained to deal with situations of domestic violence.

Some CADV branches are proposing that members of the campaign themselves set up help-lines. We are opposed to this. Workers should be properly trained and paid proper wages to do this work. It is not only difficult, requiring counselling and many other skills, it is also potentially dangerous. We should focus our energies on forcing the state to provide such basic and necessary resources, not substitute ourselves and provide an inadequate, unprofessional service. We are also opposed to women volunteering to do, for free, what many would consider a natural extension of their "caring" role.

CADV should campaign for an increased provision of secure refuges for women and their children, and for permanent housing with adequate security. Refuges and housing for women who suffer violence is not enough. It is the lack of access to

## CAMPAIGN AGAINST

# The fight for a Class Women's

Workers Power supports the Campaign against Domestic Violence. We believe the campaign can carry out practical actions to face the oppression of women. The articles here by Gen D discuss the campaign and its links to that debate, explaining why we need a working class

## The Communist Tradition

**T**O ACHIEVE women's liberation we have to fight for socialism. The two things are inseparable. Within the Second International, and later the Communist International, Clara Zetkin showed how the struggles could be linked. She led the women's organisations of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), arguing that women needed to be organised, their rights defended and that the party should take up their struggle for jobs, better wages and the vote. She built up a massive organisation of working class women in the unions and party. Zetkin produced a newspaper with a print run of over 100,000 and 140,000 women were members of the SPD.

Zetkin was clear that women needed to be organised within the party but also in a broader way which involved non-party women in the unions and communities. She recognised the particular difficulties women faced, because of their oppression, and she favoured special papers, meetings and organisations which related specifically to working class women.

Zetkin also recognised that once in the movement, women had to continue to be organised to press for their interests to be taken up by the party and unions as a whole, and to challenge sexism. This meant educating men and involving them in work amongst women. Arguing for the party to take up unionisation drives amongst women Zetkin wrote:

"In order to fulfill this task (unionisation), two things are necessary. The male workers must stop viewing the female workers primarily as a woman to be courted if she is young, beautiful, pleasant and cheerful (or not). They must stop (depending on their degree of culture or lack of it) molesting them with crude and fresh sexual advances. The workers must rather get accustomed to treat female labourers primarily as female proletarians, as working class comrades fighting class slavery and as equal and indispensable co-fighters in the class struggle. . . In view of the increasing use of female labour and the subsequent results, the labour movement will surely commit suicide if, in its efforts to enroll the broad masses of the proletariat, it does not pay the same amount of attention to female workers as it does to male ones." (Zetkin, *Women's Work and the Trade Unions*,

1892)

This tradition was taken up by the Bolsheviks in Russia, and later by the Communist International led by Lenin and Trotsky. Alexandra Kollontai, along with Clara Zetkin, helped to push the question of women's organisation onto the agenda of the Communist International.

They argued that each Communist party should build a women's section to do work amongst women workers, and that they should draw in non-party women with special organisations and forms of propaganda. They rejected the all-class women's movement of the feminists, and counterposed the working class women's movement, led by revolutionary women and linked into the general struggle for socialism.

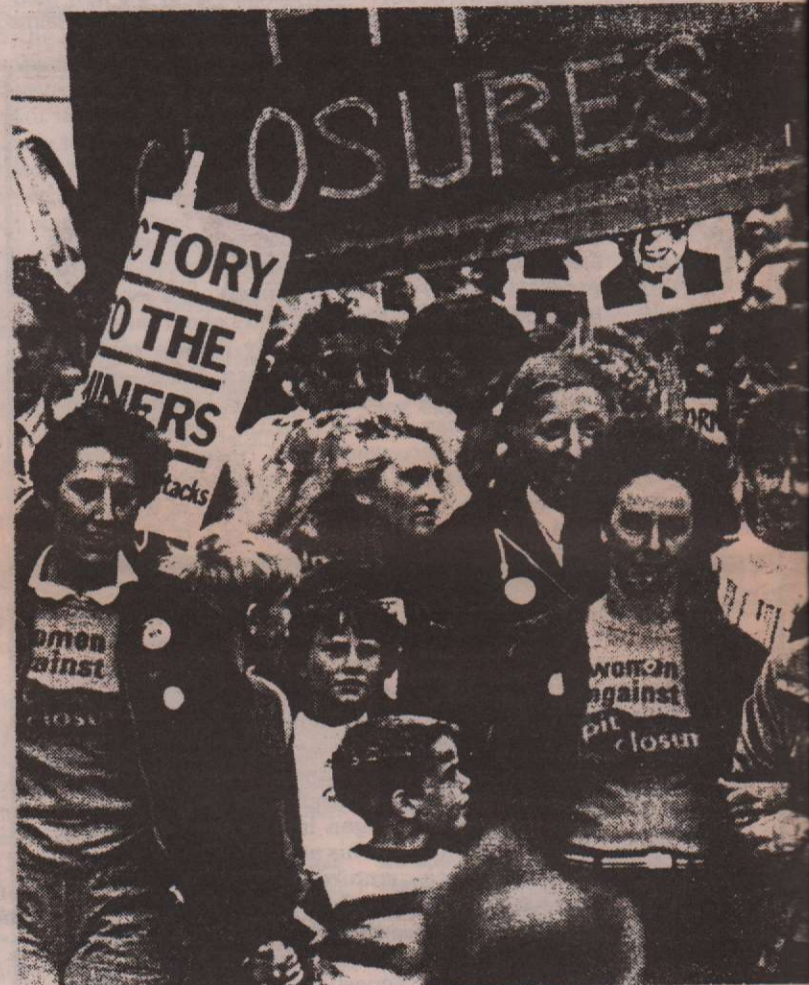
Why did they reject a movement of all women, the argument of the feminists? As Zetkin herself explained:

"The liberation struggle of the proletarian woman cannot be similar to the struggle that the bourgeois woman wages against the male of her class. On the contrary, it must be a joint struggle with the male of her class against the entire class of capitalists. . . To be sure, [the proletarian woman] also agrees with the demands of the bourgeois women's movement, but she regards the fulfillment of these demands simply as a means to enable this movement to enter the battle, equipped with the same weapons, alongside the proletariat." (Zetkin, *Only in Conjunction with the proletarian woman will socialism be victorious*, 1896)

Today we do not have mass revolutionary parties that can lead a mass communist women's movement.

We have to begin by arguing for all working class women, including those who are reformists, feminists and revolutionaries, to unite in action within a working class women's movement. Within it we would argue for our positions, but would not demand that all women agree with us in advance.

The revolutionary tradition of the Second International and the Communist International shows us that women have a major contribution to make to the fight for socialism, and building a working class women's movement will show that potential in action.■



### Miners' Wives Demonstration

decent housing for all women, whether or not they have children, that leads many to stay in relationships that become violent. A massive spending programme on public, affordable housing is necessary.

The CADV must immediately clarify its position on the police. Whilst individuals suffering domestic violence may well turn to the police for help in desperation because there isn't any alternative, the long term solution to domestic violence does not lie with the police. However many domestic violence units and training programmes they set up, the police cannot avoid their serious, continuing, record of criminalising people who turn to them for help when they are attacked.

This is frequently the police's method in instances of racial attacks. The police end up charging the victims, not the attackers. The same is true in cases of domestic violence. Many women report how the police have refused to believe or help them, and have even abused them when they were seeking support against a violent partner. As the CADV information pack points out:

"Any attempts to improve the image of the police and encourage women experiencing domestic violence to call them will be undermined by repressive actions and their involvement in miscarriages of justice."

This is certainly the case, but the practice of the CADV branches is not clear, with police invited to address

meetings, for example (See report in WP 158).

The Militant leadership of CADV have produced a set of demands for the demonstration on 10 October. These include demands directly concerning domestic violence, but also demands for a minimum wage of £190 a week, comprehensive childcare and other general anti-cuts demands.

These are important, but are they being raised in the right way, and how can CADV begin to campaign for such broad demands? Does the campaign's correct understanding of the class basis of women's oppression mean that it can mobilise the forces to achieve the "bigger" things that women need to destroy the roots of domestic violence?

### Tactics

Militant are not clear on the tactics and politics required to fight for a real end to women's oppression. CADV should campaign specifically around the issue of domestic violence, including practical help and demands for resources. These struggles should be taken into the unions to win action to press for the demands, but also to raise the issue for discussion with men and women in the unions and workplaces. It should also try to draw in women who don't have a job, through work on the estates and in community organisations.

However, to get jobs with decent



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# a Working Class Movement

Domestic Violence (CADV), launched and politically led by political work to achieve measures to alleviate a real problem of a political debate about the general struggle against Dobson, Helen Walker and Lesley Day are a contribution to the working class women's movement.



pay for all women, good childcare, the abolition of the Child Support Act and other pieces of reactionary legislation—all this will take a lot more than CADV and its current forces. An single issue campaign cannot take up all the questions facing working class women nor can it involve wide enough forces to begin to win them.

This does not mean we should ignore the bigger questions, like pay, jobs, childcare, abortion, health care and housing. But to mobilise around them we need a much broader movement of women workers, unemployed women, housewives, young women, students. We need a movement of working class women based in all the areas where women are organised—workplaces, unions, tenants' associations, student groups.

The women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s was not able to achieve this, nor have the Labour Party or unions shown themselves serious about fighting against the oppressive conditions under which many women have to live their daily lives. The all-class approach of the feminists and the reformist tokenism of the labour movement have squandered countless opportunities to win real gains for working class women.

