

Workers Power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

INSIDE: BENN
SOUTH AFRICA
WOMEN'S VOICE

Only working class power can

Stop the Holocaust

TOWARDS THE END of 1980 the "doomsday clock" published by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, was moved up three notches. It now stands at three minutes to midnight—midnight being the symbol for the atomic doomsday, the holocaust. The scientists fear is one that is increasingly shared by thousands of ordinary people, particularly in Europe. The campaigns to 'ban the bomb' have taken on a new life after years of relative obscurity and passivity. In Britain the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) has attracted thousands of youth to its rallies and activities. In Denmark the 'Women for Peace' campaign is 50,000 strong. In West Germany US Secretary of State, Haig, had his visit disrupted by massive protests against US plans to site missiles in Germany. The story is the same all over Europe. The threat of a nuclear war has aroused anger and opposition that surpasses all previous peace campaigns.

The new mood for peace stems from a very real sense of impending war. Since the Salt I agreements in the mid-70s, the strategists in the Pentagon have been devising new methods of defeating the Soviet Union in a nuclear war. The increasing instability within its spheres of interest (marked by revolutions in Angola, Nicaragua, Iran) combined with ever sharper economic crises within the advanced capitalist world (1974/75 recession, 1979/81 recession) have convinced the US imperialists of the need to re-arm and re-establish the USA as the gendarme of the world.

These are the underlying causes of Washington's frantic desire - per-

sonified in Ronald Reagan and his Defence Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger - to refurbish the USA's armory. Their 'defence' plans between now and 1986 are likely to cost 1.5 trillion dollars. To supplement the 9,200 strategic missiles (ICBMs) and 21,000 tactical missiles, that it possessed in 1980 (compared with the USSR's 6,000 and 15,000 of each) the US is to develop the MX missile and the Cruise Missile - 380 times as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb. Two hundred of them are to be built though the manner of storing them is yet to be decided. In addition Caspar Weinberger, displaying a sick sense of humour, announced on the 36th anniversary of Nagasaki that the US would be stockpiling the neutron bomb - the enhanced radiation bomb which kills people but does less damage to property.

The most significant change in Pentagon strategy is the switch to the acceptance of 'limited' or 'theatre' nuclear warfare in which extensive use of tactical missiles would be made. It was plans for this type of war which prompted NATO, in 1979, to propose the installation of 464 Cruise missiles in Europe. 160 of these are to be sited in Britain. These pilotless planes each carry a 200 kiloton warhead, ten times as powerful as the one that devastated Hiroshima. Thatcher, eager to prove herself Reagan's most enthusiastic ally, positively fell over herself to site these weapons on British soil. Indeed, to stiffen the anti-Soviet resolve of the Europeans, the Tories have decided to replace the submarine carried Polaris missile with Trident.

Continued on page 7



Tessa Howland (IFL)

Foot trips-up the left

THE 1981 BRIGHTON Conference could prove a critical point in the internal battles of the Labour Party. The two preceding years, with their three conferences, saw the seemingly inexorable advance of the Left. The gains of those years were considerable. Re-selection at least potentially put an end to the arrogant contempt with which most MPs treated their constituency parties. The right to elect the party leader was wrenched out of the hands of the parliamentarians.

The far right leaders, Owen, Rogers and Williams decamped from the party when they saw the pillars of the old regime collapsing one by one. Benn's campaign for the deputy leadership exposed the other element of "old corruption" to the chill winds of change. The trade union leaders, who had been able to cynically manipulate the block vote unhindered by their members opinions, for sixty years, were in a number of cases forced to 'consult' them or to go through something which looked like a consultation.

Yet the Conference itself was a decisive victory for the anti-reform, anti-Benn forces. A new coalition, maturing since the January special Conference finally 'delivered' as Terry Duffy put it. If Boyd, Basnett and Co. 'delivered' the block votes of their unions, Michael Foot has certainly not proved the weak caretaker for the left that most of the Bennites had hoped for. He was of course ably seconded by Neil Kinnock, who organised a faction of 'soft left MPs' willing to do anything (ie even vote Healy if necessary) to stop Benn. With them and his union backers Foot was just able to save the almost

universally hated Healey by 0.85%. Under Foot's umbrella the Boyds, Weighels, Sirs etc. broke the left majority on the NEC. Whilst NEC control over the Manifesto (composite 18) was passed in principle when the Conference voted on the constitutional amendment USDAW saved the day for the Centre-Right (as it had lost the day for them in January). Worse still, the block vote steamrollered through a return to the three-year rule on constitutional changes. Thus the Manifesto is safely in Foot and the PLP's hands until after the next election.

The vaunted policy victories of the Left are hollow ones. True the Alternative Economic Strategy was adopted unanimously in two versions—the NEC's 'Socialist Alternative' and the TUC/LP Liaison Committee's 'Economic Issues Facing the Next Labour Government'. This is hardly surprising. The AES, a real chameleon if ever there was one, is capable of changing from "deepest red" on a Hyde Park platform to palest pink on the front benches of the House of Commons. Hence even Healey can vote for it with a cynical shrug.

But if the Trade Union-PLP Right have pulled back from the brink of defeat thanks to Foot and the 'Soft Left'—they are far from omnipotent. They still need Foot and Kinnock. If overweening confidence provokes them to make a clean sweep of the Left in the Shadow Cabinet elections they could find themselves in serious trouble. Also Foot and Kinnock cannot afford to strike too hard at the Bennites since they hold the reins now only by balancing between the Left and the Right. The real battle that is likely to occupy the MPs and the constituency activists is the Soft versus the Hard Lefts battle. Reg Race is vigorously campaigning for a split away from the Tribune Group of MPs to form "a group of left people in the PLP, the Broad Lefts in the Trade Unions and left forces in the trade union movement and cons-

tituency party delegates." (Socialist Organiser October 8th). Tribune (October 9th) pointedly replies "Those who now advance the view that the Labour Left needs a closer form of organisation with a tighter form of political discipline are not the first to propose such action. (Perhaps some who advocate this action do so because they are relative newcomers to the Labour Left). Benn has not yet made his position clear beyond calling for a more open Tribune Group and a 'mission to the PLP'."

Benn has elsewhere talked about a turn to the union rank and file and to anti-Tory struggles. Certainly he and his followers cannot break the stranglehold of the new Centre Right-Soft Left bloc by next Conference without breaking out of the constituency-PLP framework. Revolutionaries should welcome this. Firstly since all forces should be focussed on direct action to combat the Tory-employer offensive. Secondly because the Bennite programme and indeed reformism in general can only be effectively criticised and definitively exposed in action, in the arena of class struggle. Whenever Benn strikes a blow at the class enemy and their open agents in our ranks he must be supported. Thus his calls for accountability must be supported. But no confidence can be put in him to do so consistently. Not only is his parliamentary reformist strategy disastrous for the working class, every tactical error and vacillation he makes must be openly and honestly criticised. To do otherwise is to help create another 'left' cult-figure such as Nye Bevan became. This will immensely strengthen reformism's capacity to betray at the critical moment, by throwing the left heroes enormous prestige into the balance.

The 'Benn Campaign' is anyway weakest in the unions. Here its only organised forces are the various 'broad left' currents tied to left bureaucrats (Scargill,

Continued on page 2



Three steps to heaven???

THE PRINTED PAGE allows the reader to submit the programmes and analyses of political leaders to a far sharper scrutiny than the platform of a rally or a conference. It is no accident that "practical politicians" rarely commit their views to print before they are safely in retirement. Then they can stake their bloated claims to posterity without providing any assistance to their political opponents. Despite the publication of three volumes since 1974 Tony Benn himself has yet to produce a book-length exposition of his ideas. In 'Arguments for Democracy' we are offered a further compilation of speeches and lectures. They do however enable us to look Benn's politics coldly in the eye away from the distraction of the venomous baying of the media pack or the standing ovations of the uncritical left. These speeches are the work of a man passionately committed to parliamentary democracy and reform "There is no reason why the great institutions of the British state should remain at the disposal of any one social system, one class of people, or one set of values." (Arguments For Democracy p.224).

At no point does Benn seek to conceal this—unlike many of his 'Trotskyist' supporters. Benn is repeatedly and outspokenly against revolutionary means in the struggle for socialism. Whilst he may or may not realise it, this inexorably means that his programme is not in the end one of socialist transformation. This observation was made long ago by Rosa Luxemburg "A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their duration but according to their content."

That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modification of the old society." (Reform or Revolution). Eighty years and the succession of the Webbs, Brailsfords, and Bevans by the Benns and Hollands have not invalidated the sharpness of this observation. Benn puffed up by the same British insularity and conceit as his illustrious forbears repeats their assertions almost word for word. "The reason why the labour movement has never espoused a revolutionary alternative in Britain, as some socialists have done abroad, is because we ourselves fashioned the democracy which should express itself through a fully functioning democratic Parliament. Therefore to ask the British labour movement to abandon democracy and go for the short cut to socialism by some coup d'etat is to ask us to repudiate our history. We will never do it, so long as the route to peaceful change through Parliament remains open to us. (Arguments For Democracy. p.178).

Power in capitalist society lies in the great industrial and financial institutions where ownership of the means of production and of capital are concentrated in a few hands. This power rests on a state bureaucracy and a military hierarchy. The industrial magnates, the city financiers, the civil service mandarins, the judges, the

Benn: Nationalist and Democrat but no Socialist

generals and police chiefs constitute the inner nucleus of a ruling class. The task of governing for them can be performed by various political formations or parties. Parliament was originally the means whereby the bourgeoisie mobilised itself and "the nation", ie other classes, against the feudal landowners. It remained for two hundred years, by means of a limited property qualification for voting, a forum for debate within the capitalist class about how best to rule. With the appearance on the stage of history of the modern working class, with its demands for the right to vote the bourgeoisie was at first fearful that the workers might use their overwhelming numbers to use democratic rights to mobilise themselves for a decisive attack on the ownership and control of the means of production. Benn constantly claims that the bourgeoisie fears democracy. This is false to the core. What it feared then and fears now is the working class's recognition of its own exploitation and its determination to end it. In that context democratic rights, freedom of the press, freedom to stand in elections, freedom of assembly, of the right to strike, to demonstrate etc become a means for mobilising the millions of workers for the decisive contest. But that contest will never be an election. Why? Because the bourgeoisie has 'other means' to defend its class power than 'persuasion' (ie systematic media lying etc). It has brute force. It used it against the Chartists—in 1839, 1842 and 1848. It used this force to deny the Chartists their aims and it refused to grant universal suffrage until the workers movement abandoned its revolutionary aims and methods. Then the bourgeoisie transformed Parliament from an instrument of internal debate to an instrument for co-opting the workers leaders into the maintenance of capitalism, whilst conceding adjustments to the everyday piecemeal demands of the workers.

