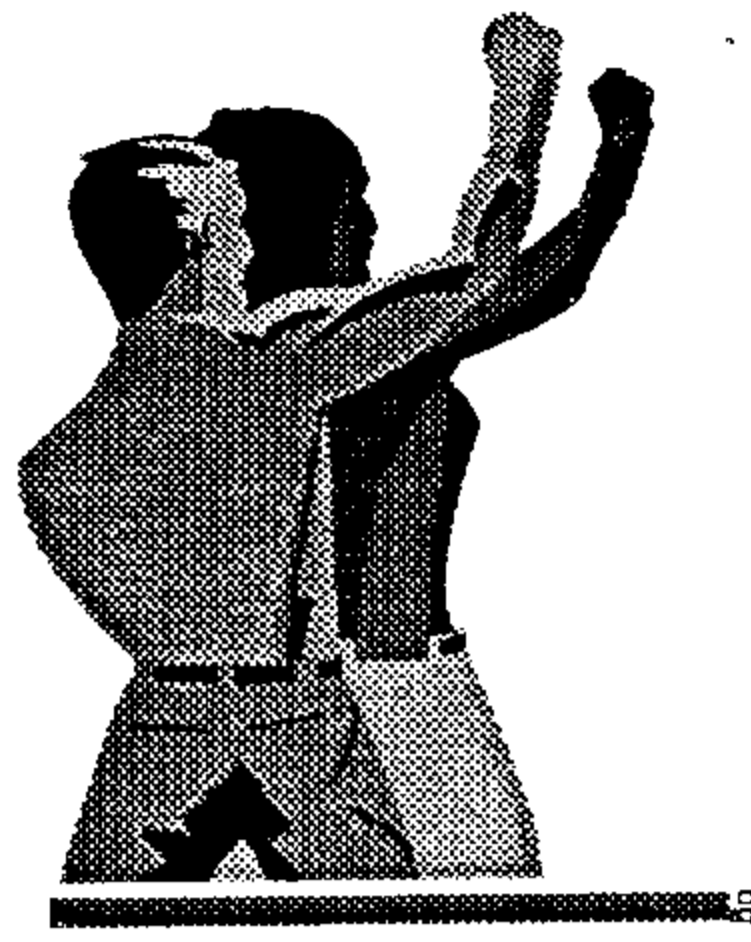


V *socialist* **VOICE**



EUROPE IN A DIZZY SPIN

WORKERS NEED MARXISM AND LEADERSHIP

The turmoil on the currency and stock markets of the world is the result of the uncontrollable crisis of capitalism and its world market which has continued to wrack the major capitalist economies over the past two years.

The measures which governments try to meet their budget deficits and currency problems are escalating rapidly. All the major

capitalist powers - USA, Germany and Japan are in a dizzy economic spin while each national capitalism seeks to escape at the expense of the other.

All the other capitalist powers in Europe complain about high German interest rates but German capitalism keeps its interest rates high because of fear of inflation out of the grave problems in the East.

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**INSIDE TUC, COUNCIL & POLL TAX, RAILWAYS, LETTERS
PLUS POLAND, RUSSIA, DEATH OF A COMRADE**

socialist VOICE



Monthly Paper
of the
International
Socialist
League

British Section
of the
International
Workers'
League
[4th International]

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This Issue By
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Peter Money
Martin Ralph

*signed articles do not
necessarily reflect
the views of the ISL*

Contributions
We welcome articles, news,
photographs etc.
from readers—
please send them to the
above address.

THE VOICE SAYS The Bosses' Men

The Trade Union Congress as something taken by itself it would not rank a comment. But in relation to the needs of the working class and their organisations, it must bring some sharp conclusions. In view of what faces working people and above all the poorest and most suffering sections of our society, we say that the complacent windbags who led the Congress are the most dangerous people for the working class of Britain.

The financial world was in turmoil, governments in panic, the capitalist world going to a repetition of the 1929 collapse and here we had leaders going through their prepared ritual, heads stuffed with self interest, prejudice, business economics and the thought of advertising sprees. There was little evidence of the working class which made it all possible for them.

There was something greatly symbolic in the miners delegation walking out while the chairman of the CBI occupied a place on the platform. What was left of the historic traditions of a great Labour struggle walked out that day, while the representative of Capital lectured the delegates on what they must do.

These are dangerous men because they have their hands on the workers organisations and the workers need organisation as the capitalist world goes into chaos. For Norman Willis, TUC general secretary it was *"the best congress I've seen"*. Bill Morris, TGWU general secretary, who was supported by the Broad Left, welcomed the CBI's speech. There was no card vote for the first time in 25 years.

Willis also probably thought Labour's election campaign was the best he had seen. As with that campaign, so with the TUC conference, the working class never got a look in. We said in a recent pamphlet; *"Why Labour Lost"*, the election was the quietest on record, the TUC leadership have done everything they can to help the Labour leaders. Willis and co are speechless when it comes to the problems facing the working class. Even though we wrote on the poverty and problems facing the working class in August now it is worse.

The Government intends to abolish the last remnants of wages control.

"Now, for the first time in a century, the South East is set to become what pre-war governments called a distressed area. Its

raison d'être has disappeared in what is almost a cultural as well as economic implosion. Talk of accumulating capital has been replaced by talk of negative equity, with a million people, nearly all in the South-east, owning homes worth less than the value of their mortgages." The Independent On Sunday, 23 August.

Unemployment has reached over 25% in Lambeth and elsewhere, according to the Unemployed Unit in Brixton.

While blows on the working class are falling more often and harder than before the TUC can find agreement with the CBI. Labour leaders such as Tony Blair direct their attack towards the youth not the bosses. He is now talking to the police about how they are going to deal with crime and youth. For him it has nothing to do with the CBI offensive on jobs, the attack on training or the near impossibility of living on benefits. No for him, *"...we have a standard of living our grandparents never dreamt of"* as reported in the Guardian 12th September. He is going to meet the *"breakdown of law"* by encouraging the police, not by helping to organise the working class youth. At the same time the lowest paid are on 65p an hour and in the last 12 years only six firms out of 17,000 have been taken to court in the North-West for paying less than the legal minimum.

This is one of the reasons why there was such little debate after Labour lost from either the TUC or the Labour leadership. None of the leaders wanted a discussion which lead to them being tied down in the slightest way to the working class, no matter how slight that would have been. They want to keep going in the same direction without hindrance from workers. While racist killings continue, which are being organised against in cities such as Manchester and London, Tony Blair wants to get closer to the police, while the bosses empty millions of workers onto the streets and support lower wages, Willis wants to clutch the CBI.

It is precisely the TUC and the Labour leaders who are responsible for the betrayal of workers, but those around the broad left should not be allowed to slink away. They are supposed to control the Transport Union, but Bill Morris, who they supported, has gone along with supporting the CBI speech. Whom we ask has ended up controlling whom?

All Britain Conference to Unite Struggles in Public Services and Communities

Over two months ago the North West Anti-Poll Tax Forum sent out a letter calling on anti-poll tax groups, activists, council workers etc to discuss organising a conference that would seek to unite the struggles for hospitals, education, council services, public transport and in the communities against the Tory government's continuing onslaught.

There has been a wide discussion and everyone we have talked with thinks that such a conference should be called.

Last year the North West Anti-Poll Tax Forum organised a conference with the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign, anti-poll tax groups, trade union branches and others. At that conference many groups were developing from anti-poll tax groups into community struggle groups without forgetting the fight which remained over the poll tax.

The Crisis in London Campaign held conferences and public meetings in 1991 and 1992, attended by teachers, students, bus and underground workers, pensioners, hospital workers, anti-poll tax and safety campaigners, council workers, immigrant workers and many others, all demanding the public services that Londoners need. Crisis in London drew up and agreed the beginnings of a plan for the kind of public services necessary.

We want to continue that work and to widen it, to discuss and plan on the widest possible basis how to fight the government's attacks. We are therefore calling a conference to be held either in January or February. All are welcome to organise and decide its agenda

In the replies and discussions we have had there are already many points of agreement. The struggle against the poll tax is not over yet. In fact in some areas it has entered its worst phase. Soon people will be faced with paying not only the poll tax but the council tax as well. Many of the poorest people have been or are going to be sent to jail.

The Tory government plans to destroy all public services, and Labour councils are implementing Tory demands for cuts. Tory and Labour councils have chosen their road - impose the poll tax and slash services despite any suffering. What is the difference between the two?

