

Workers Power

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Work or Full Pay!

Since the last set of official unemployment figures of 1,896,643 were announced, thousands more workers in virtually every industry, from carpets to cars, have either joined the ranks of the jobless, been threatened with impending redundancies, or been placed on short-time working.

As the recession bites deeper the new official figures (always masking the real figure which includes thousands of people, especially women, who do not register as unemployed) for August, will be even nearer to the staggering total of two million. Thousands of workers returning from their holidays will join the countless young school and college leavers who are now forced to frequent the "job centres".

The recession is no figment of the statisticians' imagination - it is a very real feature of the world capitalist economies. The Gross Domestic Product in Britain in April slumped 4% below the previous year's total and last month's figures showed a further drop in the GDP of 1%. The manufacturing industries have been hit the worst by this latest recession. A survey by the AUEW showed that over the last year 193,307 engineers have lost their jobs. In BL Cars the number of hourly paid workers has fallen from its 1979 level of 89,000 to 77,000. On top of this, BL boss Michael Edwardes is trying to sack another 4,600 workers over the next few months. Carpets and textiles have shed thousands of jobs and Hoover has offered its workers at the Cambuslang plant in Scotland either short time working or 863 redundancies.

The manufacturing section will continue to be hit as the crisis accelerates, but workers in the service industries are also under threat. The massive cut-backs in health, education and social services being made by the Tories mean that no public sector worker is safe in the coming period. The Tories' policies are those of slump politicians. In order to restructure capital they are letting the recession rip, crippling firms who can't weather the storm by restricting the money, and therefore credit supply, and slashing so-called unproductive expenditure.

But unemployment is not only a result of the irrational economic system, it is a weapon in the hands of the bosses that they can use to drive down wages, destroy trade union organisation and demoralise the working class.

The recent events at Talbot are a

graphic illustration of this. The workers throughout the combine have voted to accept an 18 month pay deal which involves an 8 to 12% increase over the first twelve months and a 7% increase over the following six. Inflation is currently at 16.9% officially. It is likely to continue to rise over the next few years. Yet an entire workforce has accepted a deal that leaves their wages up to 8% short of this month's inflation rate.

This grim success for the Talbot bosses is explainable when we remember that Talbot workers are on short time - in Coventry 1,000 workers are working a one day week! For the rest of the week they are receiving, temporarily, 75% of their earnings. They have been told, one false move on pay and the jobs will be chopped. In the event their jobs are likely to be chopped anyway as the recession hits the car industry further, and those left at work are saddled with a pay deal that will leave them with a reduced income in real terms.

The dangers to working class organisation are obvious. Already the TUC is talking about experiencing its first drop in members for years. ASTMS has privately reported its first ever loss of members. Yet the resistance to this job's slaughter from the TUC is negligible. Although a resolution from the NGA is before it on the 35 hour week, a regular ritual, no campaign of action is to be found anywhere in the resolution or in any of the other resolutions on unemployment, to win it or to stop the attack on jobs. This silence on how to fight is matched by the din of chauvinist appeals to the Tories to keep out foreign goods, protect 'British' industry and defend the British market. This tripe will do nothing to help the millions who are on the dole.

The floodtide of unemployment can be beaten, though. Workers need not sit idly by while the bosses put us on short time, sack us and make us pay for their crisis. Rank and file militants must organise inside the unions to force the unions to act to fight for the defence of every job, for the defence of a wage that workers themselves decide is suitable to their needs.

(Continued on back page)

Inside: Poland
War Women's Fightback
Bolivia Ireland



Mass picket at Adwest Engineering, Reading, being attacked by police.

Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

Defend picketing Smash the Act!

The Employment Act is on the statute book after the feeblest opposition that organised labour has ever mounted against anti-union legislation. Already the bosses and the police are acting with brutal confidence to use this legislation against rank and file trade unionists. Even before the Act became law, Prior and Whitelaw were giving the green light for the police to enforce restrictions on the right to picket. At Adwest in Reading the local Special Patrol Group (SPG) broke up picket lines, arrested 26 trade unionists and harassed the strikers. In the CPSA dispute at the Brixton Dole Office, only 6 pickets were allowed on three gates, and 18 trade unionists were arrested for attempting to cross the road to assert their right to picket.

These were not isolated incidents. They give a foretaste of what is to come and show the bosses' determination to use this Act in order to destroy the ability of trade unionists to take effective strike action through militant picketing, blacking, solidarity strikes and flying pickets.

But for large sections of the employers the present Act is not draconian enough. Prior's "Code of Practice" was introduced in response to demands by the CBI and Tory backbenchers to toughen up the provisions of the Act. The CBI in a submission to the Government have argued that unions should be subject to statutory control and that a supervisory body be set up to "regulate" their behaviour and keep their rules under review: a sort of Industrial Relations Court Mark II. As far as strikes are concerned, the bosses' federation are demanding a compulsory ballot before industrial action be taken (or if a certain proportion of the workforce asks for it). They are calling for collective

agreements to be made legally enforceable and for it to become obligatory to exhaust all agreed procedures and to give strike notice.

The police chiefs also think the Act does not yet give them enough power to intimidate trade unionists and break up strikes. David "Hammer" Mcnee, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan force, has called for tougher measures to control assemblies and demonstrations than the wide powers already available under the Public Order Act of 1936. Mcnee wants more powers to deal with "unprotected" industrial picketing outside Prior's code and the Employment Act - as for example the Grunwick strike would now be classified. These would include: the imposition of a legal obligation for organisers to notify the police of the event, the numbers expected and its purpose, as well as the right for the police to ban the event.

He wants to see penalties raised for so-called public order offences. Mean-

while the Police Federation has been lobbying for the right for police to exclude from a picket line anybody not directly employed by the firm in dispute.

The fact that the Tories' measures have not gone this far yet does not mean they are satisfied with the Act as it stands. Prior wants to test the water - if he can enforce the present restrictions on trade unionists without encountering a fightback, he will undoubtedly proceed with the other measures the employers are demanding.

The confidence of the CBI, the police and the Tory government is a direct result of the failure of the trade union leaders to mount any effective struggle against the Employment Act. In January, February and March, the struggle of the steelworkers and the South Wales miners laid the basis for a massive strike wave which could have defeated the plans of the Tories. The TUC deliberately sabotaged the planned South Wales general strike and diverted the struggle into the ineffective May 14th "Day of Action", after the steelworkers had been safely sold out.

Prior's "Codes of Practice" themselves take their inspiration from the code put forward by the TUC and TGWU in the winter of 1979 in an attempt to undermine the effectiveness of the lorry drivers' picketing which threatened the Labour government's policy of wage controls. The TUC remains proud of this forerunner

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AGAINST IMPORT CONTROLS – see back page

Women's Fightback / Employment Act

"A sort of women's ANL"

JILL DANIELS reports on the second conference organised by 'Women's Fightback'

THE SECOND national conference of 'Women's Fightback', which took place on June 22nd in Birmingham, confirmed the direction of that campaign as predicted in our report of the first conference (see WP14). 'Women's Fightback', launched by 'Workers Action' under the mantle of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, has been carefully steered into becoming a broad, 'umbrella' campaign aimed at uniting all women's campaigns, from the National Council for One Parent Families through to Gingerbread and the NAC. In the words of the organisers, it aimed to, 'pool information and experience, to discuss and coordinate coming struggles, and to stimulate the growth of dialogue and common work between women in the Labour Movement and the women's movement and those in specialised campaigns for women's rights'. A sort of 'Women's ANL' as one Workers Action supporter succinctly put it.

There is undoubtedly a crying need at the present time for a movement which can provide the basis for a fightback against the Tory onslaught on working class women and their families. However, the fatal weakness in the Fightback campaign's perspective is the same as that of the Anti Nazi League. The fight for clear policies which could arm such a movement of working class women, 'against those who hold back and sell out our fight' is deliberately avoided to prevent fracturing the fragile unity with the reformists and feminists whom the organisers hope to woo into the basis of a 'mass campaign'.

This approach dominated the June conference of the campaign. A clear polarisation of perspective emerged between Workers Action supporters and Workers Power, centred around the programme for Fightback. The platform offered by the steering committee took as its starting point the aim to, 'build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks on women's rights' which could, 'provide a focus of united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's movement'. But, instead of providing clear action proposals in order to forge this unity, the platform offered only the perspective of support for the existing 'aims and demands of the women's movement' and to, 'fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter for Women in the unions.' That Charter not only has nothing to say about a woman's right to work, or about the impact of cuts in social expenditure on working class women, but also says nothing about how to fight and mobilise to win its demands. It remains a pious declaration of intent - something the trade union leaders are very good at when it comes to working women's rights. This orientation by

Fightback precludes any notion of the campaign taking a political lead within the militant layers of working class women, or being able to challenge the trade union bureaucrats in action. Indeed, it lets them, and their supporters, off the hook.

This is a method we have seen before. The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (the SCLV) has as its basis neither a fighting programme of action nor the programme of a revolutionary current in the Labour Party. It was built by Workers Action as an opportunist attempt to build its own periphery in the Labour Party. So, Women's Fightback represents exactly the same rotten tactic with a specific orientation to women. Basing itself on the real demoralisation and disintegration of the women's movement into theoretical discussion circles, the socialist feminists, or localised campaigns which collapse into community reformism such as women's aid, and rape crisis centres, Workers Action is building a campaign which attempts to 'corral' as many of these elements as possible. In the process it has to adapt to feminist and localist campaigns in order to hold its coalition together and attempt to mold them in the direction of its own perspectives for transforming the Labour Party.

