

Workers Power

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British workers must support H-Block prisoners' fight



Youth shot by plastic bullet - ordinary police fighting ordinary crime?

THE MOUNTING SUPPORT for the H-Block Hunger Strikes in the North of Ireland was proved beyond doubt by Owen Carron's election victory in Fermanagh and South Tyrone on August 20th. Thatcher's refusal to see him underlines her determination to see her murderous policy through to the end. She will not grant the hunger strikers Political Status. Even concessions on "prison reform", as the December deal that ended the last round of hunger strikes showed, are merely tricks to dupe the prisoners with and defuse the mass movement that supports them. Thatcher and the ugly brood of MPs that support her on both sides of the Westminster chamber, are out to defeat the struggle of the nationalists in the North. The defeat of the prisoners' struggle is part of that strategy.

HATRED OF BRITISH RULE

Since Bobby Sands (MP) died on May 5th ten hunger strikers have died in agonising circumstances. At the time of writing an eleventh Lawrence McKeown is near to death. Over these months the nationalists in the 6 counties have again and again demonstrated their support. There were some 100,000 at Sand's funeral. In the local government elections on May 20th anti-hunger strike catholic politicians such as Gerry Fitt were dumped by the electorate. Each death still sees thousands in the subsequent cortege and hundreds of youth, armed with bricks and petrol bombs express their hatred of British rule on the streets. The increased majority for Sand's successor—Owen Carron—is another blow for the Tories. The courage of the protesters has rekindled the nationalist sentiments of the southern workers and petit bourgeoisie. In the 11th June elections to the Irish Parliament (Dail) two hunger strikers—Paddy Agnew and Kieran Doherty—were returned.

The prisoners demands, which they remain committed to, despite appeals from all quarters to end the strike, are

- * The right to wear their own clothes;
- * The right to abstain from penal labour
- * The right to free association within one's area;
- * The right to organise education and recreation;
- * Full restoration of remission;

At the start of the second round of hunger strikes in March the prisoners correctly emphasised that these reforms

were to be understood as the fight to re-establish political status for the prisoners, taken away from by the Labour Government in 1976.

The Labour Government tried to crush resistance to the British occupation of the North by seeking to isolate the active fighters from their supporters in the nationalist community, by doing everything possible to reduce their status in the eyes of the whole British population to one of 'common criminals'. To this day Thatcher's resistance is based on this claim. Yet this is the biggest lie of all. Between 1969 and 1981 there has been over a 400% increase in the prison population of Northern Ireland from a point where it was one of the lowest in the United Kingdom. Most of these have been convicted under laws brought in since 1969 (when the troops went in) and half of these are held in the ex-internment camp of Long Kesh, Belfast. This testifies to the fact that it is nothing but the last 12 years of political and military domination of the North by Westminster that has turned the prisoners into so-called 'criminals'. Most of those convicted under the special laws in the hands of the British State are under 21. They have lived in the shadow of paid British gunmen since childhood. The fact that less than 1 in 10 of the prisoners had a previous conviction for serious 'ordinary crime' also proves that it is the occupation itself that has spawned their 'criminal activities'. To underline the Tories hypocrisy and deceit the British government actually defines 'terrorism' as the 'use of violence for political ends' (S.31 Ireland (Emergency Provision) Act—1973). The struggle to retain the political links with the nationalists is thus at the centre of the stage in this episode of the continuing war in the North.

A VISION AND A CAUSE

To those who dare use the word 'criminal' to describe these men in H-Block and the women in Armagh Jail, we ask whether the self-sacrifice and suffering of the hunger strikers has ever been endured by those convicted of 'ordinary offences'? For the first 21 days the striker stays in his cell, physically tortured by stomach cramp and mentally tortured by the prison officers who leave trays of food constantly in sight. Then they are moved to a hospital room, where, slowly, violent vomiting, uncontrollable muscle spasms and blindness all precede eventual death. To resist the pleas of imploring clerics and the suffering of their family and friends is an added torture. Only men who have a vision and a cause can endure this.

Micky Devine, who at the time of writing was the latest striker to die mov-

ingly expressed the feelings and thinking of these heroic men, in a letter written before his death:

"None of my comrades who have gone before me wanted to die—they had too much to live for. I do not wish to die for I have too much to live for. Yet in what manner must we live? If we have not our dignity then what have we... As each day slips by I will keep uppermost in my mind the unquenchable spirit and magnificent example of those already buried in martyrs graves and find, in the risen people, the risen Irish people, my source of resistance and strength." (H-Block/Armagh Bulletin 21st August 81).

This is the voice of the oppressed. The real criminals are the British oppressors of the Irish people—and they are to

be found, special status and all, in Westminster. British workers must bend all their efforts to bringing these criminals to justice.

The present hunger strikes have cruelly underscored Terence McSwiney's words 61 years ago when just before he died after 74 days fast in a British jail:

"It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can suffer the most who will conquer."

The Irish people have suffered long enough. The British labour movement must rouse itself.

In every union branch, in every Labour Party ward, militants must fight for solidarity with the prisoners. Pickets and protests must be organised in every

town. Most vitally, British workers must make clear where they stand on the war that the British ruling class are waging against the nationalist population in the North. A campaign of industrial action—strikes and blocking of war materials—must be launched.

The labour movement must wage this fight until the government grants Political Status. And it must go further it must have as active policy support for:

- * Troops Out Now
- * Self-Determination for the Irish People As A Whole
- * Solidarity with all those fighting British imperialism

Only this way can we really aid our Irish brothers and sisters in their fight against their savage British overlords. ■

DEFEND IRANIAN LEFT!

IRAN IS LOCKED in a bitter struggle marked by bloody repression on the side of the Khomeini/IRP Government on the one hand and the campaign of resistance and counter terror from the Mojahedin and the supporters of the ousted President Bani-Sadr on the other. "Le Monde" in late August calculated that over 600 political opponents of the regime had been butchered since the June 27th explosion at the IRP headquarters. Executions are proceeding at 50 to 100 per day after either a summary trial or no trial at all. Girls of 9 years, old men of a hundred have gone to the slaughter in what is a massive and dramatic change in the scale and target of the repression. According to the Sunday Times (23.8.81) the majority of those executed before January this year were monarchists and officials of the former regime. However a sizeable minority were Kurds (at least 1,000), Turkmens, and members of the religious minorities. No government neither Bazargan, Bani-Sadr, or Radjai, since January '79, has for long let up on the repression aimed at Iran's national and religious minorities.

In the post-June repression the deaths have fallen heavily on the Islamic left - Mojahedin (Over half of those killed), the marxist Fedayeen (Minority), Peykar, Komaleh and the Kurdish Democratic Party. The Iranian Government claims to have wiped out the majority of

the Mojahedin's leadership inside Iran. Yet the campaign of counter-terror aimed at the officials of the Government, the IRP and the Pasdars has claimed 500 victims in the last two months.

Khomeini, having definitively thrown in his lot with the Islamic Republican Party leadership since the overthrow of Bani-Sadr, must stand or fall with the bloody dictatorship of the party of clerical counter-revolution. The sharp decline of Khomeini's reputation and faith in the Islamic republic is shown by the low turn-out in the elections to replace Bani-Sadr. From the monarchist right to the marxist left the forces are growing that seek the IRP regime's destruction. The economic situation facing the country is ruinous. Declining oil prices, war damage and the US Government's economic blockade threaten the economy with total collapse. The IRP leaders and the Khomeini clique have moved decisively to behead all opposition that could lead the embittered masses or the army against them. Simultaneously they are moving against the workers' committees (the Shoras), closing down those that show any opposition to the regime. The obliteration of these would liquidate the last remains of the democratic and social gains of the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. However, if Khomeini succeeds in destroying the left and smashing the workers' organisations then it will be a pyrrhic victory for his clerical dictatorship. It will not long survive. The bazari bourgeoisie and large sections of the mullahs, already alienated from

Khomeini's rule by economic and political chaos, will ditch the IRP and turn to the army. The Khomeinite street gangs (hezbollahis) will melt away and the IRP regime will be overthrown, either by the openly pro-imperialist Pahlavi right, or by an "Islamic" general like Zia in Pakistan.

Against Khomeini and his various anti-working class allies, the working class and all democratic forces in Iran must unite to overthrow, by mass action, the IRP/Khomeini regime. The only way to prevent the restoration of the pro-monarchist elements or pro-bourgeoisie Bani-Sadr supporters being the result of this, is to ensure that the present struggle against Islamic terror goes on to finally settle accounts with all sections of the Iranian bourgeoisie and their imperialist backers. For a workers revolution in Iran!

At the same time workers in Britain must do all they can to support all those defending democratic rights in Iran - the Mojahedin, Fedayeen (Minority), Kurds etc. Protest demonstrations against the repression, executions and torture of leftists in Iran must be organised by the Trade Unions and Labour Party. All union branches and LP organisations should send letters of protest to the Iranian embassy. All actions of Iranians in Britain who oppose the repression (and the restoration of the Shah), such as the Fedayeen (Minority) picket outside the Iranian embassy, must be supported by British workers. Solidarity with those fighting the Khomeini dictatorship's repression! ■

THIS SUMMER HAS seen an uprising of the oppressed — an uprising that shook numerous British inner cities, literally, to the ground. The post-riot desire to explain the cause of them has produced a veritable industry of inquiries and fact finding teams. Those fearless defenders of truth housed in Fleet Street, have produced miles of print explaining that the whole affair was the work of left wing conspirators — a communist version of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. William Whitelaw, going straight to the heart of the matter, thought that parents were to blame. Thatcher herself, not so interested in the causes, has declared that being unemployed is no excuse for someone indulging in street violence.

The real causes behind the wave of mass rioting have nothing whatsoever to do with this blend of fantasy and malevolent deceit. They are a combination of three related strands in the long term decay of British capitalism. First is the de-industrialisation of Britain's inner cities over the last twenty years that has accelerated over the last two. This has resulted in a massive increase in unemployment, the disintegration of public services and the continued existence of massive slums which have provided both the breeding ground and the battlefields for the riots. Secondly, and consequent upon this, is the parallel development of a larger and increasingly militarised state police force which has included the introduction of elitist specialised policing agencies (SPG, TAG, OSD). In its turn this has encouraged all the most reactionary tendencies in the police including racism and pro-fascist sympathies. Thirdly, the official leaders of the organised labour movement have organised no real resistance to this bosses' offensive. They are deeply hostile to the popular revolt from below and are bending all their efforts toward pacifying any fightback.

The misery of the inner cities is graphic, in Liverpool 8, for example, unemployment stands at 40%, compared to a national average of 12.2%. Within these areas themselves it is the youth, particularly black and Asian youth, who bear the brunt of unemployment. In Toxteth, 90% of the 16-19 year olds are unemployed. Cut off from the organised labour movement by unemployment, the black and white youth of the inner cities are one of the most oppressed sections of the working class.

While the decaying inner cities provided the grim backdrop to the riots, in nearly all cases the actual incidents that sparked off the spontaneous revolts were particularly brutal acts of racist harassment by the cops. In Brixton the rioting which took place on 10th-12th April was a direct response to the Metropolitan Police's 'Operation Swamp 81' which had seen the area flooded by groups of plainclothes police who had made over 1,000 "stop and searches" in the week before the trouble started. Likewise in Toxteth, saturation policing by the notorious thugs of the Merseyside police, carried out on the orders of the openly racist Chief Constable Oxford,

Police repression grows 'DEMOCRATIC CONTROL' IS NO DEFENCE

drove the local youth into a mood of resistance, a mood sparked into action by the arrest of Leroy Cooper. This was no isolated incident — Leroy's brother had been arrested 14 times in the last two years.