We cannot say the poll tax was totally defeated when its greatest thrust is still continuing - the break up of the council services, the attack on council unions and the decline of living conditions on the estates.

The problems facing youth are connected with these questions as well, the explosions on the estates, the suicides, the drugs, come from the fact that the Labour councils do not want to fight for the poor or the working class. Many council workers feel trapped by their situation.

The new leaders of the Labour Party, as with Kinnock, hate all those who struggle. They continue to drive out and expel Labour Party members for the "crimes" of daring to oppose the poll tax or the cuts in council services.

We want to unite all those forces coming into battle against the Tories, the Labour councils and many of the leaders of local and national trade unions. Already the Tories are signalling a renewed offensive on council jobs and services.

Communities and public service workers have to unite. Services are not only being reduced but destroyed. Let us bring together all those fights now taking place over housing, unemployment, the poll tax, schools, hospitals, social services, transport etc.

We know one thing at least, only those who struggle will be capable of defending what we have - by transforming it into what we need. To do that we need to get the money from somewhere. It must come not from the working class estates but from the rich and from the state.

These are just some of the points which seem to have a wide agreement. The conference which we can organise will discuss many questions and there are already proposals on what it could decide.

We need to build a united and powerful movement able to challenge the government's twin intentions of dismantling public services, and forcing ordinary people to pay for the government's own financial crisis.

Let us come together to discuss how we are going to unite our struggles in England, Wales and Scotland. ■

CONFERENCE 6th & 7th FEBRUARY MANCHESTER

Organising meetings in
November (London) and
January (Manchester)

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READERS LETTER

Dear Comrades,

I would like the following discussed at the 20th September organising meeting in Manchester and anywhere else possible.

We cannot allow the Tory government to close everything in its path. The latest example is the announcement that the last coal mine in Lancashire is about to close with the loss of more than 300 jobs. The unions cannot lead a fight so we will have to. We need:

1) A national people's march for jobs from Scotland to London. Say next June
2) A national committee to be set up in the North-West. (Manchester)?

3) Other working committees to be set up in London, Wales and Scotland.

4) We need the support from all working class organisations, students, unemployed and all working class people throughout Britain.

5) Meetings could be held along the route to focus attention on the many miseries inflicted on those without work and to put the case for a fight back against attacks on the disadvantaged.

6) We demand full employment by all those who say they represent the working class. We demand the right to work and live. We need to give some kind of organised expression to the anger and struggles taking place throughout Britain.

Please support our National March for Jobs. Brian Patrick

MORE LETTERS ON PAGE 6

CON TAX

MARTIN RALPH

The September issue of "London Fight The Poll Tax!" carries a very useful article on the Council Tax chaos. It is a timely warning against those who hope that the worse effects of the Poll Tax will go away next April.

Already Department of Environment officials are warning that 1.5 million appeals will be made against the valuation of houses. The Council Tax evaluations are based on April 1991 estimates by Estate Agents. There is, of course, no guarantee that these Estate Agents will arrive at the correct figure and many people will protest out of the feeling of injustice that they are paying tax based on admittedly false evaluations - house prices everywhere are lower now than in 1991.

"Ministers have been told that the expected workload of the Valuation and Community charge tribunals could require the employment of a further 150 tribunal staff." (London Fight The Poll Tax)

Appeals against the valuation can start on April 1 1993 and will stop on November 30 1993. If you need to appeal the first thing is to serve a written notice, under section 16(1) of the Local Government Act 1992 on the council challenging the valuation, if the council refuses then an appeal can be lodged.

"There are a number of differences between the enforcement procedures for Council Tax and Poll tax - all of them nastier." (LGTPT)

For example: the council can force a debtor to sell their house (section 11), Bailiffs may be exempted from statutory maximum costs, in other words charging what they like in their attempts at forcing their victims to pay up, councillors expenses can now be grabbed by the council if they owe Council Tax money and the income of a debtor can, at any time (not just the period covered by the debt) can be taken into account.

A different problem with the evaluations is that in some areas house prices were much lower in 1991 than thought and therefore more fall into the lower bands than expected - creating the problem that less money than planned for will be raised. Meaning, of course, the Council Tax will be increased to take account of this problem.

Workers living in London and the Home Counties face some of the biggest rises. Estimates already indicate that South-eastern households will pay on average £780 against £480 in the North. The majority of the million house owners who have defaulted of

their mortgage repayments live in this area and the Council Tax will just add to their worry.

Rents will be increased because of this tax and many landlords will use the excuse to make some addition money.

Because of the resistance to the Poll Tax the government has been forced to attack in a new way. While a non-payment campaign may develop we, as well as the government, have to learn from past mistakes. We have to go beyond the emphasis on individual non-payment. The government has develop certain powers to allow it to hone its attack on individuals.

Meanwhile the Poll Tax attack continues. The councils maintain their terror tactics against non and part payers. As time goes on they will devise new ways and ask the Tories for new powers to force money out of people.

Nearly four million magistrates' summonses for non or part-payment were made against people in England and Wales. Liability orders were made against 2.6 million. According to the London Evening Standard the, *"costs of seizing the unpaid debt soared to £670 million this year, 13 per cent higher than last."*

"Council officials have warned that the outstanding debts could bring years of financial chaos and put council tax bills up by between 10 and 20 per cent".

As the Voice has said before until an alternative method of financing local authority services is developed which forces the government and the rich to pay then there will be no way out.

The Government stands on one platform as far as council service goes - they want to remove them altogether. The financial crisis of Sterling is going to directly hit local authority finances.

But the crisis is so great that the government will seek to take even more from local services than it had planned. We all face a future where services can be shut down over night.

The Council Tax will be used by the government to achieve its ends, to maintain services, to recover Poll Tax money, the costs of implementation, the costs of phasing out the Poll Tax and to pay the estate agents, the tax will have to be raised dramatically - but people will not be able to afford such amounts

Many will not, or will not be able, to pay. The son of Poll Tax is growing up fast.■

Here

Poor still subsidise the rich-

So you thought that we'd not only won a battle but the whole war and we could relax now that Thatcher's out and the government have announced the abolition of the Poll Tax.

After a lengthy gestation and a rushed and guillotined passage through Parliament its offspring, the "Council" (Con) Tax is due to be thrust squalling upon us for April Fool's Day. Already our money is being spent to welcome it with massive new computer software and jobs for and payments to estate agents to conduct mass valuations from rushed external inspection.

Let's look at this misbegotten hybrid. Ostensibly a property tax (like the rates) it bears a strong resemblance to its unlamented parent the Poll Tax. It is not based on ability to pay, despite charitably exempting some of the very poorest, Bills are to be based on capital value of property, and number, status and income of residents. Single person households get a discount of 25%, and unoccupied properties and second homes 50%, thus giving additional benefit to second home owners. The tax, like the Poll Tax, is to be calculated on a daily basis so, despite disclaimers, a personal register will still be necessary.

REGISTERS

Authorities may demand of "any person appearing .. to be a resident, owner or managing agent of a particular dwelling" to supply any information in his/her possession or control "for the purpose of identifying the person who, in respect of any period specified in the request, is or will be the relevant person in relation to the dwelling". The demand may be served on a named person or by description. In other words, anyone may be asked for information about others

Billing authorities may require information from any other authority, including electoral registration and housing authorities. Worse still, "no duty of confidentiality shall prevent the Secretary of State disclosing relevant information to an authority".

So information given for one purpose (and social security is mentioned specifically in the Act) may be used for Council Tax purposes.

Comes the Council Tax

More 'reforms' and reorganisation on the way-Local services slashed again-Ballot box sham!

PROPERTY TAX?

Properties are to be put into one of eight bands Households are to be taxed according to the band in which the property falls - assessed as if it were in good repair and sold freehold. Normal extensions add to the value for Con Tax purposes, adaptations for disabled persons do not! How can an assessor driving by tell whether a ground floor extension is for a loo or for disabled access? Nation-wide making valuations are up for tender - who can do it the most cheaply?

People will be notified only of the band into which their property has been put. Try selling a house at an estate agent's valuation just think of the grounds for appeals.

PROPERTY VALUES

But, because of the varying property values in different places, some localities will do better than others. Those in inner city areas, with high property values, will pay much more. It is estimated that 80% of Camden properties fall into the top three bands, and will be taxed accordingly, yet Camden is the twelfth most deprived Borough in the country.

Once the top limit is reached (£350,000) there is no further increase, so those living in millionaires' row pay no more.