In calling for a working class women's movement, we are not saying that only working class women would be part of it. But women from other classes would have to recognise the need to join and support the struggles

of working class women. They would have to be won to a class perspective on the fight for women's liberation.

A working class women's movement would be led by working class women, linking up action groups, campaigns and caucuses in different unions and communities, building working class action to fight for its demands. Strikes, occupations, and solidarity action would be central.

A working class women's movement would need to break out of the reformist traditions which dominate the labour movement in Britain, because any lasting change to women's position requires a direct struggle against capitalism.

The need for a working class women's movement flows from the reality of the class struggle. In almost every big working class struggle, women have begun to organise in their own groups, either building solidarity (see the article on the miners' wives), or as a way of raising their own demands in the male-dominated labour movement. Women need a broad and active movement to fight for their immediate demands, with the political capacity and leadership to take those struggles further and secure genuine advances for women.

The formation of a mass working class women's movement in Britain would be a massive step forward in the fight against women's oppression. But it would also be a step forward for the whole working class which is weak-

ened by the sexist divisions fostered by capitalism and upheld by the reformist bureaucrats.

Whilst all sorts of women with different political ideas would unite in the movement to fight for specific common actions, revolutionaries would seek to win arguments and action around our own programme and politics.

This is not a cynical attempt to manipulate women, and certainly there should be no political restrictions on who could join (except fascists). It is a way of engaging women in open debate, arguing that the movement itself cannot achieve full liberation unless it becomes part of a revolutionary movement against capitalism, led by a party committed to the overthrow of the bosses' state.

How does all this relate to the present direction of the CADV? A mass working class women's movement, raising the issues of women's oppression, including domestic violence, in all the organisations of the labour movement, providing support for women and active campaigns for resources, would be a great step forward.

## Interests

Working class women will fight for their interests, but in isolated struggles that are easier for the bosses to defeat. There are women in local authorities, the health service and industry who are trying to fight the current wave of cuts and job losses. All too often they are isolated, get no support from the official unions and can see no way forward.

A working class women's movement would help these women to learn from other women's experience of struggle and enable them to take the issues into the wider union movement and win solidarity.

This is not a utopian project, but there is a lack of leadership to build such a movement. Militant's tactics in CADV are not clear about how to take the struggle for women's liberation and socialism beyond the immediate issue of violence. They know that wider demands must be taken up, but are not putting forward the arguments for building a mass movement.

Of course CADV itself cannot become a working class women's movement. Nor will such a movement be built overnight. But if we do not argue for it and seek to get CADV to play a role in actually building it then we will not even be taking a step towards the formation of such a movement. And it will not develop spontaneously.

The biggest movement of working class women in recent years was the miners' wives movement. Even that could not transform itself from a support group to a broader working class women's movement, because it lacked the political leadership to do so.

Militant have so far refused to take up this fight seriously. We urge all those involved in the CADV to discuss the working class women's movement. The campaign could then be used to take the argument into other sections of the working class, other women's organisations and launch the struggle for a lasting answer to women's oppression. ■

## Women in the Great Strike

WE HAD a glimpse of the potential power of a working class women's movement with the miners' wives organisations that emerged in the Great Strike of 1984-5.

The miners' wives organisations became central to the strike from very early on, and the political development of the women involved led to a transformation of their own, their husbands' and many other workers' consciousness about the role of women in society.

The wives' movement initially concentrated upon the vital tasks of support and survival in the communities—communal kitchens, food parcels and collections of money. These are essential, but are ultimately an extension of women's traditional role in the home.

But there were some groups of miners' wives who went far beyond this in the earliest days. Women from Kent went to the Midlands to argue with non-striking miners and their wives at the beginning of the strike. Women from South Yorkshire were clear very early on that their role was political as well as providing welfare. They wanted to ensure that women were not isolated and vulnerable to being turned against their striking husbands by the media. One woman from Hatfield Main explained at the time:

"We're trying to get the women together from the community and involved in the strike... It's so they know what's going on themselves. If they watch television it's a load of old cobblers. They won't learn anything from that."

These women were in the forefront of getting women out on picket lines, visiting other workers to argue for support, organising solidarity with the miners' struggle. Such action opened up the real possibility of building a working class women's movement beyond the confines of the mining communities. To achieve this miners' wives should have targeted other women workers' in particular. Indeed, many miners' wives were themselves workers in the health service or in industry, and they needed to take the arguments for solidarity action to their own workmates, taking up at the same time their own fight for decent pay and conditions.

We argued that such activity could lay the basis for building a working class women's movement which would outlast the strike and permanently change the face of working class women's organisation in Britain. Such a movement could not last as a wives' movement alone. Women in paid work who can organise in their own workplace are essential.

Carol, from the Hatfield Main Women's Support Group, argued at a Midlands' Women's Co-ordinating Committee in September 1984:

"I think that the miners' wives here today can be the basis of a movement that should link up with women at work, a movement that could really change things. For the past five years of Thatcherism we have been on the defensive, people have been frightened to fight back in case they lose their jobs and because they have not fought back they have lost them anyway. Women have been hit hard by job losses, low pay and loss of services. The example of ordinary working class women fighting Thatcher's plans can be an inspiration to all women. We can help them overcome the idea that nothing can be done."

But the ideas of women like Carol were not taken up by enough women. The predominant politics of what became "Women Against Pit Closures" (WAPC) were based on reformism combined with feminism. Betty Heathfield, one of the main leaders of WAPC and wife of NUM General Secretary Peter Heathfield, put forward a strategy backed up by the Communist Party and the left of the Labour Party.

The central theme of their strategy was a feminist appeal to all women in

an undifferentiated way and regardless of class. The most ludicrous example of this was the petition to the Queen—as if the richest woman in Britain would suddenly forget her class interests and jump to support the miners' wives "because they are women".

This feminist approach of sections of the leadership of WAPC went alongside a general strategy for the strike of sitting it out against the government, collecting money and public sympathy, rejecting calls for other workers to go out on strike (as this might lose public support), and arguing that British Coal should be defended against cheap imports. This was a hopeless strategy which helped lead the strike to defeat.

The key to winning the strike was building solidarity action amongst other workers, including women workers, to launch a general strike against the government. The Tories know that if they defeated the miners, then the rest of the union movement would be thrown into a demoralised state where strike action would be seen as ineffective. That class wide attack required a class wide response, and the miners' wives could have played a key role in this.

But although the WAPC leadership rejected this view, there were many women active in local groups who wanted to extend the action and go out and talk to other workers arguing for more than financial support. But the groups were never able to have a democratic discussion about strategy for the strike or indeed about the future of the groups and the possible building of a wider movement of working class women.

Workers Power supported those women who argued for a proper national conference with delegates who could hammer out a strategy and elect a leadership. This became the position of important groups in South Wales, South Yorkshire and of the Midlands Women's Co-ordinating Committee. But the leadership managed to keep a grip on the movement by undemocratic manoeuvres.

The leadership of the NUM and of WAPC meant that the best opportunities to win the strike and to build a working class women's movement were squandered.

But the experience of the women involved, and the impact it had on the workers' movement was an example of the potential for organising working class women. The women broke out of their narrow concerns with family, home and welfare and became capable political activists. "I never thought I could..." was the constant refrain of women who became skilled at organising large events, picketing and confronting the police, speaking to mass rallies, standing up to their husbands over the right to be involved.

The women often had to confront their own, and their husbands', prejudices about what women were capable of. One woman told *Workers Power* "I had difficulty with my husband, he was against me going out on the picket line! I said 'Well we'll have to see about that'. So I went and it turned out good. He was glad in the end to see the women in support."

After the strike, the movement declined because it had not become part of a broader movement taking up women's and workers' issues. Individual groups continued to try and fight against cuts, closures etc. But without a base in the unions and workplaces these women were primarily linked by the common interests of their husbands and their community which was not enough to sustain a militant organisation.

But the experience of tens of thousands of working class women taking their lives into their own hands, challenging backward ideas about a woman's role, showing what they were capable of, was an inspiration to us all. It showed that a working class women's movement is not only necessary but possible. ■



## INTERVIEW: LUDWIK HASS

# Results of the Polish strike wave

"We have to do away with the idea that strikers are national heroes fighting for a free Poland against communism. Poland is now a normal country," said Polish Deputy Prime Minister Goryszewski on 22 September. The occasion was the defeat of the Polish Fiat car workers' strike, heralded by Britain's Financial Times as yet another "good omen" for the capitalist restoration process. The Fiat strike was the latest of a series of bitter resistance struggles by workers against low pay, privatisation and the threat of unemployment. During the first week of September members of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht (German section of the LRCI) interviewed Ludwik Hass, a veteran Polish Trotskyist, in Warsaw. The interview was conducted in the aftermath of the Lublin copper workers' strike wave of July/August. Hass' comments reveal all the problems of rebuilding working class militancy in Poland and point to the reasons for the strike wave ending in a series of compromises and defeats.

**ARBEITERMACHT:** Could you outline for us how the copper workers' strike in Lublin began, how it developed and what was its significance?

**LUDWIK HASS:** The most important thing about the strike was the fact that, if the workers in other plants see that something can be won, they will strike as well. The strike wave was able to develop in Lublin because there the workers knew that most of Poland's foreign currency earnings come from the export of copper. They asked themselves why, when the price of copper was rising on the world market, they shouldn't get a rise too.

A second element was their discovery of what privatisation means in practice. It means that, when a plant goes over to private hands the trade unions no longer have any rights. The workers know that, even if the unions that represent them are the worst in the world, they're still unions, still their organisations. With the higher grade white collar workers it's rather different, they can look for a compromise directly with management.