These concessions were made on the backs of British imperial exploitation of millions in the Empire and today in the so-called 'Third World'. The bourgeoisie no longer conducted its faction fights or presented its real accounts in the House of Commons but in the inner cabals of industrialists, bureaucrats, politicians and military

men. Parliament conceals all this with a formal appearance of mass consent via media-manipulated elections.

Benn in fact knows much of the emptiness of Parliamentary democracy. He remains however wedded to it as an ideal. His disavowal of revolution, his continued profession of faith in democracy does not however allay the hatred of the ruling class or their agents in the labour movement for Benn and Bennery. Still the shrieks of 'Red', 'Marxist', 'enemy of democracy', 'founder of an East European style dictatorship' fill the pages of the yellow press. The reasons for such hostility are clear from Benn's book. Using his own experience in Government Benn gives a hint of the real functioning of government behind its Parliamentary facade sufficient to enrage the inner sanctum that once trusted him with office. He clearly knows more than he lets on, he has yet to spill all the beans.

But for the bourgeoisie Benn has gone too far in opening up the mysteries of the workings of the system to the critical gaze of the working class. That his criticisms are delivered for the purpose of refurbishing parliamentary democracy count for nothing. He has partly broken the historic pact that binds the PEP leaders to the inner core of the ruling class. His protestations of loyalty to the 'Mother of Parliaments, his positive disavowal of Marxism count for even less. "I say this as a socialist whose political commitment owes much more to the teachings of Jesus—without the mysteries within which they are presented—than to the writings of Marx whose analysis seems to lack an understanding of the deeper needs of humanity." (p.130) cannot protect him from the wrath of the bourgeoisie at present.

A consistent and simple thesis underlies Benn's speeches. In the tradition of British whiggery and liberalism he sees British history as a process of the steady broadening of political power beyond those possessing wealth and material privilege. From the Magna Carta to Cromwell, from the 1832 Reform Act through the Labour Representation Committee to the post war Labour Government, Benn sees British history in terms of the development of popular

sovereignty in the form of the steady extension of the representativeness and jurisdiction of Parliament.

However particular factors have worked in the last decade to block, and then reverse that process. The power of the civil service, the military and secret service all work to undermine the responsiveness of government to the demands of Parliament. Prime Ministerial power—in Tory or Labour guise—undermines the authority of the Cabinet. Cabinet secrecy blocks genuine Parliamentary sovereignty. Control of information and a fanatically anti-labour privately owned press serves to deliberately block or maliciously distort the flow of information. Taken in combination these forces constitute an obstacle to the further march of the democratic process, a web of privilege and special interests at odds with Parliamentary sovereignty.

The reasons for this reversal of the forward march of democracy after the fall of the post-war Labour Government in '51 lie in the weakness of British capitalism. Determined to scuttle 'national independence' rather than yield to the democratic process the 'establishment' sold out to the Common Market. Thus in the first article in the collection "Is Britain a Colony" Benn declares that without the House of Commons vote to ratify the Treaty of Rome "Britain would still be a Parliamentary democracy". It was the establishment itself which betrayed our heritage of democracy, because they feared for their power and privileges if it was allowed to continue. They opted for survival as the colonial administrators of a subject Britain rather than accept displacement by the democratic process within Britain." (p.16).

The case presented by Benn is that in the face of this dramatic reverse of the forward march of Parliamentary democracy a new national democratic revival must be begun. This means launching a "national liberation struggle" to free Britain from oppression and exploitation at the hands of an "embryonic West European federal state". Hand in hand with this must go a renewed struggle to reassert both the sovereignty of Parliament itself and of 'the people' over its Parliament.

The democratic crusader realises that the movement cannot simply pursue the restoration of past glories. He recognises that the legal and formal structures of Britain continue to contain ultimate safeguards for an unelected elite. Hence his programme for 'democratic advance' for Parliamentary control, of necessity involves a package of reforms that will supposedly strip the unelected elite of its decisive power. The march of democratisation must take place outside Parliament too. In order to overcome what Benn likes to call "the uneven distribution of power between capital and labour" (p.165) the role of collective bargaining should be extended to involve a broad range of company decisions in the form of co-partnership arrangements

FOOT TRIPS-UP LEFT

Continued from front page

Dix, Cameron, Todd, Wright) and to the Communist Party's convenor and shop steward network. Benn of course has the unorganised support of most union activists but where unions balloted their membership widely (NUPE, FBU, T&GWU) a large media-induced Healey vote was revealed. Also many of Benn's trade union leaders have far from immaculate records in the industrial struggle. The answer is not however to call for "activists power" on the model of the constituencies. This will always allow the Right the option of postal ballots and the unanswerable 'one person one vote' slogan to crush the militants with.

But without an upsurge of struggle; without the militants regaining the leadership of their members in defence of jobs, trade union rights, services etc the likes of Duffy and Sirs will easily keep their stranglehold on their shrinking unions. They will thus easily be able to use the block vote to block Benn for years to come. When Benn says as he did at the post-Conference Tribune Rally that it should be easier to 'politicise' the unions now that their 'industrial muscle was weaker' it indicates his parliamentary focus for what is political and his own short sightedness. He doesn't want industrial action for political ends. Of course he wants the Labour Party to "identify with struggles" and in return wants to "politicise" the trade unions. But he firmly sees this as a defensive piecemeal struggle now against the Tories. However "the nature of it and the tactics of it have to be hammered out by the people in the front line". Read this as meaning 'dont ask me to commit myself when it comes to breaking Heseltine's law etc : That's up to you militants and Labour councillors'. Politics for Benn all points to one goal—the ballot box, and election winners cant go calling for workers to break the law.

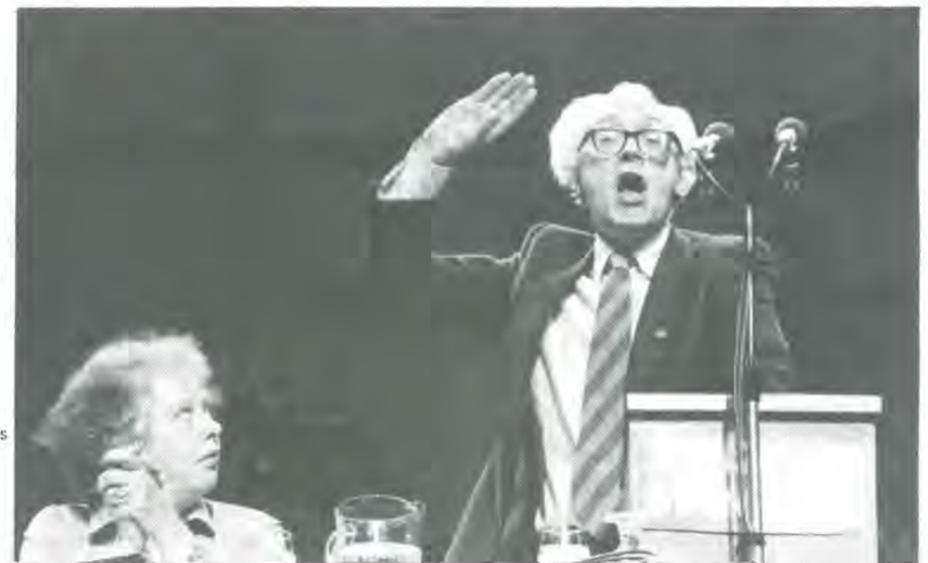
Yet in the next two years both political campaigning (marches, rallies etc) and limited sectional trade union struggle will prove themselves inadequate.

Thatcher (and the SDP) may well lose the '84 election on their record. However a Labour Government returned on a wave of 'do it for us', 'anything is better than the Tories', 'we need the political wing' (ie the PLP) illusions will be as traditional a Labour Government as that of '74-'79. The Bennite movement would have done nothing but act as a peddler of Labour's debilitating reformist opium. The beneficiaries would be Foot, Healey, Shore, Hattersley. It would have played the classic role of the Labour Left—to tie the leftward moving, revolutionary inclined militants to the PLP/TUC leaders who themselves can never, and have never, generated ideals, enthusiasm or a willingness to sacrifice in the struggle for socialism.

Therefore, as many times before, we say, for the struggle to break the hold of the Right Wing and their 'centre' and 'left' allies over the Labour Party and the unions to have any hope of success, it must centre in the workplaces, in the unions. It must centre on the strategy and tactics to defeat Thatcher now and in the coming year. A powerful and victorious struggle will knock the stuffing not only out of the Tories, but also out of the SDP/Liberals, except insofar as they pick up the panicky deserters from the Tories. It will also deal a deadly blow to the Labour Right in the party and the unions. It can put the 'lefts'—Benn and Scargill—to the acid test of leadership. It can crystallise and train a real revolutionary alternative to Reformism.

For this reason revolutionaries must support the Bennite movement every time it makes a positive working class proposal. They must support Benn and his supporters in the struggle for leadership in the party since this is the only real test of the sincerity of their professions and their trustworthiness as leaders and will subject the Left Reformist Programme to the acid test.

But revolutionaries can in no way adopt Benn's



Tessa Howland (ITFL)

priorities for, or his location of, the key struggles facing the working class. Still less can they accept his strictures against 'illegal' means of fighting. The Tories have at their disposal a formidable legal arsenal, newly supplemented by the laws on picketing. They intend to legislate against the closed shop. Tebbit is rumoured to be planning an onslaught on the political levy. Heseltine can alter the law virtually at will to close the rate rise bolt hole of Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone and Co. If workers confine their actions to 'protests' within the law and 'wait for a general election' and a Labour Government it will be suicidal. Firstly the democratisation within the labour movement arising from the revelation of the unions as having feet of clay, of being unable to defend their members will not strengthen their interest in politics and socialism but weaken it. Secondly, it will drive the unorganised workers the youth, the unemployed, the petty bourgeois

bankrupted by Thatcher, towards a 'national saviour' hostile to the labour movement. The first such alternative might be a Liberal-SDP coalition. It might then be a strong man, reducing parliament to a shadow. And behind all of these a growing fascist movement would prepare for power. But whatever it is, a left Labour Government will not grow out of defeat and demoralisation. The Labour Governments of '24 and '29 were extremely Right Wing and the massive working class defeats of 1921, 1926 and 1931 led to years of right-wing government. Capitalist crisis and misery do not automatically produce socialism!