UNIFORM BUSINESS RATE

To add insult to injury, the Uniform Business Rate is to remain unchanged. What this means basically is that, again, deprived inner cities are to continue subsidising affluent suburbs. Inner city areas will have to continue to provide services to businesses in their area, but much of what they collect in rates goes out to areas with more people on the poll tax register but fewer businesses.

Before the introduction of the Poll Tax Camden got much of its revenue from Business Rates; since then it, like London as a whole, has lost. This had to be made up from the Poll Tax (Council Tax in future) - another reason for differing rates.

In 1991-92 Camden's contribution to the pool was £214m. of which we got back £46m. In other words there was a net outflow of £168m, or £1270.95 per head, the third highest in the country after the City of London and Westminster.

Other losers include deprived Boroughs like Hackney, Brent, Newham, whereas Wandsworth gained £27m, Bexley £28m, and Bromley a whacking £40m.

STANDARD SPENDING ASSESSMENT

The Government will continue to set Standard Spending Assessments - how much it considers a Local Authority should spend on services. This government is intent on cutting social provision and privatising services

These assessments have been discriminatory between authorities. Revenue Support Grant is based on the SSA, as are government estimates of prospective Poll or Council Tax levels (estimates of average Poll Tax have been consistently low). If Camden had been funded on the same basis as Westminster Camden's Poll Tax would have been halved. On average nationally last year Conservative Councils have had an increase in their SSAs of 5.64%; Labour Councils 30.92%

Even with the cuts made, Camden is spending £5.3 million above the SSA, and further cuts are to come.

GEARING

Because of the percentage of funds provided by central government, through grants or allocation of the Uniform Business Rate, this means that if a Local Authority wants to spend more on a particular service, or total, than the SSA, the amount it must add to the Contax, as to the Poll Tax, is disproportionately high. An increase of 1% expenditure could lead to a tax increase of 4-7%. The government will, of course, cap any Local Authority the expenditure of which it considers excessive.

So the cuts will continue, and be increased. The Poll and the Council Tax to follow, are designed to achieve this.

DEMOCRACY?

And in line with true democratic procedure, not only can local Councillors who have not paid their Council Tax have their allowances taken as if attachable earnings, they will be barred from voting on finance measures; only those who support and pay will have a vote. People have dropped off the electoral register for fear of the Poll Tax; now only those Councillors who go along with government policy will be allowed to vote on it. What price the ballot box now?

CAMPAIGN

Camden Stop the Poll Tax Campaign is opposed to any tax with a Poll Tax element. Any tax must be based on ability to pay.

We didn't pay the Poll Tax. We're not paying the Council Tax.

We forced the government to back down before. Don't give in now - continue the resistance and finish the job.

★ POLL TAX AMNESTY

★ FREE ALL POLL TAX PRISONERS

★ DON'T PAY THE COUNCIL TAX

★ DON'T CO-OPERATE

ORGANISATIONS WHOSE
INFORMATION
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READERS

Letters

Send your letters, stories and articles to: ISL PO Box
9 Eccles SO Salford M30 7FX

Here We Go Again

From Norman Laws who is 73
and has just been sent to prison for second time for
non-payment of the Poll Tax.

Here we go again, 2nd round, two months (WILFULL). This time I am experiencing police cells. They are a vast improvement on that bleak, feudal monstrosity at Durham. Hygiene, food and general attitudes are more civilized in all respects. I hope Durham prison remains full and overflowing. There are still plenty of niggles, like visiting arrangements: one little cubicle with a perspex partition and only two visitors at a time, once every three days. Washing (dirty linen), food, papers, etc can be exchanged with visitors after checking by police.

I am going to try getting some newspaper cuttings photocopied by my next visitor from the unemployed centre, Newcastle. That might start an argument! I want copies; these were 'poison' letters and editorials from local gutter press, one of which I replied to and dared him to print - he did, conscience, no doubt. I can send copies in all my outgoing mail. Outgoing letters now stand at 23, incoming 23. This is good in all ways; keeps me from running up the wall.

What I wanted to write about was Kay Richardson of Whitby. She is the lady who originally told the magistrate: "I earn nothing, I own nothing, I can't pay, I won't pay." When the Magistrate said he was sorry she adopted that attitude and that she should not take it that far she replied, "I will take it to prison, that is how far I will take it." She has just been to court this last week and the Esk Valley (Scarborough) Council have been given their third liability order against her. The Yorkshire Post then states she now owes the Council "about £500." They mean for 1990/91, 1991/92 and £38 of instalments for the current year.

This, of course, must be codswallop, as the two previous years must now be null and void as per the six month rule. All she can be legally charged for is the £38 for 92/93. Her husband has been unemployed for the last 6 months, she has never been in any waged job and her husband has broken his arm and is on sick pay, so she went to town on the Bench again.

"I would just like to say this is the pile of correspondence we recieved (approximately 18 letters) from Scarborough Council in connection with the £37.71 Poll Tax owing."

"I'm sure most people today would agree what a waste of tax payers money (including my husbands who incidentally pays his poll tax.) Laugh if you may but I stand by my principle from day one. I won't pay and the fact is I can't pay." The magistrate's reply to that was, "Well you know you'll get the bailiffs." I then raised my voice, I said, "I've had bailiffs. There's no way they can set foot over my doorstep." No response, just £17 costs!

At my committal hearing, after saying I was not prepared to pay under any circumstances, the Clerk started on about a means test inquiry. He asked what I had as capital in banks. I answered: "That is my business, I should not have to tell you, this is out of order." He made no reply again.

When I inquired what provisions could be made for my invalid wife who is house bound the Bench replied, "Your wife is your responsibility, it is no concern of the court." I replied, "We called Maggie Thatcher the WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST, I leave it to this court to surmise what I think of you. I waited for screams, but no, (ashamed of what she had said perhaps?)"

Keep the pot boiling, more conferences, more information - But wait for me!

Norman Laws (Since writing this letter, Norman has been transferred to Durham)

Rock Bottom

Carol writes about a day in the
life of a Sefton court dealing
with Poll Tax cases.

We've touched rock bottom here today over the Poll Tax. The Bootle court is doing a blitz on fine defaulters - obviously the council knew what to expect - the afternoon session went similar to the morning's.

All those appearing in court were defaulters. During the morning batch some got 60 day suspended sentences. I was against people appearing from the start. The first one got sent down, then another two others were sent down after a hard fight. I sent one woman, who was going to pay, out to the bank to get cash because the council are not accepting cheques where there was no previous payment. I sussed right away the potential victims that is those with no job, no money and no hopes. Another got sent down in the afternoon....

All those who did not appear (about 11) were issued with a warrant of Commitment forthwith; that is they will be sent straight to prison.

To make it much worse I'm totally banned from the Court and my colleague had to fight in court all day alone. Normally in Contempt Cases one is allowed to apologise to the Bench of the Day, but I was not allowed to do that! With hindsight I would have moderated my protest last time.

At the time of writing another person has been sent to prison, two paid and one is trying to get the money.
Carol Larwood

The attack on Gypsies and "new regulations, the halting of sites for gypsy clearing", and police demanding a new provision have had sites provided for all. There has way to help the gypsies is not to take an increase their number. Not a great deal example with the money the Government which will find its way into the pockets.

The fury being kicked up by all the people do with the travellers however. The actions include of course those with "no fixed measures are a major step to making homes will be illegal, they will become targets to leave them where they are or arrest them.

As the whiskies and gins slip down the diners, you can just imagine them saying

READERS

Letters

Laid to Waste

In thirteen years our major industries have been laid to waste, over three million are thrown onto the scrapheap, our education, health services etc are cut, cut, and cut again. And all this is brought about by ministers who proclaim, as their predecessors did, their belief in Britain.

In ten years between 1980 and 1990 our influence in the world and authority grew less and less whilst they were in power. The frightening thing is they are back in again. They have promised more of the same. That, of course, will mean thousands of small businesses going to the wall as before and many more workers joining the shipbuilders, miners, builders, engineers, fishermen and steelworkers in the ever lengthening dole queues paid with the benefits of our best ever boon - North Sea Oil which came at the right time and fell into the wrong hands.