In contrast, Workers Power fought for a programme and perspective for Fightback which offered the possibility of developing united action which could lay the basis for a real struggle by working class women against the attacks on their rights and living standards. And one which could clearly separate those

who are real fighters for women's rights from those who are always keen to appear on the conference platforms to declare their adherence to vague policy documents but who shy away from the first real struggle. We offered a programme which concentrated on the major areas of the attacks on women, the Employment Act for instance which will viciously undercut the ability of women, such as the Chix strikers, to conduct an effective struggle for trade union recognition, better pay and against redundancies. We proposed a programme which offered a fighting alternative to the bosses' demands for sacrifice.

Workers Action rejected this approach. Not, of course, because they disagreed with any of the demands - but for the novel reason, given by Rachel Lever (Workers Action) that if you made a list of demands it had the effect of excluding what was not on it!

The IMG were more open in using the same approach. They stated their wish to limit the demands of the campaign because a programme such as ours would alienate people and fail to achieve broad support. It is ironic that, in 1977, Workers Action withdrew from the Working Women's Charter Campaign because the IMG

refused to take a clear stand against the trade union leaders or to fight for a programme of action within the labour movement. So fast has Workers Action moved rightwards that their positions are now indistinguishable from those of the IMG in the WWCC. Indeed, the IMG can now willingly abandon its own journal, 'Women in Action' in favour of a jointly produced 'Women's Fightback' because the two projects were so similar.

Women's Fightback offers no way forward for working class women. It offers a diet of 'Women's Festivals' and rallies, served up under the most moralistic anti-Tory sentiments together with local 'umbrella' talking shop conferences which are claimed as great successes for improving 'communication' between the participating groups. It adds only one more women's campaign to the plethora that already exist - one based on the perspective of 'co-ordinating the fragments'. For this reason Workers Power will not be giving its support to the 'Women's Fightback Campaign'. We will, of course, join with Women's Fightback in actions or campaigns around women's struggles, but on the basis of our own programme and perspectives.



Picture: Derek Speirs (IFL)

The programme we fought for

1. NO TO ALL CUTS!

Strikes and occupations to stop all closures. No negotiation and no cooperation with the implementation of cuts. For strike action by all workers for those fighting the cuts.

No implementation of the cuts by Labour Councils - no rent and rate increases. For a Labour Party pledge to reverse all cuts and for a massive programme to expand welfare and social services. For a programme of public works to build nurseries, schools and hospitals under Trade Union control.

Support for rent and rate strikes against all increases in charges.

For cuts committees based on workplace delegates in every locality. For the maximum representation of women workers in those committees.

2. FOR A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK!

- i) No to women out first solutions. No to all redundancies.
- ii) For occupation to prevent redundancies and closures. For work-sharing under Trade Union control with no loss of pay whenever the employers can't maintain full production.
- iii) For unions to provide creche facilities to enable women to play a full and active role in the unions.
- iv) For women's right to caucus in the unions.
- v) For action to force the employers to provide full creche and nursery facilities under Trade Union control.

3. SMASH THE EMPLOYMENT BILL!

which stands to deprive women of important rights won by Trade Union organisation.

For a General Strike to smash the Bill. For no recognition of the provisions and institutions of the Bill by the Trade Union movement.

action will get out of control, challenging the "law of the land" and their bargaining role that haunts the bureaucrats and underlies their pleadings to keep the law out of "industrial relations".

We can expect no fight from such a leadership - indeed they will do everything in their power to sabotage a real fight to destroy the Act. The "right wing" leaders have predictably announced their willingness to fall into line with the Act. Terry Duffy of the AUEW has already rushed to declare "We will be telling our members not to break the law of the land. We think that some aspects of this law are unworkable, such as the suggested limit on the number of pickets ... but we are not looking for conflict. We do not see the need for conflict". (Guardian, August 13th).

Boyd has declared his union's willingness to apply for financial help from the government to run ballots of the membership, and the EETPU is following suit, of course!

But what of the lefts? Fine words

were two a penny at July's NUM conference, as the 'Left' and 'Right' - Scargill and Gormley - proclaimed their readiness to go to jail should

4. NO RESTRICTION OF ABORTION RIGHTS!

Free abortion on demand on the NHS. For industrial action to protect existing inadequate NHS provision from attack. For a Labour Party Manifesto pledge to provide free abortion on demand on the NHS. For a 3-line whip on all Labour MPs to vote for Labour Party policy.

5. OPPOSITION TO ALL THE IMMIGRATION ACTS!

which subject immigrant women in particular to humiliation at the hands of the British state.

6. MAINTAIN THE VALUES OF WAGES, BENEFITS AND SOCIAL SERVICES!

For Committees of Trade Unionists and housewives to calculate a workers cost of living - for the sliding scale of wages, benefits and social services to protect them against the effects of inflation. 1% rise in spending and wages for every 1% rise in the workers cost of living.

that is strong enough to commit the trade unions to decisive struggle to smash the Prior Act and defend picketing rights.

In the localities trade unionists must build delegate-based Action Committees to fight the Act, to give solidarity to workers struggling against the Tory law, to organise blacking, solidarity strikes and mobilise mass picketing in defiance of the law.

The protection of pickets against the attacks and harassment of the SPG and other strikebreaking police units will be crucial in the coming period. We must organise disciplined picket defence squads - large enough to deal with the bully boys of the SPG.

So important is the breaking of effective trade union organisation to the ruling class and its government in the present crisis that the Tories will not be deflected easily from their task. Only a General Strike can break the resolve of the Tories on this question and destroy the Act. Therefore we demand that the TUC names the day for an indefinite General Strike until the Act is driven off the statute book.

Defend picketing

(Continued from Front Page)

of Prior's charter for police harassment of pickets. In a recent interview with the Sunday Times, Len Murray argued that the TUC has a proven record of controlling effective picketing without Prior's codes, evidenced by the fact that, "it was partly to prevent unruly behaviour that in 1979 the TUC brought up to date its guidance to unions."

Prior's intention that the secret ballot should become the basis of decision making in the Trade Union movement was also prepared for by the TUC's acceptance of the secret ballot principle. In its Code of Conduct (February 1979) it recommended, in the interests of curtailing unofficial action, "to provide for ballots to be held where a strike is contemplated or during the course

of a strike."

Prior's codes add to these TUC-inspired measures a ruling that any scab crossing picket lines should not be subject to union disciplinary measures - thus undermining the very basis of militant picketing.

They rule that officials from one union will have no right to express solidarity with another union in dispute, nor indeed with groups of workers in their own union for whom they have no specific responsibility. It is little wonder that the TUC leaders have limited their opposition to complaints that the law should not be used because it will, "harm industrial relations".

Their problem is that the Tories have refused to accept their plans to leave it to them to control the pickets and the rank and file. The real fear of Murray, Basnett and the rest of their crew is that militants will challenge the law and be gaoled, so provoking a "Pentonville 5" type situation. They fear that legal action against their members could draw them into the firing line if the employers move to use the courts to sequester their precious union funds. It is the fear that industrial

action will get out of control, challenging the "law of the land" and their bargaining role that haunts the bureaucrats and underlies their pleadings to keep the law out of "industrial relations".

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But what of the lefts? Fine words

The only way to end war

Win the class war!

This year there are more resolutions on war and disarmament at the Labour Party Conference than on any other subject. Most of them calling for the closing down of nuclear bases or outright unilateral disarmament. The historian E.P.Thompson and others have launched a campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament (END). All of this is hardly surprising in the face of the sabre-rattling of Carter and Thatcher over Afghanistan, the enormous increases projected in the US and UK's military budgets and the widespread talk by generals, politicians and the armaments lobby of a type of war intermediate between 'conventional war' and the 'holocaust' - the so called theatre war. The Pentagon has long contemplated and threatened the tactical use of its nuclear weapons in reply to Soviet use of conventional weaponry.

E.P.Thompson's project of re-creating the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) on a European scale has received uncritical acclamation on the left. Socialist Worker (26.7.80) notes the war drive of Thatcher and Carter and comments, "That's why we welcome the European Nuclear Disarmament Movement and the fact that a quarter of the resolutions to the Labour Party Conference cover the arms race." Socialist Challenge, as usual, wants "the broadest possible campaign of mass action." Workers Action and Socialist Organiser supported the Labour NEC's slogans 'Nuclear Arms No: Peace Yes.' as correct but in need of supplementing with the demands, 'Britain out of NATO', 'Unilateral Disarmament'. Socialist Organiser gave space to E.P.Thompson, as did Socialist Worker. Socialist Challenge wheeled on veteran pacifist Pat Arrowsmith.