#### Which unions led the strike?

OPZZ [the former Stalinist official unions] and Solidarnosc 80 were the leaders. In the 1980s, Solidarnosc 80 existed as a fraction within Solidarnosc under the leadership of Jurczyk. At a national level, OPZZ is a huge trade union with over 4 million members. Solidarnosc 80 is relatively small compared to that, with around 250,000, mainly in West Poland and Warsaw.

Jurczyk was one of the historic leaders of the strikes in Stettin. For years he was inclined towards the nationalists. Now, however, he is saying something important, that the workers, the workers' unions, should go forward together, that the ideological differences are not so important. Naturally, the government is fearful of that.

#### How was the strike organised? Was it led by a trade union committee or an elected strike committee?

From the beginning there was an inter-union committee which brought together the unions and the employees of all the plants, representing about 40,000 workers altogether. This committee was not elected but it had the agreement of the majority of the workers and it called the strike.

There was also a strike ballot: this was the first completely, "legal" strike. It couldn't be declared illegal. After that, there were



Police hold back strikers at Ursus factory

strikes in the car plant at Tychy and solidarity strikes in some of the smaller coal mines.

However, a compromise was reached there with the management and the strikes were broken. It was only afterwards that the national co-ordinating committee was formed. This brought together the OPZZ, Solidarnosc 80, two independent miners' organisations, the train drivers' union and the farmers' organisation Samoobrona (Self Help)

The government's attack was actually directed mainly against the farmers' organisation. They want to illegalise it, and this was perhaps a test to see how far they could go: whether they could split the unions and isolate Samoobrona.

The farmers have got very militant because of their unbelievable indebtedness. They've had to take out more and more loans at higher and higher interest rates and now, because of inflation, they can't pay it back. There is now a kind of land reform "in reverse", a sort of capitalist forced collectivisation—in other words the expropriation of the small farmer.

#### Back to the demands of the strikers: were there only economic demands or were there also political slogans?

Well, at first there were only demands for wage rises but then the second great demand became: "We want to know what future we have". In the copper combine, it went as far as the strikers declaring that they would take over and run the plants themselves if the government did not agree to enter negotiations. Then the negotiations started and the government backed off a bit.

#### What, concretely, was achieved?

What they got was a wage rise. But this is also a question of interpretation, whether you think the strike could be resumed again. I am not sure that it could be. The workers were on strike for a whole month without any strike pay. Their average wage is only about 2.5 million Zloty (approx £100) per month. This means that there is now a certain exhaustion.

The Prime Minister claimed that the workers would receive a good wage if they returned. This woman [Prime Minister Hanna Suchoka] earns 16 million Zloty! This was a central argument of the strikers, that their work earns a good percentage of the country's foreign currency, therefore they had a right to a better wage.

LUDWIK HASS was born in Stanislaw in 1918. Whilst studying history in Lvov in 1936-9, he joined the Trotskyist movement. After the occupation of East Poland by the Soviet Union, as a consequence of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, he was arrested by the NKVD and deported to Siberia for 17 years. After his return to Poland he resumed his studies. In 1964, he was again arrested, along with Kuron and others after the publication of the "Open Letter to the Party". He was sentenced to a further year and a half in prison. In the 1970s he became a history lecturer and today operates as an "independent Trotskyist" and historian of the labour movement in Warsaw.

In the early 1980s Solidarnosc demanded self-management. Do the workers still raise the demand and how do you think the demand for workers control should be raised?

Well for example workers' control should mean control over all the expenditure of an enterprise, control over the salaries of the management because the relationship between the income of a director and that of a worker is very high, something like sixteen-to-one.

As to the slogan for self-management in 1980/81, however, it was mainly a demand raised by the Solidarnosc leadership, the KOR. At that time it was directed against the planned economy. Every plant was to function on its own account and trust to its own luck, this would obviously have created an awful relationship and competition between the plants. It would have been a kind of economic lottery. Revolutionary propaganda had to make this very clear for the workers.

Today, however, there is more to it than that. In state industries, there is a statutory upper limit for wages. If an enterprise pays over this limit then they have to pay a penalty tax, the so-called *popiwek*, to the ministry. In private enterprises, however, wage deals are free and so the employer can pay much higher wages without any tax penalty. The government uses this as a powerful argument in support of privatisation, for selling firms to foreign capitalists.

Obviously, privatisation threatens the freedom of the trade unions. In small private enterprises there are no trade unions. Workers who try to set them up, or even want to go on strike, are unceremoniously sacked.

There was a lot of talk about a general strike, do you think that a widening of the strike into a general strike was a real possibility?

Yes, that was a continual threat by the strike committee. But you have to see that the strike leaders, the union leaderships, were of course ready to compromise. They were very opportunist and ultimately did not want to make things too difficult for the government.

Because of its Stalinist past, the OPZZ, the biggest union, is still used to behaving as if it were a "state union" and its bureaucratic leadership kept offering to negotiate and to call off the strike. The same thing is true of the Solidarnosc

unions. Under pressure from the members they had to talk more radical and sometimes threaten the general strike but, in reality, they would not risk going against the government and Walesa. The feeling towards the strike amongst the general population was not bad. According to a poll in Warsaw, 70% of those questioned welcomed the strike!

The Labour Minister, Jacek Kuron, rejected all negotiations with the strikers, while Walesa, by contrast, thought the workers were "right in their demands".

Yes, "but not with these methods" he said. Walesa wanted to take a position as a mediator.

Kuron has taken the hardest position of them all. He used the same arguments against the strike, word for word, as the Stalinists did in 1980/81! He says that striking against the government then was in order but to strike in a democracy would be illegal and damage Poland! He had to have it pointed out to him on TV that even in "democratic" western Europe there were strikes, even general strikes, even political strikes that had brought down governments.

#### How did the Left parties relate to the strike?

Well, the Social Democrats, (the remains of the former Stalinist Polish United Workers' Party) were very quiet. They supported the strike rather cautiously in their press, but their central position was for negotiations with the government, in the national economic interest—no chaos.

All these people want is to be recognised as equal partners by the right and by Walesa. There were even some "lefts" from the Democratic Union who were gutsier, although for demagogic reasons. The far left, which is very small anyway in Poland, had absolutely nothing to say.

All the Trotskyist groups were, in fact, on holiday—*Dalej*, the group from Mandel's United Secretariat, the *Militant* supporters, the three Spartacist people. The only exception is the little group around the magazine *Anti-Rzadowy* (Anti-government) which is very active and went to Lublin and Tychy and intervened.

#### Do you see the Lublin strike as a sign of a developing strike wave, or will it eventually be seen as an isolated event?

The strike could be a precursor of a strike wave, that's one possibility. What I fear is that it is a retreat. Even if there are more strikes, there is a danger that altogether they will be nothing more than a defensive struggle, a rearguard action against privatisation and the mass sackings that will result from it. The central problem for the Polish workers is the lack of a political alternative to the existing parties and trade unions. The strikes threaten to go around in circles, demoralising the workers and leaving the mass of the population apathetic.

We should not forget that the class consciousness of the Polish workers is very low, as a result of decades of Stalinism. In my opinion, the strike, although it was not a one hundred percent victory, was certainly not a defeat. ■





**T**HE BOURGEOISIE are rejoicing. The reactionary press are celebrating what they are calling "the news of the century", "the capture of the principal enemy of Peru", "the most important blow against subversion in twelve years", and "the beginning of the end for Sendero Luminoso".

The arrest of Guzmán and some twenty central leaders of the Peruvian Communist Party-Sendero Luminoso (PCP-SL) is indeed a very serious defeat for the Gonzalistas. Never before in the history of the continent has there been a guerrilla movement so based on a personality cult. The PCP-SL does not have a collective leadership and they are proud of having a one-person, infallible leadership.

The "Thoughts of Gonzalo" are idolised by the PCP-SL as the basis of their "united following". Gonzalo is the strategist, the leader, the "fourth sword" of Marxism, a veritable demi-god. This fanatical cult of Guzmán might have appeared for a whole period as a source of strength. But today, with his capture, this earlier strength is transformed into their main weakness. This should show revolutionaries in Peru and the rest of the world exactly how not to build a revolutionary party.

The reasons for the downfall of Guzmán, like the absence of popular support for the new prisoner, show their major political errors. For a year SL have been saying that they have achieved a strategic equilibrium with the state on a national scale and that they have been preparing for the final stage, the final offensive to seize power. We assessed this position at the time as voluntarist and that it would lead to adventurist actions which would end in the weakening of SL.

The Gonzalista army cannot count on any heavy arms nor on the control of any provinces, nor on the support of a significant section of the population. People might assume that the man who proclaims himself president of a new republic with an army that has achieved a balance of power would have a general staff in his own "liberated zones". Nevertheless, "President Gonzalo" and his general staff were living in the self-same city as the enemy with inadequate security where it was easier for them to be detected.