Four general elections we have had and failed to get the message across in the face of half truths, untruths and damn lies. Well it's up to us - all of us - all who have seen our standard of life attacked year after year. All who have seen our workplaces closed, our homes repossessed, our social services reduced and our hopes for the future dashed so often. All of us are losers in one way or another and now we must give our old country a fresh start. It will not be easy - a long road to recovery lies ahead but we have been along hard roads before on behalf of the working class. This one will be the road that we workers must lay down for our grandchildren and the working class of the new century - they have a right to expect it and we must do our best for them and not allow the government to divide and conquer. Bob Mullane

travellers" has gathered pace: new dole called by the National Gypsy Council "ethnic order act. In the first place the gypsies never says been more gypsies than official sites. The y the sites which have been provided but to f money would be involved, compared for as given towards the Olympic bid, most of businessmen.

and not just the gutter variety, is not only to s which can be taken by the authorities can ode" and that means the homeless. These ssness illegal. It means people sleeping rough he police who will be able to move them on,

fat throats of the London City clubbers and "That's the way to clean up f London."

Manchester Rail Dispute

BR launch attack on union activists-A Voice Interview

BRITISH RAIL at Manchester, Piccadilly Station, in an attempt to break union organisation, sacked four of the Guard's union officials on Thursday 20th August. Now guards who are being made to break book jobs (agreed working practices) and the workers now have no union officials to turn to in the event of a dispute.

Socialist Voice spoke to Paul Walker the Secretary of the Guards Committee of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union at Piccadilly, Manchester - and one of the guards sacked along with the three other union officials.

SV: Please tell us exactly what happened - how did you and your brothers get sacked?

PW: I have to explain that the dispute arose because management were breaking national and local agreements over making men who were training to be drivers act as guards. There are three grades of guard and one of the grades provides for men to train as drivers; allowing them eventually get a better paid job within the industry. Under an agreement management are able to call on those guards training to become drivers to work as guards in an emergency such as a failure of a guard to turn up for work.

But management for some time were using trainee drivers continually as guards - not just in emergencies or totally unforeseen circumstances. What we term pre-rostering. Whereas the agreement provides for guards to be offered the option of extra work and overtime to fill in.

The men asked that management stop pre-rostering and they agreed to stop it by the Wednesday before the dispute and abide by agreements. But on Wednesday the agreements continued to be broken and so the men decided to act.

Therefore at 2.00 pm on the day of the dispute all the guards in Piccadilly, at the time, about 50 to 60, sat in and did not work the trains.

At 5.20 pm management then sacked myself and the three other union officials and immediately all the guards walked out.

Since then the national union has instructed the other guards to go back to work pending a ballot which took place on 26th August and the result of the

ballot will be known on 2nd August.

The ballot initially is for industrial action in Manchester but with the option to make it a national dispute should the need arise.

SV: It seems that the sackings were deliberately engineered to start the de-unionisation of the railways?

PW: Precisely! Don't forget that in Manchester the new Metro-Link tram system is completely non-unionised and the pay and conditions are horrendous - this is what British Rail want for the railways in order that it can be sold off to the private sector. I've spoken to a few workers on the Metro and they all want to leave because of the poor pay. Their contracts are such that they do not know when they are likely to be able to go home. Some one may be about to finish a shift but if a driver is needed then they can be made to work another shift!

Finally as proof that the dispute was deliberately engineered management have now agreed not to break the agreements concerning trainee drivers but are refusing to reinstate us - the union officials. Also the sacking was done in a very public manner in front of not just the other guards but also many passengers. Since our sacking Guards have been taken to one side by management for one-on-one counselling in private offices and they are being told not to have anything to do with us and to "keep their noses clean".

SV: What lessons have you learned from the dispute?

PW: The principal lesson is that Tory anti-union laws have left ordinary workers with next to no rights. I think the TUC should have opposed all anti-union legislation and not just relied upon the re-election of a Labour government to put everything right. All the sacked men have had meetings with the unions solicitors and they say that what they are up against is horrific. The solicitors expect British Rail to try to prevent industrial action with injunctions.

People do not realise that basic freedoms such as the right to withdraw labour have been lost. Legally there is very little difference for workers than if they were slaves. The bosses have been allowed to slip through draconian laws through the back door. People just do not realise how few rights they have and it does not just effect the unions it effect everyone. ■

PICCADILLY GUARDS HARDSHIP FUND, C/O MIKE HARRISON, 9 CHELFORD AVENUE, GORTON, MANCHESTER

Sept/Oct 1992 7

In 1943 something like 60% of Yugoslavia was controlled by these committees. They had driven the Nazi occupation out. The resistance fighters had grown to an army of 300,000. It united the masses into a formidable mass force of resistance. They defeated nine Nazis battalions and fought off eight offensives freeing whole areas of Yugoslavia and placing them under the control of the partisans.

In November 1943 the Y. C. P. and Tito was forced to go much further than it had planned. The Committee for Liberation banned the return of the Monarchy and the exiled government and proclaimed a new government. Yugoslavia was transformed into a federal state which proclaimed it was based on national equality and the people's committees.

These committees, however, were controlled in a pyramid formation by the Y. C. P. Early in 1944 all property and enterprises owned by German and Yugoslav collaborators were confiscated, the owners of which had been killed or fled the country, and placed under state control. This represented 82% of the entire industry of the country.

The Yugoslavian Stalinists were forced by circumstances to adopt a policy which contradicted the orders from the Kremlin. In 1944 the Kremlin advised the Y. C. P. to dissolve the partisan organisation in the army, to abolish the political

partisan organisations in the army, to remove the red star from their caps and not to solve the question of power by revolutionary means, to provisionally recognise the Monarchy and come to an agreement with Drazha Mihailovich, the very Chetnik leader who had order the brutal killing of partisans, in order to solve the problem of power by parliamentary means.

Recent strikes in Slovenia and Croatia against privatisation and unemployment and the wave of strikes and demonstrations called by the independent trade union "Nezavinost" in Serbia against layoffs are proof of workers' refusal to 'pay the bill for the war' as a Nezavinost official explained in a rally in Belgrade.

An appeal has been launched by Serbian trade union leaders, university professors and democrats in answer to a Greek trade unionist appeal for a conference of Balkan people. It said:

"Once again, the various powers of the world make use of our region to organise a confrontation between them. The creation of a new colonial world order could be stopped in the Balkan, or be implemented at the price of sufferings and disaster never known before. Let us unite to resist and defend peace and democracy in the Balkan region! Let us not allow the world powers to decide upon our own destiny, let us take in hand our own destiny! Let us create the Union of Democratic Independent Republics of the Balkan region."

The Y. C. P. leadership attempted to carry the essence of this line but were forced to become critical of that policy although they were very careful never to attack Stalin who

they saw as the central power. They could not implement Stalin's policy without them losing control of the revolutionary aspirations of the masses.

In 1945 the last two remaining bourgeois ministers resigned from the Yugoslav government. With agrarian reform all land over 45 hectares was confiscated and placed under state control. With 82% of industry nationalised and the introduction of agricultural reform thousands of young workers and students from all over the world were attracted by the revolutionary spirit and flocked to Yugoslavia to help with the industrialisation.

Agricultural co-operatives were encouraged and by 1948 2,200,000 agricultural workers were employed on co-operatives providing food for 10,000,000 people. A system of taxation was introduced which favoured the poorer peasants. All through this period the Kremlin criticised the Y. C. P. calling it opportunist and adventurist. But never the less they continued to provide material to the country, much more in fact than they supplied to the other European Eastern countries. In 1947 Tito proposed to the National Assembly a five year plan to transform Yugoslavia from a

mainly peasant economy into an industrial country.

The bureaucracy - the Communist party bosses, aparatchiks, state planning bureau-



Croatian fascists during the war in action: "If you can't kill a serb or a Jew, you are an enemy of the Croatian state."



A Bosian funeral.



Prisoners at a Serb detention centre

crats etc - retained power by crushing working class democracy but also by preserving the nationalised property relations. At this point Tito became more and more in conflict with Stalin. In 1948 Stalin withdrew all support from Yugoslavia and imposed an economic blockade. Tito faced with isolation could only turn two ways: to the working class or to imperialism. Unable to break with the ideas of socialism in one country he allowed increasing connections with the West. By agreeing to implement the policies of the IMF since 1951, with all its twists and turns against the opposition of the Yugoslav working class, Tito laid the basis for today's catastrophe.

As Trotsky stated, such a system is inherently unstable in the long run. A centrally planned economy needs a living feed-back mechanism to direct what, how much, and what quality goods/services are needed. A replacement for the supply and demand mechanism of the capitalist market place, is, and can only be, the most developed and sustained workers' control and democracy at all levels of society. The Stalinist workers' states were termed "deformed workers' states" because they lacked this essential element. Thus these bureaucratically controlled states were inherently inefficient with bottle necks in production, production of shoddy goods, inefficient distribution and widespread corruption. And were unable to solve the regional antagonisms, instead they fed on them.