The Bennite Left in the Labour Party seems to be in the throes of a momentous decision about their future. Should they split the Tribune group in the House of Commons and form exclusively Bennite caucus (excluding the 'soft' lefts)? The Socialist Organiser Alliance is, with Reg Race MP, eagerly urging

"Arguments for Democracy" reviewed

Andrew Ward (Report)



between the employers and unions. The mantle passed down from the barons of Runnymede has now come to the modern working class—the shop stewards of Lucas Aerospace and the Labour Party activists—to complete the triumphal march of the democratic process over wealth and privilege.

Benn's argument is held together by Christian incantations "Perhaps the greatest inheritance that this country has derived from the teachings of Jesus has been the heritage of democracy itself and the political ideas that are associated with it. . . . The right of each man or woman to vote in elections also stems from their right to be treated as fully human and equal in the sight of God." (p.126) it is wreathed in nationalist demagoguery "If all the other colonies in the British Empire were able to win their freedom from the tyranny of the British establishment, how much easier will it be for us to liberate ourselves? All the pressures from Washington, Brussels or Zurich could not prevent us from shaping our own future once they realised that we were in earnest; The greatest obstacle lies not in external forces that might frustrate us, but in ourselves for our tardiness in attempting to free ourselves and our unfounded self-doubt about the outcome if we tried. Once we set upon our course, we can certainly win (p.17). But at the heart of this thesis lies the essential assumption of reformist democracy. This is that the owners of productive wealth, the capitalists and bankers, can be subordinated to the democratically expressed wishes of the majority of the population without having first been deprived of the means by which they have derived their power and privilege in the past, ie by expropriation. This occurs through a process as Benn puts it himself of reforming the existing institutions of the state. "In this book I have tried to suggest practical

ways in which many of our existing institutions can be adapted from their present role as props of the status quo. Instead they must become the agents of the profound changes necessary if we are to avert the serious economic and political problems which now confront us". (p.223) and when we study his programme for the Trade Unions in the 1980's it becomes clear that he envisages ending the uneven distribution of power between capital and labour without expropriation or nationalisation. Benn in fact demagogically distances himself from nationalisation projects "The Labour Constitution calls for common ownership—not nationalisation—and for the achievement of "the best" obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service." p.175. Indeed at this years conference Benn voted against proposals from the left for a commitment to sweeping nationalisation by the next Labour Government. Benn's programme for co-partnership agreements presumes that the capitalists will continue to own their own property which will be utilised in a manner determined by negotiations with shop stewards committees and national planning agreements with the "democratically accountable" Government.

It is a tragic fallacy to believe that the ruling class, whose Parliamentary window dressing Tony Benn has whipped away, will put down their privileges resignedly and peacefully as the result of the expression of popular feeling through a General Election. In prosletysing such a programme Benn demonstrates just how crippling a legacy Christian moralistic Liberal-Labourism has passed down to the modern workers movement. The establishment that Benn describes monopolise wealth and power. That they have done so in Britain behind the facade of Parliamentary Democracy, ably abetted by the leaders of the Labour Party, has been all the better for them. But they have always had, and will always have, a far more realistic appraisal of the role of 'parliamentarianism' than ever the Labour leaders have. Benn, in his own way, knows this and demonstrates it in his book. But what he fails to recognise is that the ruling class, with all its built in constitutional safeguards should Parliament ever not toe the line of its front bench trustees—will not back down meekly as their accumulated privileges and power are taken off them. Belief in the power of moral persuasion—what Benn calls 'the moral basis for Democratic Socialism'—might have impressed senior church leaders in Windsor Castle to whom he delivered this particular speech (although we very much doubt it) but it has never disarmed the privileged. It has, however, always disarmed the exploited and oppressed when power has been within their grasp.

It is an oft repeated but necessary reminder to those who follow Benn that the Allende Government in Chile based itself on a programme of achieving popular power through democratic sovereignty over Chile's employers and armed forces. But unless the bourgeoisie is deprived of their ownership of the economy and their monopoly of armed force it has of necessity—and Chile shows this—the means of sabotaging the economy and physically striking back against the working class. No amount of moral persuasion will ever convince the ruling class to

relinquish that power without a fight. And those who peddle the idea that it can be otherwise, are preparing the Labour Movement for defeat at the hands of a conscious and organised foe.

But a careful look at Benn's targeted reforms reveals a feeble packable of proposals that don't even start to tackle the obstacles that Benn himself has described. The vital defenses of the ruling class—the monarchy and armed forces—are acknowledged by Benn to be at the very heart of the 'privileged elite'. But they are to be left untouched in Benn's restored 'parliamentary democracy'. The 'House of Lords'—a secondary perimeter fence of the bourgeoisie—is instead singled out as the only bastion of unelected privilege and power that will be abolished. Beyond that Benn concentrates on features of the British state whose extension or reform is the standard diet of British Constitution textbooks controversies. Benn would elect the Cabinet and extend the role of select committees. He would seek the Parliamentary confirmation of major state appointments and tear down the veil of secrecy with a Freedom of Information Act. But does he really believe that under the arc lights of Parliamentary scrutiny, face to face with a Labour Prime Minister accountable to the PLP, the resolve of the British ruling class will wither and decay?

The other vital and deadly thread that runs through 'Arguments for Democracy' is the attempt to link this campaign for Parliamentary reform to the struggle to end Britain's supposed 'colonial status'. Within this perspective the establishment that has sold Britain's heritage and hired itself as Quisling administrators to the West European predatory federal state will be called to task before a new Sovereign Parliament. A Parliament not subordinated to Brussels. The final blows against the traitorous establishment will be struck by a newly awakened independent British 'people'. The victorious national liberation struggle will complete the rout of the establishment.

This element in Benn's thought represents a particularly dangerous and potentially sinister component of Benn's programme. It is based on a wilful misrepresentation of Britain's status. The British ruling class—with its own massive overseas investments and its own colonial war in Ireland—is an integral, albeit increasingly junior, component of international capitalism. As Benn knows himself capitalism, and the capitalist class itself, has long since outgrown the national boundaries and markets of the nineteenth century. The British ruling class has itself been part of that process. To locate the key obstacle to 'popular sovereignty' as being the Treaty of Rome, to place the major responsibility for the problems facing the working class at the door of the Common Market and that section of the capitalist class that supports it may help the Labour Party win the votes of that section of the capitalist class that opposes the Common Market.

It may seem the key to 'electoral success' but it positively misleads the workers movement. Apart from the fatal illusions that it sows in the viability of a tariff protected insular British capitalism as a means of raising living standards it threatens to throw the labour movement into an orchestrated orgy of chauvinism directed

not at the real cause of mounting unemployment and declining social services—the capitalist system itself—but at one feature of that system namely its uneven tendency towards international integration and multi national organisation. Benn hopes in this way that the Labour Party can win electoral support outside its traditional social base. "The role of the British Labour Movement must be to offer leadership in that liberation struggle to end our colonial status, and to allow the people to enter into their rightful inheritance." (p.17). He clearly sees himself as candidate for leadership in this war of national redemption. But it will be the task of revolutionaries to oppose him *all the way* as he attempts to tie the organisations of the working class into this diversionary, demagogic campaign. At present Benn's liberal democratic programme has found no significant support amongst the capitalist class. But this should not be read to mean that it never will or that it is therefore not a capitalist programme. Benn's programme has as its explicit intention the reversing of the downward spiral of Britain's capitalist economy. He argues that a consensus prevailed in British politics throughout the 40s and 50s that united the leaders of the Labour and Tory parties with the key centres of the establishment. When Labour tried to break that consensus in 1964—with Wilson's 'National Plan' and the intended White Hot technological revolution—the establishment defused the challenge by 1966. It is this break with the 'consensus', one Benn played a leading part in, that he wishes to emulate. But now he is arguing that a nationally planned capitalism, tariff protected, could only be imposed on the establishment with the backing of, and participation of 'the people' themselves. He claims to have learnt from Wilson's failure to harness British capitalism that the establishment will always win without an accountable Prime Minister being responsible to a democratically responsive Parliament.

Benn poses his programme as a stark alternative to monetarism, and the advancing 'corporate state'. He is right to outline his project of centralised state intervention and protectionism as a viable alternative programme to that of the monetarists. Further dislocation in world trade and a further slide in the fortunes of the British bourgeoisie *could* persuade sections of British capital to back his programme. Should they do so they would doubtless find that the popular prestige of this democratic nationalist crusader was a vital asset in forcing the working class into harness to fight for the national revival of British capital. Whatever the bourgeois saw now Benn's 'Arguments for Democracy' shows his colours as a true bourgeois democrat. But he has betrayed too much trust, and excited too many expectations among large sections of workers, for him to be trusted in office—unless the bourgeois face dire crisis. At that moment we would see finally that it is not Benn who is being realistic and us taking 'short cuts'. Revolutionaries and Tony Benn are going to different places.



Picture: NETWORK

this course. Their stated reason is that although Benn's politics are "not yet even very left wing", "Benn whatever his ideas, is building and rebuilding the labour movement, and playing a great part in helping it to shake itself awake politically from the long wasting torpor of the 60s and 70s." Benn peddles a renewed Left reformist programme which excludes any serious nationalisation measures, includes the chauvinist call for import controls, and the anti-EEC rhetoric includes class collaborationist planning agreements and inevitably an Incomes Policy in a new AES/Socialist guise. It is on the one hand 'not very left wing' (Say that again!) and on the other heralded as part of the "labour movement (. . .) trying to renew itself and rethinking its social and political philosophy".

This ridiculous schema is based on a wilful suppression of the facts. The 60s and 70s were not a period of 'wasting torpor' unless you regard the Labour Party as the sole institution of the working class movement or its god-given political representative (as the Militant do!). This period saw massive unionisation, shop floor militancy, shop steward organisation, the involvement of thousands of working class militants in self proclaimed revolutionary organisations, massive strike waves approaching General Strike proportions, political strikes, and workers willing to take on a pro-capitalist Labour Government. Now turn to the 'revival' supposed to be underway.