PERU

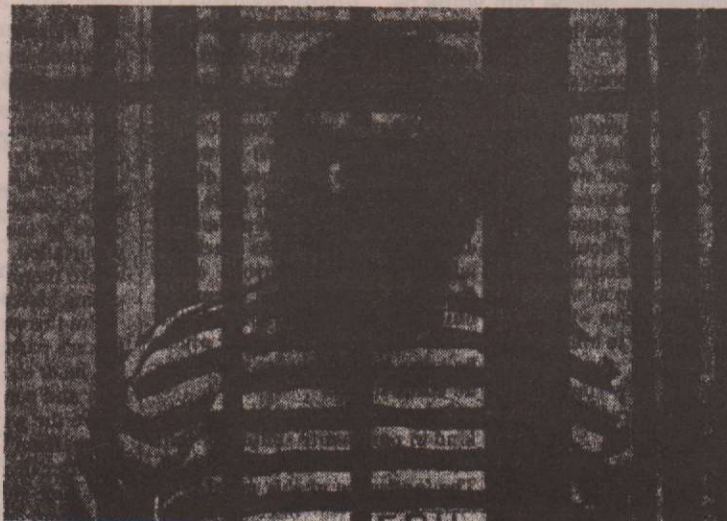
# The capture of Guzmán

*Abimael Guzmán, known as Gonzalo, leader of the Peruvian guerrilla movement Sendero Luminoso has been captured. Here we print translated extracts from a special bulletin issued by our comrades of Poder Obrero, the Peruvian section of the LRCI.*

To try and justify their claims to military equilibrium and prepare the offensive, SL were concentrating most of their actions in Lima. Their objective was to provoke a major militarisation by the Fujimori regime, an intervention of foreign troops and a consequent polarisation between a strong dictator and the popular resistance headed by SL.

In their desperation to attract attention and to achieve their longed for polarisation, SL were increasing their bombings which indiscriminately kill children and innocent victims. This only succeeded in alienating them from the popular masses, who have ended up considering them as their worst enemy, so that they now even prefer Fujimori's dictatorship of hunger.

For the working class the main enemy is the bourgeoisie and its repressive apparatus. SL is a petit-bourgeois anti-imperialist move-



ment with a Stalinist, militarist ideology. But it is one which actually attacks and weakens the workers' movement and which is an enemy of direct democracy and the proletarian revolution.

For the working class to take power it has to achieve class independence and create its own councils and militias. This will require the defeat of Sendero and the winning of its social base. We cannot ally ourselves with the bourgeoisie nor recognise that this genocidal and reactionary state has any authority to arrest or judge anyone who has risen up against imperialism.

After the anti-terrorist orgy a major offensive is being unleashed to consolidate the regime and its repressive and neo-liberal policies. Fujimori is launching a hunt for "subversives", bringing in a new law to attack teachers who instruct their students to question the system, and taking advantage of the

situation to go for more attacks on the left and on the workers', peasants' and poor peoples' movement.

The reactionaries want the take advantage of the widespread popular revulsion against the terrorist actions of Guzmán to bring in draconian punishments and even to introduce the death penalty. Later on they will use these methods against the struggles of the working class.

We defend the life and the physical and psychological health of the new Sendero prisoners. We must fight to stop them being tortured or ending up being executed in prison. We call for the fullest right to legal defence, methods of communication and the right to put their distinct point of view in their defence against the state.

We do not charge Guzmán for having risen up against reaction. However he does indeed have charges to answer to the classes he claims to act for, the working class,

the peasantry and the urban poor. We call Guzmán to account for having set out to sabotage historic workers' strikes such as that of 1977, for having called for the crushing of union and popular organisations, for having destroyed workers' democracy in the areas where he has won control.

He stands accused of having killed hundreds of villagers, workers and innocent children and of having assassinated workers and popular leaders, (such as Chiara, Requis etc.) including dissidents within his own ranks.

Above all his political crime is carrying out a strategy which seeks to break up the workers' movement, destroying their centres of work, provoking repression, disorienting and demoralising the workers, and pushing the popular sectors to pursue the aim of constructing a new capitalist state with the "national" bourgeoisie, not with bringing to power the working class in alliance with the peasantry.

Guzmán's defence is calling for him to be judged before a civil court. He should be tried, but not by a bourgeois court. Only the workers have the authority to pass any judgement on him. The political and union organisations of the workers' movement should demand the convening of a workers' and popular tribunal to politically judge Guzmán and the guerrilla leaders. This tribunal has to be based on delegates elected from and recallable to assemblies of workers, communal canteens, the shanty town community organisations, centres of study and popular organisations.

The proletariat has to call on the guerrillaists, the SL and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA), to end their actions against the workers and their organisations. They must respect workers' democracy and join in a united front of all the union and political organisations of the workers against imperialism and the bourgeoisie. In this united front the insurgent forces should be subordinated to assemblies of the masses and must stop seeking to impose their commands on everyone. To the supporters of SL and MRTA we call for them to break with their bankrupt leaders and strategy and join the Bolshevik-Leninists.

★ Lima, 18 September 1992

Is the suspension of Collor a victory for the large number of workers that took to the streets in the last weeks and demanded his resignation?

Why, when systematic corruption by bourgeois politicians is so widespread in Brazil and other semi-colonies, should these charges be allowed to surface and gather enough momentum to bring down the country's first freely-elected head of state for three decades?

It is hardly necessary to have a long trial. Money-for-favours deals go with the job. In semi-colonies—even one as large and as regionally powerful as Brazil—the national bourgeoisie is often so weak that the avenues for the legitimate accumulation of wealth are relatively narrow. Imperialism and its multinationals take the lion's share of exploited wealth; the smaller capitalist class compete ferociously for a place at their side.

In most of the post-war decades in Latin America the state was the central national instrument for capital accumulation, indeed, the mechanism for the creation of a viable national bourgeoisie. Add to this the difficulty for aspiring candidates to sustain a well paid career as professional politicians without a "little help" from business friends, and you have a recipe for systematic, structural corruption.

From the standpoint of the ruling class as a whole in 1990 Collor's "outsider" image helped in present-

ing a different image to the masses, cynical with the established bourgeois parties. Collor ran a campaign based on demagogic anti-establishment rhetoric and promises to freeze prices and help the shanty town dwellers.

But Collor was also relatively free of obligations to the established state and private Brazilian monopoly interests that dominate São Paulo and Rio. The ascendant neo-liberal policies of privatisation, of opening up private monopolies to imperialist competition, of state spending cuts—all found in Collor a willing frontman.

Collor's demise results from both his relative success in implementing these policies and the social consequences of this. The masses of workers, of slum dwellers, of rural poor have obviously suffered most. They have seen their state sector jobs go in their tens of thousands.

In São Paulo a million engineering jobs have been lost in the 18 months since the recession bit deep. Prices

were quickly unfrozen in 1990 whereas real wages have been eroded by 15% in the last year alone.

Neo-liberal orthodoxy has gained acceptance in the capitalist class; the necessity for some degree of opening up, of privatisation and so

## BRAZIL

on is recognised. The recently concluded deal with imperialist banks and the IMF over Brazil's huge foreign debt was conditional on progress in this direction.

But Brazilian big business has also been troubled by Collor's actions. Three years of deepening recession and popular discontent which only put wind in the sails of the Workers Party. By focusing popular attention on Collor and deflecting mass resentment onto the secondary question of corruption, bourgeois leading circles hope to ensure a continuity of strategy with some tactical ad-

justments.

The São Paulo employers' federation, the FIESP, want a slowing down in tariff reductions; they have also lobbied for and will now get the creation of a new industry and commerce ministry, carved out of the Economic super-ministry, which was more concerned with state finances.

Thus it is no accident that Vice-President Itamar Franco will succeed Collor.

He is known to be much more sympathetic to the special pleading of the FIESP.

To ensure that the influence of Brazil's monopolies is felt, the new cabinet will reflect a far broader collection of bourgeois parties than was allowed for by Collor.

So is Collor's demise a victory for those hundreds of thousands of workers watching the Congressional vote live on open air screens?

The answer could only be an unqualified "yes" if the mobilisation was simply one stage in the development of an independent working

class movement against Collor's successor and above all, Collor's policies.

At the moment the danger is that the masses are being drawn into a huge popular frontist attack on one agent of the hated elite. A cross-class consensus has been established which will make it much easier for the Brazilian bourgeois to proceed with authority to demand the "necessary sacrifices" from the workers in order to "heal the nation's scars".

This danger is increased by the antics of the Workers Party leader Lula. He has been meeting with all the senior military commanders in Brazil's regions and had top level talks with big bourgeois figures such as the head of media conglomerate, Globo. Lula has no doubt reassured the military top brass and big business that the Workers Party leadership will do its best to channel the mass discontent into protests supportive of the constitutional impeachment process.

The Brazilian workers must, on the contrary, establish broad committees of struggle to fight the resurgence of inflation through imposing a sliding scale of wages on the bosses and resist all "emergency packages" from Collor's replacement that demand tax increases or further spending cuts. They must force Lula, the Workers Party and the trade union federation into struggle for the impeachment and overthrow of the capitalist system itself. ■

# Collor suspended!

*On 29 September President Fernando Collor of Brazil was suspended from office for six months. He now faces a political trial on corruption charges which could lead to his impeachment and permanent dismissal. In 1990 Collor was hailed as the saviour of Brazilian capitalism. Keith Harvey explains why things have changed.*



## ITALY

The recent European economic crisis has hit Italian workers hard—and they are fighting back with exceptional determination, even against their own trade union officials. **Marco Longhe** reports from Italy

In the largest and most militant wave of struggle since the 1970s, more than one and a half million Italian workers took part in demonstrations and regional strikes in the last week of September. In the key Turin plant of FIAT Mirafiori, over 90% of the workforce joined the action. As we go to press a national 48 hour general strike is planned.

The focus of these actions is the government's vicious austerity plans. But government attacks have not been the only target of workers' anger. The workers have also had to take on their own trade union "leaders". Some have gone so far as to attack them physically.