Such problems would, Trotsky argued, either lead to a workers' revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy and move towards the development of true socialism; capitalism would find a way back in.

The very birth of Yugoslavia, in stopping the socialist revolution and a real workers solution to the crisis contained the seeds of the events today. Of course imperialism is not an innocent bystander. It sought to develop the dependence of Yugoslavia on the West since 1951, even then it was seeking to promote the divisions between sections of the country.

As we said before, when workers ask us what they should do in these circumstances we have in the first place to stand on principles, on the traditions of Marxism and Internationalism. We have to say this is not our war. All sides exhibit national chauvinism and that is on the increase. Although, whatever their antagonisms are now they can, in future, forget their differences and make alliances with each other against the Croats and Serbians who are against the war and in order to make alliances against the working class.

We are not for taking sides with this or that nationalism. The split inside Yugoslavia is finding different supporters inside Europe and further afield. Greece and Russia is continuing to support Serbia while Germany and other countries are supporting Croatia.

All this is not surprising as a resurgent German imperialism drags the weakened powers of the Common Market on board in its age old policy of divide and rule in the Balkans.

Nothing can replace this chaos except further chaos and a deepening barbarity of all sides, unless the working class can lead a way out.

We stand against the intervention by Imperialism. At the same time we demand that

Europe opens its borders to the refugees and that the national chauvinism from any quarter is opposed. It is the working class who taking the brunt of this fighting as they did in the war against Hitler and the forces close to the monarchy.

Today the working class do not have an authoritative international. Stalinism destroyed the Third International and struck blows at the international consciousness of the working class. Therefore it is all the more necessary to raise proletarian internationalism. We build for the future.

The great banner of internationalism was raised long ago for example over 80 years ago. In 1912, the International Socialist Congress - the Second International - met at Basle, Switzerland. The delegates voted for a principled internationalist socialist resolution on imperialism war and national conflicts calling "upon the workers of all countries to oppose the power of capitalist imperialism with the international solidarity of the proletariat".

The resolution took a position on the Balkans which we must build on today - a principled stand for proletarian internationalism in face of the reactionary chauvinism, "ethnic cleansing" and racial pogroms of the time. At that time "Social-Democracy" was still an honoured term, the Social-Democratic parties were the major parties of the working class. The resolution declared quite bluntly: "The Social-Democratic parties of the Balkan peninsular have a difficult task." It went on: "The Great Powers of Europe by the systematic frustration of all reforms, have contributed to the creation of unbearable economic, national and political conditions

in Turkey which necessarily lead to revolt and war."

"Against the exploitation of these conditions in the interests of the dynasties and the bourgeois classes the Social-Democratic parties of the Balkans, with heroic courage, have raised the demand for a democratic federation. The Congress calls upon them to preserve their admirable attitude; it expects Social Democracy of the Balkans will do everything after the war to prevent the results of the Balkan War attained at the price of such terrible sacrifices from being misused for their own purposes by dynasties, by militarism, by the bourgeoisie of the Balkan states greedy for expansion. The Congress, however, calls upon the Socialists of the Balkans particularly to resist not only the renewal of old enmities between Serbs, Bulgars, Rumanians and Greeks, but also every violation of the Balkan peoples now in the opposite camp, the Turks and the Albani-

ans. It is the duty of the Socialists of the Balkans, therefore, to fight against every violation of the rights of peoples and to proclaim the fraternity of all Balkan peoples, including the Albanians, the Turks and the Rumanians, against the unleashed national chauvinism....

"The Social-Democratic parties of Austria-Hungary as well as the Socialists of Italy must pay special attention to the Albanian question. The Congress recognises the right of the Albanian people to autonomy; but it protests against Albania, under the pretext of autonomy, becoming the victim of Austria-Hungary and Italian ambitions for domination. The Congress sees in this not only a peril for Albania itself, but, in a short time, a menace to the peace between Austria-Hungary and Italy. Albania can lead a truly independent life only as an autonomous member of a democratic Balkan federation."

The same problems exist now of national-

ism used for reactionary purposes in the Balkans with the position exacerbated by the degeneration of international leadership in the Third international and the ravages of Stalinist bureaucracy.

Are we to have less "heroic courage" than our forefathers of the Second International who raised the call for a democratic federation. It remains the only solution. The Balkans will continue as a festering ground of backwardness and ethnic demagoguery poverty and exploitation under the domination of the great Powers until we have a workers movement to achieve a democratic federation.

We are at the beginning of a new movement of workers throughout the world, which now will re-learn in bitter experiences old lessons of class solidarity and internationalism. We must seek to make all connections with that movement, but we must, above all teach the need for principles and above all the old lessons of internationalism.



No Labour leader dared discuss the points raised in ISL pamphlet because we show "Why Labour Lost".

To our knowledge it is the only pamphlet which seeks to give answers to the questions workers are asking.

Buy a copy

50p

WHY LABOUR LOST

An International Socialist League Publication
Socialist Education Series Number 2

SWEDEN

End of a Dream

Only a few years ago, the Swedish economy was being held up as the model of an acceptable Socialism, which Gorbachev and former Stalinist academics declared should be the goal of the Soviet Union. The Swedish "model" was also the joy of Labour reformists with its many years of prosperity, low unemployment and high standard of living under a long period of Labour governments. For a while even workers in Poland thought Sweden must be a workers' state because workers had jobs, good housing and welfare benefits.

The illusions and lies are being shattered. Sweden was never a socialist country. Sweden has more large global corporations than Spain or Italy, including Electrolux, the world's largest "white goods" manufacturer. The economy has been dominated by big conglomerates. The country is the sixth in the world for the largest number of big enterprises, with a population of 8.4 million.

A well-organised working class gained crumbs from the super profits of their rulers in a welfare state that became the pride of social democracy. The long class collaboration of social democratic reformists leading the trade unions and the Socialist party was a big factor in developing the profits of the Swedish capitalists. Robert Taylor, of the "Financial Times", reviewing a book on the history of Sweden - which was one of the poorest countries in Europe one hundred years ago - says that what has to be recognised is that, "the country's ideological superstructure of solidarity in collective bargaining and egalitarianism in social policy provided the necessary pre-conditions for the achievement of Sweden's competitive advantage." Such success, however, was only possible in the fifties and sixties, built as it was, on Sweden's escape from the slaughter and destruction of the Second World War.

For the past two years Swedish capitalism has been going into difficulties in the acute competition on the world market. Profits have been falling as markets slumped. The editorial of the Financial Times on 9th September, gave the following picture of capitalist Sweden's problem:

"In the 1970s and 1980s public expenditure took a disproportionately large share of gross domestic product, while devaluation failed to solve the problems of declining competitiveness. Subsequent difficulties have been compounded by the 1980s credit boom which caused a property bubble."

Sweden is now going through its worst crisis since the 1920s. On the Stock Exchange, in September, trading was sus-

pending in the shares of Svenska Kredit, a credit insurance group when it halted payments because of lack of liquid funds. Svenska Kredit is owned by Trygg Hansa and Skandia, Sweden's two biggest companies who each own a 47% stake in Svenska and whose shares plunged because of its default. The government has had to pledge support to Gota Bank, the country's fourth largest commercial bank, whose financial position has rapidly deteriorated with estimated losses of £784 m.

Swedish capitalism faces further decline of its economy and growing political instability. Since the elections last October, it has had a minority conservative government, dependent on the right wing populist "New Democrats" who demagogically oppose some cuts. In September, the movement of domestic and foreign capital out of the country brought Sweden, and other Scandinavian countries to the brink of disaster on the international money markets.

On 8th September, Finland - whose problems have been added to, because of a loss of trade with the Soviet Union - devalued its currency thirteen per cent, the second devaluation in less than a year. The devaluation in Finland increased the competitiveness of Finnish companies as against those of Sweden. In order to bolster its currency, stop a flight of capital and defeat the move of Finland, Sweden was forced to push up its lending rate by an eight points to 24%.

A day later it increased the rate again, this time to an incredible 75% and later still to 500%. The Swedish government

announced on 9th September, a foreign borrowing of £22.5bn to support the Swedish currency. This is three times what the Tory Government borrowed to support sterling. That was announced as a brilliant move, but it has sunk almost without trace.

The day before the increase, the Swedish Prime Minister, had declared that Sweden's interest rates were coming down! Which only shows that statements by ruling politicians and most economists in today's volatile and dangerous situation of world currencies are "strictly for the birds". Either they are "talking up" economic confidence in their economy among the world's financial gamblers or they cannot go further than superficial or psychological reasons for the accelerating crisis to the underlying reasons for the crisis of capitalist production..