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Revolution and Counter-revolution in Central America

Method and Content of the Transitional Programme

The War in Indochina Bahro's "Alternative"

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The new war threat, the growing danger of a third world war owes its origins not to something inherent in arms production itself, nor is it a blind irrational impulse, mad as its stockpiles of weapons may seem. 'Maggie's missile madness' as Socialist Worker calls it, is in fact nothing of the sort, and to suggest that it is, blinds workers to the war danger, and its real causes. It arises from the 'logic' of capitalist economy (competition) translated into political rivalry in the world economy. International crises occur in a series of spasms, becoming more serious as the internal social-economic contradictions of the Imperialist powers increase. The existence of nuclear weaponry does not qualitatively alter this. Therefore, to make the call for 'unilateral Nuclear Disarmament' the central slogan of an anti-militarist campaign creates dangerous illusions. It suggests that Britain, if it were to disarm, could somehow escape a future war. In the face of a potential holocaust this is a ridiculous pipe dream. Most importantly it spreads the illusion that it is the weaponry itself that is to blame for war - end that and you can end war. This is dangerous nonsense. The capitalists have created weapons of belligerent destruction to preserve their rule. It is their control over these weapons that we must challenge, not by asking them, politely, to disarm, but by disarming them ourselves, through overthrowing their system.

Figures like Thompson, who learned their Marxism and Leninism in the CP all too often reject genuine Marxism and genuine Leninism at the same time. What they rarely reject is Stalinism's Popular Front. They simply become the Liberal component within it, the sensitive intellectuals serving as the custodians of civilization. Although in Thompson's writing he only really seems concerned about European civilization. The rest of the world doesn't appear to deserve his 'nuclear free zone' status.



Thus the Anti-Exterminist popular front is to include "trade unionists, women's organisations, members of professions, churches, practitioners of Esperanto or chess" (Protest and Sruive). Protest is their key weapon, indeed the only form of action indicated, apart from "crossing frontiers, exchanging theatre and songs, bursting open bureaucratic doors etc etc". Against this guff, the words of Trotsky go to the very heart of the matter: "The war danger, which is a life and death question for the people, is the supreme test for all the groupings and tendencies within the working class. 'The struggle for peace', 'the struggle against war', 'war on war', and similar slogans are hollow and fraudulent phrases if unaccompanied by the propaganda and the application of revolutionary methods of struggle. The only way to put an end to war is to overthrow the bourgeoisie.... Marxists irreconcilably reject the pacifist slogans of 'disarmament', 'arbitration' and 'amity between peoples' (ie between capitalist governments), etc, as opium for the popular masses. The combinations between working class organisations and petty-bourgeois pacifists... render the best service to imperialism by distracting the attention of the working class from reality with its grave struggles and beguiling them instead with impotent parades.

The struggle against war and imperialism cannot be the task of any sort of special 'committees'. The struggle against war is the preparation for revolution, that is to say, the task of working class parties and of the International. Marxists pose this task before the revolutionary vanguard, without any frills. To the enervating slogan of 'disarmament' they counterpose the slogan of 'winning the army' and arming the workers. Precisely in this is one of the most important dividing lines between Marxism and centrism drawn. Whoever does not utter aloud the revolutionary tasks will never find the courage to solve them". (Writings, 1935-6, p26-7)



Those like E.P.Thompson and those on the left who ape him, simply repeat bourgeois pacifist arguments when they present the cause of war as the existence of nuclear weapons, whose qualitative increase will somehow lead to an irresistible desire to use them or an accidental triggering of them. Why bourgeois? Because they present armaments not as a product and tool of imperialism but as the causal factor. Therefore Imperialism can be disarmed without overthrowing the bourgeoisie, without the class struggle. Indeed the latter is divisive, for it may break up the unity of all people of good will necessary to prevent war. All these features are to be found in the thought of E.P.Thompson who explains the war drive by reference to a new malevolent force. This he calls 'Exterminism'. Moreover, "Detonation might be triggered by an accident miscalculation, by the implacable upward creep of weapons technology or by a sudden hot flush of ideological passion." (Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization. New Left Review June 80)

This viewpoint says Thompson, "must modify, in profound and subtle ways, one's whole political stance. Class struggle continues in many forms, across the globe. But exterminism itself is not a 'class issue': it is a human issue. Certain kinds of 'revolutionary posturing' and rhetoric, which inflame exterminist ideology and which carry divisions into the necessary alliances of human resistance, are luxuries which we can do without."



Hiroshima after the dropping of the Atom bomb in 1945

Nuclear 'pacifism' is no better than previous kinds. Indeed it is less consistent since it leaves out of account the massive 'holocaust' capable through 'conventional weapons', through chemical and biological warfare. The working class does not need a new version of CND - it does not need Anti-Nuke rallies and conferences, it needs to win the class struggle, to disarm the bourgeoisie, to arm itself. The working class can never be pacifist. It can and must wage a struggle against imperialist war. Marxists oppose all forms of military expenditure with capitalism - 'Not a man, not a penny for this system'. This would of course include support for partial measures taken 'Against Cruise Missiles', even for 'Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament'. However to regard this sort of 'disarmament' as possible within capitalism, and to build an all-class alliance to try to achieve it, and to drug the minds of the working class with pacifist illusions will do nothing to stave off the threat of nuclear holocaust.

DAVE STOCKING

By Dave Hughes

The crisis that has afflicted Poland through the 1970's is a crisis of a society which, while no longer based on capitalist property forms, is blocked in its transition to socialism. At every level political power is in the hands of a parasitical bureaucracy. The transformation of production and distribution in the direction of socialism — which would mean immediate and dramatic decrease in inequality, the dissolution of a state bureaucracy separate from, and set against the productive class and struggle against capitalism on a world scale — would spell the end of the privileges and security of this bureaucracy. Hence the profound conservatism of this bureaucratic stratum.

Despite the power of the bureaucracy and its repressive apparatus, the Polish working class has shown itself capable of fighting to defend itself, wringing important temporary concessions three times in the Seventies alone. What is at stake now in the present wave of strikes, is no longer the question of living standards or the right to free trade unions. It is increasingly clear that even the concessions won in the last two months can only be defended and guaranteed by the seizure of political power by the organisations that have been built by the workers in the strikes.

The potential of planned industrial production allowed by the property relations of Poland is negated by the self interest of the bureaucrats. To maintain their power and control, they have to exclude from decision making the only social force that could make a planned economy both more productive and more responsive to human needs than is capitalism in the long term — the workers themselves. The 'plans', therefore, are developed 'blind' by a bureaucracy that plays no essential role in production.

The result — so evident in the 1970's — has been stagnation and chaos both in the realm of production and in the realm of distribution. In Stalinist East Europe and nowhere more than in Poland, black and grey markets for goods exist alongside the tawdry official distribution channels. Not only has this meant shortages of essential goods for the workers but the bureaucrats' control of distribution has also meant massive social inequalities.

In Poland almost empty subsidised state meat shops exist alongside commercial shops selling cuts of meat at higher prices to those who can afford them. When the striking workers of Radom entered the Party head quarters in 1976 they found a special secret shop selling choice goods earmarked for the local bureaucratic inner circle. The family allowances alone of the top ranks of the Army and internal police network are three times those of the workers in Poland.

In December 1970, the Polish bureaucracy introduced a 20% increase in basic prices and a new, productivity-based, wages system and lowered the prices of certain luxury goods! This was answered by immediate strikes in Gdansk and Szczecin which swept Party chief Gomulka from power. Two months later striking textile workers in Lodz forced the new chief, Gierek, to quash the price increases themselves.

It flows directly from the anti-socialist nature of the bureaucracy that, unable to meet the elementary needs of the population, it looked for an alliance with the Western capitalists. Gierek hoped to build up the Polish economy by Western loans which would be repaid by increased exports. In the short term this allowed improvements; by 1976, 43% of machinery in Poland's factories was less than five years old and in the same period living standards rose more rapidly than at any time since the war.

But the price of the bureaucracy's attempt to escape the consequences of their own inability to plan rationally and effectively was a soaring foreign debt. By 1974, repayments equalled 13% of foreign earnings — in 1976 over 100%. Today the bureaucrats' debts have grown to a total of \$20,000 million, of which \$8,000 million is due for repayment this year. More significantly still, the terms of further loans become stiffer. When a consortium of banks lent Gierek £250 million to develop the copper industry, it insisted on access to economic information and the right to "demand changes in copper export strategy as necessary". In this way Western capital now has greater access to and control of, the Polish economy than do Polish workers, courtesy of the Polish Stalinists!

This 'solution' to the crisis of bureaucratic planning firmly tied the economy into the web of Western inflation and recession. Inflation has eaten away the value of Poland's hard currency earnings. Recession means that the Polish bureaucrats cannot sell the cars produced in the factory borrowed from Fiat, or the tractors they borrowed heavily from Barclays Bank and Massey Ferguson in order to produce. No exports, no hard currency to pay off the loans! It has meant that as the regime found itself in conflict with the Polish workers, the western capitalists anxious for their investments have

Polish workers must take political power!

backed Gierek. In August, the Dresdner Bank drummed up 25 other banks to throw a £286 million lifeline to the Polish Stalinists. The Financial Times, The Times, The New York Herald Tribune have all urged the Polish workers to exercise restraint and reason!!

The mounting crisis of Gierek's 'miracle' also has an agricultural dimension. In order to create political stability after the strikes of 1956 which brought him to power, Gomulka made a deal with Poland's peasants. The dismantling of state farms has left only 10% of the land in state hands. The rest is farmed in family units averaging only 15 acres. Whilst securing political stability for the Stalinist bureaucrats — in alliance with the Catholic Church whose real social roots lie in peasant Poland — this NEP-type solution has had profound effects on the productive capacity of Polish agriculture.