Workers strike against the removal of the *scala mobile*

# General strike to smash austerity!

Bruno Trentin, general secretary of the "communist" union federation CGIL, has borne the brunt of the workers' anger. During his speech in Florence he was the target of a hail of eggs, tomatoes, coins and nuts (the steel variety!). The police had to defend him while he beat an ignominious retreat. In other Italian towns, union bureaucrats were unable to speak and abandoned the platform.

These violent reactions are not due to collective hysteria, nor to provocations by ultra-left "terrorists" or fascists as some of the union leaders claim. They are wholly justified expressions of frustration, rage and hatred against the be-

trayals of the union leaders. Italian workers have good reason to think that they have been sold down the river.

In July, one day before the summer closure of the plants, the unions signed an agreement which finally abolished the *scala mobile*, a system of automatic wage increases linked to inflation. This is a historical gain of the Italian working class dating back to 1945, and has given rise to many hard struggles to defend and extend it.

In a country which had an inflation rate as high as 20% in 1980 such a mechanism is of primary importance. Not only the content of the agreement to abandon the *scala mobile* but the way it was imposed have incensed the workers. No consultation took place whatsoever.

The peak of hypocrisy and cowardice came from Trentin, the leader of the 5 million strong CGIL. He signed the agreement and then immediately resigned, saying: "I had no other choice, but it is a defeat".

## Crisis

Trentin claimed that he signed to avoid a "combined crisis of the government, of trade union unity and of the CGIL". What greater proof could anyone ask for of the fact that he belongs to a clique of bureaucrats whose only interest is to preserve their own privileges, even at the price of repeatedly selling out the workers? The bureaucrats' plan is to build a class collaborationist union. It will be little more than a state institution whose sources of power and credibility are the bosses' law and capitalist consensus, not the fighting spirit of the working class.

The ideological fig-leaf for this miserable policy is the myth of



CGIL leader Trentin was pelted by angry strikers

"trade union unity". In reality it means a unity of the leaders with the bosses on the worst possible basis for the workers. The "nation in crisis", which demands sacrifices (from the workers of course) in order to be saved, is another bosses' refrain which the workers have become familiar with since the time of the so-called historic compromise of 1976. Then the Communist Party opened the road for a major defeat of the Italian workers' movement through a governmental pact with the Christian Democrats (the Italian Tories).

The abandonment of the *scala mobile* in the end proved insufficient to "save the country". Italy has the weakest economy of all the original members of the EC. Its enormous public debt, which strangles the economy, was accumulated over half a century of Christian Democratic government in an inept attempt to overcome the structural gap between the industrialised North and the underdeveloped

and rural South.

So after the currency storm of September which forced a 7% devaluation of the Lira, the coalition government pushed the attack further. To alleviate the budget deficit it decreed an increase in taxes, an increase in the age of retirement from 60 to 65 years and cuts in the health service.

It was the spontaneous response of the workers which finally pushed the unions to take some form of action to regain control. Now they are even muttering about general strikes. But their objective is not the withdrawal of the austerity plan and the defeat of the government. It is an "improvement" in the plan, the detail of which will presumably be left to separate negotiations. This project could succeed because of the weakness of organised opposition to it.

Despite a decade of attempts to build rank and file movements, from the launching of new unions to various organisations of shop stewards, there is only one established oppositional current in the CGIL. *Essere Sindacato* ("To Be A Union") is in the hands of a few reformist leaders which see it simply as their vehicle for taking control of the CGIL. Their main worry about the withdrawal of the *scala mobile* was that "it is a danger for democracy".

## Fusion

An additional weakness for the workers' movement lies in its political organisations. The old Communist Party (PCI) has recently split. On one side the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), led by Achille Occhetto, changed its name, asked to be admitted to the Socialist International and is looking to a possible fusion with the Socialist Party. Its abandonment of Stalinist ideology and symbolism is part of a move to the right, and to a final attempt to appear respectable to the Italian bourgeoisie.

On the other side the Communist Refoundation Party (*Rifondazione*) fills the void on the left by trying to be as close as possible to the old PCI, even using the hammer and sickle symbol. There is no questioning of the role the "good old PCI" played in maintaining capitalism in Italy after the war.

The Italian working class, already dismissed as dead by the middle-class intellectuals, has once again come to the fore in the struggle. But anger and passion will not be enough to win the next bitter contests. The urgent task of the day is difficult but unavoidable: the construction of a strong movement of rank and file workers within the trade unions. This movement must constantly challenge the betrayals of its leaders, and fight for the democratisation of the unions and a sharp turn towards militant struggle.

## Energy

In response to the bureaucrats' attempts to dissipate the energy of the workers through partial one-day protest strikes, workers must fight for an indefinite general strike, bringing out every sector until the austerity measures are reversed. The *scala mobile* must be fully restored with a guaranteed wage rise of 1% for every 1% rise in inflation—as determined by workers' price-watch committees controlled by workers and their families.

The renewed energy and combativity of the Italian working class is living proof that this is not a utopia but the only way forward. It is also a timely reminder to British workers that a retreat can be stemmed when workers organise to fight. ■

## EYEWITNESS REPORT FROM GREECE

WE LIVE in times dominated by myths of imperialist propaganda: the "collapse of communism", "the end of history". But the strike wave gripping Greece overturns the current mythology.

We are not at the end of class politics. The Greek strikes, like the strikes in Italy, have hardly been noticed by the British media. But they represent a serious chance to inflict a strategic defeat on the Mitsotakis government.

During August we found ourselves in Athens. Traditionally August has been the most peaceful month in the class struggle. But after Parliament agreed—by 296 MPs out of 300—to vote for Maastricht, the day of reckoning arrived. Vicious cuts and price rises of over 30% were announced. Whole swathes of the public and private sectors are to be wiped out with only a few skeleton industries remaining. Most of these are part of multinational conglomerates: everything else has to go to the wall.

Already five or six very militant sectional strikes, which have seen occupations of the factories, town halls, road and rail routes have—despite the militancy of the workers—been led to defeat. The city of Lavrio has seen all its factories close down and has been turned into a ghost town. The de-industrialisation of Greece is proceeding apace.

Under this background a truly mili-

# Leaders sell out strikes

BY V N GELIS

tant mood has swept workers. The spark which has lit the flame has been the indefinite busworkers strike.

Faced with thousands of sackings the busworkers replied with 24 hour picketlines, defence squads and daily demonstrations blocking Athens.

Mitsotakis, the Greek Prime Minister, responded with a police crackdown which led to the "battle of Votanikos". For six hours bus picket lines—swelled to thousands—battled with the riot police. Kollas, the busworkers' union leader, realising he was losing control—something which would not favour his PASOK paymasters—attempted to call the busworkers to order. But he failed.

An eruption of spontaneous anger swept the poor suburb of Votanikos. People felt the busworkers' strike was their strike. The next day in all the papers, capitalist and Stalinist, ran headlines such as "500 provocateurs keep Athens awake all night". Kollas re-

peated this lie, stabbing the busworkers in the back.

Meanwhile Athens' bus service, the only effective mode of public transport, is reduced to army lorries manned by conscripts.

After the events at Votanikos, token 24 hour stoppages were called by the Greek TUC (GSEE). Endless speeches, in bureaucratic code, repeated the same message: we will do everything in our power to leave the busworkers to fight alone. Kollas set the tone by asserting early in the strike, "we will stay out till Christmas".

When the busworkers decided to travel en masse in their buses to Thessalonika, to derail Mitsotakis' appearance at a trade fair, Kollas stopped them. When scabs were undressed and paraded in Omonia Square, Kollas condemned those who carried out the action.

Since August sporadic strikes have led to a brief occupation of the Ministry of Economics by building workers and occupations of electric power stations. In addition there has been

a vicious witch-hunt of militants, who have been arrested and will appear in political show trials. Just as soon as workers called strikes, the bureaucrats called them off.

What could anyone expect from the trade union leaders of PASOK and the KKE (Stalinist party)? Are they prepared to overthrow the government which they themselves brought to power? No. Their aim has always been the same: to let off a bit of steam, to combat militancy, to make sure any opposition remains under their control.

The trade union leaders have been presented by Mitsotakis and the press as militants and hard fighters, but in reality they support the government. It is no coincidence they never demand the overthrow of Mitsotakis, only that he changes his policy.

The busworkers sold out by the PASOK and KKE leaders are still on strike, but sacked. The busworkers' strike must not become a Greek equivalent of the British miners' strike, with one militant section left to fight it out alone after union leaders have called token but ineffective solidarity actions.

Greek workers must not substitute the collecting tin for direct solidarity strike action in support of the busworkers. To win they have to replace their misleaders who once again have proved themselves to be pillars of support for Mitsotakis. ■



# Germany after Rostock

BY MARTIN SUCHANEK

**T**HE SEIGE of an immigrant hostel in Rostock by racist and fascist thugs for nearly an entire week at the end of August marked a major shift in German politics. For the first time, the would-be Führers of the various fascist groups were not only able to mobilise their members and open supporters but, more worryingly, significant parts of the local community and youth.

This demonstrates the growth of the neo-Nazi plague over the last year. Just one year ago, when fascists and racists attacked an immigrant hostel in Hoyerswerda, large scale anti-fascist mobilisations followed in many German cities with hundreds of thousands of participants clearly outnumbering the fascists.

The Social Democrats (SPD) responded to Hoyerswerda by hardening its defence of the constitutional guarantee of the right to asylum. But after Rostock the SPD caved in completely. Its leadership is now prepared to negotiate constitutional changes to keep out the "immigrant flood".

