

# workers power

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## WE CAN STOP THATCHER!



IN HER New Year message Margaret Thatcher declared that she was launching:

'... The greatest programme of reforming legislation this century.'

She and her 'reforms' are aimed at making her class even richer at the expense of our class.

She will try to isolate every resistance struggle that erupts. Teachers will be fought separately from local government workers. Miners will be taken on separately from steel and railworkers. But every aspect of the Tories' onslaught is part of a coherent strategy to restructure British capitalism from top to bottom, with the working class footing the bill.

The Education Bill, the Poll Tax, the Health Bill, the anti-union legislation, the Social Security Act, the Local Government and Housing Bills and the privatisation plans are all interlinked.

The workers that will be made redundant if the privatisations go ahead will be hit by benefit cuts. All workers will be affected by the attacks on education, on health and welfare services. The class wide character of the Tories' attack has never been clearer.

Our New Year resolution is to sound the alarm bells in the labour movement. We must organise the rank and file in every industry and in the Labour Party for class wide resistance. We must end the election-induced passivity in our ranks.

We must expose the leadership's calls on us to endure every blow delivered by the Tories until the 1990s as defeatist dope.

Thatcher is not invincible. Not in the slightest. She appears strong for one simple reason—the leaders of the working class are weak-kneed cowards.

### Power

The power to stop Thatcher exists. It existed in the militancy of rank and file firefighters and postal workers who were ready to strike in defence of jobs and for better conditions.

It exists amongst the 80% of Scottish people who opposed the planned Poll Tax. It exists in the car workers at Ford and General Motors who have repeatedly struck for better pay.

And, despite the defeat of the Great Strike, the power to fight Thatcher is there, for all to see, amongst the miners. Most of them will back Scargill once again as a way of showing their own readiness to step up the struggle against British Coal.

The truth is that our leaders fear this power as much, in fact more, than they fear Thatcher. They fear it because, organised and mobilised for struggle, the power of rank and file workers can sweep out not only the Tories. It can sweep them away too if they try to duck or sabotage the fight back.

There is every reason to believe

that 1988 will present us with new opportunities to use our power, to take on Thatcher and win. The stockmarket crash is a harbinger of the economic turmoil capitalism is heading for. Its crisis will lead to further battles in the class war. Despair and pessimism in the face of such stormy prospects is the response of cowards like the shareholder-loving Gould, the image-conscious Kinnock, and the hapless babbling Willis.

Thatcher must be beaten by direct action. Her attacks must be met with strikes and occupations. We must link up every struggle with those in other industries and in the working class communities. We can do this by building councils of action which bring together those fighting the Poll Tax with those defending the NHS, and which unite the miners and the steel workers.

We can and must unite the struggles so that Thatcher faces a class wide fight back. Her battlefront is so wide it is vulnerable. The panic in the Tories' own ranks over the Poll Tax has already exposed one weak flank. That weakness must be seized upon, by us pressing the attack, not appealing to the wets.

Our New Year message is every bit as straightforward as Thatcher's. The working class can beat her. It will beat her. But it must join battle now, not wait for 1992!■

## March to commemorate the 16th anniversary of Bloody Sunday

London, Saturday 30th January  
Assemble 12.30, Whittington Park, near Archway tube

The road to Bloody Sunday: see page 5

**TROOPS OUT NOW!**

## THATCHER'S BATTLEFRONT

### POLL TAX

Planned first for Scotland this year and then for the rest of Britain in 1990, the Poll Tax is, literally, legalised daylight robbery.

A charge on everyone, totally unrelated to ability to pay, is to replace the rates. Working class families will be hit hardest. While the Tory Scottish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, will have his rates bill cut by £522 a year a six strong family in Glasgow will face an additional £1,294. Across the whole country families with average weekly incomes of £75-£100 will pay 3.9% of their income on the tax while those on £500 plus will only pay an average of 1%.

Despite massive opposition in Scotland and the rest of Britain the labour movement's leaders are sitting on their hands. They describe the attack as folly and are busily preparing to woo wet Tories and even wetter Peers!

What we need is a massive campaign now—beginning with protests, demonstrations, one day strikes all aimed at laying the ground for general strike action and mass refusal to pay if the Tax goes through. Against the Poll Tax and against the old rates system we say tax the rich parasites to pay for the welfare of those whose labour creates every penny of wealth!

### EDUCATION

Baker's Bill for education is supposed to grant parental choice. It sure does. It gives well-off parents the choice to buy a posh education while working class kids are herded into underfunded schools. There they can be turned into docile recruits for industry or tamed candidates for the dole queue. Education itself will be regulated by a National Curriculum. Far from offering a sensible rounded education this will turn the DES into the Ministry of Thought. Any deviations from a curriculum designed to breed servility, bigotry (against gays in particular) and respect for capitalism will be rooted out. Teachers' jobs will be ravaged.

Yet again the task of resistance is clear. Teachers, students, all workers in the education sector and working class parents need to be united and mobilised for action. Instead a TUC sponsored conference resolved that it had the 'gravest doubts' the Bill would help education and agreed that the government must be pressured 'to change direction'.

### PRIVATISATION

Apart from the continuing piecemeal privatisation inside every sector of the welfare state—education, health, local government—Thatcher plans to hand over more denationalised loot to the idle rich in the Stock Exchange. The now profitable British Steel is to be sold off in 1989. The Electricity Board is to go as well with the potential loss of almost 200,000 jobs including those of thousands of miners.

The Economist, always unashamed of its naked class interests, compared privatisation to the ancient Roman practice of throwing Christians to the lions. This time it was workers being thrown to the speculators.

Workers who fear being thrown to the stockmarket become more willing to change inefficient work practices.

This was in the magazine's 25 December issue—puts Scrooge in a new light really! The lesson of every privatisation is that jobs are destroyed. The facade of fair share ownership spread evenly amongst the masses has been shattered by the great crash of 1987. Popular capitalism is nothing more than a Saatchi and Saatchi catchphrase. Privatisation must be fought by the occupation of the workplaces—we must seize the steel mills and the big power stations before the stockbrokers do.

### ANTI-UNION LAWS

In their attempt to stop us being able to resist their attacks the Tories plan another round of anti-union laws. These will fill the gaps left by other attacks. Scabs who break a strike agreed by a ballot are to be given legal protection. A special commissioner will be paid to help scabs sue their union. The union itself is to be robbed of the right to discipline scabs. Industrial action to win a closed shop will be made illegal. Separate ballots for every location will be required of any union calling a strike. Unions and their trustees will have no legal control over union funds. Young workers who refuse to work on the YTS scheme will be robbed of their right to benefit.

This is a comprehensive package. If it is allowed to go through it will continue the trend, begun in 1980, towards making effective trade unionism illegal. And in the face of this the TUC have expressed their 'concern'!

Almost six years on from the Wembley Conference which promised defiance of the anti-union laws the union leaders are now falling over themselves to abide by every jot and comma of every scabs' charter that the government has made law. In the battles ahead we need to put defence of our livelihoods above the observation of their laws. And, as with the Poll Tax, we need a general response to this general attack. Every effort must be directed towards pushing every protest and every struggle towards a general strike that can smash all anti-union laws.

More details of Tory attacks on Pages 2 and 3

## The secret of Labour's lethargy

AS THE year of Labour's third election defeat drew to a close, rumblings of discontent could be heard from Neil Kinnock's backers in the trade union bureaucracy. Not only had they been subjected to the big sting to fund Neil Kinnock's election show in the spring. They were also told to keep well away from the campaign.

Now the full time officials are being told that their job is to keep on coughing up the cash. They should leave policy and promotion to the professional politicians.

In May 1987 Kinnock may have landed in the proverbially unpleasant substance but he was allowed to come up smelling of roses. The result has been that Kinnock and company have been allowed to simply press on with more of the same. The Policy Review has reduced even the parliamentarians to silence. As the Tories unveiled their poll tax proposal, Labour pathetically explained that they were re-thinking their policy on the rates. It has been the same on issue after issue. As the Autumn saw the Tories sinking deeper and deeper into trouble, the silence from the Labour Party has been remarkable.

The great Stock Exchange crash produced hardly a whimper. This mighty reminder of capitalism's mortality was a tremendous opportunity to pitch into the millionaires and tax lawyers. But as the exchanges plummeted, the Labour front bench sat as silent as a bunch of scared schoolboys.

When the Tory consultants and extreme right-wing Conservatives took up a campaign against the crisis in the NHS, Labour lagged behind at a safe distance. It was the same with the introduction of Baker's Education Bill. The Labour front bench's eyes have been fixed on the Tory 'rebels' and the House of Lords.

Why this self-defeating silence and inactivity so obvious that even centre-right unions spokespersons like David Warburton have accused Kinnock of lethargy? The reasoning starts from the very bedrock of Labourism—parliamentary cretinism.

The class struggle, in that it is recognised at all, is seen by these people as an unprovoked assault by the rich and powerful on the poor and needy. Resistance must be strictly limited to turning the other cheek for four or five years in the hope that the ugly and vicious behaviour of the Tories will lose them the hearts and minds of compassionate voters.

Why then are the union leaders becoming a little restive? The answer is not that they wish for a vigorous political and industrial offensive to take advantage of the Tories' unpopularity or the manifest divisions within the ruling class over education, the poll tax and the Health Service. Not a bit.

Their own silence over these issues is deafening. When the King's Cross fire had even the rabidly Thatcherite London *Evening Standard* attacking the de-staffing and the rundown of government subsidies, where was the voice of the transport unions?

A united demand for more jobs, more funds, should have been backed with a call for a city-wide strike. No better conditions could have existed in the minds, not only of transport workers but also the angry and frightened 'travelling public'. But no—the Aslef, NUR and T&G leaders all lamely went along with the charade of a public enquiry that probably would not report for nine months or a year.

Exactly the same applies to the Health Service crisis. So too with the attack on education. What the trade union leaders want is to distract their members eyes and attention from their own do nothing policy with more fireworks from the parliamentary Labour Party.

Kinnock has effectively shouldered them out of the Policy Review. He has even used their request to have a senior union official working in Kinnock's private office, to pose in the union tamer posture again.

The union leaders—Todd, Bickerstaffe and company are understandably miffed and have expressed their 'greater respect' for John Prescott and John Smith in a series of unattributed 'leaks' to the press: 'At least John Smith can add up to 6 million' said an un-named 'union leader'.

Prescott has been sulking in his tent since Kinnock gave the plum jobs in the shadow cabinet to the old right and failed to recognise the full worth of Mr Prescott. His announced intention of standing against Roy Hattersley for the deputy leadership and his prominence in the pages of *Tribune*, delivering scarcely veiled attacks on the right indicate that he has the support of certain important union bosses.

However even this struggle goes on under the camouflage of fulsome tributes to Neil Kinnock—our leader. Only 'his majesty's' ministers, or his advisors, can be attacked openly. The hapless David Warburton has been rounded on by most of his union colleagues. So fragile is the mummified world of the Labour Party that the faintest breath of criticism could set it crumbling into dust.

The truth is that Kinnock is not the vigorous young leader of a rejuvenated Labour Party that his sycophants proclaim him to be. His politics are more senile and empty of content than Michael Foot's were five years ago. The idea that the best bet for Labour is to allow the Tories to implement their 'unpopular policies' and thus hand Labour electoral success is the most bankrupt schema reformism has come up with since the German Socialists and 'Communists' used it against the conservative right and Hitler in the years 1928—1933.

The reason Labour lost in 1983 and 1987 is that the official labour movement has proved itself impotent to resist the Tories attacks. It confessed itself to have no alternative that was recognisably different. Apathy and indifference amongst the millions of voters was the result. So it was and so it will be in 1991 or 1992 if Kinnock and the union leaders get away with it once again.

That is why the answer to the Labour movement's paralysis must come from below. It must come from those who suffer the Tories attacks the most sharply. Ten years of Thatcher, ten years of Labour sabotage and inaction, show that unless this dead weight on our fighting capacity is broken history will repeat itself.



## Forge fighting unity!

Anne Wackett and Frank Owen look at the likely effect of the next round of legislation on local government

**THE COMBINED might of the Local Government Bill, the Housing Bill, the Education Reform Bill, the Fowler Review and the poll tax is all being brought to bear on local authorities. The aim is to reduce the power and status of locally elected bodies to that of Victorian workhouse overseers and tax collectors.**

The limited resistance that some Labour controlled authorities have put up to the Thatcher revolution will be swamped by the flood of legislation. Despite the Whitehall farce of the mistake-riddled Housing Bill being withdrawn as soon as it was published, there is nothing haphazard in the mounting pile of Bills being presented. They are inter-linked, and add up to the biggest co-ordinated attack ever on the social welfare of the working class in Britain.

The Local Government Bill will make it compulsory for councils to tender-out (i.e. offer for privatisation) six services—refuse disposal, street and building cleaning, ground and vehicle maintenance and catering. More services will then be added to the list at the whim of the government. The point is not to improve services, but to make profits.

The Housing Bill will consign hundreds of thousands of council tenants into the hands of unscrupulous private landlords. Whether by selling estates, 'opting-out' or takeover by 'Housing Action Trusts' the effects will be the same—higher rents, more evictions, less decent housing for working class families. In the face of these attacks we need a coordinated fight back—now. Though you would not think so from what the labour movement's leadership are doing. The picture up and down the country is of craven capitulation.

From right to 'left', Birmingham to Lambeth, Labour councils have already made plans to comply with the Local Government Bill. Their strategic planning committees are being instructed to budget housing, education and social services on the basis that the Bill will become law. The 70,000 jobs at stake are already being written off.

The union leaders too are rushing headlong into the tendering trap. Their faith in 'copper-bottoming' (writing the tender so that only an in-house bid can win it) has been dented by the Bill's clauses outlawing exactly that. Their strategy now is to drop any resistance to tendering, and to cajole their members into 'co-operating in the improvement of local services' (Jack Dromey, Public Services National Secretary of the T&G) to keep the jobs in-house.