Such farms cannot meet the needs of the Polish economy and, from the mid-Seventies, agriculture went into a deficit. Between '76 and '78 this amounted to \$20,000 million. Although the

share of the collective farms in the GNP increased from 14% to 23% in 1978, they cannot provide a basis for a solution to the agricultural crisis. The output and productivity of the collectives remains sluggish. Meanwhile the peasants farmers have become ever more resistant to state encroachment — be it state farms or comprehensive state schools!

In the nature of Poland's crisis, and in the attempts of the bureaucracy to make the workers pay the cost of its solution, the SWP (Socialist Workers Party) see proof that Poland is a capitalist country and the bureaucracy a collective capitalist headed by their very own Margaret Thatcher — Edvard Gierek. This fails to understand the specific nature of Polish (and other, similar) societies and the crises that afflict them. The bureaucrats do not own the productive forces. They certainly use them to enrich themselves through privilege and embezzlement. Thus when the workers' committee of the Warski shipyards scrutinised the accounts in 1971 they discovered that, "the Director's home had

been furnished with 100,000 zloties' worth of top quality luxury furniture, the cost had been lost in the cost of furnishing a ship" the management were also drawing pay for non-existent workers!

But these are the acts of parasites whose usurpation of political power allows them to embezzle and swindle portions of nationalised property without the mass of workers and peasants having the access to information or the freedom to organise that would enable them to hold them to account. The underhand swindles of the Stalinists bureaucrats, their very inability to transform the nationalised property that they corrupt and embezzle into their own possession shows them to be a cancer on the productive forces of Poland not their collective ownership of the bureaucracy in Poland, and the other Stalinist states, is not that of a ruling élite. It does not own the productive forces but it has a monopoly of political power and a security and police apparatus constructed to deny political rights to the vast majority of the working class.

The development of the strike wave

The strike wave that has gripped Poland for two months shows most of the key elements needed to break the hold of the Stalinist bureaucracy and to take the Polish workers, in concert with those of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, onto the road to genuine socialist construction. The wage increases won by 17,000 Ursus workers after the government raised prices on July 1st, sparked a strike movement which, within a week, involved over 100,000 workers. At this stage the strikes were mainly localised and economic but local negotiations, which had ended the Ursus strike, could no longer contain the flood.

The borderline between economic and political demands in the Stalinist states is necessarily a narrow one. Self organisation to press for pay increases is itself formally illegal. The rigid centralisation of the decision making process on all aspects of pricing, distribution and wage levels means that struggles over living standards very rapidly pit the working class against the central state apparatus. Unlike the anonymous capitalist market within which the employer initiates redundancies or wage cutting because of invisible forces, 'theoretically' and 'practically' out of his control, the Stalinist bureaucrats are, in the last analysis, in control of the wages and prices that effect Polish workers. They stand visible as the leading personnel within the state.

As long as the central apparatus could contain each dispute as an individual negotiation with local management, they could hope to prevent the escalation of the dispute into a direct and conscious political struggle between the working class and the bureaucracy. This proved impossible.

By the 10th of July, seventeen plants were on strike in the South-Eastern town of Lublin. Gierek tried to placate the workers with promises of increased family allowances next year and, at the same time, sent in troops to distribute strikebound supplies. The transport and railway workers joined the strike and a joint strike committee was formed which represented all the workers of the town. Demands for social equality now came to the fore as workers demanded not only that family allowances be increased immediately but that they should be raised to the level of those paid to military and security officials — a 300% increase. The crying need for independence of working class organisation was summed up in the railway workers' demand for a new trade union committee and the right to strike. The joint strike committee also demanded more and better housing.

These demands underline the correctness of Trotsky's argument that such demands strike at the heart of the bureaucratic power in states modelled on the USSR: "A fresh upsurge of the revolution in the USSR will undoubtedly begin under the banner of the struggle against social inequality and political oppression. Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy. Down with Stakhanovism. Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders. Greater equality of wages for all forms of labour. The struggle for

the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees for the right of assembly and freedom of the press, will unfold in the struggle for the regeneration and development of Soviet democracy". (The Transitional Programme, 1938).

It is because such demands open the road to the struggle to destroy the political power of the bureaucracy that the Polish bureaucracy has been thrown into deep internal crisis ever since the Lublin strike.

The strike at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk raised the struggle to even greater heights. From the first, it was an open struggle against political oppression sparked off by the attempted sacking of Anna Walentynowicz, a known and trusted fighter for free trade union rights. Younger workers had earlier failed to pull the yard out behind them for economic demands.

The unified strike committee (MKS) was origi-

nally composed of delegates from 24 plant committees. It is an organ of struggle against bureaucratic rule and for independent workers' organisations. Its initial demands for the freeing of all political prisoners explicitly named, free trade unionist Edmund Zadrozny of Grudziadz. Free trade unions, protection of wages from inflation and a ban on the privileges of the security forces, police and party officials through immediate equalisation of family allowances and the abolition of the high-priced commercial shops.

The MKS is, in embryo, a workers council. It controls transport and supplies to the town and has partially paralysed the official authorities. In the coming struggles it can either be emasculated and isolated or become the centralising centre of the fight for political power of the Polish workers. The struggle between the bureaucracy and the workers committees will ultimately be decided by which of them holds political

How the bureaucracy reacted last time

The Polish bureaucracy is more experienced than any other in East Europe in isolating and weakening the periodic uprisings of the Polish working class. They have become past masters at offering up a section of their number as sacrificial lambs in order to appease mass discontent, of making certain apparent social and economic concessions, while keeping political power firmly in their grasp, so as to force back the workers through direct repression once the tide of working class revolt has temporarily receded.

* In 1956, after June strikes in Poznan had been bloodily suppressed, the party bureaucracy admitted their past errors while blaming them on dismissed officials and officially recognised the existence of workers councils in the major plants. Once the wave of discontent had passed they set out to destroy the autonomy of the workers councils and reassert the authority of the bureaucracy's security machine.

* In April 1958 the workers councils were subordinated to party and trade union control by law!

* In 1970 shipworkers in Gdansk and Gdynia struck against price rises and a new payment system. Szczecin workers walked out later. Bloody suppression in which at least 70 were killed was followed by the ousting of party leader Gomulka by a faction in the party around Gierek.

The bureaucracy tried every trick to fool the workers into a return to work. Baluka has described one of the most amusing attempts: "By mid

January a small amount of work was being resumed in the shipyards, with little gained by the strike. It was then that an elaborately prepared report appeared in both papers and television that the workers of the shipyard tube division had pledged extra productivity in support of the Gierek regime. Film and photographs of a attended mass meeting of three years ago had been overlaid with new slogans, new banners and a new sound track. It took the bewildered division workers a full 24 hours to piece together the real facts amidst a barrage of abuse from the rest of the shipyards. This incident provided the fury that started the second wave of strikes (ISJ No 94) [No wonder today's strikers are demanding that the media published their demands in full!]

Gierek promised an end to the practices of the Gomulka era and regular consultation with the workers in future. Free elections were to be allowed to the trade unions and the Szczecin workers were even to be paid for their time off strike. The strike committee in the Warski shipyard, for example, proceeded to supervise and democratic elections to the trade union branch. Price rises were cancelled after the textile workers struck in February 1971, within two years the independence of the workers committees had once again been eroded.

* In 1976 an attempt to push through a thwarted price rises was destroyed by a series of strikes and demonstrations at Ursus and



Free speech in action: a mass meeting of strikers in the Lenin shipyards

Revolutionary strategy

A decade of heroic struggle has created a class conscious vanguard of militants and a rich tradition of combat. As the workers committees stand in direct conflict with Gierek, the absence of a revolutionary communist party armed with a clear programme for a political revolution and an underground network of cadre capable of taking advantage of any crippling of the Stalinist state apparatus is the principle weakness of the Polish working class. Only such a party, rooted in the mass of the workers could prepare organisationally and politically for an insurrection to take power into the hands of the workers councils.

In their struggle the workers have had no shortage of offers of alliance and assistance. The poison of the Catholic church hopes to use the struggles and sacrifices of the Polish workers to increase its bargaining position within society. It is not interested in breaking the political stranglehold of the Stalinists at present, only in proving its indispensability as a force for conservatism and stability in exchange for a greater licence to peddle their obscurantist and reactionary message. This they can do better as props for Gierek than alongside victorious striking workers set on destroying all privilege and inequality. That is why Cardinal Wyszinski (who once recommended Gierek to Mrs Carter as "a righteous man") and Bishop Kaczmarek of Gdansk have

in Poland

called on Polish workers to avoid lengthy work stoppages and bloodshed.

The hold of Catholicism could prove fatal to the Polish workers. In the first week of the Gdansk strike there was no sign that even the devout were obeying their priests' calls for a return to work. But in the period ahead, Gierek will doubtless attempt a new deal with the Catholic church in order to secure a climbdown by the workers.

The working class cannot entrust its historic class goals to the democratic intelligentsia. The working class alone can confidently take political power — establish its full class dictatorship and use it to construct socialism. The democratic intelligentsia are pessimistic about the ability of the working class to do more than act as a pressure group for democratic rights. Many of them see Socialism as a utopia or as a "failed dream". This pessimism leads them to reformist or economist conclusions with regard to the struggles of Polish workers.