The growth of fascist and racist attacks, leaving 10 people killed by right wing lumpen gangs this year, is just one indication of the growing crisis of German capitalism.

In 1990 capitalist reunification temporarily boosted the German economy by raising consumer demand. West German factories continued to produce at near full capacity for the new "eastern" market. This temporary postponement of recession in the west was bought at the expense of destroying large parts of the East German economy, where industrial output declined in 1991 to about one third of the old GDR levels.

## Destructive

The destructive effects of the penetration of the economy of the former degenerated workers' state by western capital were exacerbated by the way in which currency union was put into place. The artificial exchange rate of one East German Mark to one Deutschmark (DM) meant that the debt burden that East German enterprises inherited from the old regime became even heavier. As a result, the number of jobs in the east declined from 8.7 million to 5.67 million in one year, leading to unemployment rates of 20 to 30% in some regions.

In the second quarter of 1992 German gross domestic product shrank by half a percent—and it looks set to fall further. In the words of Vogel, vice-president of Thyssen: "We are already deeper in recession than many would wish to recognise." Meanwhile reunification costs will amount to about DM160 to 200 billion a year until the end of the century.

There is no magic solution for Germany, whatever the Social Democrats and trade union reformists may hope. The country's fate lies in a fundamental readjustment in the balance of class forces, in the coming battles between the bourgeoisie and the working class.

Post-war German capitalism was characterised by a high degree of legally enshrined class collaboration. This restricted the trade unions' and works' councils' rights to take industrial action. At the same time it gave them far-reaching negotiating and consultative rights over wages, jobs and working hours, and guaranteed representation on the supervisory boards of major industrial and financial holdings. But it has become more and more expensive, as well as being insufficient for the bosses' needs.

To date attacks on workers have been most visible on the wages front. To reduce public spending (and the rapidly growing budget

deficit) the public employers forced the ÖTV trade union into a massive strike when they refused to accept a wage increase of just over 5%. Like the strikes in the banking sector and the threat of a strike in the metal and engineering industries, this led to wage deals of between 5% and 6% this year. That satisfied neither the bosses nor the workers, but demonstrated the ability of the trade union bureaucracy to control and sell out workers' struggles.

While a significant reduction of high western wages is a major objective of the German capitalists, it would be wrong to see this as the only one. At the same time mass redundancies have been announced. In North-Rhine-Westphalia alone 30,000 will be made redundant in coal mining. There will be a major wave of cuts in the steel industry. The public sector will be a major target of the bourgeoisie. Finance Minister Theo Waigel's response to the wage deal of 5.6% was: "This means 20,000 jobs have to go."

Likewise German capital is starting a major offensive on the question of working conditions and workplace organisation. The 35 hour week, a slogan the German trade union bureaucracy raised for years (but never seriously fought for), has now been postponed until the next century.

The introduction of new, more intensively exploitative shift systems is going ahead with scarcely any resistance from the official labour movement. "Japanese" workplace organisation and practices are due to be introduced in German industry on a large scale.

However, to carry out all these attacks, a strong and unified capitalist leadership is necessary. As the ÖTV-strike and other industrial disputes showed, the Kohl-government is far from up to this task.

The voices advocating a more decisive attack are growing amongst the capitalists. But an onslaught similar to Thatcher's in the early 1980s would produce levels of class struggle that Germany has not seen since the war, and without any guarantee of an outright bosses' victory.

## Strong

This makes it more and more likely that Germany will move towards more collaboration between the two strong governmental parties, the CDU/CSU and the SPD. Although a grand coalition is not an immediate prospect, there are clear signs that point in that direction. A pact on a parliamentary level between the two parties is already on the way—a pact for reducing public spending, tax increases, modernisation of industry and stronger immigration controls.

This is a pact against the working class. It is a pact for cutting down the gains the German proletariat has made over decades and for a strengthening of German im-

**"There is an urgent need for a workers' united front against fascism, committed to the physical destruction of the neo-Nazi movement and the organisation of workers' and immigrant self defence squads to combat racist attacks."**



Fascists and antifascists in Rostock

perialism abroad. It is a pact which will further strengthen the far right, and lead to the further growth of fascism and racism. It will enable the Nazi gangs to present themselves as the only ones who stand for the "ordinary people" amongst a growing section of the workers, the unemployed and the youth, particularly in the east.

To stop this nightmare, the left and workers' movement needs to begin the fightback now. Rostock not only signalled the growth of the right, but also the failure of the strategies of the German left. It showed the bankruptcy of "Autonomist" sectarianism, which refuses to relate to the working class and its organisations whether in the struggle against the employers or the fascists.

It equally demonstrated the bankruptcy of the pacifist middle class and reformist left, who refused to physically confront the fascists in the past, hoping that peaceful demonstrations and education campaigns alone would stop the Nazis.

The German left has to break with its traditional reliance on the left trade union bureaucrats like Steinkühler, the leader of IG Metall. Steinkühler called a year ago for defence groups to be created by the unions to protect immigrant areas and hostels. Yet what has he done about this, what did he do during the post-Rostock wave of burnings

and riots?

Nothing! Like his right wing colleagues in the headquarters of other unions, he did not try to link the defensive struggles of East German engineering workers with this year's wage round in the West, not to mention fighting for equal pay and working hours for the whole class.

This can only further strengthen the mistrust within a working class divided between east and west—a division which is one of the major weapons of the bosses in the struggles ahead and which could become a rope around the neck of the whole working class.

For revolutionaries the correct attitude is neither to rely on Steinkühler for leadership nor to ignore the fact that he is a leader whose calls could help alert millions of German workers to the new Nazi threat.

## Demands

In short we should place demands on him. He says he is opposed to altering the asylum provisions of the constitution. Good, let him mobilise IG Metall and its tens of thousands of activists in a mass campaign to protect the immigrants, physically, materially and financially.

Such an initiative by IG Metall could rally at least the youth and the left in the SPD against the

constitutional amendments restricting asylum rights. Of course such demands on the leadership must be combined with independent initiatives at rank and file level, in the areas where the danger is already acute.

Germany's bosses are not going to turn to the neo-Nazis in the first or even the second instance. At the present stage they are still trying to use Kohl. A first alternative would undoubtedly be a grand coalition. Only if the bosses suffered a serious defeat in their attempts to shift the rate of exploitation decisively in their favour by traditional methods would they turn to using the fascists—at least as an auxiliary force to frighten the workers' reformist leaders into surrendering their gains "to save democracy".

## Dividing

By contrast racism and the existence of a significant far right does have its uses for the bosses in the here and now by dividing, weakening and confusing the labour movement. Already the bourgeoisie has dragged the SPD into an attack on the asylum rights embodied in the constitution.

There is an urgent need for a workers' united front against fascism, committed to the physical destruction of the neo-Nazi movement and the organisation of workers' and immigrant self defence squads to combat racist attacks. The only condition on participation in that united front should be commitment to the necessary action to stop the rise of racism and fascism.

But at the same time, unless workers begin to fight for their own, socialist solution to unemployment, housing and inflation, the problem of neo-Nazism will not be eliminated. Fascism breeds on crisis ridden capitalism. Only a new, revolutionary workers' party can offer a complete alternative to capitalism, and it is to the task of building that party that the Gruppe Arbeitermacht, the LRCT's section in Germany, is dedicated. ■



Over the July/August period, the CODESA talks were officially off. After the events at Boipatong when police backed up an Inkatha attack on pro-ANC demonstrators, the ANC pulled out.

The talks were already stalled over disagreements about proposals for the degree of white control in the proposed new Assembly. Pretoria demanded that proposals would need a 75% majority to get through. The ANC negotiators were willing to concede as much as 70% but could go no further without losing support from their rank and file. At issue was whether De Klerk's Nationalists and their allies would have a veto over an ANC government's legislation.

But during the period when official talks were off, behind the scenes negotiations have been progressing. The ANC's National Executive, which is a large body incorporating some critics of the leadership's policy of concessions, had forbidden Mandela to be involved in such discussions. So this job was left to Cyril Ramaphosa.

### Explore

He and constitutional minister Roelf Meyer began to explore the "federal solution", giving power to regional states or areas. Such a system would mean that the 75% majority proposal would be unnecessary to secure a decisive voice for the National Party.

The federal system would allow over-representation of whites and of those in the black communities they are wooing into an alliance with them. The Nationalists claim to have won increased support amongst the Coloured and Indian communities. They hope to keep a base in the corruptly run homelands, and they also hope to use Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) to weaken the ANC's hold over the black majority.

Both sides in the main negotiations are talking about such an Assembly providing the base of an Interim Government and acting as a constituent assembly to quickly draw up a new constitution.

They are also keen to reach an agreement between themselves first and then haul in other parties to give the deal legitimacy. This was spelt out in a strategy document discussed at the 3-day ANC National Executive meeting at the start of last month: "Once a settlement is agreed within a bilateral forum, this settlement would then be taken into a multi-lateral forum. But this latter forum should not be allowed to undermine the basic bilateral agreement."

It is this bilateralism, which excludes Inkatha, which has enraged Buthelezi.

By late September, after various "concessions" by the government such as releasing ANC militants from jail, and after the promise of minor reforms in the homelands following the massacre in the Ciskei, this agreement resulted in

## SOUTH AFRICA

# New moves to a sell out

September's agreement between Nelson Mandela and FW De Klerk was always on the cards. The African National Congress (ANC) had been forced out of the CODESA talks by the outrage following the massacre at Boipatong. Inkatha had been given the green light by the government. De Klerk stated that any campaign of mass action by the ANC would lead to bloodshed. Inkatha thugs duly obliged at Boipatong.