If one can tear one's eyes away from the 50 to 60 thousand largely white-collar labour activists and the (collapsing) struggles to get Left Labour Councils to lead the anti-cuts fight a grim picture emerges. Three million unemployed without any serious fight-back, on the scale of UCS for example. The TUC totally inactive and easily getting away with it. The right-wing rampant in the major industrial unions outside of the T&GWU and the NUM. Shop floor organisation pathetically weak. Working class militants victimised, isolated, showing little political interest, either in the Labour Party democracy campaign or in the stunts of the far left groups. The 'revolutionary left' in complete ideological collapse before Bennite Reformism. If this is revival then long live 'torpor'. The Socialist

Organiser's perspective is either a cynical fraud aimed at gaining a few recruits or the product of constituency party cretinism of unbelievable proportions.

In either case the attempt to form a political bloc with Benn regardless of his politics spells disaster for the Socialist Organiser Alliance. John O'Mahoney aptly sums up the calibre of this formation "All sorts of people who have only a hazy idea about your policies (dupes-WP), or who disagree with them (cynics-WP), consider themselves Bennites. We supporters of Socialist Organiser—and we do not want to play down our serious political differences with you—consider ourselves in the latter category" (Socialist Organiser 10th September 1981).

What underlies this cynical, but in the end self-defeating liquidationism? It is a method which goes back to the 1940s when Gerry Healy leader of the British section of the Fourth International and Michel Pablo, the Fourth International's secretary, developed a 'new type' of tactical relationship to Left Reformists. The model then was Nye Bevan. The politics of Bevan were dreadful (actually they were to the left of Benn on) most issues except democratisation of the Labour Party. Never mind, Bevanism was a 'mass movement' that would be propelled by the combined crisis and impending war, leftwards in a roughly revolutionary direction. If the 'revolutionaries' acted as its organisers, ie produced papers, campaigned, held meetings—all of which things the MPs and constituency activists were a little rusty on, then when the crunch came with the capitalists, the revolutionaries would take over the movement. This was a strategy based on the abandonment of the revolutionary programme 'just in the short term', in order to gain a sympathetic hearing from the left reformists. Since the objective process was heading towards revolution the real programme would be appropriate at a later stage. But if the hearing gained was not in fact for revolutionary politics then the sympathy of the 'Trotskyists' won from the reformists was merely for the organisational services that they so generously provided to the cause of left reformism itself. Far from creating favourable conditions in which to 'later' raise the revolutionary progr-

amme, it created a barrier to doing so. To maintain the alliance, to sustain the sympathy the programme was to remain concealed, adapted or turned into sterile fetish within one's propaganda. Thus in the 1940s and 50s Healy reduced the revolutionary programme to the role of propagandistic criticisms but having no operative effect lest it clash with the left-reformist programme which holds the helm at the rallies and public meetings. For public consumption a "Labour Government with Socialist Policies" would do. To the left-reformists it meant a left Labour Government; to the closet revolutionists it was a "transitional slogan".

The Socialist Organiser Alliance repeats this fundamentally right-centrist policy with scarcely an alteration. As Healy once hailed Bevan, so now O'Mahoney can claim that Benn "—has become the personification of a radicalising labour movement which is becoming dangerous." Of course the reformists will ensure that such alliances are short-lived and Socialist Organiser has seen a procession of 'lefts'—Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone for example. They have found other hard-left friends and now produce their own house organ (Labour Herald) for left councillors, unencumbered by cutting single-issue criticisms (rate rises) from the O'Mahoney team. The Knights and Livingstones may have gone but they have been replaced by bigger fish—there is Reg Race MP, and even Benn himself is being wooed in open letter and editorial. If only they can be prised loose from Tribune then they too will need journalists.

To this end the forces around the SOA are eagerly dedicating themselves. Providing that Socialist Organiser can present itself as a broad paper, a paper which in O'Mahoney's words at an SO forum, can, "set out to build a mass left wing", then there is just a chance that Race and Benn may oblige. Perhaps they will. But such a 'mass left wing' will be based on the politics of Tony Benn, not on the carefully tailored and 'in-offensive' slogans of the SOA. And by tailoring their politics to suit the Bennite milieu, Socialist Organiser, like Healy's Socialist Outlook will set back the chances of developing an unequivocally revolutionary wing out

of some of the forces who may be attracted to such a movement.

An organisation with which some of today's SO ideologues would claim political continuity once described such politics with reference to post-war 'Trotskyism': "In the advanced capitalist countries they persistently and repeatedly adapted to left wing bureaucratic currents in the name of building a broad left wing," and: "They have played the sedulous ape to every 'socialist', 'communist', 'revolutionary' current. They have shown an inexhaustible capacity for seeing these currents, not as they are, but as they would like them to be. . . ." Well said! "And so the whirligig of time brings in his revenges!"

THE ROOTS OF THE RACIST STATE

THE SOUTH AFRICAN invasion and occupation of Southern Angola in September demonstrates again the determination of that regime to ensure the continuation of its military and economic hegemony in the southern part of the continent. The invasion aimed to smash the liberation forces of SWAPO for a whole period, thus tipping the balance of forces in Pretoria's favour during a crucial phase of the "negotiations" over the future of Namibia (South-West Africa).

As in Zimbabwe, the Western imperialists - the "contact group" Germany, UK, USA, Canada, France - have been struggling to reach the settlement most favourable to their enormous economic interests in Namibia. Fearful of a prolonged guerrilla struggle and recognising the overwhelming support for SWAPO, the contact group has over a long period been attempting to persuade their reluctant ally, South Africa, of the need for a "realistic" compromise - i.e. one which as far as possible entrenches imperialist and S. African economic dominance over a politically independent Namibia.

The attempted agreement, proposed last January, including SWAPO withdrawal to monitored bases, a United Nations peacekeeping force and the promise that Walvis Bay - the only deep sea port on the Namibian coast - would remain in the hands of S. Africa, was not sufficient for Pretoria. The S. Africans intend to militarily defeat SWAPO or so weaken it that election rigging and intimidation will put in power their own "Democratic Turnhalle Alliance". Thus their demands in the negotiations for a "demilitarised zone" on the Angolan/Namibian border to cut off SWAPO's lifeline and their willingness to attempt to establish one by military force, despite opposition from sections of the European imperialists.

REAGAN APPROVES AGGRESSIVE POLICY

Botha's government has been encouraged by several developments to follow a more intransigent line. The victory of Mugabe in Zimbabwe alarmed and strengthened the ultra right wing in S. Africa. The Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) made considerable gains in the April elections; Botha cannot afford to open himself to charges of "selling out" the Namibian whites. In the international field, the victory of Reagan, who quickly promised "to end S. Africa's polecat status in the world and seek to restore its place as a legitimate and important regional actor with whom we can cooperate pragmatically" (Int. Herald Tribune, May 81), obviously gave the green light for a more aggressive policy from S. Africa. Sure enough the invasion of Angola led to not so much as a bleat of protest from the US administration. S. Africa plays a crucial role for US and Western imperialism in Southern Africa, a role analogous to Israel's in the Middle East.

Not only is South Africa a crucial source of strategic minerals as well as an area of massive profitable investment - US investment in S. Africa now amounts to half its total investment in Africa - but it is also in Reagan's words an "important regional actor" i.e. a dependent sub-imperialist backed and used by the major imperialist powers as their "gendarme" in Southern Africa. South Africa is the stick with which US imperialism threatens the petit-bourgeois nationalist regimes to the North - Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique. These governments coming to power at the head of mass struggles against white colonial regimes need to be integrated once more into the western sphere of influence as secure and profitable bases for investment. They need to be kept as semi-colonies, formally independent but safe for imperialist investment - i.e. exploitation.

This means above all removing any Soviet influence (and in particular the presence of Cuban troops in Angola) which provides these regimes with a degree of security and therefore independence from imperialism.

The past period has seen growing collaboration between the CIA and S. Africa, the aim of which is to de-stabilise and weaken these regimes and bring them to heel. The invasion of Angola, coupled with financial and military backing to Jonas Savimba's UNITA, economic warfare against Zimbabwe by S. Africa and S. African/CIA backing to the remnants of pro-Portuguese guerrillas in Mozambique are all part of this strategy.

INTERESTS DO NOT ALWAYS COINCIDE

At the same time Western imperialism faces problems with the stability of South Africa itself, as the growing black proletariat starts to shake the regime with its new-found strength. As with Israel, the South African ruling class has its own specific interests which do not coincide at all times with those of imperialism. For imperialism, too much South African intransigence on Namibia risks driving SWAPO and Angola into the arms of the Soviet Union. South Africa's refusal to grant any serious reforms at home threatens to exacerbate the internal contradictions of the South African economy. The South African state, forced by its own contradictions into a position of perpetual war with its neighbours and with its own working class, can become a dangerous ally in Southern Africa

Even the Reagan regime recognises this. Thus Chester Crocker, Reagan's African Affairs Spokesman, presents the administration's policy as involving "reciprocal action" - US support, in return

for internal reforms and a willingness to settle the Namibian question. Even "reforms", however, immediately challenge the very foundations of the white settler state in S. Africa. Why is this?

THE SETTLER STATE

The heart of modern S. Africa and its state is its system of "grand apartheid" (separate development). A system based on migrant labour, "influx control" and the Bantustans - so-called "homelands". With a large section of the African working class forbidden to permanently settle in urban areas; with its families and communities torn apart, prevented by law from effectively organising to defend its interests; with reserve labour corralled in the "homelands", the African working class provides the cheap labour which enables the maintenance of the high profit rates, so attractive to Western capital. It is these same high profits which allow the S. African ruling class to provide its white workers with unparalleled levels of comfort and privilege. It is the preservation of this brutal system that demands the vast repressive apparatus at the disposal of the government - the denial of democratic rights, banning of political parties, the pass laws, secret police etc - which are the hallmarks of the Pretoria regime.