In Sweden, as in other European countries, big business raises demands for more drastic cuts in public expenditure. The measures already taken hit hardest at the workers and lower middle class. Home loans have gone up by 5 points to 22.5%. The "Guardian" reported a cook from Gothenburg as saying: "I absolutely don't like this at all. People just don't know what will happen to their interest rates. Everyone is worried after the talk of these huge increases."

One reason that capital left the country was because of the lack of confidence in the present government's firmness in cutting into the Welfare State. Sweden's big employers demand increasing cuts in their costs of production. First and foremost, that means a cut in the costs of labour and a cut in state expenditure on the "Welfare State", so that the big capitalist firms can be assisted in their trade war.

Sweden's workers are strongly organised, but with a leadership of Social Democrats which had many years of managing the country for capitalism. To halt the threats from the financial markets, sections of Swedish capitalism would like a coalition government with the Social Democrats playing a leading part.

The stability, peace and progress of the Swedish dream is finished. It does not take much prescience to see a stormy period in front of Sweden. The Social Democrats held their position in the past and began the austerity cuts while still able to maintain "Welfare State" conditions, among the highest in the world. The world economic depression and crisis of Swedish capitalism is posing the complete destruction of those conditions. ■

The Strike at Tychy & the Premiers Pearls

It was the Prime Minister herself who convinced me to travel to Tychy, though she still does not know it. It was her Friday speech, so full of pearls, that made me wonder what kind of knot ties this rare necklace.

Pearl 1

She said it would be unjust to yield to the pressure of the strike for it would leave unprotected those who earn much less and yet cannot go on strike.

The Strikers replied:

"We don't know who has told the Prime Minister all that rubbish. The fabulous salaries she talked about must include the Directors salaries. The truth is we earn between 1,300 and 2,000 zL a month (96 to 150 dollars). We work 12 to 16 hours a day and we can't even go to the toilet most of the time".

Pearl 2

The Prime Minister said that a strike is justified if the damage it causes is smaller than the evil it tries to prevent.

The Strikers replied:

"The Prime Minister belongs to the 4th recent government. Each blamed the last for what is happening and then proceeds to do exactly the same. We can understand the need for sacrifice for the sake of a better tomorrow. But, if today is worse than yesterday and tomorrow will be worse than today, it means we cannot wait. Once they have turned us into dumb beggars it will be too late".

Pearl 3

The Prime Minister said that in 1980 it was necessary to strike but now it is possible to talk.

The Strikers replied:

"It is not only possible to talk, the law forces us to talk, but that way we can talk our heads off. If conversations lead us nowhere the only way out is to strike. The director refused to talk to us before the strike. We have been on strike for 18 days and still nothing. Now they will not talk because they say the strike is illegal.

Pearl 4

The Prime Minister says that the strike at Tychy is a rare case because workers wanted their wages to be related to the price of the car they produce.

The Strikers replied:

"How many cars could the Prime Minister buy with her monthly salary?"

Pearl 5

This Pearl was not so much stated as implied. She said that the Tychy question is a huge misunderstanding, a problem for Tychy.

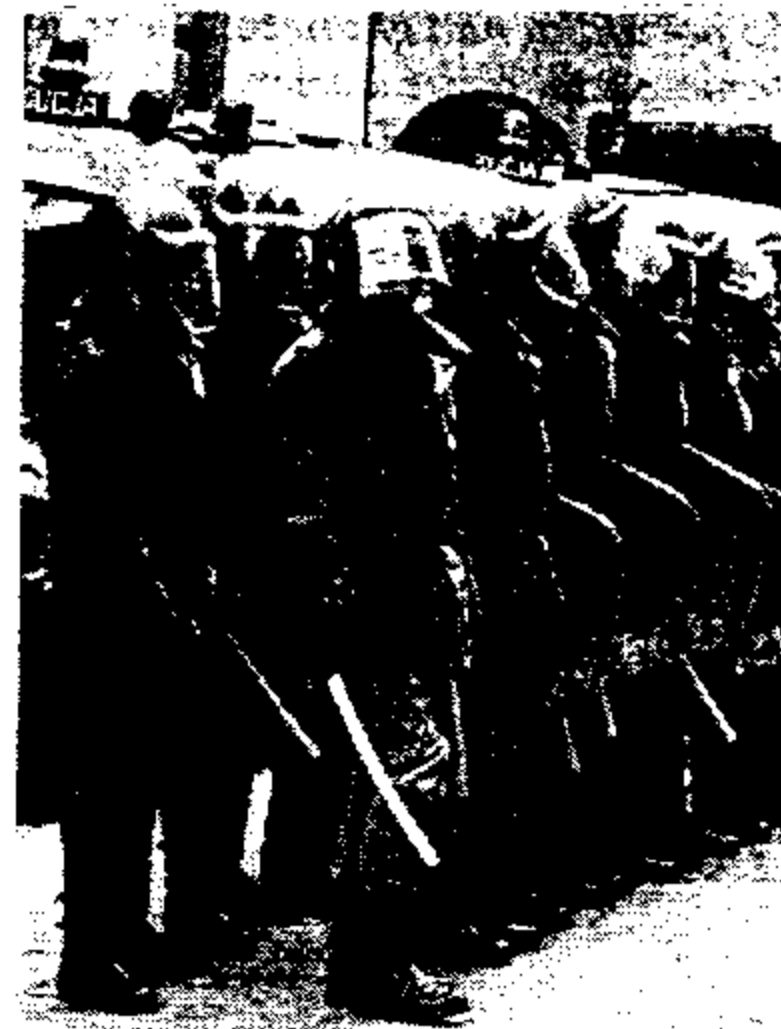
The Strikers replied:

"If we did as they told us they'd soon 'fix' us one by one while the others would watch indifferently". ■



URGENT

HELP THE WORKERS



Via a Comrade In Poland, we
worker.

"We appeal to all those organisations who refuse to be indifferent to our sufferings.

We have been on strike in the Tychy FSM SA (CAR FACTORY) since 22nd July. 3,800 workers are taking part. On the 14th August we decided to occupy the factory. Since the beginning of the strike strikers have received no more than 60 dollars, some have received no money.

According to Walesa the strike is illegal but the cause of our strike is just. The main cause is over pay. After 5 weeks of striking some of us are going hungry. Our families are left without any means of survival. The directors of the firm refuse to negotiate because they want to starve us into submission.

That is why we are asking for help."

The above letter was received by a Polish paper called "Anti-Government Weekly" which our comrade writes for. She sent us the above as a fax adding the following:

People remember here that a lot of

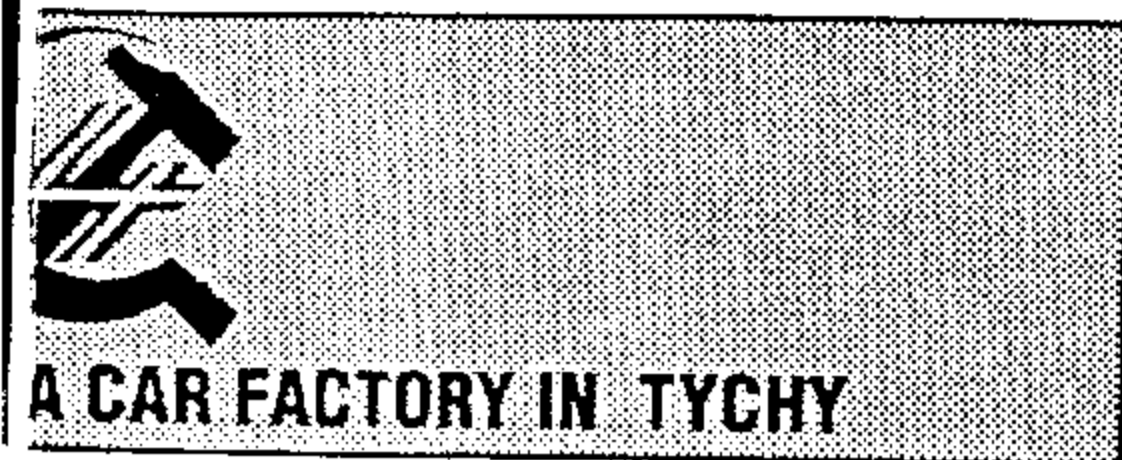
BANK POLSKI KASA OPIEKI S.
2701-4-110 KOMITET

ISL C

We too hope the British trade unions can see that British workers will help other workers. Walesa tells them we are not all supporters. If you can suggest other trade unions who please let us know. If you do help the workers done.