This is a double betrayal. Improved services are impossible within the budgets currently allowed to local authorities. They need more money, not less. Since 1979 £17 billion has been lost in government grants alone. To argue for improvements without the money is simply to heap the blame for deteriorating services on the shoulders of the union members.

### Resistance

To improve services needs more resistance to every service cut, every job loss, every 'rationalisation', not less. The co-operation of local government unions with their bosses' capitulation to the Tories is the co-operation of the turkey with Bernard Matthews. 'Bootiful' for the butchers, not the birds!

The picture in other unions is the same. Nalgo has conference policy against participating in tendering-out. It calls for the re-nationalising of all assets stripped in this way. Yet John Daley, the General Secretary, has issued a letter to all branches urging them to compete in the process 'on our strengths (quality of service) not theirs (cheap labour)'. This ignores the existing powers of the district auditor to prevent such factors being considered, let alone the new provisions of the bill. It also ignores the lessons of the NHS, where 'successful' in-house tendering has resulted in 70,000 full time job losses and worsened conditions for those who remain. In short, cheap labour.

Yet Nupe policy is for co-operation now. So too is the GMB's practice. In Leeds Nupe and GMB stewards are in the process of negotiating

away 7,500 jobs in those areas targeted by the bill in the hope of creating the same number of jobs in other areas of the council. And when these areas are in turn forced out to tender? Who knows, but at least they will have avoided a fight. Bootiful!

All these 'strategies' seek to avoid the central problem. How to mobilise sufficient working class forces against the Tories (and those who are doing their dirty work) to actually beat them? To start with, each and every cut and tender must be resisted with deeds not just words. But that is not enough. Precisely because the attacks are so well connected, precisely because they leave councils no room to manoeuvre and workers nowhere to hide, they must be confronted head on by all the sections under attack. Housing workers must unite with tenants, catering staff with cleaners, teachers with gardeners. Sectional barriers must be broken down and a united front formed against the implementation of the Tory legislation.

The crying need is for Councils of Action to be formed in every city, county and borough. Democratically elected delegates representing council workers, tenants, Labour parties and service users must replace the bureaucrats in the leadership of the fight against the destruction of the last remaining elements of local democracy.

But that can only be a beginning. The offensive must be taken. Council services have been corroded by years of Tory cuts. They cannot simply be defended. They must be extended to provide the services the working class needs, not those the ruling class think they can afford.

That extension cannot be achieved by good will and 'co-operation' with the capitalist state, local or national. A massive programme of public works, of improvements to homes & hospitals, of repairs and new building, of staffing up run down services is needed—providing jobs for the unemployed and facilities for the working class. Such a programme must be under workers'—not bosses' or bureaucrats'—control. Only then can services really be improved, for need and not for profit! ■

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## Fund Appeal

Why not begin 1988 as you mean to go on—give us a cash donation! P. Atienza, a reader in Birmingham, has given us £100 to help kick off the new year's fund drive while another reader in South London has sent us £55. We are certain other readers could do the same. Send cash, cheques, POs etc to our box number straight away!

If Norman Fowler gets his way the benefits people claim will be savagely cut. A benefit advice worker examines the implications of the Social Security Act for claimants and trade unionists

# PUNISHING THE POOR

**THE 1986 Social Security Act comes fully into operation on 11 April 1988. It is one of the biggest single attacks on claimants since the Tories took office.**

Under the guise of simplifying the system the changes to Supplementary Benefit it will mean that approximately four million claimants will lose out. Eight million pounds has been cut from the real value of this benefit. Changes to Housing and Supplementary Benefits will result in 43% of claimants losing out. A massive £450 billion has been cut from the Housing Benefit bill.

The Social Fund is perhaps the most obnoxious of the government's proposals. Payment will be made at the discretion of the DHSS who will prioritise both claimant and need. So if you are a single person who wants a loan to buy some furniture to enable you to live independently you will have very little chance of receiving a penny. The DHSS will not consider that need a priority. The rationale behind the Social Fund reeks of hypocrisy.

Quite clearly the government has two aims in mind in introducing this legislation. firstly and obviously financial savings have to be made. The government's policy of creating unemployment has increased public spending in this area.

This contradicts their aim of keeping a tight control on public spending. The answer therefore is to cut the real value of benefits and change the rules so fewer people are entitled to benefits. This is what the government has done in the Act. From April you will not be able to claim benefit if you or your partner work over 24 hours a week. Client Group Premiums will not be available to the same

number of people who claimed Additional Requirements.

The second major aim of the Act is to intensify divisions. This has always been an aim of the Tories. A divided working class is a weakened working class. In line with this the government has introduced the Social Fund which divides claimants into priority groups and non-priority

'I do believe we've won the great majority of the arguments. Although in committee we won hardly any votes — the Tories had the majority... we cannot win in the Commons. But we put the government on the defensive... I'm not sure what more we could have done.' (*Poverty: Journal of the CPAG, Winter 1986/87 No 65*)

Meacher takes comfort in the fact that he believes Labour won the moral arguments. Not much help to those already on the breadline. The unions have also been silent on the question of opposition to the cuts. Despite the fact that this and other changes to work practices could mean up to 20,000 job losses at the DHSS the CPAG has not organised any opposition to the Act. Opposition which has occurred has been restricted to individual offices.

The Social Fund will also depend on the cooperation of both social workers and welfare rights advisers. Again unions representing these workers have been silent on the issue. In the main, welfare rights workers have concentrated on pressure group campaigning, lobbying and organising 'take-up' campaigns. No attempt has been made to organise the rank and file of the unions or the unemployed worker's groups against the act.

Unions in the various benefit offices and centres should be organising resistance to the Act to smash it now before it comes into full force, linking up with the CPAG in the fight against job losses and with unemployed worker's groups to demand work or full pay. Joint committees of struggle need to be established to further this and ultimately strike action must be seen as the answer in opposing the Act. ■



Young claimant families will be hit hard

groups — the deserving and undeserving poor. The disabled for example are being forced into the role of deserving poor (not a role they either want or need), as against the other sections of those on benefit.

The unions' and Labour Party's record of opposition to the Act is non-existent. Michael Meacher, Labour spokesperson on social security

Verna Care reports on new legislation which poses a massive attack on lesbian and gay rights



## A bigots' charter

**THE TORIES** have given the Local Government Bill a new twist and the Parliamentary Labour Party has been happy to assist. A new clause added to the Bill will legalise bigotry against lesbians and gays and signal the return of closetted misery for tens of thousands.

The new clause will make it unlawful for local councils to:

- 'promote homosexuality'
- fund individuals or organisations which promote homosexuality or its acceptability
- teach the acceptability of 'homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'.

If this becomes law in the New Year, its effect on lesbians and gays will be devastating. The current climate of 'public opinion' is moving from one of grudging tolerance to open hostility. In the week the new clause was introduced, the

offices of *Capital Gay* newspaper were attacked by an arsonist. Individual lesbians and gay men are subject to more frequent physical attacks. The gutter press is currently applauding bishops who intend to ban openly gay clergy.

### Gains

For lesbians and gay men, the equal opportunities policies and financial support for switchboards/helplines and lesbian and gay centres of Labour local councils have been important, if limited, gains. All of this will go. The tentative attempts to introduce positive images of homosexual relationships into sex education will stop. Lesbians and gay men who work in local government—especially teachers—will live in fear for their safety and their jobs. Lesbians and gay men in the Labour Party and in

the trade unions will face more open hostility in the wake of the front bench support of the Tories.

Not surprisingly, the Thatcher government fully supports this new law against lesbians and gays. Not surprisingly, the cowardly opportunists of the Labour Party leadership failed to stand by conference policy in support of lesbian and gay rights.

But, worse still, they jumped at the opportunity to distance themselves from a policy they see as a big vote loser. John Cunningham supported the anti-gay bigots by saying: 'in my view and in the view of the Labour Party it is not and never has been the purpose of local authorities to promote homosexuality.'

Of course, you can't 'promote' homosexuality like Saatchi and Saatchi promoted Thatcher or tins of baked beans. The notion is ridiculous—and Cunning-

ham knows it. But as things stand, simply to talk about lesbians and gays in terms that are not an outright condemnation of their sexuality is to promote homosexuality.

### Myth

Simply to be lesbian or gay and 'out' is to promote homosexuality. Anything at all that challenges the ruling class myth of homosexuals as predatory monsters out to corrupt the nation's youth promotes homosexuality. That is why this new legislation will be a bigot's charter to hound lesbians and gays.

- Fight back! Support the demonstration on 9 January.
- Force the bigots in the labour movement to shut up or leave!
- Defend positive images and equal opportunities!
- No compliance with the bigot's charter!

## What the act will do

### INCOME SUPPORT

- × Supplementary Benefit abolished. Replaced by Income Support.
- × Additional requirements replaced by flat rate client group premiums.
- × Long term rate of Supplementary Benefit abolished.
- × Householder rate abolished.

### HOUSING BENEFIT

- × HB Needs allowance aligned with HB rates used for income support and family credit.
- × There will be a capital cut-off introduced (of £6,000).
- × Steeper tapers used for calculating entitlement for claimants with income over Income Support levels.
- × All claimants will have to pay 20% of their rates.
- × All claimants will have to pay their water rates.
- × Local authorities will no longer be able to introduce high rent schemes.

### FAMILY CREDIT

- × Will replace Family Income Supplement.
- × Will no longer count as income for housing benefit purposes.
- × Recipients will no longer receive free school meals.



### SOCIAL FUND

- × Replaces single payments and urgent needs payments.
- × Comprises of two loans (budgeting and crisis loans) and three grants (community care, maternity, and funeral grants).
- × Each area will be cash limited.
- × There will be no right of independent appeal, just the right to ask the DHSS to review your case.

### SERPS

- × Value cut from 25% to 20% of the relevant earnings band.
- × To be calculated on your life's earnings not the best 20 years.
- × Individuals will be able to 'contract out' under the personal pension system to be introduced.
- × The widows and widowers pension will be cut reducing the right to the additional pension built up by the spouse.



THE MONTH of December saw an explosion of resistance in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. There has been an 'uprising' against the oppression and discrimination to which the Zionist State of Israel subjects Palestinians under its control. The Israeli government, emulating its South African counterpart in similar circumstances, responded with the brutal repression of the Palestinian youth and communities.

Defence minister Yitzhak Rabin, declared:

'Here we will fight united in all our strength—and it is substantial—against any element that attempts, through violence, to undermine our complete rule in Judea and Samaria [the Zionist term for the West Bank] and the Gaza district.'

The Israeli regime's 'substantial strength' had already been deployed in all its viciousness. Television pictures of the bloody beatings inflicted on captured Palestinian school students by both the army and the hated *Shin Bet* security forces and of a Palestinian tied to the front of an army lorry advancing against demonstrators, told only part of the story.

### Hospital bombed

Teargas dropped by helicopters on Palestinian areas included the 'bombing' of Shifa hospital in Gaza. Regular shooting by the army into crowds of Palestinian youths armed only with stones resulted in hundreds of injuries and at least 22 deaths. Israeli army 'sharpshooters' armed with special Beretta sniper rifles, ordered in to pick off the 'ring-leaders', counted for many of these fatalities.

Despite the degree of force employed, the largely spontaneous explosion of anger spread across the occupied territories. Barricades were thrown up in the camps, villages and towns. The highpoint of the struggle came with the general strike of Arab labour on 21 December involving over three quarters of a million workers. In the biggest ever mobilisation of workers on both sides of the pre-1967 border (the 'Green line') public transport, construction, manufacturing and retail were widely disrupted in both the occupied territories and crucially in Israel itself.

For the first time since the disturbances began clashes took place in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Jaffa and Lod. In Rabat the largely Bedouin population dispelled their image of loyalty to the Zionist state by taking to the streets. On the West Bank crowds of women stoned cars taking scabs into Israel.

Only by Christmas Eve, almost a fortnight after the first protests, was the sheer scale and violence of the military repression able to finally suppress the movement. Over 900, mostly Palestinian youth, were incarcerated in hastily set up prison camps, left in inadequate clothes in freezing conditions, subjected to further beatings and many, dragged blindfolded and to be tried before Israeli military courts.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip have been under Zionist military administration since the Six Day War in 1967. Israel has held back from formally annexing these territories for fear of the massive influx of Arab voters this would involve, rendering the very basis of the Jewish state untenable. Previous resistance, as in Gaza in the early to mid-1970s, has centred on Israeli forces, with spontaneous mass struggle a rare occurrence.

The violence and intensity of December's events has re-opened debate in Israel as to the future of the occupied territories. Yet the extension of the revolt to Israel itself has afforded the events a deeper significance. The solidarity shown by the Israeli Arabs and the united general strike was a great blow to the Zionist state's traditional 'divide and rule' policy.

In crossing the Green Line, the revolt thus challenges the very legitimacy of a state in Palestine which seeks to preserve an exclusively Jewish character. This state is based on Zionist colonisation of a territory populated by 750,000 Arabs and with millions forcibly excluded from its borders.

### Expropriations

Since the foundation of Israel in 1948, early land seizures by Jewish settlers have been legitimised and further expropriations carried out. A discriminatory immigration policy (the Law of Return) allows any Jew the right to Israeli citizenship whilst millions of Palestinian refugees are denied precisely this right. Even Palestinians who at present live in the occupied territories can be denied the 'right of return' if they go to another country for more than 12 months.

None of this, however, has solved the fundamental contradiction of an expansionist Zionist state which brings ever more Arabs under its domination. Within a decade Arabs will outnumber Jews in Israel and the occupied territories. The right-wing Likud Party is clear as to its preferred solution. It favours stepping up the implantation (Judaisation) of Jewish settlers on the West Bank. Widespread support has been

forthcoming for the proposal by Deputy Defence Minister Michael Dekel for a mass 'transfer' of Arabs from Gaza and the West Bank to neighbouring Arab states.