NO LEAD

FROM THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Although the riots gave rise to great acts of courage and daring, their political content was that of despair. The riots were the actions of people who have nothing to lose, who have given up hope in their ability to resist the attacks of the bosses and their police in an organised way, as a class. Indeed, many of the youth have never even had the opportunity to act in such a way. The key to understanding when, where and why the riots took place is the recognition that they were not merely a product of, "government policies" as Foot, Benn and company would have us believe. That the youth of Brixton, Toxteth and other towns took to the streets was a direct result of the failure of the organised labour movement, in particular its leaders, to lead an effective fightback against either unemployment or police and fascist attacks on the black communities.

Only nine months prior to the Toxteth riots, those same devastated streets of Liverpool 8 witnessed some 200,000 people march by in an official Labour Party protest against unemployment. Yet these same leaders and their allies in the trade union bureaucracy have not made any serious attempts, in Liverpool or anywhere else, to organise direct action in the factories to resist the Tories' policies. Worse, they have actually sabotaged the initiatives of the rank and file in a number of disputes — Ansell's, Plansees, Advest, Laurence Scott etc.

Even when the youth were forced to respond to constant victimisation in the ghettos, they got no sympathy, even from the 'Left' leaders. Eric Heffer moved quickly to condemn a LPYS leaflet that defended the rioters. The organ of the Labour Left, Tribune, was eager to say, in the guise of blaming the Tories "it would be wrong too to blame the police" and Tony Benn sided with the police against the rioters, arguing that he "wouldn't tolerate injuries to the police carrying out their duties". It is precisely this real indifference to

the plight of the unemployed and the daily repression suffered by youth at the hands of the state, that drives them away from the labour movement. The smallness of the August 15th demonstration in Liverpool illustrates the suspicion that thousands have of organised action.

FROM BRISTOL TO BRIXTON — THE TORIES HARDEN THE LINE

The response of the state to the rioting, shows that the ruling class, with Thatcher at their head, have not been slow to learn the lessons of the St Pauls riots in Bristol in April 1980. There, the police completely withdrew from the area, conceding the first, "no-go area" on mainland Britain. When the police returned to St Pauls and dispersed the riot they were under instructions to, "play it softly" with the black community, and have continued to tolerate the same level of illegal drinking, dope smoking and prostitution as they did before the crackdown which started the riot. Instead of physical reprisals the police pinned their hopes on quelling the resistance of the St Pauls community through legal repression — heavy fines and imprisonment — against those arrested. However, when many of the accused elected for trial by jury, and when the juries began to throw out the too obviously fabricated prosecution cases, the police were forced to drop the charges against the remaining defendants.

Having burnt their fingers on the 'St Pauls 9' and seen the chance to, "strike while the iron was hot" in Bristol, pass away, Thatcher and her police chiefs resolved to act decisively in the wake of the Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side riots.

In changing their tactics from those of attempting to construct an uneasy peace to those of "positive" reprisal policing, the Chief Constables at last seized their chance to use in Britain the accumulated experience of years of army and police repression in Northern Ireland. As The Times reported on July

15th, a week after Toxteth erupted, "The experience of 12 years of dealing with violent street riots will today be passed onto senior police officers when they meet their counterparts in the Royal Ulster Constabulary."

The promise by Home Secretary Whitelaw of all available technology of repression (water cannon, CS gas, plastic bullets) is but the most recent import from the Six Counties. Throughout the 1970's the elitist formations of the SPG were trained in the techniques of crowd control — snatch squads and wedges — all since used to destroy the effectiveness of picket lines and demonstrations. In all but name a para-military "third force" was built.

The "positive policing" tactic was given the green light in the aftermath of the first round of Brixton riots in April 1981. Between 12th April and 24th July a special squad, set up to make arrests in connection with the April disturbances and run by the head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist squad, has made over 60 raids. These culminated on the 14th July with a massive police raid on Railton Road, involving between 600-700 police in over 30 vans and coaches. The ostensible aim, to discover petrol bombs and drugs, was not realised. The primary aim of the raid, however, was to establish police authority over Brixton's "Front Line" and to terrorise the community into submission.

In Toxteth on July 6th, "positive policing" took the form of firing CS cartridges at people, resulting in serious injury. A Smith and Wesson spokesman commented, "If you are going to fire these cartridges at people you might as well fire live ammunition because you'd have the same effect." (New Statesman 12.7.81) Unable to successfully kill with CS cartridges, the Merseyside police had to resort to more conventional methods of driving on pavements in transit vans and by mowing down disabled bystander David Moore. The premeditated nature of these tactics shines through the callous comments from Oxford on the incident, "They can see the vehicles coming and they know what will happen if they get in their way." (New Statesman 1.8.81)

The spate of official inquiries, staffed by the ubiquitous white judge and whitewasher, Scarman, fits neatly into the drive for "community policing". Of course the first job of these bodies (as the inquiries at Brixton and Moss Side are demonstrating) is to whitewash the police. However, having exonerated them

S.W.P. HAILS THE RIOTS - TAILS THE RIOTERS

"THE ROAD FROM riot to revolution requires a detour that leads through the factories" (Socialist Review 16/5/81).

This piece of political geography, penned by Chris Harman, epitomises the tailist political method of the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Their response to the outbreak of rioting in Britain's major cities has been, for the most part, to uncritically tail it, and, on occasion, to advocate rioting as a viable tactic of the class struggle. Their prescription for taking thousands of youth beyond rioting is a combination of abstract and maximalist socialist propaganda and a diversionary, reformist practice.

For the SWP the twists and turns of the class struggle are things to be followed and encouraged by the revolutionary party. A programme designed to shape the course of the class struggle is irrelevant to the SWP. Unable to tail any major industrial struggles because of the real downturn in combativity amongst employed workers, the SWP have recently decided that the riots are an example of the working class taking the offensive. Thus, in response to the Brixton riot last April, they rapidly asserted that it was "A class riot not a race riot" (Socialist Review 16/5/81). After the first Toxteth riot, Socialist Worker joyfully proclaimed "We've Turned" (11/7/81). Riots, like strikes, exist to be tailed!

This profoundly one-sided interpretation of the riots, as positive actions conducted on a class basis, has led the SWP to advocate rioting. Tony Cliff, the leader of the SWP was explicit about this: "I wish there was a good mass riot in Coventry to clear the air of this horrible racist rubbish" (SW 18/7/81).

Taking their cue from the leader, the SWP in Brixton issued a Right to Work leaflet headed: "The Next Riot - Tory Conference". It went on to point out, by way of innuendo, that the Tories will "be a mere stone's throw from Blackpool beach". This irresponsible bravado ignores the real nature of the

riots and fails to prepare any youth mobilised for the march for a potential conflict with the police. By and large the Brixton and Toxteth riots, by their very spontaneity, took the police by surprise. They revealed the pent-up hostility of whole communities to the police. But this hostility, unorganised and without a political objective, was expressed in a necessarily short-lived way — through a riot, a temporary assertion of popular anger. The "victory" over the police has, sadly, proved to be extremely brief.

For the SWP to suggest that such a victory can be repeated at the Tory conference is to deceive the youth and other workers (employed and unemployed) that they may mobilise for the march. Blackpool will be like an armed camp. The march, made up largely of people from outside Blackpool (ie not a local community familiar with the terrain) will be kept much more than a stone's throw away from the conference. More important, the SWP are suggesting that the unorganised spontaneous rebellion of a community can and should be used as a weapon of class struggle. This is the politics of spontaneity gone mad. The unorganised riot cannot and should not be advocated by revolutionaries. Revolutionary violence is not something to be toyed with, not something that we prepare for by childish innuendo. We defend absolutely the rioters against the state, but we have to counterpose to their anarchic rage, organisation and political objectives. The SWP fail to do this because their own worshipping of the working class' spontaneity blinds them to the need for politics and organisation — except at an abstract level.

Harman did argue that to get from the riot to the revolution it was necessary to go through the factories. What this means is not immediately clear — Harman, we presume, does not mean that we should riot in the factories! Harman and Cliff do go on to elaborate their road map to revolution:



Upper Parliament Street, Toxteth

"What is needed is thorough going revolutionary socialist politics, a stress that the factories as well as the streets have to be seized" (Socialist Review 16/5/81); Or again:

"We need general socialist propaganda. Therefore we must have mass leafletting again and again" (Cliff - SW 18/7/81).

But general socialist propaganda — which in Socialist Worker consists of speculative recipes for post-revolutionary Britain — is not much use in defending Brixton now, as the police thugs smash up homes and people. Nor are the residents of Toxteth likely to take much comfort from repeated leaflets promising that one happy day society will have no need of police. When it comes to giving practical, immediate answers the abstract socialists of the SWP can only echo the slogans that they hear raised "spontaneously" (in fact slogans often fed to people by reformist community or trade union leaders).

Around the August 15th Demo in Liverpool the SWP went no further than the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee's demand to get rid of Chief Constable Oxford. Nowhere did they forcefully warn that, while supporting the demand, even if Oxford was removed, nothing would fundamentally change — the same police thugs would harass under a different leader. All that was said on this issue by Socialist Worker in its report on the demo was: "And the speakers also emphasised that getting rid of Oxford wasn't enough". (22/8/81)

What else is needed? The SWP are silent. They cheer on the riots but cannot answer the question posed in their aftermath — what next? Nowhere do they raise the urgent call for the organised defence of the communities by black and white working class defence units. This demand, so immediate, so practical, also takes the class forward in the struggle for power. It makes working class power a living concept — it throws down an organised challenge to the highly organised forces of the state. It demonstrates in practice that the working class don't need a police force separated from themselves, their communities and workplaces. No to the capitalist cops, yes to workers defence squads — this answers the question "What next?" in a concrete, socialist fashion.

The SWP don't raise this slogan. Indeed they often scorn it as too advanced. Too advanced when, by their own admission: "The local streets suddenly take on the aspect of a revolutionary battleground" (Socialist Review 16/5/81). Instead the SWP mouth maximalist platitudes and practice minimalist politics. They agitate around the limited and inadequate demand of kicking out Oxford but in their paper they say there is no reforming the police: "Because the system the police defend is corrupt and brutal. That is what has to be changed." (SW 22/8/81) Never the twain shall meet! ■



Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

Oxford gets jostled at protest picket

they also aim to explore possible improvements in police methods. The most fashionable of these is the introduction of so-called community police. Indeed, partly as camouflage for their aggressive reprisals and partly as a response to the criticisms and outrage that have accompanied them, certain sectors of the police and the Tories, taking their cue from the likes of Scarman, have been keen to draw attention to the benefits of "community policing". In particular, after the April riots in Brixton, the Times was moved to ask, "Are there lessons in the way Handsworth became quieter?" As if to demonstrate to The Times what the police already knew — that 'positive policing' and 'community policing' are not simple alternatives — the youth of Handsworth rioted in early July and were met by a period of fierce repression. Community policing in Handsworth, as elsewhere, operates on a number of levels. Originating in the mid 70's it began as an attempt by the police to penetrate the cultural organisations of the oppressed. The Times noted, "Police have contributed to school programmes and to leisure and sports activities for young people: there are links with the social services ... with ethnic minorities through collaboration in dealing with community problems, ... with housing authorities through discussions on the control of 'squats'". (14.4.81)

From boxing clubs to adventure holidays the police attempt to divide up the oppressed. They try to co-opt a privileged section of youth to act as spies and informers and as an ideological transmission belt for the principles of 'law and order'. However, such methods alone failed to overcome the suspicion and hostility of the most conscious and militant sections of the Asian and Afro-Caribbean youth. As a result 'community policing' widened its scope to include an age-old police concern, the control and development of corruption and crime. This tactic has weakened the militant black organisations. In particular the Rastafarians have been targeted. Harrassment of Rastas is, of course, still a common occurrence but the police, particularly in Handsworth, have encouraged Rastas to continue in petty-crimes, not least the distribution of the drug ganja. By playing one Rasta gang off against another, through the selective distribution of grants of vans and sound systems, by fostering the reactionary creed of, "Back to Africa" and stimulating an introspective culture around ganja smoking, as well as their usual desire to foster corruption for their own ends, the police aim to prevent the emergence of a united militant black organisation.