Capitalist development in S. Africa has been intimately connected with the growth of the migrant labour system. The function of the battery of laws restricting land ownership, dating back to the mid-19th century, is to ensure the continuing supply of this labour. The first laws were demanded by the white settler farmers, who found themselves short of labour and in competition with a growing African peasantry. But the real power behind the lobby for further restrictions came from the owners of the diamond and gold mines. The heads of the powerful mining finance houses, the Chamber of Mines and imperialist politician Cecil Rhodes, succeeded in enforcing a series of measures including land tenure restrictions, hut taxes, and labour boards which prevented individual companies raising wages in



THE RHODES COLOSSUS
Cartoon from "Punch", 1892. Cecil Rhodes, the British arch-imperialist who gave his name to the racist state of Rhodesia, dreamed of having Africa under British control "from Cairo to Cape Town".

the competition for labour. A strict contract labour system, the Masters and Servants Act, was introduced which made breaking a labour contract a criminal offence. A compound housing system which kept contract workers effectively imprisoned, and pass laws - first introduced in the Transvaal in 1895 - ensured that unemployed African workers were excluded from the fast growing cities.

The mineowners were perfectly aware and indeed quite open about the purpose of these measures. The Chamber of Mines stated: "It is clearly to the advantage of the mines that native labourers should be encouraged to return to their homes after the completion of the ordinary period of service. The maintenance of the system under which the mines are able to obtain unskilled labour at a rate less than ordinarily paid in industry depends upon this, for otherwise the subsidiary means of subsistence would disappear and the labourer would tend to become a permanent resident upon the Witwatersrand, with increased requirements". (Quoted in Ernest Harsch, South Africa)

THE BOER WAR AND AFTER

The Boer War of 1899-1902 was fought by British imperialism to ensure the dominance and indeed extension of British finance capital's control over South Africa. It necessarily involved the crushing of the independent Boer republics both to prevent a potential alliance with German imperialism and to remove the obstacles to the recruitment of African labour on a national scale. The government which emerged in 1910 in control of the Union of S. Africa headed by General

Smuts - was an alliance between English speaking capital and the large Afrikaaner landowners and bourgeoisie. This first Union Parliament passed the Natives Land Act of 1913 which set aside about 7% of the country as African "reserves", forbidding Africans to acquire land outside these and suppressing "squattling". This deliberate pauperisation ensured a plentiful supply of cheap labour - but also meant that black workers settled in and around the cities and towns. The potential power of such a working class was all too apparent to the white employers. Beginning with the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, a whole battery of legislation was introduced to enforce the segregation of black workers into special "locations" in the towns (including segregation between African, Indian and coloured workers) and to impose the pass system on all African men.

The Stallard Commission (1922) stated the aims: "It should be a recognised principle that Natives - men women and children - should only be permitted within municipal areas in so far and for so long as their presence is demanded by the wants of the white population".

The enlargement of the reserves to encompass 13% of S. African land in 1936, far from being a concession, was designed to better facilitate the migrant labour system. The reserves were still made up of the worst land: they have not been expanded since.

WHITE WORKERS IN A PRIVILEGED POSITION

In mining and industry the principles of strict racial hierarchy and job segregation were being enforced, together with further measures to deny any trade union rights to black workers. While such a system underpinned the high profits of the mining interests it also produced growing problems for the capitalists. The growing industry suffered from a chronic shortage of skilled labour which had to be filled by importing labour. Between 1890-1913 immigration ran at 24,000 per annum - English workers from Cornwall and the North of England were recruited to the mines and industry as well as Indian and Asian workers. In 1910 62.8% of white miners were British compared to 27% Afrikaaners. This shortage of skilled labour ensured a strong bargaining position of the white workers against their employers.

The (white) unions introduced from Britain in the 1880s and the South African Labour Party fought to maintain segregation on the basis that they were preventing semi-slave labour from undermining their bargaining strength. This pernicious ideology, which was shortly to tie the white working class to the white supremacist Nationalist Party, infected even the S. African Communist Party. In 1922 when Smuts agreed to the employers' proposals to increase the proportion of black to white miners, they were faced with a massive strike in Witwatersrand. A strike by 22,000 white miners turned into a strike in defence of the colour bar, and yet S.P. Bunting, one of the more progressive labour leaders and a leading figure in the Communist Party could declare: "The strike is sometimes called a strike against the abolition of the colour bar. The colour bar literally as a restriction on Non-European workers is of course unfair. To the extent however that it helps to keep up high wages and the numbers of those drawing them, it serves the interests of all workers. Nor would its abolition benefit more than a handful of coloureds or natives". (Edward Poly, S.P. Bunting)

BLACK WORKERS GET NO SUPPORT FROM WHITES

The position of the white skilled workers was from the outset that of a privileged labour aristocracy. Trade unions which limited themselves to or remained dominated by these workers were bound to develop in a racist direction. It was the task of communists not to speak for the defence of the privileges of the aristocracy of labour against the great oppressed majority, but to lead the latter in an assault on the whole system. Thus the white proletariat and its leaders sold their class birthright. The consequence was the triumph of the ideology of "baaskap" (white supremacy) - the ideology of the Broederbond.

As a result of the militant struggles of black workers in the 1920s organised in the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union received no support from the white workers and collapsed in the face of massive repression. The Nationalist/Labour pact which won the elections of 1924 quickly consolidated this white working class alliance through the Mines and Workers Act of 1926, popularly known as the Colour Bar Act, which guaranteed the white miners their labour-aristocratic privileges.

The Broederbond was founded in 1918 as a society committed to unifying the Afrikaaner community and ensuring its domination over the blacks and English speaking capital. Developing an ideology which appealed

to the spirit of the "Great Trek" and the "Boer War" against the African and "anglo-jewish" capital, the Broederbond proceeded to construct an all-class alliance which drew on a base in the Dutch Reformed Church Trade Unions and the small Afrikaaner business and farmers communities. This movement with its mass base was finally to break up the alliance of English Afrikaaner big capital represented in the Hertzog Coalition Govt. of 1932-39. By 1941 the Broederbond dominated the Nationalist Party, which proceeded to oust Smuts' United Party in 1949. As one South African marxist put it "for the first time in South African history the big financial interests found themselves led from their own government" (I.B. Tabata, quoted in From Chattel to Wage Slavery by W.M. Tsotsi)

The Nationalist Party began systematising white privilege and the maintenance of a cheap labour supply industry by developing apartheid. This complete process of tying the white working class to the defence of the state which defended its privileges.

Alongside measures enforcing total racial segregation went the rationalising of "influx control" and strengthening of the pass laws by a law which was named, in characteristic "double think" terminology of the time, the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination Documents) Act. Urban segregation was reinforced by the Group Areas Act, and the notorious Section 1 of the Urban Areas Act was introduced. This allowed Africans to live in an urban area only if they fulfilled certain qualifications regarding residence and employment otherwise they can be "enforced out" to the homelands. Thus, every aspect of the lives of black workers and their families became subject to even more rigorous control and thousands found themselves in jail simply for failing to carry their passes. At the same time, the Nationalist Party regime sought to foster South African owned industry with tariff measures, and a massive sector was developed to facilitate this.

The 1950s saw a period of fast economic growth also of developing black mobilisations. After the massive campaign against the pass laws culminated in the Sharpeville massacre, the Nationalist government adopted increasingly severe repressive measures - execution, torture, imprisonment without trial, bannings etc. Against this background, the apartheid project moved into higher gear, with P.M. Verwoerd announcing in 1962 the plans to develop the Bantustans into "separate Black states" with "independence".

TRYING TO SPLIT THE BLACK PROLETARIAT

From the mid 1960s, "influx control" was buttressed by "efflux control" in the Bantustans, enforcing contract labour system. At the same time, concerted attempts were made to reduce the black population in the urban areas by encouraging the removal of "economically inactive" black people to the homelands.

The Bantu Homelands Citizen Act of 1970 provided for all Africans to be proclaimed "citizens" of one of the Bantustans, a policy designed not only to entrench the migrant labour system but to foster "national" differences amongst the black proletariat. All previous improvement plans for urban blacks were abandoned.



Map showing the distribution of black residential areas.

SPARTACISTS Cheerleaders for the Kremlin

THEY'VE MANAGED to do it at last! The ostensibly Trotskyist International Spartacist Tendency has offered their support to the Moscow Stalinists should they summon up the vigour to destroy rampant 'counter-revolution' in Poland.

"Solidarity's counter-revolutionary course must be stopped! If the Kremlin Stalinists, in their necessarily brutal, stupid way, intervene militarily to stop it, we will support this. And we take responsibility in advance for this; whatever the idiocies and atrocities they will commit, we do not flinch from defending the crushing of Solidarity's counter-revolution" [Workers Vanguard]

Fresh from refusing to support either the Arab states against the Israeli state, or the mass movement that overthrew the Shah in Iran, these 'revolutionaries' have finally closed the book on the Polish working class as well. For the Spartacists the Polish workers are now bound and tied to the Solidarity leadership's drive to carry through a Vatican-CIA backed counter-revolution in Poland.

What would the Spartacists have us believe? Firstly that the Solidarity leaders are preparing a counter-revolutionary bid to take power. Walesa is supposedly dead set on this. What matter to the Spartacists that he fought the elections at the second part of the Solidarity conference congress on a clear platform of conciliation with, and respect for, the Stalinist authorities; that he has an explicit programme for, and record of, collaboration with the authorities: "We do not want to take over power, but we must assure that the authorities serve us". Obviously for the Spartacists, nothing!

KOR leader Kuron - the target of the sharpest venom in the Stalinist presses, as of the Spartacists, is reported to have issued a call "for a counter-revolutionary regime to take power". What does it matter, if, in fact, he fought vigorously against Solidarity raising the demand for free elections because it would destroy the Communist Party or that he was the key architect of the compromise between the authorities and Solidarity that grants them both a veto over the appointment and dismissal of senior personnel in industry. His "counter-revolutionary" regime - a council of National Salvation composed of Solidarity, the Church and Party 'moderates' [those that don't call for the crushing of Solidarity or the shooting of workers] has been embraced as a lifeline and positively advocated by supposedly pro-Kremlin maverick Politburo member Olszowski.

None of this is relevant to the Spartacist Sect. If your programme for the Polish workers is calculated on no other scale than one which enables the sect to counterpose itself to the centrist metropolitan left, then what does it matter if you simply retail the lies and innuendos of the Stalinists?

Particularly offensive to the Spartacists was Solidarity's call for Free Trade Unions in Eastern Europe! The official Soviet news agency Tass saw it as "openly provocative and impudent towards the socialist countries", the Spartacists saw it "both as an arrogant provocation of Moscow and a declaration of ideological solidarity with Western capitalism imperialism". Why is this call a declaration of solidarity with imperialism? Because NATO's lackeys in the Trade Union bureaucracy have always raised the slogan, because Cold War hacks represented the AFL-CIO at the Solidarity Congress and because Solidarity did not come out clearly in support of the American Air Traffic Controllers against Reagan. With a traditional Stalinist amalgam the Spartacists want to find the Polish workers guilty by association!