On the other hand the Labour Party has rejected the policy of mass expulsions as unworkable. Labour leader and Foreign Minister Shimon Perez knows that such a strategy would be unacceptable to even Israel's closest backer—the USA. Peres has his hopes pinned on a different strategy, namely an international conference which will deliver a 'Palestinian statelet' dominated by Israel and rigorously policed by Arab regimes such as Jordan and Egypt. If Arafat and the PLO leadership can be pushed into such a deal, and Arafat appears increasingly enthusiastic for such a sell out, so much the better. This explains Peres' rhetorical question about the Gaza:

'Are another 300 square kilometres better for Israel's security than another 600,000 Arabs?'

It also explains the proposals being floated for Jordan to take over 'security' operations in the Gaza. The December revolt of the Palestinians has posed point blank for the Israeli rulers the impossibility of continuing with the status quo for any length of time.

The same question increasingly concerns the US administration. At the very moment footage of Israeli soldiers shooting down Arab school-children was flashing across millions of US TV screens, Yitzhak Rabin was in Washington signing yet another arms agreement. The USA had agreed to give another three billion dollars in foreign aid to Israel in 1988 including paying 80% of developing

Israel's anti-tactical ballistic missile the Arrow, in conjunction with the Pentagon.

Even the Reagan administration had to condemn the shootings, 'even handedly' condemning Palestinian stonethrowers as well. As long as Israel remains a vital component of US imperialism's economic domination of the Middle East, which it has done since its foundation in 1948, there is no question of a break between these two governments. Nor will the USA even insist on a compromise with the bourgeois Arab regimes despite the enormous economic leverage that it has over Israel. Nevertheless the tacit US backing for Peres and their desire not to alienate Egypt and Jordan has led them to distance themselves from the Likud hardliners.

The major danger for the Palestinian masses is that the spontaneous and unprecedented explosion of struggle against Israeli oppression will be used by the PLO leadership and the Arab regimes to further a policy diametrically against the interests of the Palestinians. Since 1974 the PLO leadership has effectively abandoned the struggle for its own programme, of a democratic secular state of Palestine, encompassing the lands now under the control of the Zionist state. This political retreat was accelerated after the defeat suffered by the PLO in the Lebanon in 1982. Increasingly Arafat has concentrated on manoeuvring with Jordan and Egypt, and via them with the US imperialists to push Israel into accepting a Palestinian 'mini-state'. If such a state ever came about, it would be little more than a feeble 'Bantustan' dominated

## Palestinian masses revolt

# ZIONIST TERROR UNLEASHED

by Israel and US imperialism. In return the PLO and the Arab regimes will recognise the right of the Jewish people to a racist and exclusionist state in Palestine.

It was no surprise then that the immediate response of Arafat to the upsurge of struggle was to make more concessions to imperialism. Amidst strong rumours of the establishment of a Palestinian government-in-exile to bargain for 'autonomy' on the West Bank and Gaza, PLO chairman Arafat stated in an interview with *Newsweek* that:

'The only way—if our friends will help us—is for the occupied territories to be under United Nations control . . . until we arrive at a final comprehensive solution by the international conference.'

The advocacy of this reactionary utopia shows the PLO leadership has learnt nothing from the role of the UN in Lebanon and places the fate of the Palestinian masses firmly in the hands of world imperialism. The final goal, Arafat makes clear, is a Palestinian state existing alongside Israel.

### Determination

The determination and courage of the insurgent youth in the towns of the occupied territories and in the camps of Jabalya, Balata, Nuseirat and el-Bureij gives hope that such a betrayal would meet with firm opposition. Now that Palestinian workers and youth on both sides of the Green Line have taken centre stage in the fight for national liberation, many will be dissatisfied with anything less than the revolutionary destruction of the Zionist state.

The danger is that in disillusionment at the retreats of the PLO and its bankrupt bourgeois nationalism the youth will turn to the apparently more 'uncompromising' parties of Islamic fundamentalism. Yet religious reaction and outright hostility to the Jews as a people will not serve the cause of Palestinian national liberation.

### Potential

The solution to the log-jam of oppression and exploitation in Palestine must be for the working class to stand at the head of the national struggle and to reconstruct the nation under its own leadership. The strike of 21 December is an indication of the potential for uniting the Arab working class in struggle around national and democratic questions. Yet a secular workers' state of Palestine, governed by democratic organs of the Arab working class and peasantry alongside a Jewish proletariat broken from Zionism remains the only genuine alternative to Zionist discrimination, terror and mass expulsions.

As the Israeli state slides deeper into crisis, even more wracked by internal contradictions working class unity in struggle for national liberation and socialism must be fought for. A revolutionary working class party, armed with the strategy of permanent revolution, must be forged by Arab and Jewish workers as an indispensable instrument for this task. ■



Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip

## NUS Conference: Resolving nothing

Zionism was one of the key issues raised at NUS Conference last month. *Liz Wood* reports on this and other debates

THE NATIONAL Union of Students met in conference in December. The most contentious issue on its agenda was Palestine. Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) put forward an amendment which defended the right of the state of Israel to exist. It defended the Israeli immigration law—the Law of Return—which prevents the Palestinians returning to, or visiting, their homeland.

While SSiN paid lip service to 'the oppression of the Palestinian people' their position was overtly Zionist. On the conference floor and at fringe meetings SSiN members argued that Palestinians would 'swamp' the Israeli Jews if they were allowed to return to their homeland. They repeated this classic racist argument for immigration controls.

### Bureaucratic

Hand in hand with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) SSiN used deliberately bureaucratic procedural points to stretch out the debate on their terms. As a result we could only discuss the first three amendments and not reach the pro-Palestinian motions. Eventually conference rejected both the SSiN and UJS positions, leaving NUS with no policy on Palestine.

Students should use the current events in Palestine to expose the reality of the Zionist state and campaign against it in their colleges.

Conference also discussed the Baker Bill and the poll tax. On both questions conference adopted some tactics that will be necessary if the attacks are to be beaten. There was an unspecific paper commitment to direct action and linking up with the working class. However this was alongside a commitment to seeking out dissident Liberal and Tory MPs as allies.

This was due to the conference being dominated by CP Stalinists and by NOLS, which in turn is dominated by Kinnockite 'democratic left'. They, as usual, were preaching the need to work across class lines. SSiN abstained on this question in the vote.

### Make links

The NEC was left with a mandate to support direct action rather than actually organising it themselves. However, militant students must use the policy as a starting point for building rank and file opposition. We must link up with campus workers who face the threat of job losses and worsening conditions if Baker gets his way. We must organise now to ensure that students join the fight against the poll tax.

That conference voted for direct action at all shows the potential for student militancy. The Executive will try to squander that militancy. Our job is to organise rank and file students to stop them. ■



SIXTEEN YEARS ago this month 20,000 people took to the streets of Derry to protest against the policy of internment. They were met with a hail of bullets from the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment.

On Bloody Sunday fourteen unarmed demonstrators were killed. Thirteen were wounded. That was the price the British Army was prepared to pay to put down those who opposed its repressive rule in Northern Ireland.

Ever since its birth the Northern Irish state has been a prison house for its Catholic minority. As an artificial statelet it has always required the brutal repression of the nationalist population trapped within its frontiers. The 1922 Special Powers Act allowed internment without trial. It was aimed at anyone who protested against the blatant injustices of the Northern Irish state.

Those injustices were far reaching. Jobs and housing were first and foremost the preserve of Protestants. With the full support of Britain, flagrant and systematic discrimination was conducted against the Catholic minority. In predominantly Catholic Derry, for example, the electoral boundaries were so gerrymandered as to give the Protestants a clear and safe majority on the town council. When Ian Paisley said 'I would rather be British than just' he was giving voice to the inbuilt reactionary and oppressive character of the Northern state he defends.

In the late 1960s the sectarian northern state was challenged by a civil rights movement. That movement did not immediately challenge Britain's rule or demand a united Ireland. But it opposed the repression and discrimination that were integral to the sectarian state. It demanded the end of electoral gerrymandering. It called for the repeal of the Special Powers Act. It insisted on the disbandment of the 'B Specials'—armed Protestants who acted as an auxiliary to the full time police force.

The civil rights movement immediately came up against the organised brutality of the British backed northern state. In 1968 the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) ran amok amongst a civil rights march in Derry. In January 1969 loyalist gangs ambushed a protest demonstration at Burntollet. Throughout the North the official and unofficial forces of Orange sectarianism attacked the oppressed minority

every time they attempted to oppose discrimination and inequality.

In the face of repression the nationalist minority fought back. By August 1969 the predominantly Catholic Bogside area of Derry had become a no-go area for the RUC. So too had the Catholic ghettos of Belfast. Faced with the Orange thugs the populations of these areas barricaded their streets for self protection.

This was the immediate pretext for the Labour Government of Harold Wilson to send the British Army into Northern Ireland in August 1969. Its task was to restore order in a state where the most downtrodden sections of society were beginning to demand an end to their oppression and to organise defence against their oppressors.

Sections of the Catholic population may initially have seen the entry of British troops as a respite. Any illusions they may have had about the army's neutrality though were soon to be brutally shattered. Its first job in Belfast was to take down the barricades that protected the Catholic ghettos. As the loyalists marched and intimidated the Catholic minority, the British Army stopped the nationalists from fighting back. It was the Catholic ghettos that throughout 1970 felt the brunt of Britain's armed might. The daily harassment on the streets, the night-time raids and curfews

*On Bloody Sunday fourteen unarmed demonstrators were killed. Thirteen were wounded. That was the price the British Army was prepared to pay to put down those who opposed its repressive rule in Northern Ireland.*

were meted out against the nationalist population. The 'order' the army had been sent in to maintain was inevitably an order for the loyalists and against the Catholic minority.

In the face of armed repression the Catholic population increasingly needed armed defence. This developed primarily in the form of the IRA. Prior to Britain's armed intervention the IRA was not a significant force politically or militarily. In 1969 the Belfast IRA had no weapons. The Dublin leadership's refusal to give military support in the North led to the IRA being renamed in some Belfast graffiti 'I Ran Away'. The official leadership of the IRA was now committed to renouncing the armed struggle in favour of a campaign for what it called socialism. Little wonder that in the

On 30 January 1972 British soldiers shot dead fourteen unarmed civilians demonstrating in Derry. As anti-imperialists in Britain mobilise for the commemorative march on its 16th anniversary *Breda Concannon* and *Dave Hughes* look at the events that led up to this brutal attack

# THE ROAD TO BLOODY SUNDAY



North the Provisional IRA developed as a challenge to them and as a means of defending the nationalist areas. And the more it did so the more it met with repression from the British and their agents.

In February 1971 the army started wholesale searches of the Catholic ghettos of Belfast. Armed with the Special Powers Act they started to round up nationalists on the flimsiest of pretexts. In August 1971 the British authorised internment without trial against those who resisted their rule. By December there had been over 1500 arrests

into the crowd. Seven of the dead men were under 19. None of the men hit were wanted by the security forces and 'none of the deceased or wounded [were] proved to have been shot whilst handling a firearm or bomb' (Widgery Enquiry). The army's claim that they had been fired on by the IRA was a pack of lies.

In the South of Ireland, in Dublin, Dundalk, Cork, Galway and Limerick tens of thousands of workers downed tools and marched in protest against this latest British atrocity in Ireland. Lynch, the prime minister in the 26 Counties at the time, was forced to call a national day of mourning on 2 February (the day of the funerals). 20,000 attended the funeral. 30,000 people marched on the British Embassy in Dublin and burnt it to the ground.

The Southern government came under attack for its conciliatory attitude towards the British army in the north. Demands were raised for the Irish army to march into the North. Within the north the minority population broke off all relations with the northern state—rent and rate strike spread. The British state responded with yet more repression. Bloody Sunday was no freak occurrence. It was an inevitable outcome of Britain's presence in its oldest colony.

Sixteen years on the sectarian state that guarantees British domination over Ireland is still intact. British troops still patrol its streets and harass those who are a threat to British rule. There is no better way to honour the dead of Bloody Sunday than to step up the fight to force the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland now. ■

# MRCI

AT THE end of November the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI), the international organisation to which Workers Power is affiliated, met and discussed a number of key questions facing revolutionaries worldwide. We print here a resolution on Sri Lanka adopted at the meeting. The meeting also discussed the world stock market slump and its implications for the world economy in the coming period.

A major item on the agenda of the delegate meeting was the draft Programmatic Manifesto of the MRCI. The meeting discussed the theoretical and programmatic work necessary in the next period for the MRCI to develop this draft as the programmatic basis for a democratic centralist international Trotskyist tendency. The questions of developments in the system of world imperialism since World War II, and the nature and development of Stalinism on a world scale during this period were prioritised to help take this work forward. Along with the elaboration of an agreed set of theses on women's oppression, completing these areas of work will be the MRCI's major theoretical tasks in 1988.

Reports were received and debated from the MRCI sections in Britain, France, Austria, Germany and Ireland, and the developing work in Latin America was discussed. In particular the Austrian comrades of the AS reported on their intervention in the recent student struggles where they played a leading role in pressing for the students to link up with the Austrian public and private sector workers in a struggle against government attacks. A special issue of *Arbeiterstandpunkt* sold over 1,700 copies during the struggles.

The meeting also registered the successful launching of a monthly paper *Class Struggle* (now into its third issue) by the Irish Workers Group, a move which marks an important step forward for the IWG and the MRCI as a whole. ■

**1** The India-Sri Lanka accord of July 1987 represents the latest attempt at imposing a reactionary settlement on the national struggle of the Tamil people. The accord proposed autonomy which demanded the disarming of the only force enjoying the support of the Tamil people and reliance on Indian troops responsible for the repression of national groups inside India. It proposed a referendum in the Eastern Province in late 1988 to decide whether to continue links with the Northern Province.