Together, 'positive' and 'community' policing provide the iron fist in the velvet glove to hold down the rebellious community. This is why we say **NO** to community police schemes and **NO** to the official inquiries into the riots. We demand that the labour movement hold its own **WORKERS' INQUIRY** into the incidents of police brutality that provoked the riots.

DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF THE POLICE OR DESTABILISE THE STATE

Some sections of the Labour Left (e.g. Tribune and Benn) have obscured the issue of policing and have instead intensified the campaign, if only verbally, on the Tories' economic policies. They are, thereby, abstaining from the fight against the immediate enemy, those responsible for enforcing Tory policy on the streets — the police. At best they have been silent, at worst they reaffirm their support for 'law and order' and its paid enforcers.

Others on the left, notably those whose positions in local government place them nearer the centre of events and make them more susceptible to the pressure for change, have espoused the need for the radical reform of the police. Perhaps the most radical statements with regard to making the police 'more accountable' have come from the 'left' Greater London Council (GLC) led by Ken Livingstone.

The chairperson of GLC's police committee, Paul Boateng, a Livingstone man, stressing that he was not, "involved in a police bashing exercise" outlined a proposal to replace Home Office control over the Metropolitan Police with a body consisting of "elected representatives of the London Boroughs and the GLC". Such a body would have the power to appoint all officers above the rank of Chief Superintendent and "scrutinise the day to day affairs of the force and allocate resources".

(The Times 24.5.81) On closer "scrutiny" Boateng's goals prove to be quite reactionary. In an interview in 'The Leveler' (no.60) he makes quite clear the limits of the control he and the GLC envisage over the police. Via a GLC sponsored Bill for the 'next Labour Government' (until then the victims of police harassment will just have to wait) Boateng would seek to amend the 1964 Police Act to 'clarify' their powers. In what way? By giving a Police Committee powers to concentrate the ordinary police's attention upon "ordinary crime". The GLC would discourage the use of money on surveillance helicopters and more on, "increasing the size of your establishment so that you had more men on the beat." Perhaps Boateng believes that the taxpayers of Brixton fear there are not enough already patrolling the streets? More, Boateng argues that the police have, "professional skills and expertise" which he does not wish to interfere with! Like snatch squads and truncheon handling for example? Boateng deliberately leaves outside his proposed powers the **political operations** of the police, such as phoning trade unionists for which he concedes there might be a necessity. He thinks such operations, "should be an area in which the Home Secretary should have direct responsibility".

Behind the rhetoric about, "curbing the abuse of power" lies the reformist GLC councillor's real goal. To put more money into catching the 'common criminals', like the unemployed driven to desperation by poverty. No doubt Boateng is disturbed that in beating people up in Brixton the Metropolitan Police have disgracefully fallen behind their provincial colleagues in 'crime solving'. Boateng's main consideration is the **efficiency** of the Met which only cleared up 20.3% of recorded crime last year as compared with 40.6% nationally.

Boateng's goal is merely to reform the existing force, a force whose very function is the defence of capitalist property and capitalist law. Boateng is fundamentally wrong to believe that, by a measure of accountability and a stress on 'ordinary crime', he will be able to chip away the power of the McNees, Anderton's and Oxford's. Indeed, local authorities already have 'Police Committees' that are supposed to make the force more accountable. That has not stopped them killing Davey Moore in Liverpool or turning Moss Side into a virtual armed camp.

However, while countering any belief in the reform of the police as a strategic goal, and while placing primary stress on the need to organise workers' defence against the police, we do recognise that particular struggles to reform the police can play a limited but progressive role in undermining the power of the cops. For example, we would support the demand of the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee that his replacement would be no better and that defence squads need to be built. However the removal of Oxford would undermine morale in the Liverpool force. It could temporarily weaken the chain of command etc. What is crucial, however, is the **fight** for such reforms. In the course of fighting for them we would seek to build organisations capable of going further — permanent organisations that could resist every attack the police try to launch. Tactical support for particular reforms, therefore, can serve to weaken the resolve of the police and the stability of the state in the face of direct workers' action. However, this in no way obscures our strategic goal — one that is very different from that of Boateng, Livingstone et al.

Against their reactionary pipe-dream we believe it is impossible to reform the police. They need to be smashed by an insurgent working class organised in an armed militia based on the factories and estates. But, while that cannot be conjured out of thin air, workers in Toxteth, Brixton and Handsworth can take the necessary first steps in **defence** of their communities. The repression will continue. More rioting will not help. Without organisation and solid roots in the local movement any future confrontation between the youth of Toxteth, Brixton etc. will lead to further repression and further defeats. It is vital that the local communities of the riot-torn areas organise **disciplined** groups of men and women — **workers' self defence squads** — which could move round the area quickly to resist the provocations and reprisals of the police. Such workers' self defence squads would need to win support from the local trade union movement as well as from the older and more passive sections of the community.

Such a perspective, as well as challenging the inactivity of the labour movement leaders, matches up to the **immediate situation**. To resist now from a position of organised strength is far better than to attack from a position of unorganised weakness. Together with the struggle to achieve **protest strike action and mass demonstrations** to force the release of all prisoners, to demand the dropping of all charges, such a strategy can lay the basis for a fightback. Those who reject this and instead place their hopes in either sporadic, unorganised rioting, or the utopian dream of an "accountable" police force, leave themselves **defenceless** in the face of the onslaught which has followed the riots and which will continue. ■

ORGANISING THE UNEMPLOYED

THE LATEST REGISTERED total of 2.94 million unemployed represents the largest absolute number of jobless workers ever in British history (surpassing even the January 1933 figure of 2.9 million - the highest in the 1930s). Although today's total represents 12.2% of the working class as compared with the 25% of 1933, the tendency in the 1980s is up and up, with some bourgeois commentators even resignedly talking of 5 million unemployed by 1984.

The urgent tasks of the day are fighting unemployment and organising the massed ranks of the unemployed. Yet the official leadership of the British labour movement - headed by languid Len Murray - is either inert in the face of the Tories' offensive, or busy sabotaging rank and file struggles. The TUC Congress will not be taking decisions on what actions its 12 million members can take to stop the rot.

LEADERS FAIL TO ORGANISE UNEMPLOYED

After floating the ludicrous idea of a motorcade of the unemployed (not many of whom have cars), and a touring train, the "Jobs Express", the General Council's latest offering, "The Reconstruction of Britain", contains no proposals for the immediate defence of jobs. It offers us a programme (for a new Labour government - not thought likely until 1984 by Murray and Co.) of £24,000 million in investments that would create - 500,000 jobs! The other 2.4 million workers currently signing on are no doubt waiting in eager anticipation for "The Reconstruction of Britain - Part 2". The only other proposal on the horizon from the TUC is support for a planned youth lobby of Parliament some time in the autumn. The scale of the bosses' offensive seems to have induced a catatonic state amongst the TUC worthies.

The leaders of the Labour Party are organising yet another protest march to be addressed, yet again, by the ageing windbag Michael Foot. As in Birmingham on September 19th, so in Liverpool last November, Glasgow last Winter and Cardiff in July. There will be a carefully contained protest that lets off steam, but provides no immediate perspective for fighting unemployment. Even this field of fairly tame activity is seemingly too much for the labour leaders. Labour Weekly has declared: "The midland event will probably be the last in the party's national rallies this year over the worsening jobs crisis" (7/8/81). Having done their bit for the year, the Labour leaders are retiring gracefully back into their parliamentary ivory towers, leaving not a single permanent organisation of the unemployed behind them.

Yet this low ebb of resistance to the high tide of unemployment exists in the aftermath of what Murray, Foot, Basnett and Benn all hailed as the labour movement's success of the century - the People's March for Jobs. The bitter truth is that the real potential of the People's March has been squandered by its bigwig sponsors (the TUC) and its smaller fry (largely Communist Party) organisers.

Throughout the country the recalled People's March Steering Committees - retitled the People's Campaign for Jobs - have, during June and July, promulgated the popular frontist perspective that they were, in the end, successfully able to foist onto the march. Working class interests are sacrificed for the sake of an alliance with various conscience-stricken middle class elements.

At the 20th July Sheffield recall meeting of the Campaign, local Communist Party (CP) leader Brennan Bates - the chief gauliteer of the Eastern Leg - decided that fresh elections for the local Committee were out of order, despite the overwhelming desire of the meeting for elections. Apart from quelling a major anxiety of nearly all the ex-marchers - why had their souvenir scrolls and mugs not arrived - the main function of the meeting was to announce the organisation of another march - this time across the Pennines to Blackpool during the Tory Party Conference. The sectarianism of the CP was revealed by their stubborn refusal at the meeting to even consider linking up with the SWP's Right to Work March from Liverpool once it reached the Lancashire side of the Pennines, despite the fact that they were going to the same place.

This might interfere with their plans for a tightly policed re-run of the People's March. Like its parent it is being billed as an **alternative** to workers' action (one of its organisers is the Sheffield Stalinist George Caborn who, as his last act as AUEW District Secretary betrayed the fight to defend 100 jobs at Plansee). It is

to be a passive protest aimed at securing the support of all the people - regardless of class. As usual it is marked by the atheistic CP's preoccupation with attracting support from the clergy. A poster for the march declares: "If Christ were alive there would be a carpenter leading the Peoples March".

In stark contrast to this record of retreat, popular frontism and inaction, **WORKERS POWER**, with far more limited forces, has made a significant contribution to organising amongst the unemployed the beginnings of a militant resistance to the bosses. Developing the work we undertook during and on the Peoples March (see **WORKERS POWER** No. 23 and the Peoples March Special), we have taken the initiative in Birmingham and Sheffield in gathering together ex-marchers and other unemployed militants into local Action Groups of the unemployed. In Birmingham, the West Midlands Unemployed Action Group (WMUAG) and in Sheffield the Sheffield Unemployed Workers Group (SUWG) have made a promising start in formulating a militant programme of action to guide the struggle, and an imaginative and energetic attempt to draw in wider layers from the dole queue, and win political and financial support from the trade unions and the Labour Party.

In both groups we have argued for class answers and class actions to fight unemployment.

- * Working class unity - the unity of the employed and the unemployed.
- * The right of unemployed workers to join trade unions.
- * The fight for work or full pay and for the 35 hour week.
- * The fight to end YOP schemes and to unionise YOP workers.
- * For the provision of full benefits and free social and recreational facilities for the unemployed.
- * The struggle for a national unemployed workers union, represented at every level of the trade union movement.

These policies and others have been the plank that we have attempted to base the organisation of the unemployed upon.

THE REAL POTENTIAL THAT EXISTS

The fight to establish the WMUAG and SUWG has had to be conducted against the resistance of the Stalinists and the Labourite leaders, who counterpose to them the "tea and sympathy" centres of the TUC/MSU which are emerging this autumn. Against the chorus of reformist voices that denounce us as "splitters and wreckers", the WMUAG and SUWG have fought to win the trade unions and trades councils to a perspective of transforming the proposed centres into fighting centres of the unemployed. In Birmingham proposals from **WORKERS POWER** along these lines were accepted by the Trades Council Unemployment Sub-Committee, which decided that: "the centre will assist the united action of employed unemployed to defend every job, resist all closures, redundancies and cuts in social spending and seek to prevent the unemployed being used as scabs to break trade union strength". The Trades Council has agreed to allow 2 observers from WMUAG to attend full meetings.