Even such a courageous fighter for workers

While the Gierek government climbed down on the price rise, it set into motion its repressive security apparatus against the strikers. KOR activists cite at least 2000 dismissals in the period immediately following the 1976 strikes. The ministry for the Engineering Industry sent a memorandum on 17th July 1976 instructing plant officials on how to proceed with dismissals: "The willful stoppage of work without valid reason, the shirking of one's duties, and the disturbance of order and peace in the institution are a basis for termination of contract without notice, i.e. dismissal from work with immediate effect". (Quoted in P. Green: Third Round in Poland. New Left Review 101-102).

No wonder then that when deputy prime minister Tadeusz Pyka was relieved of his post after failing to secure a return to work at Gdansk and was replaced by Mieczyslaw Jagielewski, the Gdansk strikers refused to back down. No wonder that the first response of Ania Walenowicz to later news that the party leaders were offering a Prime Minister and a Foreign Minister as concessions was to declare that this had changed nothing.

The very same Stalinists who have systematically destroyed even temporary and highly relative independence within the Polish Trade Unions are now declaring that these same unions have shown "excessive submission to the viewpoint of the administration in enterprises and industries" (Quoted by the Morning Star, 22nd August 1980).

The militant workers of Poland have seen all this before - in 1956, in 1970 and in 1976. What faces the delegates of over 300 enterprises in Gdansk who now comprise the inter-factory strike committee is how to prevent a repetition of their past defeats. While Gierek offered them temporary concessions, without relinquishing political power, his police were already rounding up militant workers in Katowice, and KOR activists in Warsaw so as to isolate the north and move against it later.



*Strikers' leader Lech Walesa
in the Lenin shipyards.*

rights as Kuron (of KOR), interviewed by "Rouge" in July, expressed the view that the dispute was simply a struggle over wages and would remain that way. He predicted that the strike wave would end "when workers everywhere win their 10 to 15 percent demands", adding that "The only solution is a major reform, self-organisation, but the workers aren't ready for that yet. When they go back, faced with new difficulties, the working class will be stronger, more conscious of what it has won. That will be the difference".

He repeated a very similar argument in an article for the London "Guardian", explicitly excluding struggle to destroy the political power of the bureaucracy at present: "Certainly we shall have to co-exist, for a while, with our existing totalitarian state and party machine. We must assume that it will do everything possible to destroy our democratic organisations and to undermine our decisions. It will try to compromise and corrupt militants; it will use intimidation and blackmail. We must defend ourselves and bit by bit, try to win some of the territory occupied by the system".

Despite the intentions of Kuron, this perspective can only lead to a rotten compromise with the bureaucracy in exchange for "concessions" from the Stalinists which they will claw back once the workers' movement has allowed itself to be demobilised.

Equally dangerous for the Polish workers is the diversion of Polish nationalism and the traditions of anti-semitism within it. It is vital that the current of internationalism that is evidenced by the singing of the "Internationale" after negotiations in Gdansk triumphs over the spirit of nationalism witnessed in the singing of the national anthem and the flying of the Polish flag as the symbol of the strike movement.

It is perfectly true that both the economic and political transformation of Poland after the second world war was primarily the result of the Russian bureaucracy's imposition of its system on Poland. That transformation ran counter to the immediate pattern and rhythms of the class struggle, and served to isolate and demobilise the most class conscious sections of Poland's working class.

But Polish nationalism can have nothing but a harmful effect on the workers' struggle. Firstly, it can be a tool in the hands of those who openly espouse a programme for the return of capitalism in Poland (for example in the ranks of the Confederation for an Independent Poland led by Leszek Moczulski).

Secondly it isolates Polish workers from their most important allies, the Russian, German Czech and Hungarian workers. Without their aid, the massive forces of the Russian bureaucracy can crush even the most heroic resistance as events in Hungary in 1956 showed.

Even the Polish bureaucracy can use nationalist demagogic to mislead the workers - concentrating on the "national crisis" which workers and bureaucrats have a supposed common interest in solving.

In the struggle to seize political power, the working class must break politically with these false friends. Failure to do so will mean a serious defeat for the workers at the hands of Gierek's regime.

*For a revolutionary Trotskyist Party in Poland

- * Build and extend the workers committees in every plant into a network of workers councils.
- * For the defence of the strikes and workers committees by an armed workers militia.
- * For democratically elected independent trade unions.
- * Free the KOR and arrested workers.
- * Open the media to the workers committees - let the workers speak out, not the bureaucrats. Workers control of the media.
- * Close the special shops.
- * Open the accounts of the economy and all deals and diplomacy to the workers representatives.
- * Guarantee wages against inflation.
- * All power to the workers councils! For workers council power in Poland. A republic based on workers councils would revise the economy from top to bottom, to meet the needs of the masses and ensure workers management of the economy.

It would put distribution and pricing in the hands of democratically elected consumers' cooperatives. It would provide the credits and technology to make possible the rapid cooperativisation of agriculture. It would ensure management of the collective farms by their workers. It would cancel the crippling debts that the bureaucracy has taken on and call on the workers of Poland to break any blockade against workers' Poland. It would declare its commitment to the defence of the USSR against imperialist attack, while breaking with the Warsaw pact, which is a tool of counter-revolutionary Stalinist diplomacy. It would abolish the secret police and standing army and replace them with a workers militia.

Workers resist Army rampage

THE US-FINANCED Bolivian military apparatus has for the second time in under a year swept aside the elected Congress of Bolivia. Once again it has embarked on an attempt to smash the Bolivian workers' movement. The Bonapartist coup was the military's response to the Bolivian electorate's refusal to back its candidate in the June 29th elections.

The military high command has also stated "we cannot permit the people of this country to vote for a man (Hernan Siles Zuazo) whom we disapprove of. Until the people learn what is correct and begin making the correct choices, we will have to shepherd them, for we, among Bolivians, know what is correct." The military's latest exploit was carried out because of Imperialism's lack of faith in the Bolivian ruling class's ability to cow the working class through parliamentary rule, and to protect its vital interests. Bolivia owes imperialism a staggering £1.6 billion.

The Bolivian working class, especially the metal ore miners, and more recently, the poor peasants, have a history of steadfast opposition to the generals' attempts to implement imperialism's plans. This militancy has greatly strengthened the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), the Bolivian equivalent of the TUC, to such an extent that the national peasants union joined the federation. The combative of the class was seen when a general strike and 16 days of bloody street fighting (300 dead) in late 1979, forced the military to relinquish the power they had seized from the congressional government on November 1st. Peasants set up road blocks, stopping the movement of supplies and military convoys.

Carter's Government is backing both horses at present. It hopes that its 'human rights' overtures and backing for the 'democratically' elected congress will take some of the steam out of the Bolivian working class and get it to place more faith in a parliamentary solution. But the State Department has also used the defeat inflicted by the working class in November 1979 on the military, to bolster that very army. It called the election by Congress of Mrs Lidia Gueiler to replace coup-leader Alberto Natusch Busch as head of State a "dramatic victory for the Bolivian people" and promptly resumed a £2.8 million aid military programme.

The brunt of the army's violence has been borne by the workers and peasants movement. Immediately after the July 17th coup, Juan Lechin, tin miners leader and head of the COB was captured, beaten and forced to call off the general strike that had erupted. He has since disappeared into the headquarters of military intelligence and has not been heard of since. Both La Paz's football stadium are now stuffed with detainees. Death squads, backed by the Argentinian military's expertise in this field, are setting about their gory business, rapidly and ferociously.

The army's main task is to force the miners to the South of La Paz back to work. The miners have resisted fiercely. They and their families have been subjected to the most heinous atrocities including rape and decapitation. A miner was said to have had gun powder put into his mouth and to have been blown apart in the town centre of Caracoles.

The Bolivian workers and peasants have a massive struggle ahead of them. They must learn from their own bitter experiences, the pit falls inherent in alliances between workers' parties and those of the bourgeoisie. Such alliances always result in the destruction of the independence of the working class and its subjugation to the interests of its class enemies. The COB participated in the National Committee for the Defence of Democracy (CONADE) which was supported by all the main bourgeois parties, and the Church. Inspite of the fact that this body was set up to undertake anti-coup preparations, it made no move until 24 hours after the military were deployed on the streets.

Its preparations were not even enough to prevent the capture of Lechin and Simon Reyes, miner union leader and CP Congressman, and the execution of Marcelo Santa Cruz, head of the Socialist Party, plus 15 other union leaders, when right-wing vigilantes and military crack squads stormed the COB headquarters in La Paz. Inevitably the class collaborators inside the CONADE popular front bloc, made no call for the workers and poor peasants to arm themselves and act to prevent the coup. Their weak-kneed resistance only began when the whole country was already crawling with soldiers and tanks.

Socialists and trade unionists must act immediately to solidarise with their Bolivian brothers and sisters and oppose the murderous military junta. All Bolivian goods must be blacked and no military shipments must be allowed through to Bolivia. All trade and aid links between Bolivia and Britain must be broken. Furthermore we must mount a campaign inside the working class to stop the Tory Government from recognising the blood-soaked junta, once the dust has settled.

R. Camacho

Egyptian Trotskyist murdered by Sadat

In May of this year, WORKERS POWER organised a speaking tour for a comrade from the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) of Egypt. Since that date we have received the following statement concerning the murder of an RCL militant by the Sadat police.