Ten years since the formation of the guerrilla groups and four years since the start of open warfare between the Tamils and the government the Sri Lankan economy is in a parlous state. Export earnings have plummeted, tourism is in ruins, the military budget is crippling; indebtedness to the world's banks has mushroomed as a consequence. Through the accord the Indian government hoped to:

- (i) forestall the complete victory of the Tamil separatists and prevent the creation of Tamil Eelam which would be an encouragement to nationalists in India to attempt secession.
- (ii) end the attempt by the Sinhalese government to impose a purely military solution on the Tamil struggle and force Jayawardene to recognise the need for a political settlement which, while making some concessions on local autonomy, preserves the unitary state.
- (iii) restore a 'favourable investment climate' for imperialism.
- (iv) increase Indian hegemony over Sri Lanka and displace the influence of Pakistan.

**2** The Tamil Tigers (LTTE, the main guerrilla force) were not party to the accord, nor consulted about it. Nor, on the other hand, did they openly denounce it, initially placing their trust in the good offices of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Tigers hoped to effectively use the accord to their advantage by retaining their arms and maintaining geographical control of the peninsula. In this way they believed it was possible to use the provincial autonomy proposals as a means of furthering their struggle. Once this became clear the Indian and Sri Lankan governments decided on a military offensive.

The Tigers' control of the administration of large parts of the Jaffna peninsula has been effectively ended, but the Tigers have not been decisively crushed. Rather they have retreated to regroup and continue their guerrilla struggle at a lower level.

The effect of the Indian attack has been to destroy for the moment many illusions in the Indian 'ally'. A whole period lies ahead whereby India will attempt to make the accord work by pushing ahead with the proposals and drawing in Tamil 'moderates' to oversee it, in other words a battle for the hearts and minds of the Tamil people. Whatever its short term prospects it is unlikely to quash the national struggle for good because the accord does not address any of the main structural problems that have led to the Tamil struggle for national liberation.

# SRI LANKA & THE

**3** The roots of the present conflict lie in the exploitation of the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka after 1971) by British colonialism and imperialism between 1802 and 1948. For much of this period all major decisions effecting Sri Lanka were taken by the London tea barons of Mincing Lane who owned the tea plantations of the island.

The vast nature of the British Empire required the colonialists to become masters in the art of divide and rule, using sections of the indigenous population as their administrators. The form of political control sponsored by the British colonial masters to safeguard their super-profits explains the ethnic rivalry in Sri Lanka. Britain selected out the 'Ceylonese Tamils'—descendants of the Tamil population who came to the island from Tamil Nadu in India thousands of years previously. These made up half the Tamil population. Sections of them were given privileges by the British administration in both education and employment. Whilst only ten percent of the population by 1948, these 'Ceylonese Tamils' occupied some 60% of civil service posts and nearly 50% of the armed forces. The 'Indian Tamils' (some 10% of the population) by contrast were brought over as a conscript labour force to work the Southern Highland tea plantations. Today they are the most oppressed and super-exploited section of the Sri Lankan working class.

**4** After independence in 1948, a short spell of working class unity gave way to inter-communal rivalries. The privileges enjoyed by sections of the Tamils in the civil service and professions led to antagonism against them from the Sinhalese. These rivalries have been systematically used by the Sinhalese bourgeoisie to obscure class questions facing the whole of the Sri Lankan working class. Universal suffrage allowed the weight of the Sinhalese masses to be felt. Continued savage super-exploitation of the island's economy by imperialism made the harmonious development of relations between the groups impossible. Reverse discrimination became entrenched, sponsored by the bourgeoisie and landowners to divide the working class. For thirty years the two main Sinhalese bourgeois parties (SLFP and UNP) vied with each other in communalist measures against the Tamils.

Discrimination in education, employment, language rights, and landownership in the 1950/60s were supplemented in the 1970s by colonisation (of a West Bank nature) of the Eastern Province where Tamil speakers were in a large majority and the banning of Tamil parliamentary representation. Throughout these decades pogroms have been a regular feature of repression.

The effect of these four decades of systematic repression has been to transform a bourgeois reformist

struggle for language rights and an end to discrimination within a unitary state into a fight for a separate state for the Tamil people.

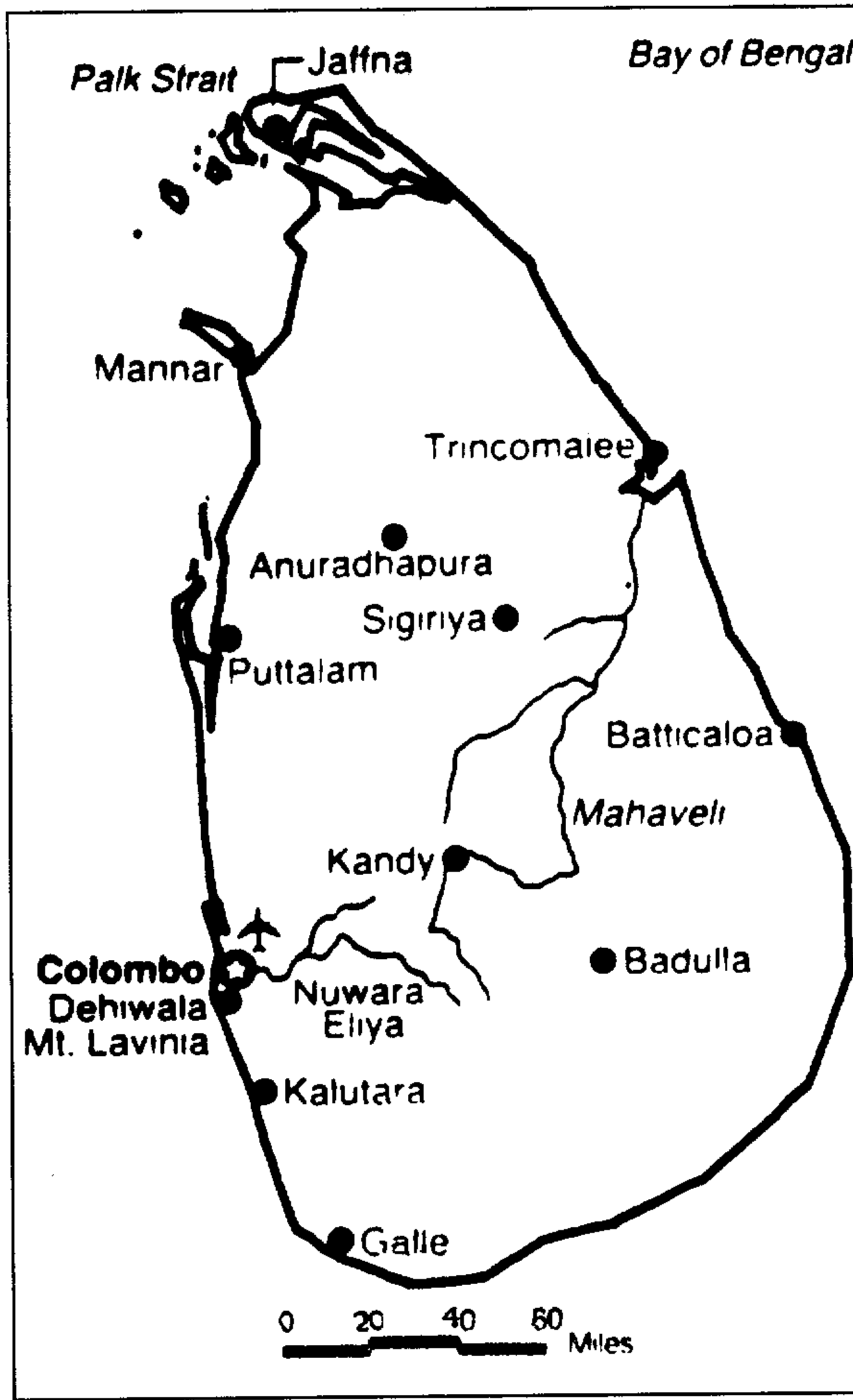
**5** The record of the leftist and nationalist parties is a dismal one. The bourgeois nationalist TULF failed to defend the Tamil people in the 1960s and 1970s. This failure spawned the petit-bourgeois guerrilla groups in the mid 1970s. In the 1980s the TULF—outside of parliament and trailing the Tamil Tigers—has been forced to lend its verbal support for a separate state whilst facilitating negotiations for much less. They lent their support to the accord.

For many years the main party of the left was the LSSP. Affiliated to the Fourth International (then the International Secretariat after 1953, the USFI after 1963) it was not a Trotskyist party. After 1948 it was a centrist party with a social-democratic practice covered by Trotskyist phraseology. While it did lead mass struggles of the, predominantly urban Sinhalese, working class in the 1950s, it was weakly based in the peasantry and the Tamil workers. It succumbed to electoral cretinism and the lure of office within the semi-colonial regime. Its indifference to the fight against Sinhalese chauvinism (an indifference tolerated by the leadership of the International Secretariat) led it to enter a Sinhala chauvinist government of the SFLP in 1964. The entering of a popular front by the historic party of the Sinhala working class was a historic betrayal which led to its collapse and disintegration, thus opening up the working class further to the poison of the bourgeois chauvinism of the Bandaranaike party. As a result of the LSSP's betrayals the forces loyal to proletarian internationalism within Sri Lanka remain small and isolated but they deserve the support of the international workers' movement against the repressive actions of the government.

A similar fate has beset the JVP which as a student based organisation in 1971 led an abortive leftist uprising against the government. Today, it opposes the accord as a Sinhalese chauvinist terrorist organisation.

The failure of the left working class parties to stand firm against chauvinism has only succeeded in sponsoring the growth of Sinhalese chauvinism on the one hand and Tamil petit-bourgeois nationalism on the other.

The centrist 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International' found its Indian and Sri Lankan sections completely politically disarmed by the Accord. The Indian section, like the LTTE itself, could 'neither endorse or oppose'; the Sri Lankan's saw the Accord as a 'window of opportunity' for peace. They failed to call for the removal of troops and must take their share of responsibility for what followed.



# TAMIL QUESTION



in advance the right of self-determination of all the Tamil people.

Whatever the outcome of the existing civil war and the national or democratic struggles and whether or not a constituent assembly/assemblies come into existence only the creation of a revolutionary workers and peasants' government can ensure the carrying out of these demands as well as resolving the fundamental questions of class exploitation.

**7** As revolutionary communists it is our duty, however, to say that we believe the Tamil guerrillas are leading the Tamil people into a cul-de-sac. Their tactics of armed defence against the Sri Lankan army and the goon squads of the so-called 'Home Guard' in the Eastern Province have naturally won the support of the Tamil people. But the failure to arm or train more than a tiny number of youth (2,500) has left the Tamil masses defenceless in the wake of the Indian attack.

Certain tactics pursued by the Tigers flow from their increasingly narrowly nationalist ideology. Whilst unconditionally defending their right to pursue the war against the Sinhalese and Indian armies, we will criticise the backward and divisive nature of such tactics. Often the Tigers have killed hundreds of Sinhalese workers and peasants as a short-sighted response to new Sinhalese settlements in Tamil areas. Whilst not the cause of chauvinism against the Tamils, such actions do nothing to undermine it and much to entrench it. In addition they have systematically eliminated rival Tamil groups in the North in order to bolster their claim to sole representation of the Tamil people.

But more than anything it is the strategy and goal of the Tigers—Tamil Eelam—which is a bankrupt solution to the misery the Tamils presently endure. A separate Tamil state in the North and East, based on the most economically deprived sectors of present day Sri Lanka will be even more at the mercy of the world's bankers and industrialists. It will permanently divide the working class.

Nor can the prospect of Tamil Eelam appeal as a liberatory ideology to the key sector of the Tamil working class—the plantation workers—geographically and politically isolated from the Tigers' struggle as they are. The goal of revolutionary Marxists is the united struggle of all Sri

workers and peasants to be able to determine the future of the liberated areas.

Should the Tamils' struggle successfully turn into a mass uprising that results in the withdrawal of Indian and/or Sri Lankan government troops then communists and democrats should demand the summoning of a sovereign constituent assembly in the liberated areas to decide the political form of the state, its relations with the Sinhala dominated areas of Sri Lanka (i.e. complete independence, free federation or unitary republic) and with the Indian state.

Revolutionary communists (Trotskyists) in the Sinhala dominated regions should be fighting in the workers' movement for the right of the Tamils to self-determination alongside the struggle to overthrow the Jayawardene Bonapartist regime. In the field of democratic demands we fight for the separation of all religious bodies from the state and the expropriation of their lands and accumulated wealth; for political rights, for the Tamil plantation workers; land to the tillers. These demands should focus on the call for a sovereign constituent assembly for the non-Tamil areas or for the whole of Sri Lanka if the mass organisations agree to participate and the Sinhala majority accepts

**6** Revolutionary Marxists have, as their prime duty, the unconditional defence of the Tamil people against repression and discrimination. We defend their right to self-determination up to and including a separate state. The fight for unity of the Tamil and Sinhalese workers begins with a fight to win the latter to a defence of the Tamils' cause. Unity of the workers in the struggle against the Sinhalese bourgeoisie's austerity attacks and repression of the trade unions cannot be lasting or principled without a struggle against chauvinism in the ranks of the Sinhalese masses.

However, the Tamil Tigers are not the Tamil people. The oppressed masses shelter and feed the LTTE who in turn defend them from the army; but the people have no way of democratically deciding what forces within the liberation struggle they support, nor are they able to express what form of self-determination they desire within Sri Lanka. We call on the Tamils to rise up and expel the Indian and Sri Lankan army. We call for the formation and arming of working class and peasant based defence committees as a necessary first step to the expulsion of the occupying forces and as a necessary basis for the

Lankan workers and peasants around a programme of anti-imperialism, anti-landlordism and anti-chauvinism which is directed at the Sinhalese bourgeoisie and its Tamil apologists and leads to a workers' and peasants' government and a workers' republic. For these reasons we do not advocate a separate state.