Likewise the SUWG has fought for the unemployed to have control over the running of the proposed TUC centre. To date the SUWG has lobbied the Trades Council over the centre, has organised an occupation of the Job Centre in protest at the Royal Wedding, has given out thousands of leaflets to the dole queues and ranged weekly meetings of the group, which have included discussions of general political topics. Seeking and gaining support in the labour movement remains a priority.

In Birmingham the WMUAG has been involved in a similar range of activities. In the wake of the Handsworth riots, for example, the WMUAG leafleted the dole to explain the significance of the riots, and point a way forward from them.

Without doubt these are small beginnings, but they reveal the real potential for organising the unemployed that does exist. They show the TUC's bleatings about the impossibility of organising the unemployed to be in fact cynicism and indifference. With the forces of the trade unions, with a perspective of determined struggle in defence of workers' interests, an unemployed workers union can be built. Together with the unemployed, such a union can play a vital role in building a massive campaign of active resistance against the Tories and the bosses. Such a campaign must launch an offensive against their policies, and their whole wasteful, profit hungry system. ■

ONLY POLITICAL REVOLUTION CAN DEFEND GAINS OF STRUGGLE

THE MOBILISATIONS OF the last twelve months have given ample evidence of the potential strength of the working class in Poland. But the experience of the last year also vividly demonstrates that unless the workers are organised for a decisive struggle to seize political power then the initiative, ultimately, continues to lie with the bureaucracy—however divided and demoralised it may be at the moment. If the workers fail to destroy the political power of the bureaucrats then their hard-won gains will be systematically destroyed. The longer the working class remains in a state of mobilisation without there being a conclusive confrontation, then the stronger will become the forces of reaction in the workers organisations. In the absence of a revolutionary communist party workers will recoil from the policies of collaboration with the bureaucracy, advanced by Walesa, but encounter no other alternative programme save that of reactionary clerical Polish nationalism.

The mobilisations of the working class point the way to the only solution to Poland's deep crisis in the interests, and at the hands of, the working class. The struggle against privilege and rampant corruption, the struggle to tear down the wall of lies and secrecy that the bureaucracy hides behind and the struggle for workers control over the appointment of managers and their decisions, all threaten the very heart of bureaucratic rule. Further, the bureaucracy has proved itself to be powerless to resist the Polish workers with any threatening show of force such as Gomulka was able to deliver against the Baltic coast dockers in 1970. Indeed they have been forced into retreat and have had to make concessions in the short term in order to win the time and space they need to reassert their grip on society and the economy.

THE STATE OF THE PARTY

The Polish Communist Party is the principal means by which the bureaucracy organises to ensure the implementation and explanation of its policies in the workplaces and localities. But historically it has become ever weaker in its ability to recruit and organise workers. In 1946 64.7% of its members were registered as workers. By 1973 that figure had dropped to a mere 39.6% in a country where the industrial working class makes up a majority of society. Of its 3 million members at least three quarters of a million are full time party

themselves rather than via the vertical structures of the Stalinists' bureaucratic distortion of democratic centralism. At the July Party Congress alternative draft programmes to that of the outgoing Central Committee were presented by the party organisations of Poznan, Krakow, Gdansk and Wroclaw. This turmoil in the party reflects—as did Kania's key speech to the Congress—the battle between the workers and central bureaucracy that has gripped Poland for a year.

But the party, as the property of the ruling bureaucracy, cannot become the central arena for the resolution of the conflicts that pit the workers against the bureaucracy. Kania was able to ensure that rank and file opposition received little representation and even less speaking time at the Party Congress in July.

or state functionaries. In the period between September 1980 and May 1981, 140,000 used the opportunity of open anti-party mobilisations to slip out of the party. One third of the party members—doubtless the bulk of the party's industrial membership, joined Solidarity. A party divided in even proportions between state functionaries and Solidarity members has not provided a stable base for the central bureaucratic apparatus to move against Solidarity. There has been a degree of mobilisation at the base of the party as a result of the struggles of the Polish workers. In April over 750 delegates met at Torun to organise 'horizontal' coordination between party cells

POLITBURO ELECTIONS

Against the rank and file opposition Kania fought hard to use the full time party apparatus to secure the delegacy of Tadeusz Grabski who had led the hard-liner attack on Kania at the June Central Committee. A firm pro-Soviet man, he was responding to the letter the Kremlin had sent to the Polish party demanding that immediate measures be taken against Solidarity. Similarly the central grouping in the bureaucracy around Kania and Jaruzelski were able to ensure that the elections to the Central Committee and Politburo returned their key supporters while ousting the principal figures of the 'hard-line' anti-Kania opposition (who can count on virtually no support outside the party apparatus). They were also able to oust those with reputations as reformers and compromisers whose election despite their intentions to the contrary could have served to strengthen and encourage the mobilisations of the working class. Kania could not risk this. As a result only 43 old Central Committee members won their seats back. The 'hard' advocates of bureaucratic repression—Grabski, Zabinski, Kociolek (the 'butcher of Gdansk'), the sinister godfather of anti-semitic Polish 'party nationalism', Moczar, and Fiszbach of the present Gdansk organisation (and a reputed compromiser) were all excluded. Similarly the Kania-Jaruzelski group retained their pre-eminence in the Politburo, taking on board the notably anti-Solidarity member Zofia Grzyb. So alienated is the party from the working class that it could never have become the means by which the working class ousted their bureaucratic oppressors. On the contrary it is a weapon of the bureaucracy designed to defend their power and privilege. But so isolated and demoralised is the bureaucracy that the party so far has not been able to advance an explicit programme for destroying Solidarity. This has forced the central core of the privileged bureaucracy to search for alternative or additional bases of power from which to secure the demobilisations and then destruction of the Polish workers.

THE ULTIMATE BASE OF THE BUREAUCRACY

Ultimately, without the external aid of the Kremlin bureaucracy Poland's political rulers do not have a base to sustain themselves in power. They need to constantly remind the workers of the objective limits on their gains that are posed, not by the decrepit discredited party apparatus, but by the military might of the USSR itself. Hence the endless rounds of highly publicised Warsaw pact training exercises in and around Poland. And hence the mighty barrage of anti-Solidarity propaganda spewed from the presses of Moscow, East Berlin and Prague. Each of these bureaucracies know that the lessons of 'free' trade unions are contagious and can threaten their stolen privileges and political power. They know that if the Soviet bureaucracy in particular, cannot move to crush the gains made by the Polish workers then this will serve as an enormous encouragement to millions of workers in the USSR and East Europe. These workers will see this as the hoped-for signal of decay and weakness on the part of the hated Kremlin bureaucracy. But the men in the Kremlin—whatever the secret divisions within their inner council—know that to have invaded Poland in the past period would have precipitated a full scale war against the Soviet army with no significant section of Polish society providing the base for an alternative government. Thus the Soviet bureaucrats too have been forced, despite temporary discomfiture, to come to terms with allowing the deep crisis of the Polish economy and the bankruptcy of the Solidarity leaders to so demoralise and polarise Polish workers as to pave the way for a new crack down.

Within the preparations for a new crack down—whether it is 'aided' by the forces of the 'fraternal socialist countries' or not—the rôle of the Polish army is vital. Compared with the party and old trade unions the Army can still play on the poisonous traditions of Polish nationalism. It has a command structure and personnel that stretches down to the basic units of the economy. As well as generals in the government it has troops in the state farms and factories. The higher ranks have a hand in mismanaging the planned economy, while the rank and file are often called upon to act as auxiliary workers to help solve the inevitable

recurring labour sabotages that stem from blind planning. Its high command was trained by and receives regular experience joint exercises with the Soviet high command. The Jaruzelski premiership is a transparent attempt to maintain the power and privilege of the bureaucratic caste. On the one hand plays on the reputation of the armed forces 'neutrality' and 'patriotism'. On the other prepares the armed forces to play a decisive role in brutally reasserting the power of the central bureaucracy when the most suitable moment for such a move occurs—already the Kania Jaruzelski government has introduced the army—not the hated and demoralised police force—into the market place to stamp on the black market speculators who are thriving on the complete breakdown of planning and the inability, or unwillingness, of central agencies to meet the most elementary consumption needs of Polish workers.

CONCILIATION BEFORE CONFRONTATION

But while preparing a refined iron fist with which to smash the Polish workers the bureaucracy is also set on developing those forms of incorporation of the organisations of the working class that least upset the preservation of bureaucratic power and privilege. That is why the party Congress promised to extend the powers of scrutiny afforded by the bureaucracy to the Sejm (Parliament) while offering no change in the nature of its selection. It is also why, as Gomulka did in 1956 and Gierka again in 1971, it promised to extend the powers of workers in each separate enterprise at factory, to play a role in management and decision making. Most crucially it explains the cooperation with the clerical hierarchy of bishops, Bishops and Priests. This cossack caste has been able to strengthen its grip on the minds of millions of workers the more their struggles have been demobilised and prevented from reaching a successful conclusion.

The Catholic hierarchy has made clear that it will support the Polish workers only to the extent that the workers support the Church. As the new Polish Primate Archbishop Glemp declared in July "The Church's role is primarily pastoral, not political. But if Solidarity follows the light and needs our help, we will support them." This message is a clear one. Solidarity will have the full backing of the priesthood to the extent that it eschews the direct struggle for workers power and allows its strength to be used to pressure for the increased hold of the church over those affairs it calls 'unpolitical'—headfixing in schools, abortion and contraception provision, family life. The Catholic intelligentsia continue to use their influence as advisers to force Solidarity firmly in that direction. The Stalinists h

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Striking bus drivers blockade the centre of Warsaw.



LUTION



Shipyard workers at the Lenin yards in Gdansk.

shown themselves quite prepared to deal with the Church—giving one of its representatives in the Sejm responsibility for family affairs for example—so long as it proves a short term ally against the working class. After Głomp's appointment Kania was quick to secure a private audience with him. In the immediate aftermath at this meeting the church publicly urged 'Let nobody clench a fist'.

This alliance graphically illustrates the lengths the so called 'Communist' bureaucrats are prepared to go to defend their power. The church, currently negotiating for influence rather than state power, is an avowed enemy of communism. The Pope, before being shot was busy touring the world sanctifying the most brutal capitalist dictatorships in the Philippines and Latin America. The minute the balance of forces in Poland tips favourably towards capitalist restoration the church will enjoin the faithful to support the imperialists against the godless 'communists'. Yet Kania and co are prepared to bloc with these enemies of communism, opening Poland's planned property relations to yet another risk, in order to stave off the threat to their power and privilege immediately posed by the working class.

WORKERS TO PAY FOR POLISH CRISIS

At the heart of the Stalinists' programme for reasserting the unfettered role of the central bureaucracy is their intention to force the working class to pay for the catastrophic crisis of the Polish economy. A crisis that is the direct result of bureaucratic planning during the 1970s. The national income of Poland is expected to drop 15% in 1981 after a drop of 4% in 1980 and 2.3% in 1979. The massive foreign debts that the Stalinists took on board in order to circumvent stagnation and gross inefficiency in their planning mechanisms have left the economy with a debt to the Western banks of \$27 billion. In the last year the Polish Stalinists have also taken out extensive loans from the USSR in order to win room to manoeuvre. The Western capitalists are demanding strict terms of repayment including that Poland joins the IMF and thus becomes obliged to open her books and accounts to the scrutiny of international finance capital. The 'experts' of the 'Economist' and the 'Financial Times' are openly canvassing a 25% wage cut, the end of food subsidies, followed by a 5 year wage freeze as the price Polish workers should pay for bureaucratic mismanagement and to maintain the profit levels of the western banks.

In this context the bureaucracy is set to force the workers to shoulder the burden through a massive cut in food subsidies and a consequent leap in the prices of key food stuffs and consumer goods. In the immediate aftermath of the Party Congress price increas-

es of up to 110% were announced. Bread is to go up in price by 400%. Generalised scarcity and price increases for available goods is intended to destroy the credibility and bargaining power of Solidarity. If the bureaucracy can force these increases through then the mobilisations of the last year will have won nothing. The Stalinists will have paved the way for the destruction of the gains made by the working class.