Send to: ISL PO BOX 9 ECCLES S

THE RIGHT OF THE OWNER



received the following appeal from
car factory.

money was collected 'in the west' when they were striking against the so called 'communists'. Now workers feel very abused when there is no response to their calls for help now. It is not too difficult to explain why things are the way they are, but explanations feed nobody.

Tychy is a city in the Silesian Region, near Katowice. Its life hinges round a car factory (small cars), the FSM. This is about to be sold to the Italian car giant, Fiat. Workers are against selling the factory unless the Italians agree to pay the same rates as they pay in Italy.

Workers earn about 150 dollars a month, and they work between 12 and 16 hours a day. Conditions are bad, for example they try to restrict access to the toilet.

The car workers are part of a strike wave which has reached the level of the strikes of 1980.

We hope the trade unions in the west will respond to the appeal of the Tychy workers. Please send your donations to the following address.

KATOWICE NR 5.27031-20018331-
RAJKOWY FSM TYCHY

COMMENT

Workers respond to this call. It will help them in other countries and that contrary to what the Thatcher "miracle".

In contact or can help in any additional way of Tychy, can you tell us what you have

LFORD M5 4PR Tel/Fax 061 707 1584

Henryk Langer is a miner, a technician. He has worked in many mines. He has never been one of the "passive but faithful". He was quick to see things badly done and would denounce them. That is why in the seventies and eighties he had to change jobs often, because the job could not change him. He joined the first Solidarity hoping that it would change things.

When in 1989 the "communa" fell, he was happy and believed that now all would be right. At the time he was working in the mine called Julian. He had a quarrel with the director and proved that there was plenty of negligence and misadministration. They dismissed him with the excuse that he was getting too old for his job. He started writing, he wrote to the parliament. From the Chancellors office there came a note asking that his case should be reconsidered. The director never even reacted to that so, as from the 4th September, Langer joined the ranks of the unemployed.

Then we had the elections to the parliament. In a Solidarity bulletin Langer read that the candidate number 30 for the trade union was W. Szostrowski, the director of Julian. He went to a meeting and started asking "difficult questions" about the candidate. After that the chief of Solidarity of his region asked the director to find Langer a job and asked Langer not to come to any more meetings as he was "mucking up" the campaign.

Soon, in spite of his age, Langer received a job in the Rozbark mine. The Solidarity fairytale about how a poor miner's dreams come true did not last long. He received a contract to sign. It was predated but Langer was too pleased to pay attention to details. They told him that the contract was necessary for a trial period. Shortly before the trial period ended he asked the director to extend the contract. The director refused. It was 6 days before he could retire that he was notified that the contract had expired and that he could collect his dues for the holidays in cash. He was denied the right to take his holidays as this would make him still officially part of the crew and therefore eligible for his pension. Again Langer appealed to the regional leadership of Solidarity and explained that if he went to the unemployment office no-one would give him a job on the eve of his retirement. He wrote to the director telling him that such behaviour was a very perverted method of teaching the values of democracy in which the "directorial mafia" always gets away with everything. Langer sued. In the tribunal he learned that his employers did not present the documentation necessary for his retirement in time. He appealed. In the letter of appeal he put his foot in it by asking a "difficult" question: "Do those who govern us know how the workers are treated in this country?" There was no answer to his request.

That is why I appeal to all those who are against such unlawfulness. Do not let us forsake this man. Let us write letters to the tribunals, to Solidarity, to the director. It is his turn today but tomorrow it may be any of us.

Re-writing History

The capitalist press has run many reports that Russian people are totally disillusioned with communism and that they date all the evils of their present situation back to 1917 and the victory of the Bolsheviks in that year.

Much publicity has been given to the renaming of towns and streets, the most notable example being the changing of the name of Leningrad back to St. Petersburg. Since August 1991 a number of statues have been removed, the most notable being that of Dzherzinsky from outside the building occupied by the KGB in Moscow. Also, in Moscow a number of statues of Lenin have been taken down and turned to scrap.

But, when one travels around Russia and the Ukraine the statues of Lenin are still standing from the Karelia region in the north to Sochi in the south. The local television stations are running programmes about the circumstances of the birth of Soviet power. One I saw concerned the circumstances under which Lenin travelled across Germany in 1917 in a sealed train. Another examined Trotsky's role as the founder of the Red Army.

Battleship Aurora

This new openness was very evident when we visited the Battleship Aurora permanently moored in the Moskva River. It was the thunder of blank charges from the guns of this cruiser which signalled the beginning of the 1917 October Revolution. Disregarding the official Tourist guide who told that these salvos heralded the beginning of 70 years of misery for the Russian people we went aboard anyway and were met by an elderly man, obviously an ex-sailor, who was only too pleased to answer any question we asked.

George Petersen of our Australian Section recently returned from Russia. He has sent us this report about what he saw



The first item which came to my attention was a painting of Lenin addressing the Petrograd Soviet, with Sverdlov and Trotsky seated on the platform beside him. Pointing to a picture of Dybenko our guide advised us that he was the representative of the Aurora crew on the Petrograd Soviet, that he had become an Admiral of the Soviet Navy and that he had been murdered by Stalin in 1941.

Despite such atrocities our guide was obviously proud of the achievements of the Aurora crew and of the Bolshevik revolution in which it played such a distinguished part.

The Lenin Museum

This change from Stalinist brainwashing was also evident when we visited the Lenin Museum in Moscow and a young English-speaking woman attendant gave our small party of four a comprehensive tour lasting about two hours. To my surprise there was no attempt to hide the role of Trotsky and the other Bolsheviks in the Russian revolution.

The notorious painting of Lenin addressing a crowd from a wooden platform, with Trotsky standing at the foot

of the platform, is now on full display. So is a realistic painting of the Second Congress of the Third International being addressed by Lenin and containing pictures of all the Bolshevik leaders including those murdered by Stalin.

The museum also shows original proclamations issued by the first Council of

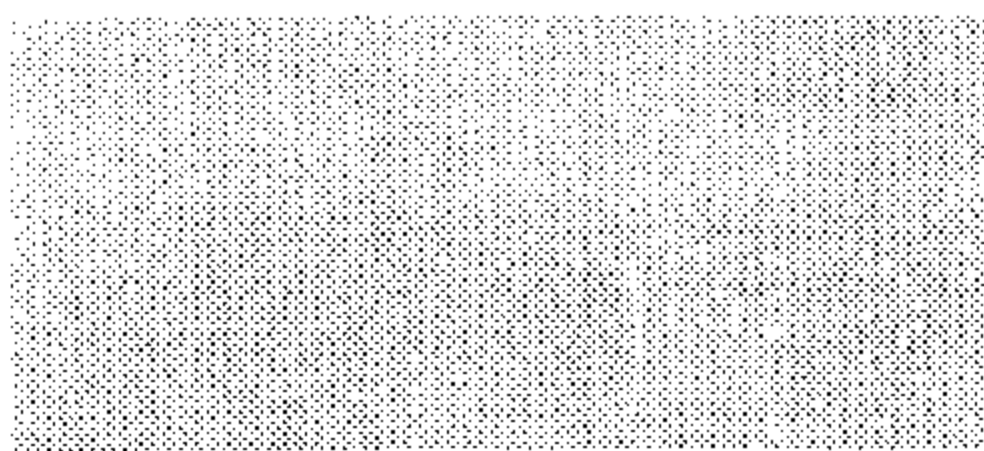
Peoples' Commissars, signed by the Commissars, and a photo montage of Lenin's 1917 Central Committee. Our guide advised us of the fate of them all and answered detailed questions regarding their political stances on various incidents of the revolutionary period.

A very touching exhibit contained pictures of Lenin

in the last year of his life suffering from the heart condition which eventually killed him - pictures which had never been publicly displayed until very recently.

It is clear that the museum displays a new image of Lenin as a brilliant revolutionary political leader, not as a demigod, and that this image obscured by Stalinist propaganda for 68 years is now available for all to see.

This image is obviously not to the liking of the rulers of Russia today. The Moscow City Council is demanding a million roubles in rent from the Museum, and is demanding that the museum be self supporting. The staff are paid 1000 roubles a month, about \$30 American in real terms, and a starvation wage. There is a real danger that the institution will follow the example of the St. Petersburg Lenin Museum and close. ■



Russian workers living standards are falling

How Do Workers Live?