"At the beginning of June, Comrade Mohamed Awad Chamis, a leading member of the Egyptian organisation RCL (Revolutionary Communist League), 'disappeared' in the Tora prison in Cairo-Heluan. Although he had been under arrest there since 15th January 1980, the prison authorities suddenly denied all knowledge of his existence, and his name vanished from all their records. His fellow internees, also political prisoners of the Sadat regime, reported that one day early in June he had been removed for interrogation - he never returned. His comrades also reported that they had been tortured with electric shocks and other physical and psychological methods during the interrogations and several of them sustained serious injuries as a result.

Mohamed was known to the police as a leader of the January uprising of 1977, and as a leading member of the RCL. The fact of the sudden 'ignorance' on the part of the prison authorities and police concerning Mohamed, the fact of the tortures, the fact that, as a leading member of the RCL, Mohamed would have been able to give the police a good deal of information about the organisation (which is, like all other left organisations, illegal) - all these factors lead to the conclusion that Mohamed has very probably been MURDERED by the police while under interrogation.

Mohamed's murder takes place at a time of increasing isolation for the Sadat regime. The causes of this isolation lie essentially in the complete collapse of its economic policy, the so-called 'Infitah' - the complete opening up of Egypt to foreign capital, Sadat promised that this policy would result in a decisive improvement in the economy, above all in the material conditions of the impoverished masses. The Sadat attempted to pacify the masses with this line after the January uprising of 1977, and for a short time he was successful, co-ordinating this strategy with a renewed ban on all activities and groups connected with the left opposition. However, escalating food prices and growing unemployment and the bitter experiences of the masses of the Egyptian people demonstrated the hollowness of Sadat's promises.

The result of these developments was a growing readiness, especially on the part of working people, to take up the struggle against the regime once again. At the end of last December, strikes took place in important factories in Alexandria (Tercena, Bata) and Cairo (Iron and Steel, Cook), followed by strikes in Cairo University (in January) and by workers in a factory in El Mahala el Kobra in February, which were directed against the economic policies of the regime and its dictatorial methods. Since then disturbances have continued: strikes, demonstrations outbreaks of mutiny in the army - all these highlight the serious internal crisis of the Sadat regime. The situation of the regime is now also critical due to the de facto failure of negotiations with Israel over the Palestinian question.

As so often in the past, the regime has reacted with massive force against the growing opposition. Strikes are 'settled' by the army, Cairo University was temporarily closed down, huge numbers of people were arrested. It looks as though the regime intends to crush the left once and for all. Already on 18th December 1979, Zaki Mourad, the chairman of the Egyptian CP was brutally murdered in broad daylight: he was run over by four secret police vehicles!

The murder of Mohamed is another step along this road of repression. It is especially significant because the RCL is one of the few groups who continued to organise opposition in the period following the repression of the January uprising, and thereby implanted itself securely in the working class. In the factories which were on strike in December, it (illegally) won important gains in union elections. The RCL also initiated strikes.

The regime keeps silent about any opposition, and about its own repression, in order to propagate an image of peace, security and calm in Egypt.

WE CALL ON THE LEFT TO PROTEST AGAINST THE REPRESSION BY THE EGYPTIAN REGIME AGAINST THE LEFT AND THE MURDER OF MOHAMED AWAD CHAMIS WE MUST SHOW THIS REGIME THAT IT CANNOT DRAW A VEIL OVER ITS CRIMES AND THERE ARE STRONG FORCES WHICH CAN ACT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE EGYPTIAN LEFT!"

Palestine Committee, Vienna.

Whenever reports of the situation in Northern Ireland appear in the British media, they are usually tales of terror, concerning the killing of soldiers or innocent civilians by the IRA. The impression we are given is that of a country rife with terrorist fanatics, being contained by "our boys" - the British army. Most British workers respond to this media-manufactured view of Northern Ireland either by supporting wholeheartedly the presence of British troops or by arguing that "our boys" ought to get out and leave the Irish to it.

These attitudes stand in marked contrast to the willingness of sections of the working class movement to solidarise with other anti-imperialist struggles, such as those in Southern Africa, every bit as violent as that being waged by the IRA in Ireland. This has made it enormously difficult to build a solidarity movement in Britain committed to forcing the withdrawal of British troops on the basis of the right of the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future.

Inside the British working class the Communist Party and the Labour Party, left and right, and the Trade Union bureaucrats are all unanimously agreed that Northern Ireland is different from other anti-imperialist struggles. Such is their insistence that they are prepared to witch-hunt trade unionists who oppose their line. Thus when the Tameside Trades Council tried to discuss the Irish war, Len Murray and Co. promptly disaffiliated it from the TUC. Thus when rank and file activists forced a discussion on Ireland at last year's Labour Party conference, it was granted only half an hour. This refusal to discuss Ireland, let alone support the anti-imperialist movement there is all based on the notion that Northern Ireland is fundamentally different from Vietnam, Zimbabwe, etc.

The crux of the excuse that the union and Labour Party leaders use is that Northern Ireland is not a colony but "an integral part of the United Kingdom" and that a clear majority of its population wish it to remain so. Of course they will admit that the minority are the subject of discrimination - in jobs, housing and in political rights. This they claim is the result of both the violence of the IRA which "provokes" the unionists into a "siege mentality", and the religious bigotry of the Protestants.

If only the Catholics and Protestants would forget their religious differences - and the "violent" political ideologies which rest on them, Republicanism and Orangeism, and get down to solving the problems of bad housing, unemployment, low wages (via trade union action and Labourite reformism) all would be well. That is how the argument usually runs.

This approach seems very plausible to workers fed on a diet of British media propaganda, who have never themselves experienced any form of national oppression. The great majority are indifferent to religion and have strong democratic illusions (ie the belief that "violence" is unnecessary in the solution of political and social problems). "Traditional" anti-Irish prejudices dating from the influx of Irish immigrants as competitors in the labour market, the chauvinistic feelings of superiority that come from Britain's imperial past, plus indignation at the killing of "our boys" who are only "peace keeping" in Northern Ireland, have all laid a powerful basis for British workers' refusal to be drawn into support for the Irish struggle. Against this British revolutionary socialists have to mobilise powerful arguments to convince most labour movement activists, who on other issues take a class stand, that they must do the same on Ireland too.

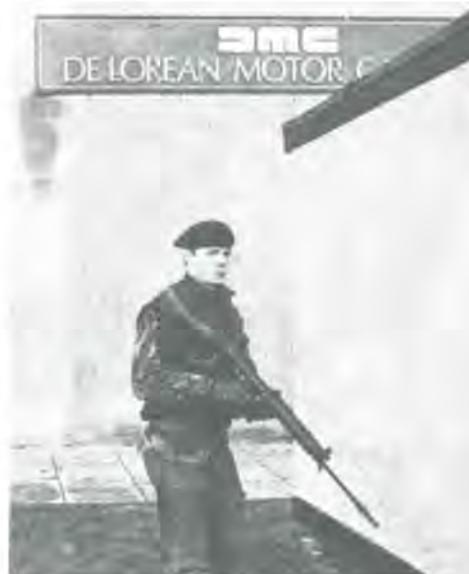
Colony

Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and its very geographical proximity has made it one that the British ruling classes - aristocratic landlords and later the industrial capitalists have been unwilling to let go. It has been a source of cheap agricultural products, of a massive "reserve army of labour" to be used in Britain's factories and construction sites, and a source of above-average profits to British investors.

This is as true today as ever, although the UK's monopoly of Ireland's exploitation has been broken by American, West German, Dutch and Japanese capitalists. (Of the "overseas companies" in the Republic, 35.5% are American, 26.9% are British, 15.4% West German and 5% Dutch).

British imperialism has maintained the political conditions for the domination of the whole island. This originally meant its forcible retention as a part of the UK. The revolt of the majority of its people between 1916 and 1921 forced Britain to adopt a different method.

Twenty-six counties were given "self-government", ie they were transformed into a semi-colony. British investments were safeguarded, Ireland's trade and economy were retained as an integral part of the British domestic economy. The bourgeois nationalists who led the national liberation struggle were retained as an integral unit. They were part bribed, part coerced into accepting the partition of Ireland. Six counties in the north were retained as part of the UK. This area was not "Ulster" (which has three extra counties - Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal). Nor was it simply the area whose population did not wish to be included in a united Ireland. In fact 40% of the population of these counties (and one whole county, Armagh, which had a nationalist majority) were brutally



go to relieve the massive Catholic unemployment in Belfast. But the majority of jobs will go to those who have the appropriate skills. This means that most employees will in fact be Protestants. (Picture, Chris Steele-Perkins)



Army snatch squad. (Picture, Alain le Garsmeur)

erced into the northern statelet. Why?

Firstly the north-east of Ireland had the largest concentration of modern industry - engineering, shipbuilding, textiles. Their markets were within the British Empire and their owners an integral part of the British bourgeoisie. The six counties were the minimum economically viable unit for such a statelet and they allowed for a factor vital to the profits of the capitalists - a divided working class more prone to fighting itself than its rulers.

The state was sectarian from its very foundation - a protestant state. Its creation and maintenance was and is a violation of democratic rights. The borders were drawn to keep the nationalists in an artificial minority position. The majority of the people of Ireland were (and British politicians like Callaghan and Thatcher are determined to keep them so) excluded from any say as to the future of these counties.