In the face of these attacks the crippling weakness of the working class does not lie in its physical strength or the size of its new organisations. It has proved itself able to paralyse the major towns and to challenge the prerogatives of individual local managers. Against them, to date, the bureaucracy has not been able to muster a police or armed force that could physically defeat the workers. The crucial weakness of the new workers movement is to be found in the dominant ideology and programme of that movement. Despite the heroism of many of the struggles, despite the deep felt hatred of the workers for their Stalinist overlords the ideology of Solidarity is one that ultimately disarms the workers in the face of their bureaucratic oppressors and the plans of the western banks.

THE UTOPIAN DREAM OF A 'FREE' TRADE UNION

The limited programme of establishing a Trade Union in a bureaucratically degenerate workers state is a utopian one. Under capitalism Trade Unions represent workers against individual capitalists in a market over which neither employer nor worker has control. The very dynamics of the market economy keep alive trade unionism as a form of representation of the working class within bourgeois society. Within a healthy workers state Trade Unions would initially continue to represent the interests of sections of workers within a state that was under the direct control of the working class as a whole. They would be essential training grounds for workers to learn to control and manage the economy, 'schools for socialism', as Lenin liked to call them. But in a bureaucratically degenerate workers state such as Poland neither the market mechanisms through which workers bargain with individual employers nor the prerequisites of the functions of Trade Unions in a healthy workers state are in existence. Every major demand of the workers—on the length of the working week, the sacking of an individual manager, the allocation of goods or wages—inevitably pits the working class against the central bureaucracy which monopolises the central planning mechanism. And lasting success for the workers cannot be secured by bargaining with the central bureaucracy. The nature of its power and privileges is such that it cannot for long coexist with independent organisations of those that it oppresses. The centralisation of its power and the scale of its privileges make it too tempting an object of revolutionary overthrow unless the masses themselves are forcibly deprived of the right to organise.

The various schemes, by local Solidarity chapters for 'workers management' offer no solution to this dilemma. They are based on the illusion that central planning can harmoniously co-exist with local control. But such a system is impossible in a state in which the central plan is designed to serve the interests of the ruling caste, rather than those of the masses. Local initiative and control—the task and lifeblood of a trade union in a healthy workers state governed by a democratic plan—is anathema to the bureaucracy. The struggle of Polish workers to remove particularly hated managers clearly demonstrate the limitations of 'self management'.

In Katowice steel workers have demanded the sacking of the manager who ordered the closing down of the local 'Solidarity' newspaper. In July representatives of 122 factories in the Warsaw region met to coordinate struggles for workers self-management. But the central bureaucracy will not permit a series of local wars of attrition against particular managers. Jaruzelski has already declared that the Government will not allow workers to "wheel them (managers) out of their plants on barrows". Once again the workers have come face to face with either destroying the central bureaucracy through a revolution that takes political power directly into the hands of the working class or conceding control to the bureaucrats. The struggle to hire and fire managers, like the struggle for access to the media can only be resolved through political struggle for a workers council Poland.

The last year has increasingly demonstrated the utopian nature of the programme for the coexistence of free trade unions with the Stalinist bureaucracy. While in its initial stages the inter strike committees and Solidarity

branches gave valuable experience to a working class used to bureaucratic tyranny. However, as long as those organs were not turned into the instruments for overthrowing the bureaucracy—workers councils and a workers militia—they eventually disarmed the workers in the face of the bureaucracy.

The leaders of Solidarity have been committed to building a Union which explicitly undertook not to challenge the power of the central bureaucracy. This is enshrined in its draft programme "as a trade union, we do not aim to replace the government in performing its tasks, but we do want to represent the interests of working people in relation to the state." (Intercontinental Press Vol 19 No 23) and was most recently expressed by Walesa when he declared "We do not intend to seize power from anyone, or become a political party".

As a result Solidarity has no programme for solving the economic crisis that looms before the working class—its draft programme favours 'economic reform' but gives that no content whatsoever. And in the face of the bureaucracy's plea for "all Poles" to pull together the Solidarity leaders have already conceded the next 8 work free Saturdays which were wrung from the bureaucracy by the struggles of last summer.

THE DANGERS OF NATIONALISM

The crippling illusions of creating a permanent Trade Union and holding back from destroying bureaucratic power is compounded by the poisonous influence of Polish nationalism on the working class. In that its formative experience in the 20th Century was in counterposition to the revolutionary communist break up of the Tsar's 'prison house of nations' in 1917 Polish nationalism has had no significant progressive character since the Russian revolution. This was compounded by the imposition of a workers state, bureaucratically degenerate from birth, by the Soviet bureaucracy in the aftermath of the 2nd World War. Therefore, however historically understandable the strength of Polish nationalism may be, communists must be aware of the reactionary character of the ideological expression of that nationalism. The flowering of Pilsudski emblems and totems of the reactionary Pope underline this fact.

Nationalism can of course serve to bind the working class to explicitly pro-capitalist forces. The scale of the planned mobilisations in support of the pro-capitalist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) which were staved off by the Church and Solidarity leaders—shows just how strong that tendency has become, particularly among the student youth. Polish nationalism's historical illusions in the west as opposed to 'communist' Russia, further serve to bind the working class to western capitalism's drive—in conjunction with the Stalinists at present—to force the workers to pay for the interest charges due to the western banks with starvation wages.

But nationalism also disarms the workers before the Polish Stalinists themselves. A significant wing of the Stalinist Party that styles itself the Grunwald group and is strong in the army and secret police is more than prepared to espouse a programme of 'national communism' (virulent anti-semitism and the militarisation of Polish society)—as a means of maintaining bureaucratic rule. That grouping, and Kania too, have already been able to play the nationalist card against the Solidarity leadership, forcing them to sell the workers gains to solve 'Poland's crisis'.

While the workers themselves have not always carried out the instructions of the unholy alliance of the Stalinists, the church and the Solidarity leadership, there is no evidence that Walesa's most vocal opponents in Solidarity represent an alternative revolutionary programme. Rulewski of Bydgoszcz, who has been singled out for physical attack by the police and for regular verbal attack by Walesa and the Stalinists has declared

TURKISH SOLIDARITY

IN THE TWELVE months since General Evren staged his military coup in Turkey the working class has suffered severe repression from the man the capitalist press likes to dub as the 'gentle general'. At the moment 52 leaders of the left wing trade union confederation, DISK, are facing the death penalty. Their crime—being trade unionists.

The Tory government are trying to make the total 53. Home Secretary Whitlaw has recently refused to grant political asylum to a DISK member, Dogan Tarkan who managed to escape from Turkey. Dogan is an ex-official of the Turkish metal

"There can be suspicion of some links between the government and certain union activists." (interview in New Statesman 14th August 1981). But in the very same interview he makes it plain that not only does he continue to look to the church as the workers ally "The Catholic Church has proved to be the best ally and we will continue this cooperation" but that he too has no economic programme in the face of the evident collapse of Poland's planned economy except a 'national' debate to attempt to find a solution.

THE SOVIET THREAT

One year after the first wave of strikes every gain made by the Polish workers is in jeopardy. A failure of Solidarity to maintain those gains will engender demoralisation and demobilisation in the ranks of the workers, it will be the signal for a final bureaucratic clamp down potentially backed by Soviet armour. But Solidarity's leadership and most of its allies are running headlong from the political solution that can alone secure those gains. Only if a revolutionary communist party is built among the workers—and if the organisations of the workers are transformed into the direct and democratic organs of working class rule, rooted in the factories, can disaster be averted. That disaster will take the form of starvation, increased repression and the shattering of the hopes of millions of workers throughout East Europe and the USSR.

The Soviet bureaucracy has bided its time, waited for its moment, to invade Poland. Its recent injunction to all Comecon parties to stand ready to "give a timely and resolute rebuff to anti-socialist forces" was yet another thinly disguised warning of its unwillingness to tolerate for much longer what it calls the "acute crisis phenomena" taking place in Poland. Only if the weak Polish bureaucracy can summon the force to crush the workers will that invasion not take place. The efforts of the church, of Walesa and KOR leader Kuron, with his repeated calls for the movement to be 'self-limited', give the bureaucracy time to piece itself together again. But there is no evidence that these leaders can indefinitely force the Polish workers to hold back from sharper confrontations with the bureaucracy. They do not yet have the apparatus and the discipline that is in the hands of the Trade Union bureaucracies of the west.

Should the invasion take place the call from revolutionaries must be to fight the bureaucracy with a direct struggle for working class power. Polish workers should attempt to fraternise with the rank and file soldiers of the invading armies (military circumstances allowing) urging them to break with their bureaucratic rulers, support the revolutionary struggle and form soldiers councils.

Workers councils, workers militias must be formed in every factory and town. A national workers council must declare itself the sovereign body in Poland and that workers Council must declare that it will not permit the re-institution of capitalism in Poland, but will revise the plan, from top to bottom, placing it under the control of the workers themselves and cancelling all debts to imperialism. It must declare its solidarity with all workers under the bureaucratic yoke in the USSR and East Europe and its commitment to defend the abolition of capitalism in those lands while supporting the overthrow of the parasitic bureaucracies that leech on and strangle the planned economies. Only such a programme could safeguard a workers council Poland in the face of invasion and, potentially, spark a massive wave of political revolution throughout the Stalinist dominated states.

Polish nationalism would issue no such call—it would send the workers to their deaths clutching emblems of Pilsudski and pictures of the Pope. In order to prevent such a bloodbath, in order to defend and extend the gains of the Polish workers a merciless struggle on a revolutionary internationalist basis must be waged against Catholic and nationalist misleaders. ■

workers union Maden-IS and editor of the socialist magazine 'Kurtulus'. If he is deported he will definitely be imprisoned. He may possibly be executed.

British trade unionists must not let this happen. Trade unions, Labour parties and individuals should flood the Home Office with protests. Labour MPs must raise the matter in Parliament. Support should be given to the Turkish Solidarity Committee's actions against repression in Turkey especially its week of action this month. For details contact:

TSC Box 5695, London WC1N 3XX

DESPITE THE SUCCESSFUL elimination of yet another two murderous leaders of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), Radjai and Bahonar, the inefficacy of the tactics of individual terror and urban guerrilla warfare, divorced from mass working class action, has been highlighted in Iran over the last few months.

Whilst the Islamic butchers deserve all they get and we stand in moral solidarity with the leftists resisting the IRP's onslaught (Mojahedin, Fedayeen (Minority), Peykar and the Kurdish nationalists), we must say loud and clear that the tactics of individual terror cannot defeat the reactionary terror of Khomeini and the IRP. Just as the mullahs found a new Beheshti in Bahonar, so they will find a new Bahonar in someone else. The fact is that the tactics of individual terror play right into Khomeini's hands.

Revolutionary Marxists object to individual terror because it relegates the fight against repression into a technical-military battle with the forces of reaction - a fight from which the masses are excluded - or are encouraged to support only passively. The mounting popular resistance to Beheshti, the IRP and Khomeini was aborted by the attack on the IRP headquarters. (Whilst the Mojahedin do not claim responsibility for the attack, neither have they disclaimed it.) Millions of workers, peasants, the urban poor, whose hostility and suspicion towards the regime were increasing daily, could and should have been mobilised on all the issues which caused their distrust - democratic rights; control of production; economic chaos; land reform; etc. Instead they were faced with the point-blank question, did they desire the death and destruction of the IRP leaders? Many, perhaps most, did not, and were summarily hurled back into Khomeini's arms. The hundreds of leftists executed are the price exacted for this tactic.