But the leadership of the ANC remained firmly committed to doing a deal with the white minority government. For them "mass action", general strikes and withdrawal from CODESA, were all just means to pressure the Nationalists into being less intransigent. Despite further massacres, as in the Ciskei where ANC demonstrators were mown down, ANC leaders such as Nelson Mandela and General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa remain determined to stitch-up a settlement that will bring the ANC a share in power.

Now the biggest obstacle to this reactionary settlement comes from not from the ANC but from apartheid henchman Chief Buthelezi. He is equally determined to secure his own position, using his base in KwaZulu and Natal and his control over armed Inkatha gangs, writes **Lesley Day**.



Buthelezi playing the Zulu card

the official announcement of resumed talks by Mandela and De Klerk.

Mandela planned to placate Buthelezi by having "summit" talks. In fact Mandela has been personally committed to talking to Buthelezi for some time but internal opposition within the ANC has prevented this.

ANC branches in Natal are determined to prevent a sell-out to Buthelezi. ANC and COSATU militants have striven for years to undermine Inkatha's stranglehold. The unionisation drives against Buthelezi's scab union UWUSA, the challenge to gangsterism in the townships and to the corrupt KwaZulu police—all this has taken a terrible toll in lives, homes and jobs.

These militants have succeeded in winning Zulu workers away from attachment to Inkatha and destroyed Buthelezi's claim to represent the Zulu people. To now see Buthelezi recognised as such seems, to the ANC militants, to be throwing away years of sacrifice.

But can the leaders of the Natal ANC offer a coherent alternative set of tactics? So far they have been unable to do so, because they have been unwilling to break with the overall strategy of the ANC and South African Communist Party (SACP) leaders.

All the Natal ANC leadership has had to offer is a repeat in KwaZulu of the same disastrous tactics as were employed in Ciskei—the proposal for an unarmed march on the capital of KwaZulu.

The ill-fated attempt to march on the Ciskei capital, Bisho, was based on the strategy advocated by

to see the overthrow of Buthelezi. He would much prefer to keep Inkatha under control, but ready to be used as a weapon against the ANC when necessary.

What tactics can oust the homeland leaders, overthrow the homeland system and destroy the influence of Buthelezi? Only those linked to a strategy aimed at the destruction of the racist state and the capitalist system that spawned it.

The current strategy shared by all the ANC leaders is aimed at the preservation of capitalism, or in the preferred jargon, the "mixed economy". This means the preservation of the existing ruling class with a layer of the black bourgeoisie elevated into it and a larger black middle class beneath.

With this strategy there is no way that the ANC can address the real problems which afflict South African society and which prop up people like Buthelezi.

### Exploitation

The system of exploitation at the heart of South African capitalism has ensured that the discrimination and terrible poverty characteristic of apartheid have continued and even deepened since the bulk of apartheid laws have gone. Socialist militants have correctly argued for the destruction of the hostel system by the building of proper housing, allowing migrant workers to settle with their families in the townships. But the ANC-De Klerk agreement revolved around the fencing-in of hostel dwellers!



ANC demonstrators flee Ciskei police gunfire

The problem of the homelands and migrant labour cannot be solved short of major land reform involving the nationalisation of the land and the seizure and occupation of the big, productive estates. Anything less leaves the black majority fighting over small areas of the worst land.

Those members of the Zulu working class and rural poor who look to Buthelezi to defend them need to be won to a programme of action which combines democratic demands with those for jobs, wages and housing and links them all to working class revolution.

Instead of the vote-fixing proposals being put forward for the new constitution, socialists argue for an unfettered Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of one person one vote. There should be no concessions to Buthelezi or the Nationalists through federal voting based on borders erected by the racist state.

### Democratic

Such a thoroughly democratic Constituent Assembly could only be convened and sustained if the working class was armed and able to challenge the might of the racist state and its army. Such an Assembly could only begin to address the burning needs of the South African masses if it was headed by a revolutionary workers' government committed to the ending of the system of capitalist exploitation in the Republic.

Should such a revolutionary Constituent Assembly be forbidden in advance from listening to or granting demands from minorities, for protection of language rights or for self-determination for particular areas or peoples, especially the Zulu majority area of Natal?

Not at all—as long as this was not used as a power base for the racists or to deny the rights of other peoples and minorities.

In fact a guarantee by South Africa's working class that, should such a demand command majority support, it would be granted would be one of the best ways of undermining Buthelezi's position and convincing those workers and rural dwellers who still fear domination by another group that they have nothing to fear.

At the same time revolutionary socialists in South Africa would raise the arguments against the splitting up of South Africa in every section of the working class.

But a progressive recognition of minority rights is far removed from the current federal proposals. These have nothing to do with extending democratic rights to minorities and everything to do with swindling the black majority out of its democratic rights. The new sell out being negotiated by Mandela and Ramaphosa must be opposed by every socialist, every working class militant and every ANC supporter who looked to their leadership for a democratic settlement. ■

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**T**WO MONTHS after the Tories imposed a ban on the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), loyalist paramilitary organisations have intensified their murder campaign. But the proscription of the UDA on 10 August brought in its wake no round ups, no dawn raids, and no mass arrests of loyalists.

This was predictable. As one UDA member recently told newspapers, the ban was just "a gesture for appeasement" toward the SDLP and the Dublin government in the context of renewed British attempts at peace talks. Britain never intended to seriously enforce the ban. The Loyalist paramilitaries have played an important role in defending British rule in the North.

In his new book *The Red Hand*, (Oxford University Press £8.55)—Steve Bruce sets out to record and explain the origins and growth of the loyalist paramilitaries—mainly the UDA and the UVF—in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland of the late 1960s was a one party state with a popular mass organisation—the Orange Order—designed to link working class protestants to their unionist bosses. Catholic nationalists were discriminated against in housing, employment, council boundary gerrymandering and security policy. The year 1968 saw an unprecedented explosion of revolt as the anti-unionists of the North took their fight against social and national oppression onto the streets. The civil rights marches and protestant counter-demonstrations in 1968 and 1969 led to the emergence of loyalist paramilitary groups, which sprang into action in defence of the status quo.

Steve Bruce's book illustrates clearly that the actions of these groups over the last quarter of a century have been those of sectarian murder squads in defence of a sectarian state.

Loyalist paramilitaries have been responsible for just under half the civilian deaths from 1969 to 1989, the majority of them Catholics uninvolved in nationalist politics. Instead of targeting IRA men and Sinn Feiners, loyalist paramilitaries will kill "any ould Taig" who has the misfortune to fall into the hands of a team out for the kill.

The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was a small radical working-class "vanguard" for loyalism which grew rapidly from 1970 to 1974—"wee teams" circulating in a small

# Red hand of loyalist terror



Now banned, UDA is still a murder weapon for British imperialism and the Orange State

world of militant protestant organisations. Their hero was Gusto Spence—who with others had killed four Catholic barmen in a sectarian attack in Malvern Street in 1966.

The UVF had three questions which it asked of potential recruits: were they ready to kill, were they ready to go into prison, and were they ready to be killed to preserve Ulster from a united Ireland. The slogan "Gusto was right" began to appear on walls. The pub bombings and sectarian murders began.

The UDA grew out of the remnants of the "wee teams" of the UVF and the vigilante groups that had formed in frontline streets of Belfast in 1969. (Vigilantes proudly claimed they had on 14/15 August almost succeeded in burning the Catholics out of

Belfast). The Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) were the "operators" (a euphemism for killers) within the UDA. The UDA grew enormously with about 26,000 paid up members by the end of 1972.

Most of the murders committed by loyalists in 1972 and the first half of 1973 were the work of the UDA, with the 3 Belfast UFF teams being particularly active. But after July, the UVF began to catch up. In the summer and autumn of 1973 the UVF planted more bombs than the UDA and the IRA combined. In Belfast 16 pubs were destroyed in 16 days.

The early UDA had a trade union and community action element in its leadership—representing the "political" as opposed to the UFF "military" wing—while almost all of the UVF leadership were "operators". The UVF saw itself as a tight military organisation and neither sought nor achieved the size or public presence of the UDA. By the 1990s the two groups were hardly distinguishable from each other.

Early in 1974, in the aftermath of Sunningdale and the formation of the new power sharing executive, Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Craig's "Vanguard" and the anti-Sunningdale, anti-power-sharing Unionists led by Harry West, formed the United Ulster Unionist Council to present a common front against the powersharing.

They took 51% of the vote in the British general election of March 1974 while the parties which supported Faulkner gained only 41%. Encouraged by this, the loyalist Ulster Workers Council called a reactionary general strike in May 1974 in support of the demand for new elections to the assembly. Within 14 days the economy had collapsed and the power-sharing executive resigned.

Bruce explains how, through most of the strike, the army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) did very little to prevent the UDA and UVF adding the necessary element of coercion and intimidation that ensured the workers' industrial efforts were successful. Policemen stood by as gangs of loyalists blocked roads and intimidated motorists into turning back from their journeys to work.

In Ballymena two Catholics whose pubs had stayed open during the strike were shot dead. On May 17 (the fourth day of the strike) UVF car bombs exploded in Dublin and Monaghan killing 26.

The strike was a huge success for the UDA and the UVF. In two years they had gone from organising "wee vigilante groups of ten men to patrol the street" to running the province.

A thread running through Bruce's book is the collusion of British imperialism with the loyalist paramilitaries—although Bruce is at pains to deny much "direct" collusion.