A monstrous violation of the Irish people's right to self-determination - not religious differences - lies at the root of the "Irish problem". In the South this takes the form of a truncated state economically crippled and subjected to the dictates of international finance capital and politically tied to maintaining the status quo as far as the North is concerned. In the North 40% of the population is held against its wishes and subjected to discrimination and military/police repression unlike anything in Western Europe.

Reformists

In the face of this sectarian state, reformists cite the trade unions and to a lesser degree, branches of the British Labour Party as the means of bringing the protestant and catholic workers in the North together. The CP, for example, support this line and have published an article by Sean and Mike Morrissey which argues for an exclusively trade unionist strategy for the North: "And it is our contention that trade union work, for the reasons we have outlined, principally its relations structurally in the most significant contradictions, offers the best opportunity for class work or even in attempting to realise the preconditions for class work" (Marxism Today, November 1979). The CP clearly want to dodge the national question. But the whole point is that imperialism has divided the working class in Northern Ireland, has created divided interests which appeals to abstract class unity, such as

WHY MUST Troops Ireland

Soldiers pay a routine visit to the Delorian car factory. Located in Twinbrook, West Belfast, between Catholic and Protestant estates, the project was initially presented as providing 2 000 jobs, the majority of which would

those above, simply will not bridge.

It is necessary to recognise that we are talking about Protestant-dominated unions, and therefore about divided unions. As with trade unions worldwide those in the six counties, organised in the Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) are dominated by employed, skilled workers - by a layer of workers who enjoy better (albeit only marginally) standards of living, as compared with the vast mass of unskilled and unemployed workers. What this means for the unions is clear from a report in 1978 by a British government appointed body, the Fair Employment Agency. It commented: "...it is clear that the Protestant is most likely to be a skilled manual worker while the Roman Catholic will be an unskilled worker...Unemployment is experienced at a much higher level by Roman Catholics than Protestants. Overall, the level is two and a half times greater."

Unions

Necessarily unions dominated by protestants will reflect the interests of protestants. A strike in the Harland and Wolff shipyard in 1972, for example, demanded internment, that is imprisonment without trial of suspected republicans. It was led by Billy Hull, an AUEW steward at the yard, whose trade union credentials (over wages and conditions etc) were impeccable. Another graphic example was given by the Belfast Workers Research Bulletin: "On another occasion when Loyalist shop stewards at the predominantly Protestant Sirocco works in East Belfast protested at housing redevelopment in the adjacent Catholic Short Strand area on the basis that this would restrict potential development of their factory, the NIC of the ICTU lacked their stand. Terry Carlin (leader of the NIC-WP) claimed that jobs for union members were his first priority, until, under pressure from Belfast Trades Council and angry lobbying by Short Strand residents, he withdrew this spurious argument" (Summer Bulletin, 1979).

In the face of examples such as these it is clear that the policy of abstract trade union unity on bread and butter issues, advocated by the CP, the Labour Party and the so-called Trotskyists of the Militant tendency, ignores the reality of unions rife with sectarianism. It is a policy doomed in advance through its

BRITISH WORKERS DEMAND

out of
now

TAMESIDE TRADES COUNCIL was disaffiliated from the TUC for daring to hold a conference on the Irish war. Forty six Trades Councils have passed resolutions defending Tameside. The NUJ national conference came out in support of Tameside.

DEFEND TAMESIDE TRADES COUNCIL!

Pass resolutions in its defence in all labour movement bodies.
Support the Lobby of the TUC to protest at the disaffiliation. Assemble for the march on the TUC on Wednesday September 3rd, at 12.00 noon outside Brighton railway station.

- *Defend the right to discuss Ireland in the Labour movement!
- *Reinstate Tameside Trades Council!
- *Support the Irish people's struggle against British Imperialism! Get the troops out now!
- *Self-determination for the Irish People as a whole! Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act!

Reinstate Tameside Trades Council

failure to recognise that the unresolved national question stands at the heart of the Irish class struggle.

The CP argue that because the whole working class in Northern Ireland is so poor (which is true), there is no real difference between the two communities and the trade union struggle is the answer. But this position ignores the fact that precisely under conditions where unemployment is rampant the fact that protestants stand a better chance of a job puts them at a relative advantage in comparison with Catholics.

Hostility

This relatively privileged position is the material basis for protestant hostility to catholics and vice versa. It explains the Orange working class's loyalty to its own rulers and to British imperialism - the guarantors of this relative privilege. A recent newspaper report revealed just how real this gap between the two communities still is: "Belfast's worst housing problems are concentrated depressingly and predictably, in the catholic ghettos to the west and north of the city, a survey of households published yesterday shows.... To add to the difficulty, unemployment is highest in these areas. In Whiterock 35.3% of heads of households are out of work; in the Falls 29.9%; in Grosvenor 27.8%; in Milltown 21.3%; in New Lodge, 24%. In comparable working class Protestant areas in the west and east, unemployment is still high in overall British terms but it only reaches 17.9% in Highfield and 14.4% in Ballymacarrett, and hovers between 7 and 10% elsewhere." (Guardian, 14/9/79).

Unity, democratisation and other such noble sentiments come up against this Orange brick wall, against the raison d'etre of the Northern Ireland statelet itself. We are back

to square one. The way in which the protestant working class will be mobilised will be by showing them that their privileges are worthless in comparison with the possibility of a socialist united Ireland. To come near to achieving that the Orange state will have to be smashed first, with the help of the protestant workers if possible, against them if necessary.

"But", say the reformist leaders, "what about the rights of the protestants?" Here we have to be clear about what is involved. What "rights" are the protestants defending, why are they defending them, and against whom? The answer is that the protestants are defending their "right" to maintain the division of Ireland, against the wishes of the majority of its people, the right to maintain an artificial statelet by coercing 40% of its own people, by subjecting them to a "loyalist" government and to systematic discrimination in the field of housing and employment. These "rights" whatever they are are not democratic rights. In fact they are privileges.

Evaporate

But - say our reformists - what about the protestant workers? Wouldn't it be better to relegate the national question to the background for the time being and concentrate on immediate issues which can unite workers - protestant and catholic - against the bosses. Then, surely, the differences will evaporate.

The protestant workers' hostility to their catholic fellow-workers is not religious in origin. It is based on a jealous defence of privileges, on the knowledge that they are a minority in Ireland. That without the British army, without their own armed state forces ("B Specials", Ulster Defence Regiment), "unofficial" militia (UDA) and illegal terror and murder squads (UVF/UFF etc), their privileges and

their state that enshrines them could not be maintained.

Of course trade union struggles have united catholic and protestant workers - but only as long as the struggles remained strictly non-political. (This means the "Catholic" workers not raising any of their own specific problems that arise from discrimination). These united struggles have occurred where the least privileged protestant workers were involved (unskilled and unorganised workers before the first world war under Connolly and Larkin; unemployed workers in the 1930s). Where these struggles became objectively political, via a sharp clash with the state forces, protestant workers face a cruel dilemma - they risk undermining "their" (Orange) state. The worst pogroms of catholic workers have followed the episodic "united" economic struggles of catholic and protestant workers.

The actual benefits to protestant workers from this set up are squallid enough - worse conditions than those of British workers, even if they are better off than their catholic neighbours. Capitalist crises like the present one will further erode these conditions. Two factors are necessary to definitively break them from their pro-imperialism. Firstly the impossibility of a society where the conditions of all are raised to those worthy of human beings - where unemployment, slums, clerical bigotry are merely a memory. The first condition can only be provided by the revolt of the oppressed. The stronger and more successful this is, the more will the protestant class-alliance be subjected to intolerable strains. British workers can best contribute to this by demanding and forcing the withdrawal of the British Army from Northern Ireland. The British troops are guarantors of protestant ascendancy. They disarm the nationalist minority, terrify it, weaken it. They do not "protect" it.

Fake

The argument that there would be a blood bath is a fake one. The catholics in the north could defend themselves better, the Green Tories in the south would be forced by the southern masses to render assistance should the protestants attempt an all-out attack on the catholics. Moreover the protestants, at least important sections of them, would think twice about initiating a bloody civil war which they would have little chance of winning. "No surrender", "No Compromise" are viable slogans only within the context of British support and assistance. British troop withdrawal would rock "Loyalism" to its foundations. Of course, a war could not be ruled out but it is already taking place. Since 1921 thousands have died. There will never be "peace" as long as the Northern state exists.

Mark Hoskisson

CLASS STRUGGLE

SINN FÉIN - MOVING LEFT?

FIGHT WAGE
RESTRAINT!

ALCAN: what must be done

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Number 7

June - Sept 1980

35p

THE IRISH WORKERS GROUP,
the fraternal organisation, in Ire-
land, of the Workers Power Group,
is now producing its quarterly jour-
nal, Class Struggle, in a new maga-
zine format.

The latest issue (June - September) is available from Workers Power at a cost of 50 pence which includes postage. Cheques and postal orders must be made out to Workers Power and orders forwarded to:
Workers Power,
BCM Box 7750,
LONDON WC1V 6XX.



Picture, Andrew Ward (Report)

No to Import Controls!