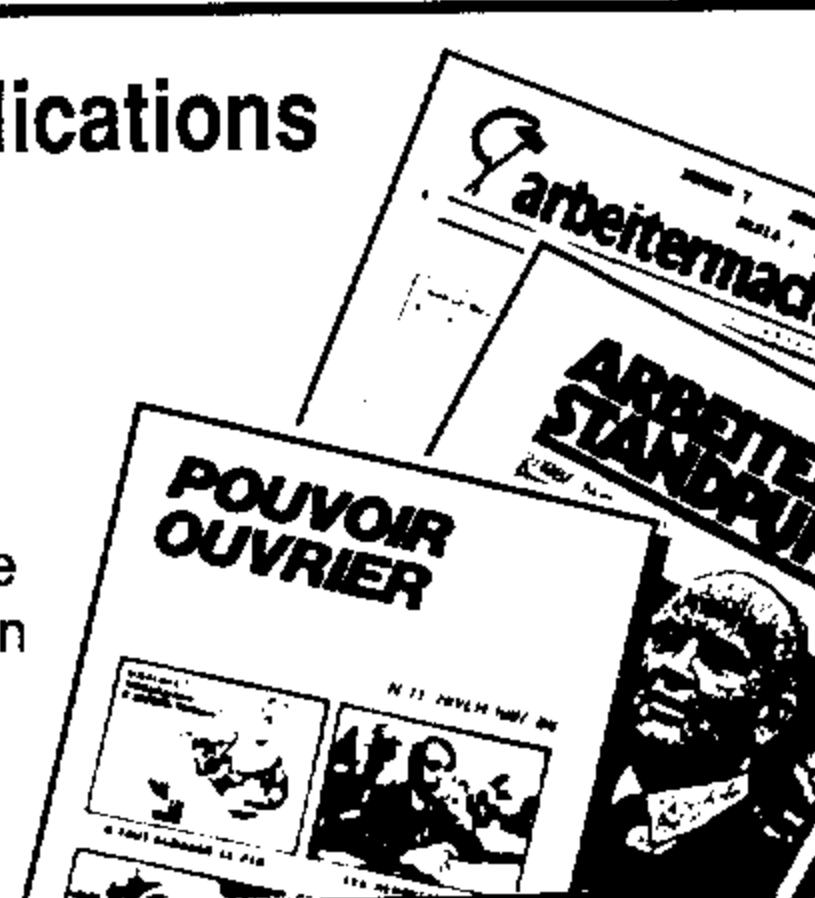
Revolutionary Marxists oppose the reactionary unification 'from above' of any Tamil state with Tamil Nadu under the control of the Indian bourgeoisie as openly advocated by some sections of the TULF. Rather we fight for the extension of the struggles of the Tamil workers and peasants into Tamil Nadu itself as part of the struggle for a socialist federation of the entire Indian sub-continent. To fight for this strategy of proletarian independence and permanent revolution a genuine Trotskyist party must be built in Sri Lanka which unites the best class fighters—Tamil and Sinhalese.

**8** Our key slogans in the present period are:

- India out of Sri Lanka!
- Smash the India-Sri Lanka Accord!
- For the Tamil resistance against the Indian/Sri Lankan army!
- Release all political prisoners!
- For an end to all discrimination in jobs, education, language
- For full political rights and citizenship for the plantation workers
- Against the pogroms of national minorities within both Tamil and Sinhala areas
- For the right of the Tamil people to Self-determination up to and including complete separation
- Cancel the debts to the IMF bankers
- No to austerity
- No bans on trade unions or political parties, no press censorship
- Land to those that till it; expropriate the large landowners
- Separation of all religious bodies from the state
- For the abolition of all religious and caste discrimination
- Down with Jayawardene's Bonapartist regime
- For a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party in Sri Lanka
- For a workers' republic of Sri Lanka
- For a socialist federation of the whole Indian sub-continent

## MRCI Publications

The MRCI has sections in France (Pouvoir Ouvrier), West Germany (Gruppe Arbeitermacht), Austria (Arbeiterstandpunkt), Ireland (Irish Workers Group) and Britain and has regular publications in all these countries. It also has publications in Spanish. All publications are available from Workers Power at our box number.



Up

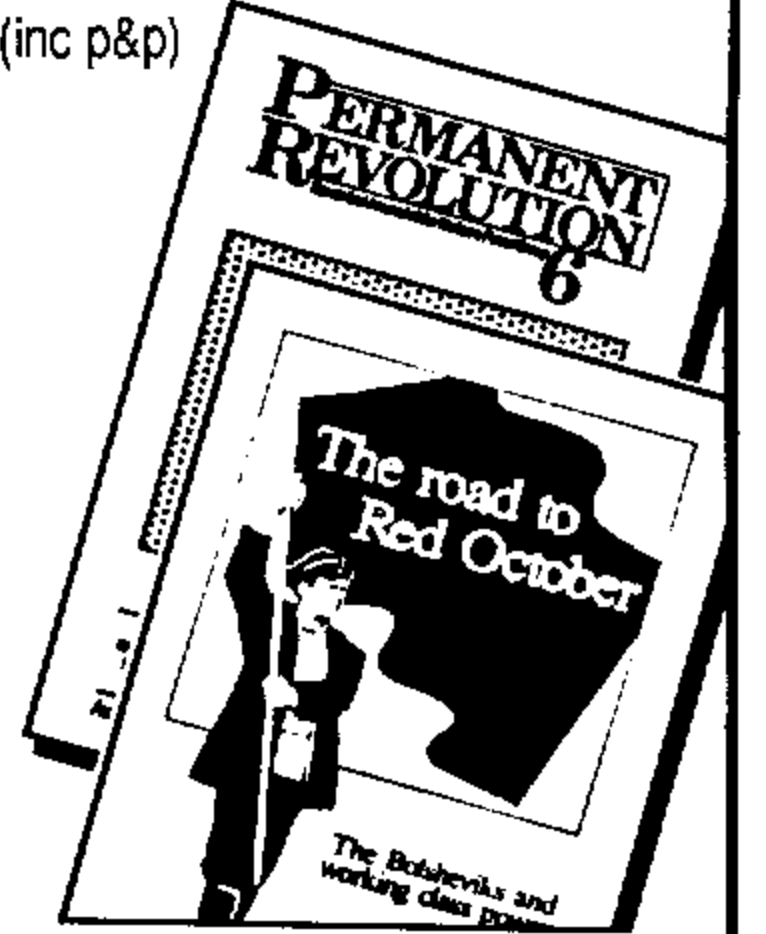
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### BIRMINGHAM

*Arab workers shake Israel*  
Carrs Lane Church Centre  
Thursday 4 February 7.30pm

### CENTRAL LONDON

*Arab workers shake Israel*  
London School of Economics,  
Aldwych, nr Holborn Tube  
Friday 22 January 7.30pm

### EAST LONDON

*The fight against Alton*  
Durning Hall, Earham Grove, E7  
Thursday 14 January 8.00pm

## MARXIST DISCUSSION GROUPS

### LEICESTER

*Fight Alton:*  
*build a working class womens movement!*  
Thursday 14 January 7.30pm

### NORTH LONDON

*The crisis in local government*  
Wednesday 20 January 7.30pm

### SOUTH LONDON

*What is a revolutionary situation?*  
Wednesday 27 January 7.30pm

### SHEFFIELD

*Recession in 1988?*  
Thursday 21 January 7.30pm

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# Brazil

# CARNIVAL OVER FOR SARNEY

As the Brazilian economy continues to shake Stephen Foster looks at the options open to the Brazilian president

IN 1987 Brazil's growing economic problems continued to threaten its fragile political stability. The year ended with a desperate struggle by the President, Jose Sarney, to prevent the Brazilian congress, acting as a Constituent Assembly, cutting his term of office by two years and drastically curtailing his powers. He failed to prevent either despite backing from the military.

Sarney had come to power in 1985 under a constitution shaped by the military. He was indirectly elected by the Brazilian congress, supported by the ruling government coalition the Alianca Democratica (AD). This was made up of two major bourgeois parties, which themselves were unstable coalitions of left and right tendencies, the smaller Partido da Frente Liberal (PFL) and the Partido do Movimento Democratico Brasileiro (PMDB). Since the November 1986 elections the PMDB dominates both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

The economy, and divisions within the ruling parties on how to deal with it, broke up this coalition in September and led to clashes between Sarney and the PMDB. Following the failure of the Cruzado plan, a set of austerity measures introduced in 1986, Sarney attempted to launch a

new plan in July. Wages were frozen, public expenditure cut, and subsidies on essentials such as wheat, milk and fuel were scrapped.

In response the two largest union federations, the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT) and Confederacao Geral dos Trabalhadores (CGT) organised a general strike. On 20 August 12 million workers struck demanding a 'total reversal' of the economic package. CUT and CGT militants drew-in support from non-unionised workers and members of smaller federations such as the Uniao Sindical Independente (USI).

Shaken by this massive show of strength the government immediately watered down its wages freeze, allowing (totally inadequate) wage increases of up to 22%.

However, not only workers opposed the plan. Sections of the bourgeoisie also demanded immediate changes in the government's economic policy. With real wages declining, unemployment rising, and government spending being cut, demand was falling. This resulted in reduced profits and threats of bankruptcy.

These demands were soon reflected in the growing estrangement between the PMDB and Sarney and were exacerbated as the crisis deepened. It soon became apparent that the plan was not solving any of the

problems besetting Brazil's economy. 1987 growth targets set at 5% were falling seriously short with end of year predictions of actual growth varying between zero and 2%. The public deficit, set to fall from US \$12 billion to US \$8.5 billion, actually increased.

Inflation is still high and is rising, now averaging 360% per annum. Price increases by large firms have thrown the government's guidelines into disarray. The vehicle industry alone has upped prices by more than 780% over the past year!

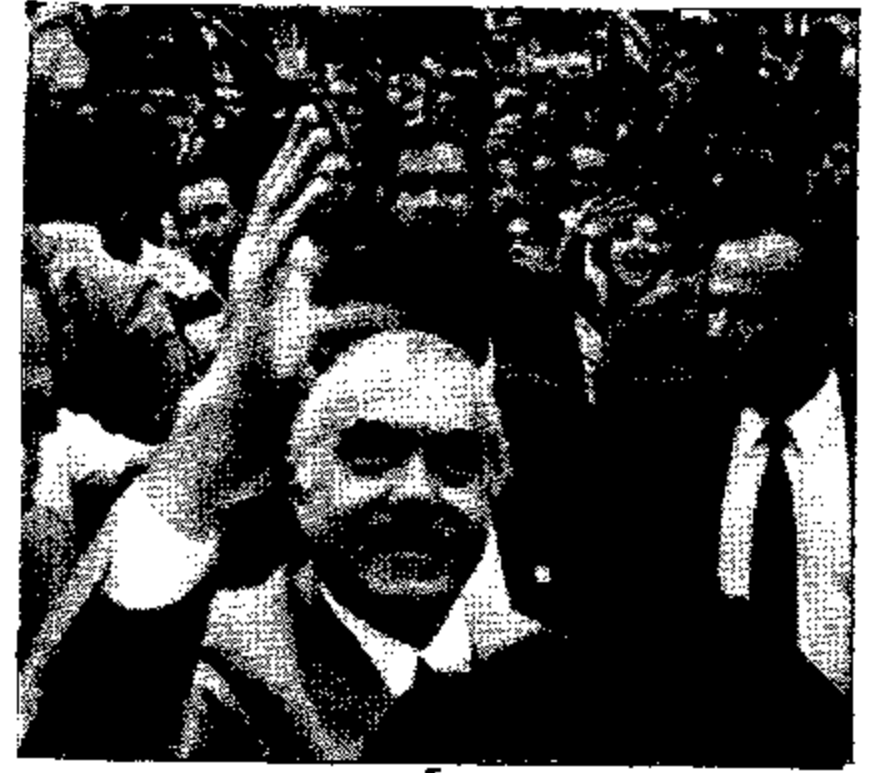
A proposal for a new plan put forward by the finance minister Bresser Pereira also collapsed. Bresser dared to suggest levying a moderate tax on some of the wealthiest sections of Brazilian society. In a country where even the World Bank has been forced to point out that virtually the entire tax burden falls on the middle income groups and the working class this might appear a minor and obvious reform. Yet so entrenched and utterly reactionary is the big bourgeoisie in Brazil that they could not even accept this proposed pin-prick of an attack on their hoarded wealth and bloated profits. Rallying around President Sarney these forces demanded even more vicious attacks on workers so the rich could remain unscathed.

Bowing to these demands Sarney

threw out the plan. With it went Periera. Immediately following Periera's resignation, PMDB leader Ulysses Guimaraes launched a bitter attack on President Sarney. This signals a further distancing of sections of the bourgeoisie from the President's administration. Sarney's base of support is now increasingly confined to landowners, big businessmen, bankers and the upper echelons of the armed forces.

These were the divisions which lay behind the struggle over the new constitution, with sections of the PMDB pressing to reduce the President's powers through cutting the term of office and strengthening the powers of Congress through a prime ministerial system. Sarney and his backers, especially in the military, fought this all the way. The army minister in Sarney's government, General Peres Goncalves, had declared in September that the draft constitution was 'unacceptable' to the army.

He condemned the introduction of a 'parliamentary system of government' and erosion of the President's powers. He declared that the army would 'ignore' the proposal that there should be a political amnesty and eventual reinstatement for members of the armed forces purged after the right wing coup in 1964. He



Sarney, waving or drowning?

openly opposed the proposal that the army should have responsibility for internal 'law and order' taken away from it, declaring that the army retained the right to intervene in domestic affairs when it felt it was necessary.

There is no doubt that 1988 will see a deepening of the economic crisis in Brazil with further attacks on the working class. The Brazilian workers have already demonstrated their strength over the last decade. Only by forging a revolutionary party based on that strength will the Brazilian workers be able to throw back these attacks and exploit the divisions among their rulers, thus paving the way for the establishment of their own power through the dictatorship of the proletariat. ■

## Carnage in the back streets

A CRUCIAL demand in Brazil today is for the complete separation of church and state. This issue is most urgently posed in relation to women's abortion rights.

While Brazil's new constitution makers may be deadlocked over many proposals they are all agreed on their outright opposition to any form of abortion rights. They are proposing that the state should 'guarantee life from the moment of conception'. If this was implemented it would mean a narrowing of Brazil's already super-restrictive laws, which allow abortion only in the case of rape or 'danger' to the life of the mother.