INTEGRATION WITH BANI-SADR

They may interpret the "divinely integrated society of Islam" (Towhid) as a classless society. Khomeini will interpret it as a society based on class collaboration and indeed the forcible suppression of the workers and peasants. He will stigmatize the expression of the class interests of the oppressed as a violation of the unity of Islam. The Mojahedin are now engaging in 'integration' with Bani-Sadr, when in power a butcher of the Kurds and leftists, and the exiled ex-President lacking any significant mass base inside Iran, is welcoming this. The young leftists being put to death by the mullahs are, for the time being, useful as an adjunct to his democratic demagoguery.

If the destruction of leaders was the critical question then the destruction of the 70 IRP leaders (in itself the most spectacularly successful act of individual terrorism ever carried out) has tested this to the full. The masses watch in stunned silence as the Pasdaran battle it out with the Mojahedin.

FALSE STRATEGIES CRIPPLE LEFT

Worse the Mojahedin have formed a solid bloc with Bani-Sadr, a representative of the Iranian bourgeoisie, and seen as such by workers, the urban poor etc. This will make it very difficult for the Mojahedin to rally the oppressed masses to the defence of their most direct interests against Khomeini.

Further, the religious ideology of the Mojahedin blurs social reality. It makes it difficult for the masses to see the differences between the 'Islamic Leftists' and the Khomeinists. Thus, in reply to Khomeini's charge that they rejected the principles of Islam, the Mojahedin were quick to reply:

"The People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran like all the revolutionary Moslems of Iran do believe in the same principles of Towhid and Ma'ad (hereafter) which were believed by all the prophets." (July 2nd Communique of PMOI).

CONTRADICTION OF RELIGION

All attempts to pursue programmatic goals within religious ideology are doomed to failure. Marxists have always recognised the contradictory nature of religion. It is "at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions". But, also, as Marx's famous dictum stressed "It is the opium of the people". Thus religion is the expression of the misery of a world of exploitation and oppression, a criticism therefore of that world, especially in the early stages of the growth of new religions (Christianity and Islam). Yet at the same time it is an ideology that consoles the masses, that seeks to reconcile the oppressed to their oppression. It inevitably becomes an ideology cultivated by the possessors and the exploiters. Whoever tries to turn the critical side of religion against these exploiters ties themselves in insoluble contradictions - is branded as a hypocrite or a heretic by the caste whose living is obtained from the peddling of religious opium to the suffering masses.

No, Khomeini's Islamic dictatorship is a real expression of the reactionary essence of religion. Certainly, large sections of the clergy will desert him because of this terrible exposure of their mystical stock in trade to the harsh and materialist test of political power. Khomeini, before the eyes of the masses, is currently shattering the sanctity of religion and the mullah caste. He is destroying the illusions in Islam as an anti-imperialist, democratic, socially just, force. The only way forward for the working class, the peasantry, the youth, women, the nationalities lies, via the dissolution of religious superstition, in the pursuit of clear, socialist and democratic goals. Not only Khomeini's personal rule, not only the dictatorship of the IRP and their street gangs must be overthrown but the whole structure of the Islamic Republic must be crushed into fragments.



The Fedayeen Minority (OIPFG) do see this. Against the deeply opportunist Fedayeen Majority (now little more than an appendage of the Stalinist Tudeh Party and sharing with the latter, complicity in Khomeini's blood-bath against their former comrades) the 'Minority' rightly recognise that from the overthrow of the Shah the state and government remained bourgeois in character. Rejecting the un-Marxist notion that the Iranian state is anti-imperialist and petty bourgeois, they observe: **"When the leaders of the petty bourgeoisie collude with the bourgeoisie, this collusion, with whatever purpose, that may have taken place, changes them into followers of the bourgeoisie and in every major and decisive issue they side with the bourgeoisie."**

The petty bourgeoisie may propel its political representatives into governmental office, but once there, the class interests they are forced to defend are those of the ruling class (the class that dominates production - the big capitalists and in the case of a semi-colonial country, Imperialist capital). The petty bourgeoisie can never be a ruling class and its political representatives can only disguise continued capitalist exploitation and Imperialist domination by nationalist, anti-imperialist or traditionalist ideology whilst taking secondary actions against the foreign and domestic exploiters.

The Fedayeen Minority go further and state: **"Anti-Imperialist struggle is inseparable from class struggle. Imperialism can only be defeated if its internal economic base in the dependent bourgeoisie and its state is destroyed."** [Kar no.78, translated by Organisation of Iranian Students in Britain, supporters of OIPFG]

BREAK WITH STAGEISM

But to take this thought to its logical conclusion would be to break absolutely with the stages theory of Stalin and to adopt the strategy and tactics of Lenin's "April Theses" and Trotsky's "Permanent Revolution". It would mean recognising that only the proletariat's seizure of state power, the smashing of the bourgeois state machine - its standing army and bureaucracy - its replacement by a state of a new type based on workers and peasants Soviets, the universal arming of the masses, their organisation in a democratic workers and peasants militia, can achieve the decisive defeat of Imperialism and the Iranian bourgeoisie. There would be no separate stage of democra-

tic unity with the bourgeoisie against imperialism. Thus the key struggle of revolutionaries before, during, and since the Shah's overthrow should have been the struggle to bring the working class, under the slogans of revolutionary socialism, to the leadership of the revolution. Only this way could the revolution that toppled the Shah be made permanent. Only this way could the forces of clerical and bourgeois monarchist reaction have been defeated once and for all. Concretely, this would mean that while unity with mullah-led forces in action (against the Shah, against the Iraqi invasion, an objectively pro-imperialist invasion, for example) was permissible at given moments in the Iranian revolution, at no time was it ever permissible for revolutionaries to give any political support to Khomeini, the IRP, or any other faction of the bourgeoisie. Tactical movements should never be confused with the revolutionary strategy - the conquest of power by the proletariat. This course of action is fundamentally different from the "Trotskyism" espoused by the various USEC groups in Iran. All of these groups (HKE, HKS, HVK) have capitulated before Khomeini's 'anti-imperialism'. They differ only in degree. They are united in turning the Permanent Revolution from a strategy that has to be fought for, into an objective process that will occur regardless of living parties and their programmes. Their version of Trotskyism is a grotesque distortion, that reduces the revolutionary party and its programme to the sidelines of history. The working class, to rally the non-urban, non-proletarian strata behind its banner, does not need to drop the goal of its class dictatorship.

PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP

It has to prove to all other oppressed strata that *only* this dictatorship (resting democratically through a system of peasant soviets, soldiers soviets etc on the support of these classes and strata) can solve their fundamental social problems. Since the thwarting of the democratic aspirations of the Iranian masses by Bazargan, Bani-Sadr, Beheshti, Radjai and above all by Khomeini himself, the support the proletariat must give to *democratic* slogans (land to those who till it; self-determination of nationalities up to and including separation; equal rights for women; separation of mosque and state; freedom of speech; of assembly, press etc.) must focus in the call for the convocation - after the overthrow of Khomeini and the IRP - of a sovereign revolutionary constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage and secret ballot. *Only* committees of workers, peasants, soldiers (necessary to overthrow the IRP dictatorship and block the road to Pahlavi restoration) could convene such an assembly democratically. In elections for such an assembly the revolutionary party would fight for a workers and peasants government based on all power being transferred to the workers and peasants committees and to the armed workers and peasants militias.

If the Fedayeen Minority comrades can break completely from *all* varieties of the stageist theory of revolution, if they can forge a revolutionary party in Iran committed to the strategy of Permanent Revolution, then the heroism of their comrades and other leftists in Iran can be repaid by a revolutionary victory. The *only* alternative outcome is bloody defeat for the Iranian working class at the hands of one or other faction of the ruling class. ■

Cuts...

How did this defeat come about? How did Lothian join Lambeth in the home for failed anti-cuts Labour Councils?

Lothian is a defeat not only for the Labour left rhetoricians but also for the "Trotskyist" organisers of the Labour Party centered "Fightback". The "New Statesman" reflects: "Those centrally involved in the struggle say the lesson is to acquire broadly based trade union support at an early stage in the confrontation. Councillors say their political fight needs to be supported by an industrial fight to stand any chance of success. Some activists are inclined to blame the local trade union leadership for pouring cold water on the notion of an all-out strike from the start" (NS 10.7.81).

Indeed Socialist Organiser (20.7.81) considers that "to a great extent the climbdown is due to the actions (or lack of them) of the Lothian Region Action C'ttee and the Lothian Joint Trade Union C'ttee."

The whole approach of centering the struggle against the cuts on the Labour Council and in the LP wards and GMCs is a false one. It lays primary stress on mandating

councillors and relegates direct action by rank and file union members to a supportive role or a way of "continuing the struggle after the council has caved in". The Labour Co-ordinating C'ttee's pamphlet "Can Local Government Survive?" sums up the left reformist dilemma. It argues against "placing reliance on industrial action as the first stage of our strategy" on the grounds that "workers are only likely to act under the threat of cuts" and that when the council is attacked by Central Government as an overspender. But the LCC is unwilling to face the legality issue squarely - ie. will the council defy the laws the Tories railroad through Parliament to clobber the councils? The point where, in their view, industrial action might be the only way to continue the fight - at this point as in Lambeth as in Lothian, the Labour Council is the direct impeller of the cuts. The cry goes up "don't attack the councillors who have been defending us, the Tories or the Labour right cuts would be worse" etc.

WORKPLACE RESISTANCE

From the start the real campaign must be based within the trade unions. This does not mean grand alliances between Regional TUC's and LPs which confine themselves to pious statements of mutual

solidarity. It has to be rooted in the rank and file. The real power to resist the cuts lies in the workplaces - not just in the council offices, the schools, the direct works depts, and the depots, but in the factories, amongst workers who use the services provided by the councils.

Such work has to be carried out on the basis of distrust of the Labour councillors in the recognition that they will inevitably collapse under the weight of "illegal action" or their possibility. Most Labour councils have preferred to 'resist' cuts in services through the mechanism of rate rises. Although this involves an equally reactionary attack on the living standards of workers, this has been preferred because it avoids forcing the councils into an embarrassing clash with local unions over redundancies. The Lothian decision led immediately to 1,100 sackings amongst teachers and ancillary workers. The leaders of the local committees of the 12 unions have been forced to turn their talking shop into a focus of resistance to this and for the moment these dismissals have been withdrawn. This can be built on by a campaign for solidarity strike action throughout the region. The trade union officials have already given an indication of their spinelessness however, by agreeing to negotiate

"more considered cuts in services"

The options open to the Labour Councils are fast running out. The bosses have launched an offensive against more rate rises. Increasingly the CBI is encouraging firms to stress that increases in the industrial rate leads to job losses. GKN and British Leyland are spearheading a campaign against rate increases in the West Midlands.

HESELTINE'S WRATH

The biggest cloud on the horizon of municipal labourism remains Heseltine and the Tories. In June Heseltine asked the local authorities collectively to revise their budgets and bring back £450 million of cuts. But late in August they returned bigger budgets than before, mostly as a result of the post-May local election return of Labour Councils. They have incurred Heseltine's wrath. He is promising to introduce draconian legislation to curb local authorities' financial freedom. The Labourite strategy of bureaucratic manoeuvres will have its scope severely reduced. For Councillors like Lothian's John Crichton no doubt this will be a mixed blessing - it will at least shorten and make easier his "first stage".

But resistance is possible. We must fight to pledge Labour Councils to all-out resistance but there must not be a hint of reliance on

the councillors. They are not even leaders of mass working class organisations capable of action. The trade union leaders, local and national, are, and must be put to the test by their own rank and file. But experience shows that none of the Labour and Trade Union bureaucracies local or national can be relied on to lead a fight to the end. It is the duty of revolutionaries to warn against this misleadership so that honest fighters in the working class are not "completely demoralised" when they betray.