(Continued from back page)

However, that foreigners might take it into their heads to work up the raw materials themselves - that is clearly unfair trading. The logic of TASS position is that the rest of the world should continue to export raw materials to Britain and then buy back the finished products of British manufacturing industry. In this way the British capitalists can maintain their grip, and their control, over both British workers and those overseas.

Put like that the argument loses its radical gloss. However, the hypocrisy of class traitors knows no bounds and, thus, we find Chapple's EETPU arguing for import controls because of the denial of trade union rights in many countries that undercut British industry. (Yes, that is the same EETPU which has recently suspended two of its major branches!) Such hypocrisy is not, however, necessarily shared by the members of British trade unions and it is true that low prices are often linked to massive exploitation and denial of rights. What should our attitude be to such countries? The short answer is to use the power and finances of our trade unions to back the struggles of the workers in these countries. We should fight to stop the supply of military and other goods destined for use against the working class abroad. That is the way to take the working class forward.

Refusing to import cheap goods not only increases the cost of living for workers here but increases unemployment in the Third World. It is an attack on working class solidarity which only serves to stoke up national enmity on all sides.

★★★

Although the economics of the import control argument do not hold water, this will often not be enough to sway workers away from them. Their appeal lies in the apparent prospect of an immediate answer, even if only temporary, to the problems of workers facing redundancy. This appeal cannot be overcome simply by resorting to moral persuasion on the basis of international solidarity.

The whole basis of the anti-capitalist cloak that the left reformists inside the unions (TASS) and the Labour Party (Benn) hang on the import controls demand is that they are combatting foreign capitalists - not foreign workers. They point to the capitalist practice of dumping, that is pouring low priced goods into a weaker economy in order to undercut the competitiveness of domestic industry. As we have argued, this means siding with British bosses. But their reply is that it is unfair to workers in the industries affected and that the doings of foreign capitalists ought to be controlled. But the question is, who should exercise this control? Who can guarantee that these controls won't result in the export of unemployment?

A labour government, committed to preserving capitalism, as all Labour governments have been, will give no consideration to such matters. The whole point is that so long as capitalism is maintained, so long as it is capitalists who control the state that would regulate imports then it will do so in its interests and against the working class internationally. For us, therefore, there is no anti-capitalist element in the imports control demand. On the contrary, it spreads illusions amongst workers that the bosses' state is neutral.

Would a state in which the working class ruled control trade? Of course, but there the state, the organised working class, would exercise a monopoly over foreign trade to preserve the workers' state from exploitation by international capitalism. It would do so on the basis of ensuring that it exercised those controls against capitalism and not against foreign workers.

In the coming months, millions of workers in all countries are going to be declared redundant by their bosses. In each country the bosses and their agents in the working class, the reformists and the Stalinists, will be preaching for import controls, for blaming other workers and other nationalities. In all countries the answers of revolutionaries must be the same, the crisis is a necessary part of capitalism, it can only be fought by fighting capitalism itself, that means fighting for the independence of the working class and the imposition of its control over society through the destruction of the capitalists and their state.

workers power

Work or Full Pay

(Continued from front page)

Against the bosses' full scale war on all our jobs we must respond with a programme that defends our needs. We must fight for:

* **WORK OR FULL PAY.** We must demand a guaranteed job or income regardless of the financial

plight of any of the bosses, bankrupt or solvent. We won't pay for their crisis.

*CUT THE HOURS NOT THE JOBS!

For the 35 hour week now with no loss of pay. For workers control of the hours worked and for the sharing of all available work between the whole workforce.

*FOR WORKERS CONTROL OF HIRING FIRING AND TRACK SPEEDS!

For trade union registration of the unemployed.

*OPEN THE BOOKS of bosses threatening redundancies to elected wor-

kers committees. No to the business secrecy that hides the financial chicanery of the bosses.

***FOR THE NATIONALISATION OF ALL FIRMS THREATENING REDUNDANCIES** under workers control and with no compensation to their former owners.

***FOR MILITANT DIRECT ACTION** to achieve these demands - occupation of factories threatening closure, blocking of work once done by sacked workers and solidarity strike action from other sections.

Not to Import Controls!

THE BELIEF that 'import controls' can protect jobs and prevent unemployment for British workers is one that unites both the 'Left' and the 'Right' of the Trade Union movement at present. Both the 'Left' TASS and the 'Right' EETPU put down motions calling for import controls to the Trades Union Congress. They were not alone, there were more resolutions on the call for import controls than on any other subject.

The T&GWU have instructed all their negotiators to raise the import issue as a priority in all negotiations and to fight for a 'Buy British' policy in the companies concerned.

The belief in 'import controls' is not simply the property of trade union bureaucrats. Thousands of workers in textiles, motors and mining are now actively campaigning for restrictions on imports. So powerful is the pressure that during the South Wales miners' campaign to ban imports of coking coal the newspaper Socialist Worker, which is formally committed to opposing import controls but is always willing to tail seemingly militant workers, opened its pages to a debate on the issue - without itself taking any position of opposition to the import controls demand.

★★★

Workers Power opposes the call for import controls. As an immediate demand to remove the threat of unemployment they will not work, in fact they will make matters worse. As part of a strategy to reform British (or any other) capitalism they are a diversion from the fight against the real causes of both unemployment and the other effects of the deepening capitalist crisis.

The effects of the capitalist recession are not an isolated 'British' problem calling for a purely 'British' solution. True, Britain is a particularly weak link in the world economy. Its unemployment rate is second only to Italy among the major economies of Western Europe. However, the capitalist crisis is unfolding on a world scale. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is predicting that by next year there will be 23 million unemployed in the 24 most advanced capitalist societies!

At the same time, business journals such as the Financial Times and the Economist openly talk of a glut of unsold commodities as a worldwide phenomenon. They point to the threat of a trade war as the rival capitalists scramble to unload these goods in the midst of a recession. The four hundred

thousand unsold cars on Britain's disused airfields and the 'refrigerator mountain' in Italy are only two examples among many.

It is not surprising, therefore, that sections of employers are now shrieking for import controls. A recent survey of the London Chamber of Commerce showed that a big majority of its members now favour such restrictions.

Increasingly, the smaller fry of the British capitalists will see import controls as a way of gaining a 'breathing space' in which to modernise their plants. How better to accomplish this necessary task than to get the unions in on it from the outset?

The carpet sector of the textile industry is only one example of where joint management/union lobbies have presented pleas for import controls to the Government.

Such blatant class collaboration is justified, from the trade union side, by the need to save 'our' industry. When Moss Evans urges an, 'Industrial Society' conference to fight for import controls as a, "temporary protective screen" he is doing no more than parroting the views of a section of employers. This programme will only serve to tie the organisations of the working class to the bosses as the recession deepens and as the capitalists search ever

more desperately for means of preserving their profit margins.

This logic leads straight to the sale not only of jobs but of wages, conditions and rights, to the bosses, to help them save their industries and their profits. The bosses in the textile industry have played on this for years. In the face of low pay (in 1979 full time women in textiles earned between £50 and £52 a week) and massive sackings (300,000 over the last ten years) the textile workers have not mounted a single large scale strike - because they did not want to damage the profits of their bosses' industry. Such illusions can only have one conclusion - the dole queue.

★★★

This supposed 'common interest' with the bosses can lead workers into ever more pernicious conclusions. Import controls as a demand means accepting the notion of 'British jobs for British workers'. Indeed, it is just this sort of demagogic reformist advocates of the demand usually play on. It is also the demand of the National Front - their recent march in the West Midlands took place under this slogan. The fascists, hell-bent on smashing the working class, are able to play on the patriotic poison whipped up by the supposedly anti-capitalist crusaders for import controls.

The supporters of import controls amongst the employers and trade union leaderships, call for a ban on

cheap imports as a way of maintaining the profits and viability of British capitalists and, as a consequence, the jobs of British workers.

But if cheap imports were banned, where would these increased profits of the employers come from? They would come from the pockets of the workers, forced to buy dearer, and probably inferior, British products. The capitalists would have to collect together the necessary money by restricting the wages of their workers. This is indeed a perfect example of making the workers pay the cost of the bosses' crisis.

Even supposing that import controls allowed the British capitalists to accumulate enough funds to 'modernise' industry, what would that mean for the working class? It would mean increasing unemployment as automated and computerised systems replaced workers in plant after plant. If it were the capitalist state, via the NEB, that financed this that would only mean that the funds came from cuts in public sector employment, cuts in the dole, removal of earnings related benefit and continuing high taxes. In other words the funds would come from us but by a different route.

★★★

At the same time it is worth remembering that there is no evidence that unemployment goes down in periods when imports are restricted or in decline. Between February and July of this year, imports into this country went down by 6% in value terms - sackings continued at 8,300 per month. Also, protective tariffs were erected around the British economy in 1931 as a response to the slump of 1929. Unemployment continued to rise during the next two years.

Nor could British workers expect the employers of Japan or West Germany to sit back idly while the British bosses restricted their access to the UK market. Import controls in Britain would inevitably mean import controls elsewhere against Britain.

What would this mean for British jobs?

Most branches of industry in the integrated world system of capitalism produce for export as well as for their own domestic market. Between 1968 and 1976 the percentage of exports as a proportion of total sales of vehicles produced in Britain increased from 33.7% to 44%. In the same period the percentage of cloth-



Picture: Morning Star

Ford shop stewards with their petition calling for import controls

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