During the first year of loyalist sectarian murders the security forces turned a blind eye while at the same time the anti-unionist Falls Road was under curfew. The RUC could refer to the loyalist murder of 200 Catholics from February 1972 to June 1973 as "random" or "motiveless killings", even though it was clear people were being killed because they were Catholics.

In 1969 the army were on amicable terms with the loyalist vigilante groups and implicitly condoned their illegal arming. In 1972 when the UDA started to set up a series of "no-go areas" as political bargaining counters, the British army again capitulated to them.

The barricading of Ainsworth Avenue was a case in point. This was a street barricaded by loyalist paramilitaries behind which 50 Catholic families were trapped. Barriers were allowed and the UDA were permitted to "patrol" alongside the army. Ainsworth Avenue was a major victory and morale booster for the UDA.

Direct collusion between the security forces and the loyalist paramilitaries in the exchange of intelligence meant the UDA and the UVF frequently got their hands on official British Army photographs of IRA suspects. All this is well documented in Bruce's book.

While the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was not just the UVF and UDA in British Army uniforms, the loyalist paramilitaries have been able to use membership of the UDR to promote their sectarian goals—the murderous attack on the Southern Irish Miami Show Band being but one example.

Bruce describes with sickening clarity the gangsterism and vicious sectarianism of the loyalist death squads. He is at his weakest, however, in his comparisons between the UDA, the UVF and the IRA. He offers no analysis beyond sociological comparisons—that the loyalist paramilitaries are less well organised, less skillful in the operations, less well funded, less well able to develop an enduring political programme, more "vulnerable" to racketeering. The IRA have also been guilty of sectarian retaliatory attacks, he says, despite admitting the fact that their operations do not as a general rule follow drinking sessions!

Bruce never gets to the heart of the matter.

The IRA is a movement that has a genuine base among a section of the oppressed nationalist working class in the North—a movement committed to the defence of the nationalist community against the forces of British imperialism. Although the IRA's strategy and tactics cannot offer a way forward for anti-unionists they have to be differentiated from, and defended against, the death squads of the loyalist paramilitaries.

The death squads are only the most extreme version of loyalist sectarianism. The RUC and the UDR are both bastions of the same sectarianism. Together with the British troops, the no-jury courts and the brutal prison system, these forces constitute the repressive apparatus of the Northern State. Bruce's book is testimony to the fact that all talk of British "impartiality" in the six-county state is rubbish.

The only effective answer to loyalist terrorism is to smash and destroy—the Northern Ireland sectarian state itself, and with it every remnant of British imperialist rule in Ireland. ■

## Mobilise the unemployed!

**T**he Irish capitalists are determined to make workers and the unemployed bear the cost of the currency crisis.

Interest rates have been jacked up by a savage 3%, directly increasing home repayments by up to £65 a month for a large number of working class families. This was necessary to keep up the profit-incentive of the rentier capitalists who move huge cash deposits about in search of the highest return.

The alternative—devaluation of the Irish pound and a wage freeze to control inflation—was resisted only because devaluation automatically increases the size of foreign debt. Ireland's debt already stands at almost two-thirds of annual Gross National Product.

Whichever option the ruling class chooses, the worker and the impoverished welfare dependent is made to pay—through interest, taxes, wage freezes, welfare cuts and job losses. In every case the result is a massive increase in profits for the finance capitalists at home and abroad, the bondholders, banks, building societies and their large depositors.

The sudden devaluation of sterling undermines exports from Ireland in their biggest single market, the UK. Hundreds of employers are preparing to lay off workers to protect their profits. The call by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions for temporary subsidies of the bosses is no answer.

The leaders of the trade union and labour movement must be forced to fight for the independent interests of the workers, unemployed and poor. Giving critical support to one ruling class policy rather than another is a calculated diversion from defending our interests.

At a moment when we are beginning to see the first mobilisations of the unem-

ployed in over 30 years, when we are faced with savage welfare cuts, new threats to jobs and orchestrated demands for a wage freeze, there is only one road open: the road of struggle.

Militants must build for action in the unions and working class estates to force the labour and trade union movement to defend our living standards. We need to win the workers' organisations to the fight for a clear anti-capitalist programme of action:

- to nationalise the banks, building societies and finance houses, cancelling interest rises on workers' mortgages and public-service borrowing
- to resist all redundancies through occupations and strikes; to stop and reverse the social spending cuts; and to smash all attempts at the wages freeze
- Only the repudiation of the national debt to the finance capitalists at home and abroad can really protect the interests of the Irish masses exploited by the super-profters.

Centrally, the new movement of the unemployed must be won to fight for the only demand which can answer their needs: a massive programme to create jobs for all in useful public works and services at union rates and under working class control! ■

## OUT NOW

Special edition of *Class Struggle* journal (No 21 October 1992) *The Socialist Workers Movement, a Trotskyist Analysis*. This examines the origins and struggles of the Irish far left over the past 20 years with special focus on a Trotskyist critique of the SWM.

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# Workers power

## INSIDE

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- ★ Strike wave in Poland
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Bosnian Muslims in Serbian prison camp. Britain has only taken 2,000 refugees from former Yugoslavia!

those really responsible for the cuts in public services: the bosses, bankers and their Tory government.

Far from being "swamped" Britain has a scandalous record on accepting refugees. Almost two million people from Yugoslavia have been driven from their homes. Many thousands face hunger and homelessness as winter approaches. While Germany has accepted over 220,000 refugees and Austria 57,000, Britain has accepted a paltry 2,000 refugees! With this record the Tories are returning to Parliament demanding new powers of exclusion.

### Campaign

The last Asylum Bill was met with a major campaign from refugee groups, immigrant organisations, students and trade unionists. Even the United Nations was moved to protest at some provisions in the Bill. The Tories will be back claiming they have "modified" it, perhaps by extending the time limits allowed for review of a refugees case. This will just be window dressing. The racist purpose of the Bill will be the same.

The Asylum Bill, along with all immigration controls, must be smashed. We reject the idea that "political" refugees are acceptable while "economic migrants" are not. Whether they face torture or starvation, every foreign migrant and refugee who wishes to live in Britain should be welcomed here.

All capitalist immigration controls are racist. They aim to divide the working class and place the blame for unemployment, run down hospitals and overcrowded schools on "the foreigners" rather than on the bosses and their governments.

The Tories will use the Bill to fuel the fires of racism and divert workers' attention from the real cause of their miseries. It will be used by the racists and fascists as an excuse to step up their attacks on black communities across Britain.

### Defeat

If we can smash the Asylum Bill, the racist laws passed by Labour and Tory governments alike will still be on the statute books. But a mass movement to defeat the Bill provides the best launch pad for a fight to strip away every racist immigration law.

The struggle against the Bill and the arguments against racist legislation must be taken into the trade unions. We need to set up anti-Asylum Bill Committees with delegates from workplaces, communities and local labour movements. These must involve not only the trade unions but refugee and immigrant organisations, student unions and black organisations.

They must organise protest meetings and build for the most massive demonstration possible on 21 November. But this will not be sufficient to stop a Bill the Tories are determined push through. We must argue for strike action and demonstrations at every stage of the Bill in parliament. And if the Tories push it through we must organise for trade union action to boycott its implementation.

**Smash the Asylum Bill, smash all immigration laws!**

**Build the 21 November demonstration.**

# Smash new Asylum Bill

**When Parliament re-assembles one of the first measures the Tories will put before it will be a new version of the racist Asylum Bill. The Tories want to make it as difficult as possible for refugees fleeing from persecution, war and starvation to enter Britain. They want to quickly ship refugees back where they came from, free from any complicated legal rules.**

The Tories' last Asylum Bill was a vicious piece of racist legislation. It sought to:

- remove the automatic right of appeal for those refused asylum
- remove all legal aid for advising on asylum and immigration matters
- initiate compulsory finger printing of all asylum seekers
- remove the right to council housing while the refugees' application for asylum is considered
- impose increased fines on airlines for bringing passengers without correct documentation

The Tories have promised to provide 300 additional detention places for those considered "likely to abscond". A government renowned for demanding cuts in the public services has promised to employ 500 extra "adjudicators". Their job is to ensure that Asylum seekers are bundled back onto the planes as quickly as possible.

ble.

The Tories launched the last Asylum Bill in the run up to the general election with the deliberate aim of playing the racist card. Their friends

in the Tory press quickly took up the campaign, declaring that Britain was about to be "swamped" by a mass influx of "economic migrants" masquerading as political refugees.

The question of how to further restrict the rights of refugees and immigrants was top of the agenda at a recent EC foreign ministers meeting in September. Douglas Hurd declared that immigration was the "most serious problem facing Europe".

Britain has been in the forefront of building "Fortress Europe", urging the other countries in the European Community to bring their racist immigration legislation up to "British standards".

It is all part of the double standard of the unified market. On the one hand it establishes the free flow of capital and goods and on the other it restricts the free movement of workers.

If the Tories are to accept the lowering of barriers within Europe they are determined to ensure the barriers go up around it. Already there has been a new wave of racist legislation across Europe and the harassment of existing immigrant communities.

In Spain special police units patrol the shores of the Mediterranean seizing exhausted immigrants as they swim ashore. In France they have withdrawn work permits from those seeking asylum, while in Germany the Kohl government is trying to restrict the constitutional right to asylum.

The bosses' united Europe will mean more racism, fewer rights for migrants and second-class citizenship for many black workers.

## Bosses' Europe – racist Europe!