After two years of "Labour Left" leadership of the Anti-Cuts struggle the Anti-Cuts movement as a mass resistance is at its lowest ebb. Called out on token demonstrations by these "noble Dukes of York" and told that they will be called

upon when Heseltine moves in for the kill, they will be blamed for the Labour councils headlong flight - "the unions didn't support us", the Knights and Livingstones will claim to their outraged white-collar constituency activists and they will get away with it. Heseltine has drawn blood in Lothian. He will undoubtedly close the rate loophole in the new session of Parliament. The Anti-Cuts movement must be rebuilt from the rank and file upwards and this time the lesson must be learned.....Put not your trust in Labour Councillors. ■

Labour Party DEMOCRACY AND IRELAND - KEY ISSUES AT CONFERENCE

THIS MONTH THE Labour Party Conference in Brighton will stage yet another act in the long-running battle for the democratic reform of the Party. The democracy issue has been crystallised in the contest for the deputy leadership. The main contenders - Healey and Benn - stand at opposite ends of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). Silkin is there primarily as a "Stop Benn" candidate.

The anxiety of the bulk of the PLP is reaching fever pitch. The reforms passed at Blackpool and Wembley - reselection of MPs and the election of the party leader by an electoral college - are moderate but not insignificant encroachments on their previously unlimited freedom from party control. A victory for Benn over Healey would represent an additional blow to the PLP. A large section have threatened to split from the PLP if Benn wins.

An unnamed Westminster Labourite summed up the thinking of the PLP majority, saying: "The PLP realised that it abdicated its responsibility last year and it has lost power, prestige and authority, and some of its members are facing individual humiliation at the hands of their constituencies" (Guardian 28/8/81). Limited democratic accountability is anathema to this arrogant clique who got into the Parliamentary club thanks to the work of the rank and file activists. Healey is the representative of this clique - and of the forces backing them - the IMF and the CIA.

Their aim at the conference is to claw back the power they lost by proposing a 50% (PLP) - 25% - 25% (Constituencies and Trade Unions) formula for the electoral college.

Tony Benn's challenge for the deputy leadership is a challenge to the majority of the PLP and their policies. Furthermore his success in cultivating trade union

support - evidenced once again by his recent policy letter offering a range of extensive reforms aimed at winning union backing - has made his chances of winning seem more probable now than at the outset of the campaign.

WORKERS POWER has made repeated criticisms of Benn's politics, his actions whilst a Minister and his fundamentally pro-capitalist alternative economic strategy (see for example our article "Put Benn to the test" - WP No 23). We believe that his notion of a democratised Labour Party is thoroughly inadequate - leaving, as it does, control of the union block votes in the hands of the bureaucrats, not the rank and file. We think Benn's refusal to call for industrial action to defeat the Tories' offensive now represents his unwillingness to break with the thinking that unites him with the rest of the PLP - reformist Parliamentary cretinism.

However, we still say the delegates to the Labour Party Conference should support him against Healey. Why?

CONVINCE THEM OTHERWISE

First, we think that a victory for Benn will weaken the right wing bulk of the PLP, but at the same time strengthen the movement for democracy in the party, encouraging it to go further. Secondly, although we do not believe that Benn and his programme offer a real alternative to the managing of capitalism that has been Labour's stock-in-trade for years, his rank and file followers do. The best way to convince them otherwise is precisely to put Benn to the test. We warn of Benn's inadequacies and of his unwillingness to see the struggle against the PLP right through to the end. But we



Labour leaders may pray for peace, but they bless the troops

seek to exploit the mobilising potential his campaign has opened up - pushing the movement he represents further, strengthening it to the point where, when Benn does betray, it can sweep him aside and go forward independently of him and on a revolutionary programme of action.

LABOUR AND IRELAND

But the democracy issue is not the only question facing the conference. The most important political debate that activists must force into the open at the Labour Party conference is Ireland. There are 53 motions to conference calling for a united Ireland. Most of them are proposals for a future Labour government. While they are welcome in the sense that they open up a debate which the Labour leaders have kept a tight lid on for over 12 years, the crucial question that must be posed is: Will Labour break with the Tories, break the bi-partisanship now?

Foot and Concannon have not been slow to state their case. After Sands' death, Foot declared to the AUEW National Committee that there was no way he would concede "the so-called political status of IRA prisoners". Concannon, as if to prove that nine deaths had made him even more repugnant than he was when he visited Sands on his deathbed to denounce him,

urged Thatcher not to meet Owen Carron: "If he wanted a meeting to support the demand for the Hunger Strikers, I should certainly say Mrs Thatcher should not see him".

In the face of this sickening pro-imperialist chorus from the leaders of a party that claims to be internationalist, there is no room for silence on Ireland from the Left.

Massive pressure must ensure that a whole day's debate is given over to Ireland. The Conference must pledge itself to support the demand for Political Status and for the immediate withdrawal of troops. It must recognise the right of the Irish people as a whole to determine the future of their nation. Benn's private statements on troop withdrawal (to a closed "Tribune" meeting) must be made public. The impact would, like the statements of Ken Livingstone, help open up the debate on Ireland throughout the whole labour movement. But both of these "lefts" must be forced to go beyond words. The party must commit its whole apparatus, resources and members to an active campaign in solidarity with the nationalist population's struggle in the North of Ireland. When Concannon, Foot and Healey try to stand in the way of such a campaign, they must be driven to one side. They have implicated the workers' movement in the British ruling class' feast of blood in Ireland for too long. ■

R.C.P. Reply: Sectarian "teachers" in need of a class

IN OUR LAST paper (no 24) we printed a polemic against the sectarian politics of the Revolutionary Communist Party (née Tendency). The RCP's paper 'The Next Step' (No 15 July/August 1981) contains a reply to our polemic entitled "Our Modest Approach". It is a shabby reply but its distortions and misconceptions need to be exposed. Its arguments need to be taken on and rebutted, for, as "our modest" polemicist encouragingly states: "political debate clarifies the issues at stake and teaches us all."

Unfortunately, such humility could not be sustained beyond the first paragraph. The rest of the article is facetious, a blend of ignorance and bluff, with little reference to our press and our work. The RCP have a right to be ignorant but it is not necessary to abuse this right. WP's record over the last few years is one we are proud of. The steel strike, Adwest Engineering, Longbridge, victimisations, Plansee, Ansell and the People's March—all of these struggles saw WP supporters heavily involved. In addition we have been involved in numerous activities around the Irish question, anti-racism and the struggles of women workers.

We fought openly in each case for revolutionary politics—politics that could win the particular dispute and take the class struggle forward towards the goal of revolution. But unlike the RCP we do not delude ourselves into thinking that this work has transformed us into immediate challengers for the leadership of the working class. We were, however, a revolutionary pole of attraction for militants involved in and around those struggles. The RCP should not confuse our modesty for lack of vitality or sense of urgency. But we believe we have a far clearer idea of the task of a fighting propaganda group under present conditions.

WHAT IS A PROPAGANDA GROUP?

The lack of clarity within the RCP over what exactly its functions are in relation to the class, given its size and isolation was obvious in Mike Freeman's attempts to supply Callinicos (in a polemic with the SWP) with a definition of a propaganda group: "A Marxist propaganda group is an organisation that seeks to communicate Marxism to workers (through papers and journals, speeches and meetings) and intervene in workers struggles both to show the practical value of revolutionary politics and to win the leadership of the working class away from the reformists." (Revolutionary Communist Papers No 7 p.23).

Freeman's definition of a propaganda group does not say what is specific about that particular stage of a revolutionary organisation's life. The tasks he sets a propaganda group are tasks that relate to every stage of a revolutionary group's life. No surprise, therefore, that if the tasks of a mass party and a small propaganda group are indistinguishable then so must be the forms of organisation. Armed with this impeccable logic the RCP have set out on the well worn path of building the "mini mass party".

We would argue that the central task of a fighting propaganda group is the elaboration of a programme—a strategy and tactics; a series of related demands and forms of organisation—with which we can both train and equip cadres and address the burning questions of the class struggle. This task is an urgent one. Since Trotsky's death his programme has been distorted by centrists claiming to be his followers. This is why, like Trotsky, we insist 'programme first'. But the RCP will have none of this—"we are not strong on inspiring programmes" they proudly inform us. That is obvious comrades.

The RCP leaders will no doubt retort that their fight for "proletarian politics" is more important than chatter about programmes. However, their version of "proletarian politics" leads them to abstain not merely on the question of programme, but also on the fight, against the reformist leaders within the working class: "Given the choice between following the labour bureaucracies initiative or fighting on a question like Irish freedom, revolutionaries will always choose the latter." (The Next Step 15).

HOW TO PROCEED?

In Freeman's reply to Callinicos we have the following:

"The SWP's main activity—calling on workers to engage in struggle—is in fact totally unnecessary—Capitalism constantly forces workers into battle with the system." (Revolutionary Communist Papers 7 p.24). Whereas: "Our position is straightforward. Trade union struggles do not revolutionise workers; they do not lead workers to question 'other aspects' of capitalist domination. Rather it is only when workers support the oppressed against the British state that they begin to develop a broad working class consciousness". (ibid p.26)

Unlike the RCP we see no contradiction at all between responding to a labour bureaucrat's initiative and fighting on Irish freedom. Any partial initiative that bureaucrats are occasionally forced to launch have to be concretely evaluated. Are they meant to derail an existing and more fruitful movement from below or can they be the point of departure for developing such a movement? A precise programme would enable revolutionaries and the class to know how to proceed from any given initiative. If, like the RCP, you have no programme then rather than respond, you must as in the RCP's formulation, end up 'following' or worse, like the RCP's practice, ignoring such initiatives, as a matter of principle.

The same one sidedness applies to the RCP's attitudes to the initiatives of the rank and file. Revolutionaries, as opposed to pedants, seek to extend the independent organisations of the workers around a set of clear goals. Workers' 'spontaneous' actions are historically shaped, limited and imprisoned by such things as economic crises or booms, the past experience of struggle and not least the alternative programmes shaped by the bosses and reformist leaders. The RCP reduces the contradictions of the 'economic' struggle to schemas about the "inevitability of economic struggle".

In fact the RCP turn economism inside out. They argue that only struggles against the state (e.g. anti-racism and Irish solidarity) can develop a "broad working class consciousness". (Freeman). This is spontaneist to the core—more radical than the spontaneism of the SWP, but spontaneist nevertheless. Militant anti-racism or Irish solidarity work are equally capable of being trapped within reformist and centrist constraints, as the history of the ANL and the Troops Out Movement demonstrate.

A workforce ejected by the police from a plant occupied in pursuit of a pay claim, an SPG attack on the picket line, these economic struggles too bring the 'political' questions in sharply. Even the act of striking in pursuit of a wage claim is political, framed as it is by legal immunities and restrictions. All these, from the start of any merely economic struggle, are raised as problems to be confronted and prepared for by the working class, by any revolutionary organisation worth its salt. This is not something we counterpose to work around Ireland or anti-racism. Like such work it is one of the integral component parts of the revolutionary propaganda we address to the working class. The RCP do make such a counterposition. They are dissatisfied with the existing class struggle—so they create their own.

One of the central criticisms levelled at us by the RCP is that we make a fetish of the united front tactic. Our polemical adversary argues:

"Anybody vaguely familiar with the science of revolutionary politics will know that a tactic that can be used in all circumstances is not a tactic. In the 'twenties tactics had to address the problem of winning the mass of workers to the already existing communist vanguard. In the 1930's tactics had to respond to the setbacks and defeats suffered by the working class. Today tactics have to deal with the problems of creating a new leadership. Trotsky insisted in 1932 that the 'united front is determined in concrete circumstances, for concrete aims'. Unlike WP, Trotsky understood, that the Left Opposition was working in conditions which were vastly different from those of the 'twenties. The tactic that he developed for the period was the tactic of entristment."