Assembly members have declared that this provision has been adopted under the 'intense pressure' of the Brazilian Catholic church—held by commentators to be a 'progressive' church by Latin American standards.

The likely consequences of such a proposal are already highlighted in a report by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops which estimated that 4 million abortions take place each year in Brazil, 90% of them in illegal 'backstreet' operations.

The report also estimates that over 400,000 women each year die as a result of these abortions. It concludes that birth control or the generalised availability of facilities for abortion could lead to an 'unwanted fall in demographic growth' (Brazil has one of the highest birthrates in the world!) The Brazilian workers' movement must ensure that at the forefront of its demands is an end to all abortion restrictions which wreak such carnage amongst working women in Brazil.

- Free access to birth control!
- For free abortion on demand!
- For a woman's right to choose!



The real face of poverty in Latin America

## Romania THE DYNASTY SHAKES

ROMANIAN STALINIST Ceausescu will be lucky to hold on to power in 1988. Massive strikes and demonstrations in Brasov and Timisoara at the end of last year show that the working class is not prepared to suffer his dynasty much longer.

The Romanian economy is in deep crisis. Years at the tender mercies of the World Bank have saddled it with enormous debts. Ceausescu's drive to pay off those debts has pushed down the already miserable living standards of the working class. Basic foodstuffs are hard to come by. Apartments must not be heated to over 50° F or lit by more than one 40 watt bulb.

As the Brasov workers showed, life had become unbearable under Ceausescu. Only when at least two

workers were killed and several injured was order restored after workers called for 'down with the dictator' and made a bonfire of portraits of Ceausescu.

Although the regime quickly granted a minor wage rise it has since announced that austerity must continue while trying to lay the blame for the worst shortages on scapegoated sacked ministers. A recent extraordinary Party conference that heaped rapturous hosannas on Ceausescu cannot conceal the fact that there are signs of real tension within the ruling bureaucracy itself.

Ceausescu has staffed his government with thirty members of his own family. That has strengthened his position atop the bureaucracy in the past. But his enemies daily increase in number. He has

few pals in Gorbachev's entourage. He has denounced Gorbachev as a revisionist and his economy is now increasingly jeered at in the Soviet press. Both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia are in dispute with him over pollution and poaching power. Even the US government, that once fawned over this dictator, has withdrawn Romania's trade privileges in protest at its human rights record.

Now that the Romanian workers have taken to the streets let us hope that 1988 will see Ceausescu fall at the hands of their political revolution. That will help set the flame of workers' revolution alight throughout the ailing regimes of Eastern Europe. That is what Romanian workers must fight for as the alternative to a settlement dictated by the World Bank and the Kremlin. ■

## JAPAN'S JITTERS

THE POST Christmas drop on all the world's major stock exchanges and the continued weakness of the dollar shows that world capitalism has still got the jitters. It enters 1988 expecting a recession—or worse.

Fears for the worse now centre on Japan after heavy falls on the Tokyo market over Christmas. Japan got off lightly in the October crash. Share prices in Tokyo fell by only 18% compared to 30% in New York and 38% in London.

A big drop in Tokyo would have major repercussions throughout the world market. Japanese banks are the chief bankers to the world. The world's largest bank is Japanese. In the City of London Japanese banks even outlend British banks. Yet most of their profits come from gambling on the exchanges. A big fall in Tokyo share values would seriously jeopardise world capitalism's financial stability. Hence the panic when the Tokyo market falls. ■

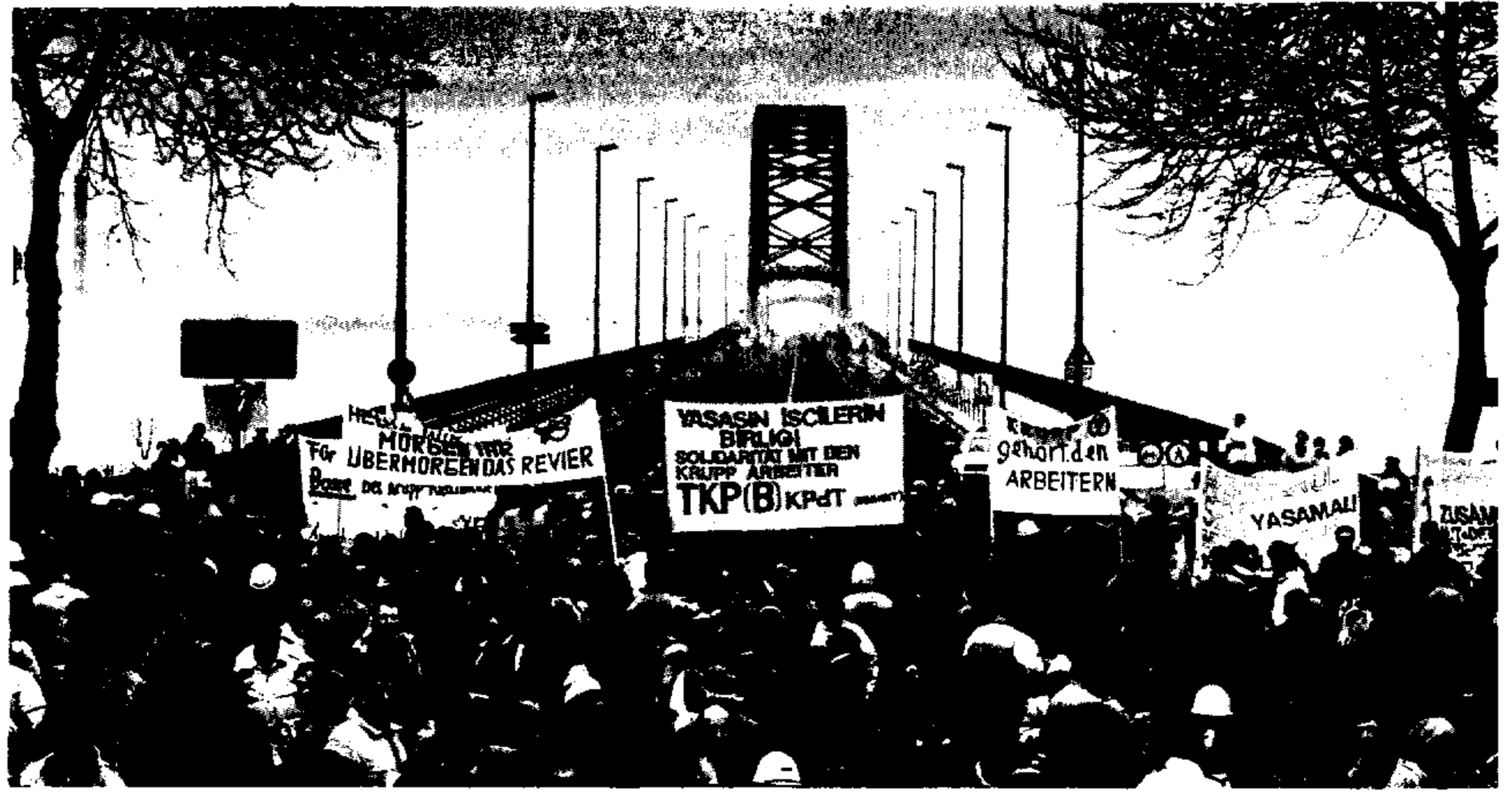


THE RUHR is the heartland of the West German 'economic miracle'. Named after the river which runs through it, the area is some 75 miles long and no more than 20 miles wide at any point. With a total population of 5.1 million it is the biggest single concentration of the industrial working class in the whole of Europe.

Since 1950 the steelworks and coalmines of the Ruhr have been a central pillar of the whole European capitalist economy. To maintain them both successive Federal German governments and the EEC have been willing to protect them by granting West Germany a quota of one third of all EEC steel production and have subsidised the use of Ruhr coal for electricity generation.

Nonetheless there has been a steady decline of employment in heavy industry in the Ruhr. In the 1950s there were 494,000 miners in 140 pits. Today there are 118,000 in 30 pits. Since 1980 alone, 60,000 jobs have been lost in the steel industry. Such 'rationalisations', always negotiated with and agreed by the trade unions, are no longer enough for the steel and coal bosses.

The Conservative—Liberal coalition in Bonn has no love for a region which remains solidly pro-SPD and is looking for EEC support for Germany's farmers. German capitalism has decided to unleash an unprecedented onslaught on the workers of the Ruhr—but they have met stiffer opposition than perhaps they expected.



Pickets block a key bridge over the Rhine

ON THURSDAY, 17 December, the steel town of Duisburg was cut off from the rest of the German Federal Republic in protest at the planned closure of the Krupp steelworks at Rheinhausen. Pickets closed the bridges over the Rhine and the Ruhr, blockaded the autobahns and blocked all access to the town centre. At the same time, 100,000 miners throughout the Ruhr struck in protest at a proposed cut of 30,000 jobs, the morning shift at the Opel plant in Bochum walked out and all public sector transport and local government services were halted as a result of solidarity action.

This explosion of working class anger signals the end of an important chapter in German, perhaps in European, history. For forty years, ever since the United States decided to reinstate the firms, and the bosses, who had brought the Nazis to power, the Ruhr has been at the heart of the Federal German economy.

Two main concessions had to be made by the German capitalists. At home they had to collaborate with the trade unions through the system of 'co-determination', internationally they had to co-operate with the other 'Western' nations, particularly France. In return for these compromises Krupp, Thyssen, Mannesmann, Kloeckner and Hoesch were enabled, once again, to dominate industrial production.

In the years of the post war boom, the concessions they had made created an ideal world for German capitalists. Not only did production race ahead in heavy industry, from 14 to 35 million tonnes of steel in the ten years to 1960, but the ideological impact of the 'end of the class struggle' ensured high productivity, and profits, in the rest of the economy too. Even in the 1970s the Federal Republic rode out with relative ease

# STEEL STRIKERS SHOW THEIR METTLE

Steve McSweeney looks at the steel workers' strike on the Ruhr

the crises which wracked other economies. This is the era which is now ending.

In the 1980s, the very basis of German capital's previous successes has turned into its most immediate danger. Steel and coal from the Ruhr are no longer competitive on the world market. Even the collaborationist trade unions of the Federal Republic would be unlikely to accept the scale of job losses necessary to lower costs to those of, say, South Korea. The whole machinery of 'co-determination' is now an obstacle in the way of capital. Nothing reveals this more clearly than the events which led up to the blockade of Duisburg.

Between March and September 1987 the 'co-determination' committee, the Works' Council, at the Krupp works in Rheinhausen discussed a rationalisation plan with the Krupp management. On 10 September, an agreement was signed, the 'Optimisation Concept' which required the loss of 2,000 jobs in order to secure a remaining 4,200. Written into the agreement was a commitment from Krupp that all plants would be retained. Despite this, rumours began to circulate in the Rheinhausen plant that the whole works was going to be closed. In order to quell the

rumours, members of the Works' Council decided to ask management to make a statement at the meeting on 25 November.

Although not intended to, the question, when put, caught the Chairman of the Board of Directors completely off guard. He admitted that there was indeed a closure plan but it was meant to be a secret until April 1988. The following morning a joint press statement from Krupp, Thyssen and Mannesmann explained that the three managements actually intended to close not only Krupp—Rheinhausen but also the Mannesmann plant at Huckingen and to transfer production to Thyssen. It soon transpired that this had been agreed at the very time when the 'agreement' was being 'negotiated' with the Works' Council at Rheinhausen.

## Occupation

Two days later, the Chairman of the Board addressed a meeting of the Rheinhausen workers and was pelted with eggs and burned in effigy. The following Wednesday, 2 December, pickets blocked one of the bridges over the Rhine. Monday, 7 December saw pickets storm the Krupp HQ in Bochum where the Board of Directors was due to ratify the closure plan. Having taken advantage of the cold buffet laid on for their lords and masters and finished off the 'Al Capone' cigars, the pickets held their own Board of Directors meeting, condemned the whole plan and left. Several hours later the official 'Board' met and decided to postpone any decision.

Two days later, strikers and demonstrators from all over the Ruhr stormed what the magazine *Der Spiegel* called the 'Fortress of German Capitalism', the Villa Huegel in Essen. Here, where the founder of the Krupp empire discussed plans with the first Kaiser, where Hitler and Mussolini plotted before the Second World War, the helmeted steel workers demanded, and got, a personal explanation from Berthold Beitz the trusted representative of the last of the Krupps and now the head of the firm. He said he found the

whole thing very painful!

The decision of the steel bosses to dispense with 'co-determination', their cynical duplicity in negotiating the 'Optimisation Concept' as they prepared for closure, underline the changes that have been taking place in the Federal Republic recently. Far more is at stake than the six thousand jobs in Duisburg. Success for Krupp, Mannesmann and Thyssen will bring with it an intensification of the capitalist offensive on jobs, pay and conditions throughout the Republic and, indeed, beyond. As international competition increases, German capital, dependent principally on the export of industrial products, will attack its own working class ruthlessly. The outcome of the battles that have now begun will play a major part in determining the balance of forces in Europe in the last decade of the century.

The dramatic display of militancy by the Duisburg steelworkers was exactly the right response to Krupp's treachery. The impact of the blockades and the picket lines, however, must not be wasted. Already, the false friends of the working class, the priests and bishops, the academics and the journalists, the mayors and the union leaders are presenting the events of 17 December as evidence of why both management and workers should listen to them.

## Collaborators

After forty years of collaboration and relatively high living standards it has to be expected that many workers will listen. The day after the pickets and blockades there was a religious service in the Rheinhausen works, jointly organised by the unions and the churches. The influence of the collaborators and appeasers will not disappear overnight. At the same time, the workers of the Ruhr have not ignored the experience of the class struggle abroad. One picket, interviewed by the BBC, declared that they had learnt their lessons from the British—they were not going to be divided and beaten, they would stand together and fight!