RUSSIAN ECONOMISTS tell foreign visitors that 90% of Russians live below the poverty line. This is not immediately evident to a casual observer. People appear to be adequately dressed, there are some beggars but they operate mainly outside churches and in the tourist areas.

There are no supermarkets such as those used by most West European, American and Australian workers, instead, Russians shop at old fashioned shops which have small stocks. There are many street markets selling fresh fruit and vegetables and a wide variety of consumer goods - mostly of very poor quality. These markets are very dear to Russians; 70 roubles for a kilo of tomatoes, 130 for cherries, 120 for pork, 135 for cheese. A packet of spaghetti costs 14 roubles, a shirt 1000 or a dress 3000. However, bread is readily available at 5 to 10 roubles a loaf in the official bread shops. There are other goods sold in the official shops such as tinned fruit soap and toilet paper but it is difficult to check their prices as they sell out as soon they appear in the shops.

Most wages are totally inadequate to meet these costs, for instance a waitress gets 1000 roubles a month, a teacher, a doctor or an office worker gets 2000.

The principle of a large kindergarten gets 3,500, a bus driver gets 4,000 and a coal miner receives the amazing amount of 40,000 roubles a month. (One pound sterling gets approximately 260 roubles.)

The answer to the puzzle of how peo-

ple live is that the working class are still benefiting from the gains of the October revolution in social services that were developed from nothing in the early days of the revolution and are still far in advance of those in capitalist countries. With the low levels of wages many workers see the benefits of the revolution as the only advantages they have.

Nobody pays more than a fifth of his or her income in rent and most people pay much less, usually around 30 to 40 roubles a month, although the apartments are small and overcrowded. Heat and electricity costs no more than 10 roubles a month per service. Telephones are free, if one is lucky enough to have one connected already as to get one connected is almost impossible. Public transport in any city costs one rouble for a journey of any length, and the Moscow Metro is magnificent. In my experience bus drivers do not bother to collect fare tokens. Health and hospital facilities are free, albeit inadequate and understaffed. Education is free, though all university students receive abysmally low allowances.

Whilst many people believe that a free market can put goods on the shelves they have no illusions what would happen to their housing, power, health, education and other services in a market economy. It is their willingness to fight to defend these gains that has made problems for Yeltsin and the other 'liberals' (who would be called Tories in Britain). ■

ARGENTINA

FAREWELL

ARMANDO

After hearing the news of the death of an Argentine Comrade and friend, Armando Esuivel, the executive of the ISL sent the following letter to our sister party the MAS in Argentina. We were speaking for all the comrades and friends who knew him when he stayed in this country in 1987 and 1988.

When we first met comrade Armando we were conducting a struggle inside the Workers' Revolutionary Party with the aim of joining the International Workers' League (Fourth International). He immediately struck us as a very reliable, sensitive and steady fighter. In that struggle, which started in 1987 and ended in February 1988, many of us got to know Armando and his wife very well.

When he arrived in England he knew very few English words, by the time he left he could converse in the language and delivered his own political speeches in English. He took our struggle very seriously. We all feel he contributed to the birth of the International Socialist League and he will always be regarded as a founder member of the party.

We often discussed the development of the International and its history in Latin America, how the International would be built in Britain and the necessity of turning the ISL to the working class.

Armando came not only ready to use his experience of Argentine and Latin American Trotskyism but also to learn about the development of the British working class. Just before he left for Argentina we told him that we had learnt a lot in the struggle out of which the ISL was formed. He replied he had learnt a lot during his stay in England with the comrades here and with Bill Hunter.

Armando had an infectious laugh, which we can hear now. In a social gathering before he went he danced and sang a tango, he told jokes and when he did his whole body shook with the laughter. He knew how to enjoy life.

All the comrades of the ISL had a high regard for him and following our own tragic loss of Rae Hunter, we feel a great sadness for his family, friends and comrades.

We know that he contributed to the life of the International, the Argentine Party and to the ISL. ■

Economic Crisis and Leadership

Only Marxism can show the way out of the crisis

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

The French are caught, like many others, in the battle between two giants. The USA is "allowing" the dollar to be de-valued and a 10 per cent drop in the dollar would reduce French exports by 2.2 per cent a year; apply this to all the countries and it is obvious why the dollar is being de-valued. The buying power of Greek wages has fallen by 20% in the last year and half. The government says it can no longer afford to maintain the pensions and public spending of the past. The Italian Government is saying the same thing. Throughout Europe privatisation is being pushed through as fast as the working class allows. In Sweden 60,000 postal workers have been sacked because of privatisation.

And for a while workers of the East thought the pavements of Western European capitals were paved with democratic gold!

The Western European countries are leapfrogging their neighbours in the economic and social crisis. The Sterling crisis saw the government spend 1/3 of its gold and Dollar reserves. Everybody who could was selling Sterling including the British banks, they sold sterling for Marks and made a killing, that is one reason why their shares on the stock market rose dramatically after the devaluation.

The initial speculation started 6 months ago and the city of London was part of that. Blaming the German Bundesbank or international speculators only serves to cover up the depth of the crisis and the fact that it is a direct product of the forces Thatcherism represented. Under the Tories manufacturing industry has broken up there is little left of it to take advantage of cheaper exports.

Major is now a ridiculous figure, as is the cabinet, but their great supporters first in joining the ERM and now in devaluation are the Labour leadership. The Tories survived the Thatcher crisis because the Labour leadership and the many on the left, including groups like Militant, refused to call people onto the streets and bring Thatcher down by independent class action. This time the position is even weaker but the crisis is deeper.

The Tories jumped 180 degrees on the question of devaluation because an interest rate rise of 15% would have catapulted Britain into a rapidly deepening slump. Such a sharp change carried the great danger of bringing workers onto

"Workers ask us what they should do? In the first place we have to understand what is going on."

the streets of Britain and of preventing British banks from making super profits...

Whatever the twists and turns this is a full blown capitalist crisis and there are no rules, Britain as a world force is dead and every day it declines further into an economy of the Latin American type and we could say of the Eastern European type. The recent hurricane killed many people in the region of Florida, this financial and economic hurricane will take a terrible toll, especially in the weaker countries of Europe.

Marxism was dead according to the European wisecracks who thought they had Europe sewn up into some kind of capitalist unity. But now you would search in vain for any comprehension of this European wide crisis, some appear even to deny it. Well it is only from the "corpse" of Marxism that a real understanding can be gained of what is happening now and what is going to happen.

The Economic Market of Europe is cracking in many places. For Marxism this was inevitable. The grandfathers of today's reformists and pacifists always wanted to live in peace with imperialism and imagined that imperialism could solve its problems by unifying.

Kaustky writing in 1915 (as the First World War was raging) looked for ultra or super-imperialism. Lenin attacked his writings time and again. Of course, Lenin said, imperialism seeks to make alliances. But, "We ask, is it conceivable assuming that the capitalist system remains intact - and this is precisely the assumption

that Kautsky does make - that such alliances would be more than temporary, that they would eliminate friction, conflicts and struggle in every possible form?" (Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism). Elsewhere, Lenin writes:

"There is no doubt that the development is going in the direction of a single trust that will swallow up all enterprises and all states without exception. But the development in this direction is proceeding with such stress, with such a tempo, with such contradictions, conflicts and convulsions - not only economic, but also political, national, etc etc - that before a single world trust will be reached, before the respective national finance capitals will have formed a world union of "ultra-imperialism" imperialism will inevitably explode, capitalism will turn into its opposite." (December 1915).

The general strikes that have taken place in Western Europe, most recently in Greece and the new levels of struggle in Poland, which are being likened to the period of 1980, are signs they cannot ignore. After the explosions of 1989 and 1990, imperialism had a short time to find a solution to the transformation of the Eastern economies. In reality they proved, as Lenin said, to be parasitic capitalisms. They went for the pickings, they went for cheap labour opening up factories here and there where they thought a toe hold could be got. But the waves of discontent, which also finds an expression in the Ukraine shows that time is running out for easy pickings.

While the echo of celebrations of the death of Marxism can still be heard, reality shows Marxism to be very much alive. Here are the economic processes of capitalism - which Marx uncovered - working behind the backs of men and women. The chaos on a world scale is as a result of capitalist world relations. The workers of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union must look well and mark well. The revolutionary, internationalist Marxists must redouble and re-treble their efforts theoretically and practically to trumpet the understanding that chaos, uncertainty, a sinking into misery and hardship is the only future under capitalist relations. ■