"There's a saying: tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are" [Workers Vanguard]

It is not the responsibility of the Polish workers that the brutal Stalinist regimes have handed to the forces of reaction the possibility to initiate struggle for elementary working class demands. Yes the Cold War hacks of the AFL-CIO and TUC accepted their invites to the Solidarity Congress. That was to be expected. But Solidarity invited the Stalinist State Unions too and is enthusiastically preparing to enter into talks with the Hungarian Stalinist dominated fake unions - guilty by association!

The struggle for Political Revolution has been seriously derailed in Poland. Socialist Organiser may still be able to see "the developing workers' political revolution" [SO, 8.10.81] but the Solidarity Congress shows clearly that the tendency towards a working class anti-bureaucratic political revolution is, at present, far outweighed by a tendency - articulated in nationalist and Trade Union colours - towards accommodation with the Stalinist regime. When Solidarity calls for "free market prices" it is conceding a demand fought for by Stalinists since 1970. When it calls for a decentralised economy and braces itself to accept redundancies it does so in harmony with a significant section of the bureaucracy that wants to emulate the 'market socialism' of Hungary and Yugoslavia. There is no secret that Stalinists and Solidarity leaders alike would like to call in the IMF because neither can see any other solution - although the Spartacists



Black workers in a migrant workers hostel in Soweto. Most of the workers in the hostel are miners.

Picture: Mike Abrahams (Network)

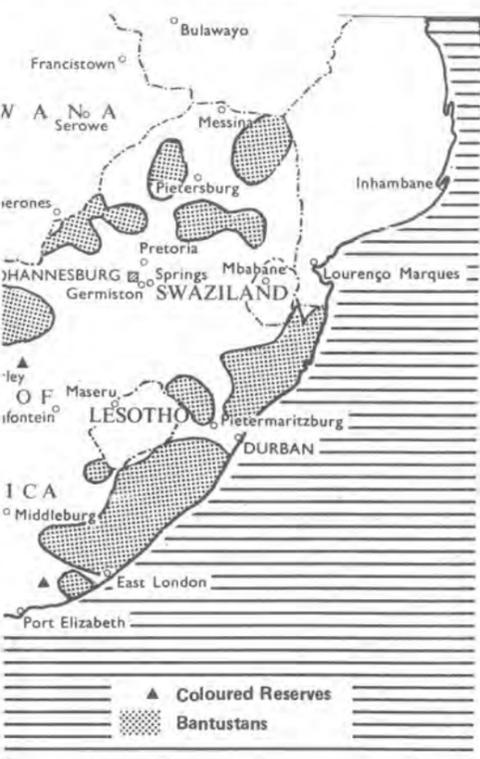
E
E

Where "homelands" adjoined cities and towns, the townships were incorporated - or removed - into them and black workers allowed to "commute" on a daily, weekly or less frequent basis.

By 1976, Pretoria had managed to buy off the leaders of the first fake independent state, the Transkei, and others, such as Bobhutha Tswana, followed. The farce of these "independence day" celebrations hides a tragedy of human suffering of horrific proportions. The available land is of course incapable of supporting the growing population. A UN sponsored study in 1976 showed that infant mortality in the homelands was rising sharply - that 50-60% of children died before reaching the age of five.

The postwar South African economy was able to achieve a growth rate second only to the Japanese "economic miracle". The 1960s was a period of virtually uninterrupted expansion in which the real GDP rose by an average 6.3% annually. A plentiful supply of cheap labour helped to sustain high rates of profit. For instance in 1974 the average American company enjoyed a return of 18% on its investment in S. Africa, compared with a return of only 8% on its investment in Britain. Foreign investment continues to accelerate. Between 1973 and 1974 direct foreign investments rose by 40%. Aided by rising gold revenues the Nationalist Government developed a massive state sector of the economy - ISCOR (Iron and Steel) ESCOM (Electricity) SASOL (Coal and Oil) ALUSAF (Aluminium) - ensuring at the same time that Afrikaaner capital was the major beneficiary of outside contracts - (within these state companies English speakers fill only 10% of the top posts). Between 1946 and 1973 the public sector had contributed 80% of all the economy's fixed capital outlays on construction work. In the process Afrikaaner capital's share of the private sector increased between 1948-75 from 9.6% to 20.6%.

But this ruling class idyll could not be sustained for ever and by the early 1970s cracks were beginning to appear in the apartheid state. As ever, expanding capital produced its own gravedigger. The ever growing ranks of the S. African working class showed their capacity and determination to fight. The 1972 strike wave centered on Natal presaged a decade of struggle with new levels of organisation and political awareness. The fiendish intricacies of the apartheid state could delay, obstruct this process, but they could not reverse it. Despite all the government attempts to send blacks into the homelands, the black urban population has increased from 1.8 million in 1948 to 3.4 million in 1960 and to 4.4 million in 1970. As the white workers have moved



as in South Africa.

progressively into professional and supervising jobs so the rigid segregation of jobs has broken down. Increasing numbers of blacks are employed in skilled and semi-skilled occupations and it becomes increasingly difficult for employers to simply have striking workers "deported" back to their homelands - it is estimated that one in two if black workers are classified as migrants. The Soweto explosion of June 1976, followed by three political general strikes in the Transvaal in early August involving 100,000 workers, and in the Transvaal and the Cape in late August involving an estimated 132,000, showed the strength of the working class movement.

A MORE PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO APARTHEID

This explosion combined with an economic crisis in 1976, "the longest and deepest recession in the S. African economy for at least 45 years" according to the S.A. Financial Mail, led the Botha government to look again at its strategy and in particular the strategy of their long time opponents - the "reformers" like Harry Oppenheimer of the Anglo-American mining conglomerate. The major party of English capital, the United Party, had long been advocating a different approach. Realising the crippling limitations that grand apartheid would impose on their industries and the dangers of relying on brute force to hold down the black proletariat, the United Party opposed the Nationalists' apartheid policy as "negative". They preferred a more pragmatic policy of "segregation" which would allow them to recruit black workers to skilled trades while at the same time retaining the great advantages of the migrant labour system. They also recognised, along with US capital who backed them, that S. Africa's natural markets lay to the North - markets which were stunted by the "first strike" mentality of the apartheid state.

CAPITAL REQUIRES BLACKS NEAR WORKPLACE

In 1947 Smuts' Minister of Native Affairs replying to Nationalist Party criticism of the influx of blacks into urban areas declared "can we develop our industries when we have the position that the native only works for a few months and then returns to the reserves for a couple of years? No, the native must be trained for his work in industry, and to become an efficient industrial worker he must be a permanent industrial worker. On that account he must live near his place of employment." (Quoted in Tsotsi, ibid.)

The question of permanent residence became a central issue in the defeat of Smuts' government by the Nationalists.

In 1978 the Wiehahn and Rickart Commissions set up by the Nationalist Government to address the same problems made a series of recommendations which included extension of trade union rights for black workers, removal of job reservation restrictions, the granting of land and trading rights to black city dwellers and the abolition or modification of the pass laws. The Nationalist Party government under pressure from its own strengthened capitalists accepted the measures in principle - an apparent victory for the "verligtes" reform grouping in the party. The Rand Daily Mail declared that it saw "the end of the long cold war between the Nationalist Govt. and big business". The Financial Mail, house journal of the big capitalists, declared the reports meant real change. They represented "the replacement of crude racial discrimination by more sophisticated means of control. Also central to both reports is the idea of building up a privileged labour aristocracy amongst blacks in urban areas" (F.M. May 79, quoted in South Africa after Zimbabwe by Alex. Callinicos.)

Botha's reforms amounted to a strengthening and streamlining of apartheid in an attempt to adapt it to the requirements of industry and the need for stability. The whole grand apartheid scheme - where more and more black South Africans lose their citizenship and their residency rights outside the Bantustans - developed apace. The resettlement programme involved forced removals, the bulldozers in Cross Roads, endless treks for thousands of women. The 1979 Rickett Commission - accepted in all but its most "liberal" measures by the government - laid out a strategy of total control involving residency and employment controls. The recent attack on Cape Town's Nyanga township and the forced deportations to the Transkei are further confirmation that the regime is pursuing its aim of limiting the black urban population to those who are productive, together with a restricted number of families to provide stability for a layer of workers and petty bourgeois. Present talk of a new citizenship deal means no more than that.

BOTHA HEADS OFF BLACK MILITANCY

While the Botha regime took steps to strengthen "grand apartheid", it also recognised that it had to head off the growing militancy amongst black workers. It implemented most of the 1978 Wiehahn Commission which sought to legalize black trade unions - if they registered, which of course involved control of their funds and rules. Most black unions refused to register and the last few years have seen a massive growth in trade union membership and industrial struggles including major disputes in such "progressive" firms as Fords and B.L. The latest proposal from Pretoria of a "new deal" for black trade unionists actually means compulsory registration.

Through these various measures, Botha's regime seeks in vain to resolve some of the contradictions facing the settler state. On the one hand it must allow industry to recruit, train and keep skilled black labour and on the other it must ensure that overall labour costs are kept down. It must convince investors overseas and at home that it is reforming enough to prevent an explosion - while at the same time it must not go so far as to lose support of the white working class and Afrikaaner petit-bourgeoisie which form the base of the Nationalist Party.

REFORMS COME UP AGAINST THE BASIS OF THE RACIST STATE

As in the Orange statelet in Northern Ireland the reforms have come up against the social forces and ideology on which their state was formed. The "verkampte" H.N.P. (the Paisleyites of S. Africa) not only made significant gains at the last election but has recently won the right to gain re-admittance to the Broederbond. Previously anyone who broke away from the Nationalist Party to join the H.N.P. was automatically expelled. This gain for the ultra-right makes it even more difficult for Botha to carry out even minimal reforms and exacerbates even further the contradictions of the apartheid state. ■

In the second part of this article we will look at the black nationalist and working class resistance to apartheid and the political struggles facing the South African proletariat in the years ahead.

Continued on page 7

Cliff stifles Women's Voice

"AGAIN AND AGAIN history shows us that the working women's movement grew and developed through a struggle against bourgeois feminists".