ENTRISM IS A FORM OF THE UNITED FRONT

In truth there is not one word of sense in all of this. Ignorance is the basis of all deceit and lest anyone be deceived by the counterposition of entristment to the united front let us remind ourselves of how Trotsky formulated the problem of entristment: "Let us once more recapitulate: in the unity of the ranks, the masses now see their only means of salvation. . . With the rise of a movement, the task of Marxists consists in, supported by the wave, bringing in the necessary clarity of thought and method. The League must take an organic place in the ranks of the united front. It is too weak to claim an independent place. That is as much to say that it must immediately

take a place in one of the two parties that have negotiated the agreement." ("The League faced with a decisive turn", Writings 34/35 p41)

Trotsky saw entristment as the form the united front should take given the concrete situation the French Trotskyists faced. The united front tactic, in all its forms, is necessitated by the fact that revolutionaries do not lead the mass of the working class. It is a tactic designed to wrest leadership from the reformist misleaders. As such it is highly likely that united fronts (i.e. tactical operations around common actions with reformist workers and their leaders) will take place in different forms, ranging from the strike to the Soviet, until revolutionaries have won the leadership of the working class. The RCP turn their back on all of this and, full of bluster call abstractly for the building of a "new leadership". WP are accused of holding to a strategic notion of the united front. But this danger occurs when the united front degenerates into a mere "propaganda bloc". That is, when the price for unity is not exacted from the reformist leaders—common action in defence of class interests—and the unity is but a left-over for opportunism. For the RCP's accusation to stick, therefore, they are obliged to give concrete examples of where WP has done this. And on this they are silent.

OUTRAGEOUS AND PATENTLY FALSE CHARGES

We have tried here to deal with the strongest points of 'Our Modest Approach'. We could have simply left it a refutation of the more outrageous and patently false charges. We are accused of "misquotes and distortions" to prove the RCP's opportunism and yet not one of these is given in proof. We are lambasted for 'unsubstantiated allegations' with regard to their 'reformist practice' despite an illustrated critique of their local election campaigns to which they feebly answer, "As it happens our propaganda was clear where we stood on this question" again with no back up. Similarly, our accusation of 'breastbeating' is held to be unsubstantiated despite our charge of their sectarian posturing towards the Peoples Marchers. Their 'refutation' amounts to, "Anybody vaguely familiar with these events will see this fable for what it is." And finally, our charges of 'tailing economic militancy' backed up with extracts from The Next Step are dismissed without even cursory answer.

WP hasn't centred on these absurdities because we, unlike the RCP do not just pay lip-service to the need for polemic which "clarifies the issues at stake and teaches us all". But then the leadership of the RCP are not at all suited to playing the role of pupils. Like all sectarians, to repeat the point made by Trotsky and quoted in our last article, the RCP leadership: "looks upon the life of society as a great school, with himself as a teacher there". The irony is that these particular teachers, if their reply to us is anything to go by, look as though they desperately need to return to the schoolroom, for a marxist refresher course. ■

workers power

FORD: pay fight must start at Coventry

FORD'S SHOP STEWARDS meet this month at Coventry to decide on the pay claim. It is the first time that such a meeting has taken place since 1978. It is a crucial meeting that will give rank and file militants in Ford's an opportunity to regain control of the pay claim - control lost to leaders like Ron Todd who have repeatedly sold Ford workers short.

The Ford claim will be important. A successful fight could well galvanise BL workers, who are currently receiving their annual round of threats from the despicable Edwardes. Furthermore, ex-Ford boss and CBI chief Beckett, along with Geoffrey Howe, will be looking to the Ford management as vanguard fighters in their bid to keep private sector settlements in single figures. Ford workers must decide at the Coventry meeting to become vanguard fighters against these plans. To do this they will have to be ready to thwart the likely double-dealing of their "leader" - Ron Todd.

In the past two years, Todd has managed to keep shop floor involvement in the pay claim to a minimum. By 1979 it was the NJNC, dominated by full-timers who drew up the pay claim. Their formula was a bureaucrat's dream, a five-point plan, at the top of which stood "a substantial increase in pay". It was presented to the workers on the same day, even at the same time, as it was presented to management.

WEAKENING ORGANISATION

Last year, once again the senior stewards rubber-stamped a 7-point shopping list, drawn up by the full-timers and convenors.

The success of the trade union bureaucracy in weakening shop floor organisation can be seen most clearly in the contrast between the build-up for the last Coventry meeting and for this one. Throughout 1976 and 1977, Ford's used the tactics of layoffs to crack down on the workforce. Ford workers responded with the strike and picket. They set up barricades and sat in the factories. They even rioted!

It was this militancy amongst the rank and file that led them in 1978 to take immediate and direct action in response to Ford's paltry 5% pay offer.

In the last two years, this militancy has waned: Ford's have once again laid off thousands of workers for long periods. This time round there has been little or no opposition. The one fight that did take place, at Halewood, over the management's disciplinary code, was quickly sold out by Todd. He has consistently urged Ford workers to respect the management's "labour discipline" procedures.

It is against this background that the Coventry stewards meeting takes place. Todd's strategy will be to minimise the importance of the meeting, hoping for an indecisive and confused outcome. That way he can keep his hands free to play out his pocket battle-ship fantasies that some call pay talks. In declaring that "The shorter working week has got to be the main priority", Todd has tipped the wink to the Ford bosses that he is willing to trade off wages for a minor concession on the shorter working week.

WORKERS ANSWER

The key task for militants in Ford's is to make the Coventry meeting the turning point. The point where the rank and file regain the initiative. A special issue of the bulletin WORKERS POWER produces for Ford Langley made clear what needs to be fought for: "The pay claim must be based on Ford workers' NEEDS. With inflation at 15% and above for the last year, that means a catch-up claim of £20. But inflation will soon start to whittle the wage claim away unless it is inflation-proofed. We said that the workers' answer to the bosses' inflation must be the SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES. 1% rise in take-home pay for every .1% rise in the cost of living as calculated by committees of Ford workers and their spouses...Between now and then (the Coventry meeting), we must make sure the stewards organise section and mass meetings in works time to find out just what we want. These meetings must be the first stage of a wage claim decided and run by FORD WORKERS...There is no way we can trust Ron Todd and the likes to run our claim for us...We must run the claim...The stewards must lead the fight to make sure we get it. That's what Coventry must be about".

LAMBETH TO LOTHIAN...

Labour Councils can't lead cuts struggle

AUGUST SAW THE collapse of the Lothian 'No Cuts' stand. The Labour Group voted on the 13th by 18 to 7 to yield to Heseltine's demand for cuts and obliged with £15 millions' worth. The strategy of the left reformist council during the whole campaign was summed up by Councillor John Crichton on the eve of the surrender, and after hearing that the Tories had cut off the grant. He said: "This is what we anticipated happening. Thursday's meeting will allow a more realistic debate on what our response is going to be. We are in a new ball game now. We have gone through the first stage and we are now facing the completely different situation of the second stage." [The Scotsman, 12.8.81]

Crichton sums up this 'first stage' as "showing the Lothian electorate that the proposed cuts were not theirs [ie. the Labour Council's - WP] but were threatened by the diktat of the Secretary of State for Scotland" (ibid.)



July 31st Lothian march against the cuts

dragging in local trade union bureaucrats to give the procedure the semblance of a "popular campaign". In reality though, this is but a propaganda exercise for allowing the councillors to conduct the "fight", strictly within their own terms of reference.

PUT UP OR SHUT UP

Younger's victory has been so signal compared with Heseltine's efforts because of the superior legal armament he possessed in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland Act) 1981 which forbids councils borrowing to finance a deficit. Since Scottish councils do not have the bolt-hole of supplementary rate increases, the Lothian councillors were suddenly faced with the unceremonious alternative of putting up or shutting up. Despite the formation of liaison committees with the local unions plans for a council of Action and a demonstration of 15 to 20,000 on June 30th, the councillors behaved as the classic reformists they are. Having failed to bend the Tory Olympus, despite all their threats they dared not call in the masses from the depths. Mass mobilisations and one-day protests are for frightening the Youngers

and Heseltines, not an army to lead into battle determined on victory.

The whole range of the Labour press is bemoaning the Lothian tragedy. On August 7th Labour Weekly appeared with a two inch high front-page headline roaring "Lothian Defiant". Two issues later on page four appeared the pathetic sequel "Scottish Tories great hatred; Lothian is the victim." Yet LW readers should have been warned. The earlier article contained the ominous words "...the labour group is also resigned to the fact that it will have to make cuts once Younger has withheld the money."

LIMITS OF LABOURISM

And the "second stage" was complete capitulation and a rush to vote a moratorium on spending for the rest of the financial year (which would amount to £96 million), three times Younger's demand.

The limits of labourism against the cuts, from Lambeth to Lothian, comes out here in sharp relief. These councillors see their only obligation as exploring to the limit every nook and cranny of the relevant statutes and legislation in order to delay and obstruct the day of reckoning with central government. They wage, at best, a bureaucratic, administrative guerrilla war in the corridors of municipal power, sniping away at the Tories while

SO MUCH HOT AIR

Thus the great "defiance" of Lothian Labour Group has been shown for what it is worth - so much hot air. Socialist Organiser, which has, according to the New Statesman (10.7.81), a "vociferous SO faction" in Lothian, now reports that the collapse has "left activists bewitched, bothered and bewildered and almost completely demoralised" (SO 20/8/81).

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RAIL LEADERS BACKTRACK ON JOBS



RAY BUCKTON OF ASLEF and 'hissing' Sid Weighell of the NUR have negotiated a sell out of railway workers' jobs, living standards and work conditions. However, the implementation of this sell out could provoke a number of struggles in the railways in the next year.

Dodging the need to carry out a fight for a wage rise that met rail workers' needs - a rise of 29% would be needed to take their wages back to their 1975 level - ASLEF and NUR accepted the Mc Arthy Tribunal's recommendation of an 11% rise. Weighell excuses this by arguing that one of the NUR's major considerations was, "the Board's financial and market constraints". (NUR News No.145) Despite platform platitudes to the contrary, Weighell and Buckton are more concerned about defending the viability of BR than about their members' wage packets.

Pay is only one half of this particular deal. The other key question involved is that of the "productivity"

schemes that the bureaucrats have agreed to "talk about" with the BR bosses. Not satisfied with the 6,500 jobs that have gone in the last year (or the 200,000 over the last twenty years) Parker wants more sackings.

Implicit in the latest deal is an acceptance of at least the rationale of the British Rail Board's job-cutting proposals, if not their final form. The ASLEF and NUR bureaucrats have agreed to trade pay for jobs. "Give us the 11% to pacify our members and then we'll be in a position to push through the productivity deal." This is the rotten thinking of the leaderships of the two unions.

The one-man operated trains, the open stations, the phasing out of the guards, the abolition of the eight hour day and the introduction of the split shift system (the continental shift system) are aimed at cutting 38,000 jobs by 1985. They will represent a severe attack on the working conditions and safety standards in BR.

ASLEF



The fight against these plans is far from over. It will be a fight against Buckton and Weighell as much as against Parker. Joint rank and file union committees must be formed in every station and depot to plan resistance to Parker's plans. The leaders must be told to break off all job-cutting negotiations with the BRB. If Parker refuses to pay the 3% due in January (and he is already threatening to withhold it) an all out strike must be called immediately. Not a single job should go. The 9,000 unfilled vacancies at BR must be filled - for a no cover campaign to force this through. The Joint Committees should launch a real fight now for the 35 hour week and end the overtime that is being worked on the railways.

A real struggle by such committees against the Parker plans would bring them into conflict with Weighell and Buckton. That struggle must be taken head on. Kick out the traitors and clear the way for one union for all railway workers, democratically controlled by railway workers and determined to defend their interests!

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