The method of the united front, as developed by the Communist Inter-

national in its revolutionary phase and by Trotsky thereafter, is the key tactic today.

At all levels of the workers' organisations demands must be placed on the existing leaders that they lead a fight at least in defence of jobs, wages, conditions and union rights. The methods of fighting which revolutionaries will propose will be those the existing leaders least want to use—mass mobilisations, occupations of threatened plants, flying pickets, regional, industrial and national general strikes.

The methods of organisation will equally be those the leaders hate—decisions by mass meetings, full accountability and recallability for all workers' leaders at all levels, no negotiations without representatives of the workforce, publication of all proposed agreements before ratification by mass meetings.

Lastly, the objectives of even defensive struggles will be those the leaders least want to win; an end to business secrecy, opening the books on the past profits and future plans of the capitalists and their negotiations with workers' leaders, an end to the confidentiality law imposed on members of Works' Councils, withdrawal from 'co-determination' whose sham nature is now clear to all, for elected shop floor representatives to have a veto on work speed and manning levels, nationalisation, without compensation and under workers' control of all plants proposing redundancies or closures.

Where and when the leadership retreat from or try to sabotage the struggles the case for organising the rank and file workers within and across the industries will need to be forcefully advanced. Such an approach and such demands can gain revolutionaries a hearing amongst those who want to fight but do not want to turn their backs either on their existing leaders or on the majority of their workmates. As the present international instability gives way to recession and crisis the German working class, both sides of the border, will once again play a central role in the history of Europe. With revolutionary leadership their weight could be decisive. ■



Franz Steinkuhler, new leader of the metalworkers' union, IG Metall. He built a reputation as a radical while a regional union leader in Stuttgart. Now at the top he can be expected to move rapidly, but carefully, to the right. For example, he says the fight in the Ruhr is really a political fight, the real enemies are the cabinet ministers in Bonn—what he means is that he does not want a militant fight with the bosses. ■

# SWP BEATS THE RETREAT

Kate Ford looks at the problems faced by socialist teachers in ILTA



ILTA teachers—a decisive response is needed

THE LAST week of term was hardly the season of goodwill for London teachers. The only presents under the Christmas tree were a bundle of threats, intimidation and fines and a package of cuts which will mean the loss of 2,500 teaching jobs. The employers, the Inner London Education Authority, (ILEA) introduced a blanket jobs freeze.

As we go to press it looks likely that in the first week of the new term NUT members will vote to call off their no cover action. Such a vote will be the result of intense pressure from Labour controlled ILEA, the Government, the Labour Party front bench and sections of the NUT itself.

Covering the classes of absent teachers has long been recognised as educationally useless. It adds to the workload and stress of mainstream teachers. Yet Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker MP, made covering lessons a contractual duty in his imposed pay and conditions in October 1987.

Local education authorities were asked to finalise details with local union groups—how many times a teacher could be asked to cover in a week, how many days absence before a supply teacher was called in and so on. ILEA insisted on one of the most extreme options and the NUT in inner London (ILTA) refused to accept any return to cover. Since October ILTA members have been refusing to cover any lessons in many schools.

In an attempt to break the action (and make some money) ILEA began to fine

teachers who refused to cover (£7 per lesson). Then they instructed head teachers to issue disciplinary letters to those continuing to refuse which would lead to suspensions and dismissals.

Such union bashing behaviour from the one time darling of the left, ILEA, was overshadowed by their announcement on 15 December of a savage programme of cuts. 2,500 teaching jobs and 5,500 non-teaching jobs are to go next year. In preparation ILEA also announced an immediate freeze on all jobs, including vacant posts, and another round of enforced redeployment to allow them to move teachers from schools which they consider to be overstaffed.

Under threat of dissolution by the Tories' new Education Bill, ILEA is grovelling before Baker and desperately trying to win his approval by showing that they can kick the workers too.

## Attack

Labour's new Education spokesman, Jack Straw, joined in the attack. In a witch-hunting article in the *Guardian* he is quoted as saying:

'What we have in the Inner London Teacher's Association is a group of warring, sectarian Trots, trying to play a completely different agenda... If the Inner London Education Authority has lost ground, it is largely due to the ILTA.'

It was clear whose side the Labour front bench were on—the employers.

In response to the threats

and intimidation by ILEA and such rabid slanders on NUT members, the Executive of the union took immediate action. But instead of support they increased the intimidation. The local ILTA leadership was called in and told that unless they called off the action over cover they would be suspended from the union. If they complied then the Executive might support an unspecified type of campaign to defend members' jobs!

The ILTA leadership buckled and complied with the Executive. They called a reps meeting and recommended ending all action. Infected with the despondancy of the bureaucracy the Socialist Workers Party were the leadership's main supporters at that meeting. Shaun Doherty, member of the SWP and the ILTA negotiating team, issued a statement calling for an organised retreat.

It was apparent at the meeting that, in the last week of term, many schools had gone back to covering—even some of the most militant like Stoke Newington in North London. Obviously ILEA's fining and threats have had some effect. But a major factor in the crumbling of the action has been the cowardly response of sections of the left.

The SWP have been arguing in the schools that it is impossible to continue the action over cover. A limited defeat now will somehow prepare us for a future struggle over jobs.

Faced with ILEA stepping up the aggression the SWP abdicated any leadership of the action and took shelter under their downturn theory. This is their analysis of the current period as one where working class action is doomed to defeat and should not, therefore, be seriously fought for. Even when they do counsel action it is generally accompanied by dire warnings of likely defeat.

Their response in ILTA indicates the major danger of this downturn theory in that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When NUT members in inner London see the

supposedly militant SWP preaching the impossibility of victory and urging retreat the impact is significant in undermining the confidence of ordinary rank and file members who may well have been prepared to fight.

The SWP's argument for an organised retreat ignores the impact which a defeat will have in ILTA. To begin a struggle over cuts and job losses from a position of recent defeat over cover will seriously weaken our position. We will also be attempting to win arguments over strike action (which will be necessary) with a demoralised and disorientated membership.

Moreover many militants in other authorities have looked to ILTA as a leading force in the fight against Baker. The spectacle of a defeat will be a blow against future action on pay and on the General Education Reform Bill.

## Assessment

Given the possible consequences, were the SWP right in their assessment of the impossibility of continuing the action, of the unwillingness of the membership to fight? Such an assessment could only have been made in the light of a determined leadership, prepared to carry the argument for a fight to the members. The will to fight needed to be tested by a leadership prepared to lead a fight, not run away from one. The SWP does not represent that kind of leadership—revolutionary leadership.

The coming term will be one of increased pressure and intimidation on London teachers. Our response must be decisive. We need to rebuild the confidence of the membership. We need to link up with other areas. Given the generalised nature of the coming attacks, we need to build links with other public sector unions. For the coming battle we need a leadership which is determined, able and honest. One 'quality' which such a leadership does not need is defeatism. ■

ON 25 NOVEMBER Labour's NEC launched the latest and most blatant phase of its attack on the youth section of the party. It has cancelled the LPYS national conference. The decision was voted in by 21 votes to 4. No reason for this decision was given at the meeting.

Diana Jeuda, Chair of the NEC Youth Sub-committee and mover of the vote for the closure, later explained that the decision was taken because of an incident at the last YS conference in which 'young moderates' were physically attacked by members of the LPYS. What a brilliant excuse for the shut down of a conference representing over 7,000 youth!

We are not children to be punished for mistakes made by individual members in our ranks. We must deal with our own internal discipline. Our conference is our right to sovereignty and we must fight tooth and nail against the leadership's witch-hunting attack on that right. We must be the ones to make the decisions about our structures, membership and paper, at our conference.

Yet the present leadership of the LPYS, supporters of *Militant*, having disarmed the membership in the face of Sawyer's attacks, are leading no fight. They are folding their arms in the face of this latest offensive by Kinnock and his stuck-

# NO FIGHT FROM MILITANT

by Saladin Meckled  
(Leyton LPYS)

up youth agents like Jeuda.

*Militant* supporters have shown themselves willing to ditch every last principle to stay in the Labour Party. Their fight against this latest attack is limited to calling on party and LPYS members who are 'outraged at these attacks', to 'rush letters and resolutions to Larry Whitty'. And that's it! Now letters and resolutions are fine, but on their own they don't stand an earthly of stopping the attack.

*Militant's* other tack has been to promise to build bigger LPYS branches to prove their loyalty to Kinnock:

'While the NEC attack us again and again, we are ready to build the ranks of the Party.' (4 Dec 87)

Building a mass LPYS is long overdue, but in present circumstances we must build it as a determined opposition to the NEC's attacks. But for *Militant*, recruits are merely a token of their willingness to serve as Kinnock's footsoldiers.

They have even welcomed the

NEC's puppet youth bodies, which are to be set up, with cries of 'Set up new youth campaign committees now.' (16 Oct 87)

Their expressed hopes that these bodies will be 'democratic and campaigning bodies' are vain. They will be used to campaign for Kinnock's policies and kept under the NEC's tight control.

All of this collaboration is to be combined with a campaign of peaceful persuasion in the hope that the LPYS's rights will be restored at the next conference. This strategy failed to defeat Sawyer's attacks—which *Militant* cleverly tried to undermine by co-operating with them! It will fail to get the conference back. Moreover, *Militant's* supporters' own bureaucratic and undemocratic record means that they cannot be trusted to ensure that if our right to a conference is clawed back from the NEC, it won't be put back into their straitjacket.

There is only one answer to the onslaught by the NEC on our move-



ment. This is to organise and build support for a fight against the witch-hunters, to organise a national emergency fightback conference where the LPYS can make its own decisions regarding its rights.

To date two branches of the LPYS stand together in calling for such an emergency conference. Two LPYS branches are calling for defiance. All labour movement bodies must join us in this call and in building for a conference. We

cannot plead with the right, we must defeat them. From Leyton and Sparkbrook LPYS comes the call:

- Defeat the witch-hunters!
- Defiance not compliance!
- For an emergency fightback conference!

For more information write to: 'Emergency Conference' c/o 14 Frankham House Deptford Church Street London SE8 4RL

Mark Hoskisson reviews  
**Big Bill' Haywood**  
 by Melvyn Dubofsky  
 (Manchester University Press,  
*Lives of the Left* series  
 1987 184pp)

# WILD WEST SYNDICALIST

THE INDUSTRIAL Workers of the World (IWW)—the Wobblies—were a source of inspiration and strength for countless militants in the USA during the first two decades of this century. Their exploits during a period of ferocious class struggle stand as a monument to the tenacity and revolutionary potential of the North American working class.

Their long-time leader, 'Big Bill' Haywood typifies their spirit of hatred for the boss-class and their spirit of determination in struggle. However he also personifies the weakness of their syndicalist creed.

Dubofsky's biography of 'Big Bill' is a clear and amusing introduction to the history of the Wobblies. It is also a colourful portrait of their leader.

'Big' is the operative word in looking at Haywood's career. He is a larger than life character. Unlike many US labour radicals of his time Bill was not from recent immigrant stock. He was a westerner, embodying the toughness and simplicity associated with frontier life. His father was, among other things, a Pony Express rider. He himself grew up amidst the saloons and brothels that were landmarks in the towns of the wild west. Appropriately enough, one of his later feats was to unionise rodeo cowboys into the Bronco Busters and Range Riders Union.

## Populism

The western states Bill grew up in during the 1870s and 1880s (Nevada, Montana, Idaho and Colorado) were politically dominated by Populism and the People's Party. The 'small people'—the petit bourgeoisie and the workers, many of whom, as miners or cowboys, still looked to becoming petit bourgeois themselves—identified the big-city Trusts and banks, rather than capitalism itself, as the enemy. Bill was initially imbued with Populism but, but as the



miners and agricultural workers became more permanent fixtures and as local capitalists revealed themselves every bit as ruthless as the Trusts, he moved towards socialism and the labour movement.

By the late nineteenth century Big Bill had settled in Silver City, Idaho, and was working as a hard-rock miner. Here he began to build a Local of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). The WFM was affiliated to the conservative American Federation of Labour (AFL). But it was of a totally different character to that business union outfit. The WFM waged a relentless struggle to unionise the mining and milling industry in the west. It operated on industrial

unionist principles, split with the AFL and became the central pillar of the Wobblies at the IWW's founding congress in Chicago in June 1905.

Haywood's life from this point on was dominated by the courts and the IWW. The cynical, union-busting role of the US state was revealed when Haywood, along with two other WFM leaders, was framed for the murder of a mineowner. Incarcerated for over a year Haywood's commitment to militancy deepened. He was acquitted of the murder charge but emerged from prison to find the IWW hijacked by the sectarian group around De Leon and the WFM controlled by moderates who had made their peace with the AFL.

These events pushed Bill, for a short period, towards the Socialist Party. He became one of its leading celebrities, feted by the radical intellectuals of Greenwich village. But Bill's socialism was without a firm theoretical foundation. By temperament and training he was pure union man, a syndicalist with little time for 'politics'. The expulsion of the De Leonites from the IWW led to his rebirth as a syndicalist in 1911. Summing up his own and the IWW's philosophy, he stated:

'I believe in direct action. You are certain of it and it isn't nearly so expensive' [as parliamentary politics—WP].

Later he wrote that:

'The industries will take the place of what are now states.'

## Strength

Haywood's commitment to direct action and industrial unionism was a real strength. On the basis of it he led the IWW through its most successful period. It began to number tens and then hundreds of thousands in its ranks. It became a stable organisation. It was at the forefront of the great strikes in Lawrence, Paterson and Akron.

But this strength was undermined by its rejection of politics. Syndicalism underestimated the strength of the state and failed to understand its real role. It was confused when faced with the US entry into the war, equivocating on its policy of anti-militarism. It failed to link the direct action of the workers to the building of a revolutionary party capable of unifying the workers and taking on the whole boss class, and its state.

These failures disoriented Haywood and the IWW and left them at the mercy of a legal onslaught by the state. That onslaught smashed the Wobblies once and for all. Haywood, ill, drinking heavily and facing a 20 year jail sentence as a result of yet another frame up, took flight. He ended his days in exile in the USSR.