With these words Tony Cliff, in an article in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)'s theoretical journal (International Socialism (IS) No 13), launched his attack on his party's own women's magazine, "Women's Voice". His article, "Clara Zetkin and the German Socialist Feminist Movement" does not mention "Women's Voice". Cliff's theme, returned to again and again in the article, is that women need no organisation separate from the revolutionary party. And what was good enough for Zetkin's SPD and Lenin's Bolshevik Party is, by inuendo, good enough for the Socialist Workers Party. Thus it was no real surprise when the October issue of "Women's Voice" announced that: "The future of Women's Voice groups will be decided at the SWP conference in November".

The present debate on the future of the Women's Voice groups is only the latest blow in a continuing battle. On the one side is a group of SWP women led by Joan Smith. They have argued that Women's Voice can and should be used as an instrument for building a feminist organisation separate from, but sympathetic to, the SWP. Smith justified this by arguing that: "the whole of women's lives are completely transformed by their role in the family as mothers in a capitalist society...the oppression of women is like the exploitation of the working class at the heart of the capitalist system. It is therefore possible to build a small revolutionary feminist organisation" (quoted in IS No 7 - Winter 1980, in "Women and the Revolutionary Party" by Lin James, p 96).

A SPECIAL FORM OF ORGANISATION

Opposed to this overt separatism - men and women with their two appropriate linked organisations - stood a faction in the SWP, led by Lindsey German. They argued for much closer ties with the Party. However, until now, this faction never denied the need for some form of separate organisation. As Lin James makes clear: "none of the contributors to the debate about Women's Voice denied that some form of special organisation for women was necessary". (ibid).

And again in a discussion document issued early in 1980, Alex Callinicos remarked: "The argument is not whether we should build a WV organisation - there is only one Central Committee member who is firmly opposed to such a perspective, namely Tony Cliff, and he has made it clear that he will not fight for his position at the present time".

The feminist tide was still too strong for Cliff to do battle. He withdrew to his tent to await better days. Now, however, the tide has turned. The compromise which dubbed "Women's Voice" a "sister" organisation of the SWP (agreed in 1979) has served its purpose - it has allowed Cliff, and German, to prove to the waverers that "sister organisations" are needless duplications of the party.

The development of "Women's Voice" groups began in January 1977. It began when WV changed its format. Before this, WV had been simply a women's version of Socialist Worker. Like SW, it cheered on their struggles, offering neither guidance nor political education. The magazine was to be a radical change. It was intended to rectify the SWP's appalling record on the women's question, by being a "socialist Spare Rib".

TAILING THE RISE & FALL OF THE W.L.M.

The impetus for this change was the significant growth of the Women's Liberation Movement. Many of the SWP's women members belonged to the white collar strata (teachers, social workers, etc) that was the bedrock of the WLM. Lacking any communist programme to fight for within this new feminist movement, they inevitably ended up bringing the issues and ideas of feminism into the SWP. Furthermore, as the WLM broke up into mutually hostile factions - notably the radical feminists, and the Socialist Feminists - the SWP saw no obstacle to wholesale recruitment amongst the socialist feminists.

Needless to say, the new style "Women's Voice" did not mark a qualitative break with the SWP's politics. The old "Women's Voice" had worshipped spontaneous women's trades unionism. The new magazine worshipped spontaneous feminist struggles. Thus the issues and obsessions current in the WLM at any given time were given extensive and uncritical coverage in WV. Thus women's health issues, the "Reclaim the Night" campaign and a host of other campaigns succeeded one another, in a vain attempt to recruit from the socialist feminist milieu. Indeed the open letter to the WLM from Women's Voice in May 1978 ended with the call: "For a socialist/feminist revolution".

The only material specific to WV that readers could not find in a dozen other feminist publications was advertising material for the current SWP's campaigns, such as the ANL or later the Right to Work

Campaign. But real debate and analysis got a firm thumbs down. The debates in WV that did develop were kept away from the non-SWP audience in the groups. They were saved for the pages of the IS or Socialist Review.

Failure to grow increasingly spurred the faction led by Joan Smith, to seek to distance WV from the SWP. They wanted to remove the party barrier that they were convinced was separating themselves from the socialist feminists. (For a full analysis of Joan Smith's theories see WORKERS POWER No 13, March 1980). This pressure for "independence" was one that the SWP had opened itself up to by tailing, rather than challenging the feminism of the WLM. Lacking any political basis to rebut the arguments for autonomy, the SWP moved against their opponents organisationally.

Firstly the "open" nature of the WV groups was ended - WV was declared a sister organisation. Policy was firmly directed from the SWP centre, with WV conference decisions being overruled by the SWP conference. The threat to the party was defeated by organisational diktat.

However, the phoney compromise of semi-independence for WV groups did not allay the fears of Cliff and German. The spectre of separatism, once glimpsed, continued to haunt these SWP leaders. The question is, why have they chosen now to exorcise it?

The decline of the WLM in the last two or three years released the pressure on the SWP to "do something" about women. The white-collar worker, student milieu which was the social base of the new feminism of the 70's has been increasingly pulled towards the new left around Benn in the Labour Party. Having fore sworn the vanguardism and elitism of the Leninist Party in "Beyond the Fragments", the ageing "children of '68" have filed into the pews of Benn's "Broad Church". The SWP leaders no sooner saw the spectre of Feminism fade than they were faced by the ghost of Labourism Past (or so they had repeatedly assured themselves).



Tony Cliff, doesn't understand...

Chris Harman lashes out at the "Posy Simmons world where a degree and Habitat furniture are as much taken for granted as are opposition to sexism and racism" in the July issue of Socialist Review. This is the milieu that breeds Bennery according to Harman. Again we may assume that this is a lashing for the predominantly teacher white-collar stable cadre of the SWP, and marks a new turn to crude workerist rhetoric and the dropping of middle-class luxuries like "Women's Voice". Organisations separate from the Party are by definition a threat to it. The Party organisation alone is capable of "Drawing the Class Line" - the title of Harman's article.

This is in fact the message of Cliff's sally into the German Women's Movement. Historical erudition usually serves a vulgar factional end for Cliff. When he wanted to ditch Trotsky's programme and Lenin's theory of the party in the 50's, he disguised himself as Rosa Luxemburg. When he saw the use of a centralised organisation, he arrayed himself as V.I. Lenin. Now he wants to smash WV, so he dresses up as Clara Zetkin. Needless to say his latest impersonation is no truer to his model than were the others.

The way was cleared for Cliff by an ideological assault on feminist theories by Lindsey German. Joan Smith was obliged to borrow the feminist theory of a separate "mode of reproduction" which exists alongside of and distinct from the mode of production and is the basis for a separate "woman's question". Lindsey German (ISJ 12 Spring 1981) attacked the whole notion of "patriarchy". Many of her criticisms of Feminism are valid. She attacks the view that it is the ideology of "patriarchy" that is the cause of women's oppression (Juliet Mitchell; Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor) as idealist and leading to a purely cultural struggle.

IDEOLOGIES DO NOT FALL FROM THE SKIES

For Marxists, ideologies must be rooted in material conditions in the mode of production and the social classes arising therefrom. She also rejects the so-called materialist theories of patriarchy which in fact reduce themselves to a view of women's oppression as biological in origin. But German is so eager to destroy the view that "all men

oppress all women" that she virtually obliterates women's oppression as such. Desirous to exonerate working class men from being part of a solid block of oppressors, she minimises the fact that working class men in general and the trade unions in particular, have taken and do take measures which strengthened the oppression of women.

AN UNEQUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

She rightly asserts that the "family wage" - the inclusion within the male wage of the subsistence of his wife and children does not represent exploitation in the Marxist sense. The proletarian housewife's exclusion from waged labour, her financial dependency, her restriction to child-rearing and domestic chores is her oppression. But German glibly concludes "it does not signify that male workers benefit from women's oppression." That housework may be "better" than much factory work is not the point. Wage-labour brings a wage which is legally the husband's property, to dispose of as he wishes. German describes wage labour/domestic labour as a "division of labour" but it is not an equal division from the point of view of independence.

It makes the woman dependent. It gives the male worker a privileged position - a poor, marginal and shoddy privilege true enough, but enough to act as material sustenance to bourgeois ideology which stresses women's social inferiority. Women's domestic slavery within the family also excludes or minimises her role in production and therefore her involvement and experience in the organisations and struggles of her class. This isolation in the home is the root of women's 'backwardness', 'inferiority' etc. Flowing from women's second place role in production is her second rate education, training etc.

Where capitalism draws women into production or into commerce, teaching etc, the objective basis for challenging and overcoming this 'backwardness' exists. Capitalism has always had this tendency but within capitalism it can never result in full equality since to do so it would have to fully socialise child rearing and domestic labour. German again formally recognises this and then urges us to see "women as part of the class organised in Work places". German is neatly skipping over all the problems towards a return to the old SWP/IS view that women are workers, and therefore no special tactics or organisation is necessary.

German typically attempts to cover up the reactionary role of skilled craft unions in the past in excluding women workers and trying to drive them out of production. Revolutionary Marxism does not claim that, spontaneously, working class consciousness or trade union organisation makes for women's liberation. Just as women's liberation can only be achieved through the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism. So working class struggle for women's freedom needs to be a political class struggle for communists goals. In the struggle to overcome sexism, revolutionaries will never tolerate the subordination and covering up of women's demands in the interests of not alienating male workers ('unity'). Economism can never understand this. It can never be a basis for organising working class women. German has simply opened the door to a sexist counterrevolution within the SWP. An important development in this counterrevolution was the publication of Cliff's article.

ECONOMISM IS NO SUBSTITUTE

Cliff's usual piles of statistics and reams of irrelevant facts are there to give a flavour of authenticity to a relatively simple thesis. He tries to prove that the proletarian women's movement had basically a negative function. It was a crusade to save proletarian women from bourgeois feminists. Anything that it did positively was really the result of its close links to the party, or the party and trades unions' work.

Starting from the position that working class and bourgeois women are class enemies, Cliff tries to demonstrate that the conclusion that flows from this is that no special women's organisation is necessary. He quotes Zetkin:

"We have no special women's agitation to carry on, but rather socialist agitation among women. It is not women's petty interests of the moment that we should put in the foreground; our task must be to enrol the modern proletarian woman in the class struggle" (IS No 13, p 35).