Dubofsky's book is an excellent read. It shows the aspects of pre-war syndicalists that communists can admire and learn from. It does not hide the weaknesses that show why, in the trade union field, communism must transcend syndicalism.■

➔ continued from back page

There are still some signs of defeatism in the coalfields as the rounds of pit closures continue without united resistance. The campaign could have been used to turn the tide. But since it began miners at Renishaw Park in North Derbyshire and Woolley Pit in Yorkshire have voted to accept pit closure despite popular local campaigns to save each individual pit. This is hardly surprising as both pits were again faced with the prospect of taking on British Coal in isolation.

Scargill himself has often stated that to stop pit closures a national fightback is needed. But in order to organise a national fightback Scargill would have to put himself in conflict with the leadership of practically every area of the union, including Yorkshire. He would have to break outside the charmed circles of the NUM leadership and organise the rank and file for action.

## Invitation

In the campaign so far the only meetings which Scargill has encouraged, other than his own, have been the semi-secret ones organised by Frank Watters and the *Morning Star* Stalinists. They have been conducted by invitation only, and with their sole goal the re-election of Scargill, not the organising of militants. This is a recipe for disaster. The re-election of Arthur will no doubt give a boost to militants and may lead to an angry delegate conference in January. But in and of itself it will leave the NUM in exactly the position it was in before Scargill resigned.

The NUM needs to be re-forged as a fighting national union. Putting a cross next to Scargill is only a small part of this fight. Building a rank and file movement is a much more important and necessary task. Unfortunately Scargill's campaign has concentrated on the passive aspect, and unless militant miners break from Scargill's politics they will find themselves weaker in the important battles to come.■

## SWP ALL OVER THE PLACE

Comrades,

Some might remember the attitude of the British Socialist Workers Party to the Falklands/Malvinas war. I say might, because various SWP members questioned recently seem to be suffering from amnesia.

To refresh: 'We are irrevocably hostile to both governments and both régimes. But we are in Britain and not Argentina and therefore the British government, the British state is the main enemy for us.' (*Socialist Review* May/June 1982—emphasis in original) The message for Argentinian socialists is clear, if wrong. In Argentina the main enemy is the Argentinian government, the Argentinian state.

They reached this conclusion from the premise that there was 'no longer a rational...cause of dispute...Pure prestige and internal politics are the driving force.' (*Socialist Review* May/June 1982—emphasis in the original) No mention of an anti-imperialist element to the conflict. British imperialism is not even mentioned. Things seem to be a little different now. Prompted by the US navy's

increased presence in the waters of the Gulf the SWP has belatedly (and inappropriately) discovered the military anti-imperialist united front! 'Iranian socialists must therefore take a new approach, calling for support for Khomeini against the current imperialist offensive'. (*Socialist Worker Review* December 1987)

This flawed formulation (which means military support for the Iranian side in the Iran/Iraq war, not support for Khomeini himself) will come as something of a shock to any real internationalists. They may be tempted to ask what has changed. It cannot be, surely, that Khomeini's regime is any less brutal and anti-working class than Galtieri's? Can it be that now it is the navy of 'the world's mightiest imperialist power' the USA, not Britain's, that is the main offender, 'anti-imperialism' can be safely rolled-out? I think we should be told, but I doubt we will!

S Pereira  
 London



## WORKERS POWER 100

Dear Comrades,  
 With (perhaps uncharacteristic) modesty you have let slip by unremarked a notable occasion. The last issue of *Workers Power* was the 100th! Surely a few words would have been in order, a balance sheet of the achievements of your group and its paper in that time and a promise of more to come? Perhaps the next issue will contain some New Year's resolutions to this effect. In any case, congratulations from a reader who has bought most of those 100 issues and looks forward to the next 100.

In comradeship,  
 L Flitton  
 Reading

➔Not modesty, but sheer lack of space, prevented us from marking the 100th issue of *Workers Power* as we would have liked. As for the shape of things to come, we would direct our readers' attention to this month's centre pages. The brief sketch of our tasks as a component of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI) is perhaps the best summation of our achievements so far and pointer to the future of our group and our paper—with the international working class.

## ARTHUR ON IMPORT CONTROLS

WHILE SCARGILL has refused to use his campaign to organise militants, other aspects of his campaign have been downright reactionary. At many of his meetings he has dwelt at length on the 'problem' of imports. At a meeting in Yorkshire he said:

'We will be fighting for a block on imported coal. The multi-nationals of the 1980s have replaced the oil sheiks of the 1960s.'

He then went on to point out that the miners' unions in South Africa and Colombia had asked for coal imports from their countries to be stopped.

When workers in another country request the blocking of imports to aid their struggles against the bosses it is a basic task of international solidarity to fight for such action. The problem with Scargill is that he is using the pleas of those who are in struggle to back up his demand for an end to all imports.

During the Great Strike miners from France, Germany, the United States, Australia and many other countries assisted the NUM. Are French miners calling for a ban on their coal exports? No. Is Scargill calling for a ban on British coal exports to aid foreign miners? No. His call for import controls is merely a strategy to export pit closures. It can only feed chauvinism and weaken international solidarity in

the future.

His position on import controls doesn't come out of the blue. Scargill has always argued for a programme to make the industry viable. For him this comes down to nationalisation and a planned energy policy, hand in hand with the government and the bosses. His proposed 'planned' energy policy has remained within the bounds of capitalism. As a strategy it proved bad enough during the boom period of the 1950s and 1960s. For the crisis ridden 1980s it is disastrous. Such a plan is either utopian or ties the workers' interest to those of the bosses. Experience shows that when this happens the bosses' interests always come out first.

Miners must organise to defend their jobs and conditions. That is where their real interests lie. If the bosses no longer want as much coal, then we should use our industrial muscle to fight for reduced hours on the same pay and make the bosses pay collectively through the state.

Only when the working class takes hold of the entire economy can we then plan an energy policy based on people's needs. Until then we must build our strength to face down every attack British Coal makes upon us, and fight for workers' control of production in the pits.■

# workers power

## STRIKE TO SAVE NHS

FOR OVER a month the crisis in the NHS has dominated Britain's news. Every day new stories of sick babies being turned away from hospital, nurses leaving their jobs and wards closing for lack of resources have emerged.

Thatcher and Lawson considered the crisis so serious that they tried to smother it with a paltry pre-Christmas hand-out. They were under pressure from their own ranks. Leading Tory backbenchers like Nicholas Winterton, leading Tory consultants, public figures from all walks of life, were protesting against Thatcher's policy for the NHS. In Wolverhampton patients went so far as to chain themselves to their beds to prevent a ward closure!

Thatcher's hand-out will not resolve the NHS crisis in the slightest. Newton's plans for a full-scale restructuring of the service along commercial lines will make things a thousand times worse.

The really amazing thing throughout this whole crisis though is not the clamour of protest from anxious Tories, nor the unbudgeted hand-out. It is the total silence from health union leaders and the mealy-mouthed parliamentary protests from Labour which were directed more towards dissenting Tories than the working class.

Kinnock really wowed the Commons by asking four, rather than the customary three, questions in Prime Minister's question time. This may get him into the *Guinness Book of Records* but it won't help the NHS. Parliament obliged Kinnock to say something. The leaders of Nupe and Cohse were under no such pressure. Throughout the crisis Bickerstaffe and Hector Mackenzie (Cohse's leader) kept their mouths firmly shut. In early January after much of the dust had settled, Mackenzie did inform a few thousand *Morning Star* readers that 'shortages are now reaching crisis proportions'. Well spotted, Hector—where were you in December?

### Content

The union leaders, like Kinnock, are content to rely on disgruntled Tories, on the specialists and consultants to sway public opinion. In turn this will 'force' the Tories to retreat. They already feel such a strategy has seen results with the Tories being forced to provide the £100 million hand-out to bale out overdrawn health authorities. And the proposals to offer nurses in London cheap home loans are likely to encourage optimistic talk of a U-turn amongst the union leaders.

But the one thing the health union leaders are determined about is their opposition to the sort of action that can force a reversal of the cuts and a

### by Workers Power health workers

restoration of service—all out action.

At local level the most that union officials have been prepared to support have been passive campaigns of lobbies and publicity stunts.

This will not stop the cuts. Nor will it tackle the problem of low pay and lousy conditions inside the NHS. On pay Nupe and Cohse advise their members to write to their MPs. Yet low pay remains a key issue for the vast majority of health service workers. The spectre of 'merit' payment to create an elite of 'supernurses' alongside the introduction of YTS trainees at the other end of the pay scale is looming. The 'supernurses' will become lower management while other staff and YTS trainees on compulsory two year schemes will carry out the bulk of nursing. This way the Tories hope to stop the exodus of skilled nurses and at the same time provide a means of enlisting a large number of workers into low paid jobs that no-one wants to do. Further privatisation moves amongst ancillary staff also remains a real threat.

HEALTH CUTS DON'T HEAL!



Unless a fight back is organised now the continuing response of many health workers will be to vote with their feet and simply leave.

The fightback must tackle head on the question of all out strike action. As in 1982 during the pay campaign the issues and the arguments must be mustered against the bureaucrats and the 'new realists'. They will be quick to say the members are not ready. They will whine that strikes might alienate public opinion. In short they will do all in their power to avoid a real fight. Militants must realise, however, that if a fight is avoided, there might not be much of the NHS left in a couple of year's time.

### Lessons

Militants must learn the lessons of 1982. Then the campaign was limited to selective action. The episodic, selective strikes over a protracted period in 1982 failed to budge the Tories an inch. They did, though, squander the militancy that clearly existed then. Members who were prepared to fight but saw no results coming from their one-day strike

## VOTING SCARGILL IS NOT ENOUGH!

WITH THE last few weeks of campaigning to go Arthur Scargill appears to be heading for a clear victory in the NUM's Presidential election.

While John Walsh is content to sup in the 'Four Ferrets' and let the bosses' media do his campaigning for him, Scargill has been to every coalfield addressing meetings of miners. He has been arguing for a fightback against British Coal. Unfortunately the opportunities which the election offered for an offensive against both the NUM's new realists and British Coal have been squandered.

The election has given rank and file miners the chance to show exactly where they stand on the key issues facing the NUM. In North Derbyshire miners at Highmoor mobilised to overturn the branch's support for Walsh. Even in Lancashire, a traditionally right wing area, militants have secured the nomination for Scargill.

The fight against the right has been keenest in South Wales and Scotland. Both areas refused to nominate a candidate. In each Bolton, Dutfield and their ilk had to use the full weight of the union machine to cow the militants. In Scotland there have been allegations of malpractice with miners who weren't at branch meetings having their votes recorded against Scargill.

### Cowardly

Scargill himself, on hearing that George Bolton was going to vote for him personally, said 'if that is true it's a little strange'. The actions of Bolton and Dutfield couldn't have helped Walsh more unless they had openly campaigned for him. However they proved too cowardly and treacherous to do that.

Since the campaign started both the Scottish and Welsh areas have seen industrial action. At Bilston Glen and Taff Merthyr there has been resistance to attempts to introduce six day working by British Coal. This gives the lie to the claims of leadership that miners weren't prepared to fight.

Basing himself on these militants Scargill could use his campaign to forge a movement in the

by Bridget Thompson

NUM to replace the sell-out merchants in the area and national leadership, and democratise the union. On the evidence of the campaign so far, this is something he is not prepared to do. In fact, the challenges to the new right in the NUM has been limited to coded statements about new realism, exhortations to fight British Coal and George Bolton impersonations!

The main thrust of Scargill's meetings has not been to organise militants, but to garner votes. His speeches have been militant. At every meeting Scargill's programme has been; no to pit closures and job losses, against the new code and for the old code.

He has argued against imported coal and for phasing out nuclear power. He is demanding wages and conditions in line with the best in Europe, the wage protection scheme as negotiated in 1981, and for improved safety standards, job security and pension scheme. At a meeting in Frickley he told the audience that to get these demands:

'There's only one answer. It's time the union stood on its feet, got off its knees, and told the board where to get off.'

However these exhortations have not got beyond platform rhetoric. They do not amount to a campaign aimed at organising and leading a fightback against the NUM right and British Coal.

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here, one-day protest there, became demoralised. On the basis of this demoralisation the union leaders sold out the struggle altogether.

The failure to build for 'all out action' at that time had its effects on the workers' subsequent willingness to take any form of action. It led to a serious weakening of shop stewards' organisation in the hospitals.

Determined action now could help re-charge the militancy and rebuild the organisations of the health workers. Part of the campaign for strike action must be a campaign to build solidly based hospital and area joint shop stewards' committees.

As far as the fear of alienating public opinion is concerned the public whose support for the health workers really counts is the rest of the working class, both as the major users of the NHS and as fellow trade unionists. Will they be alienated by the health workers taking determined action? Only if they are left to form their opinions at the mercy of the dope-peddlers in fleet Street. Only if they are kept isolated from the health workers' struggle by the union leaders.

In the past miners, car workers, printers, seamen, council workers and many other sections have shown their willingness, when appealed to, to take strike action alongside the health workers. The most recent

example of this, the half day strike against hospital closures and cuts in Coventry where 2,000 workers marched on the District Health Authority, should be an inspiration to every militant. The strikers included Keresley miners who gave up their £150 a month bonus to strike along with workers from Rolls-Royce and Massey-Ferguson. We must build on such action now.

### Emergency cover

If the backsliders in our ranks plead the need for emergency cover (as a means of undermining effective action), we must reply—but only once we are all outside the gate—we ourselves will decide the level of emergency cover necessary in a strike. We will not accept management's definition of emergency cover. After all, at the moment many wards and hospitals operate daily on or below 'emergency cover' levels!

Health workers must face up to the fact that once the wet Tories are happy enough has been done to save their votes, and once the consultants are certain their rich pickings are safe, the attacks will continue. That is why the unions themselves must begin now a campaign to win all-out strike action to defend and extend the NHS. ■