What does Cliff read this to mean? Obviously we don't need a separate agitation on women (No "Women's Voice"!). Women's immediate demands are petty and run the risk of dividing the "real class struggle", which for Cliff is the day-to-day economic struggle. Women should join the unions and the SWP! Zetkin would turn in her grave!

In fact Zetkin's meaning was the exact opposite of Cliff's. When she says that there is no special women's agitation she certainly does not mean that no specific agitation needs to be carried out amongst women which relates to their exploitation and oppression. What she does insist is that this be socialist agitation - ie agitation which in mobilising working women to fight shows them the origins of their oppression in class society and under capitalism and which does not hide the need for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie behind "Women's petty interests of the moment."

The opportunists who came to lead the German SPD and the Second International increasingly strove to push "petty interests of the moment" - ie immediate demands, wage demands or isolated reforms to the forefront of the party's work, obscuring the socialist goal. The possibility of doing this was enshrined in the division of party programmes of the Second International into minimum and maximum sections. Zetkin, like Luxemburg and Lenin vigorously fought this minimalism.

Cliff, however, stands with the minimalist opponents of these revolutionaries except he wants to supplant the immediate demands of women with those of the economic trade union struggle because he believes that these fought for hard enough pass over spontaneously into general political struggle, - class struggle. He fears women's demands pushed vigorously but in isolation from class wide issues lead to separatism and splits. True; they do. **But so do pure trade union demands.**

A DISASTROUS DILUTION OF POLITICS

Cliff draws in references to Lenin's opposition to the Jewish Bund's attempts to maintain a separate organisation for Jewish workers. True, Lenin opposed federal party made up of various nationalities, but that is not what is at issue. A mass working women's organisation is not and indeed cannot be a party organisation since it exists precisely to draw into the class struggle those whose conditions of oppression tend to exclude them from activity in the unions and the political organisations. Zetkin spent her whole early life trying to create such an organisation; one that would use "special ways, means and methods" to reach women proletarians.

For Cliff the awkward fact of "Die Gleichheit" ("Equality") and its organisation is got around by a neat device: " - why then did she build a separate socialist women's organisation? The reason was quite simple. The law did not allow women to join any political party in the greater part of the Reich until 1908. To circumvent the law, Zetkin and her friends had to adopt very awkward measures" (IS No 13 p45).

Cliff can only see democratically self-governing movements as "awkward" because he has no programme whatsoever on which his followers would fight for the leadership of these organisations. Cliff himself notes but does not realise the significance of Zetkin's fight to preserve the integrity of her paper and organisation against the integrationists of the SPD Central Committee (Vorstand). These gentlemen wanted to reduce the high political and indeed theoretical stan-



Clara Zetkin

workers power

Tory pay limit must be smashed

THATCHER'S RUTHLESS PURGE of the Tory wets, her strident defiance of the Heath 'revolt' at Blackpool should act as warning signals to the working class. The Iron maiden can't be turned, she can only be smashed. There is no turning back for the monetarists despite the Stock exchange jitters. They must force real wages down: Break union strength and hope that profit-rates will soar sufficiently to draw investment to the 'strong' sectors of industry.

Norman Tebbit, patron of the union-smashing Freedom Association, is carefully planning a legal onslaught on the industrial and political rights of the unions. The 4% public sector limit is meant to signal the figure for the private sector. Indeed the government, with the backing of private firms like Hoover, is canvassing for actual pay cuts for workers.

The 4% has already been echoed by Vauxhall as the limit beyond which they will not go. In an attempt to shift the argument away from what workers need to maintain their incomes against inflation, the CBI has gone as far as to criticise the government for encouraging workers to expect more than 'their' firms can afford. Management at Electrolux, Luton, took their cue from this and offered an insulting ¼% to their workforce. In response to the unions' claim for £20 across the board, Ford's boss Paul Rootes has shown his company's willingness to enter the unholy alliance to attack workers' wages. "Our labour costs are much too high and the only way we shall pull them down to competitive levels is to get higher productivity" (Our emphasis)

At the same time even the hard liners of the cabinet realise that some concessions over and above the 4% may be unavoidable. The most common expectation for this being the miners, water workers and power industry. Indeed, the miners have already been offered 9%. In order to avoid the fate of Heath and Callaghan, therefore, they have been careful not to make 4% a rigid norm. By this they hope to remove an obvious target for rank and file militancy, "the Tory pay limit". Thus they pave the way for special case arguments that could help to take the most powerful sections of the workers out of the struggle.

The brutal truth is that, unless the working class takes urgent steps to organise itself for the coming struggles, the Tories can hope to enjoy some successes. Last year they managed to hold down wage rises, for the 'average worker' to 9.3%. This meant that 94% of the workforce received rises below the official inflation rate - itself always considerably lower than the real inflation rate.

In the public sector where the Tories went for a 6% limit they enjoyed spectacular successes. Out of 73 public sector settlements last year roughly 60 resulted in single figure rises.

As the Leyland and Ford workers, pushing for £20, the engineers, pushing for 14%, the miners going for 25% and the public sector workers (trying to beat 4%) stake their claims, the lessons of the record of defeat over the last year need to be learnt and learnt quickly.

The principal obstacle to a successful fightback is the, "enemy within" the trade union bureaucracy. When Hoover demanded a 10% wage cut Gavin 'cave-in' Laird of the AUEW, instead of organising resistance obsequiously requested a glimpse at the consultants report on the firm saying, "We will examine them

Solidarity needed after barracks bombing

THE BRITISH PRESS was predictably howling with contrived outrage at the blowing up of a coach full of soldiers returning to Chelsea barracks, by the Irish Republican Army. These same papers a week before had been crowing over the 'victory' won by the government in the H-Block hunger strike - a strike in which ten republicans were forced to starve to death because of the determination of the Thatcher government to criminalise Irish political prisoners.

No worker can be pleased at the injuries suffered by civilians but the soldiers injured belong to an army that is engaged in an unjust war against the nationalist population of the North of Ireland. The same papers that hypocritically condemn the "terrorists" and run front page pictures of wounded soldiers, deliberately ignore the deaths and frightful wounds inflicted by the British Army's plastic bullets in Ireland, or mention in a footnote the passers-by shot or run down "accidentally" by army landrovers on the streets of the Six Counties.

The only way to end the war in Ireland is for the British troops to get out of the North. It is up to every revolutionary and class conscious worker to support the struggle of the Irish people to achieve this aim. This is why we support unconditionally all those socialists and republicans fighting British imperialism and its army.

This does not mean, however, that we think the tactics pursued by the IRA and INLA are the correct ones or even the most effective in fighting British imperialism. Throughout the Maze hunger strike the failure of the IRA to mobilise the masses of Irish workers, North and South, in industrial action against Thatcher's policy and her

collaborators in the South, crippled that campaign. For the IRA and the INLA the crucial means of defeating British imperialism is through the military struggle - which is carried on divorced from the control or mobilisation of the masses. Mass mobilisation is seen, at best, as an auxiliary form struggle, to be turned on and off as needed. The result was that the only force, the Irish working class, which had the power to make the British ruling class back down on the question of political status, is kept on the sidelines of the struggle.

During the first hunger strike the prisoners from the 'cages', the republican prisoners in Long Kesh who still have special status, declared, "We turn, therefore to our ally, the working class in England, who do have the political power to force the Tories to stop their torture of political prisoners". Unfortunately their ally was largely deaf to their pleas, with British Labour leaders like Concannon trotting obediently to the Maze to deliver Margaret Thatcher's message on behalf of British Labour.

However, for the first time in a long while Ireland and the British presence there, thanks to the heroic sacrifices of the hunger strikers, became an issue of debate in trade union and Labour Party branches. The sight of ten Republicans willing to starve themselves to death for their political principles hardly squared with the government and press propaganda churned out day after day that these men were merely criminals and terrorists. It is from the small number of people who have begun to challenge Britain's role in Ireland that an anti-imperialist movement against the Irish war must be built, committed to immediate withdrawal of the troops and self-determination for the Irish people.



(the report's conclusions - WP) and, no matter how unpalatable they may be, we will try to do something about them". He went on to accept the need for staff reductions, arguing that these could be achieved by voluntary redundancy. As Staff workers found when they occupied their plant, such consultants' reports can be, and are, deliberately falsified to suit the needs of the company.

Equally the workers in Leyland and the public sector service industries, now in the firing line, need to maintain a close watch on their leaders. The call for strike action by the full time officials in BL, backed by the stewards, from November 1st. against Edwardes 3.8% offer, has a long way to go before being turned into action. Between now and then Edwardes will be busy. Emboldened by the sorry collapse of the Cowley strike in the face of a dismissal threat, he is proposing a company secret ballot on his offer. He has flooded the workforce with letters and warnings about massive job losses. He has publicised the fact that the divisive bonus payments have given BL workers big rises. His campaign has already ensured that the bus and truck division (Leyland and Chorley) have

settled for the 3.8%

The unions' response has been abject. No propaganda campaigns to explain why £20 is necessary. No campaign of meetings in every section to prepare for the coming mass meetings. All that Grenville Hawley, the TGWU chief negotiator, has done so far is to complain bitterly to the reptiles of the bosses' press about, "the dastardly way the company has treated the negotiators".

In the public sector, the bureaucrats are also obstructing any moves towards putting their unions on a war footing. The TUC backed coordinated action by public sector service workers but, in a paper for the coming pay round they warned, "The danger is that in bargaining simultaneously for the first time, negotiating groups and their memberships may begin to see themselves as fighting for a share of a limited kitty".

The "limited kitty" argument is indeed the Tories' key argument and it is only one step from accepting this to accepting that there is, "nothing in the kitty" if a strong section wins more than the 4% early in the pay round. However, the TUC argument is aimed against united action by all the groups of

workers involved in the public sector. This would not only weaken the impact of their action but strengthen the idea of sectionalism, waiting for the strong sections to settle first in the belief that every one else can then expect the same deal. The victory of the miners last year did not prevent the imposition of a 7.5% deal on the civil servants, despite their 21 week struggle.

Fragmentation, and the bureaucracy's encouragement of it, can and must be fought. The teachers, civil servants and health workers must bring forward their claims alongside those of the firemen, the local government manual workers and the miners. The miners must stick to their claim and reject the 9% offer. Car workers in Fords, Vauxhall and BL must coordinate their fight against the various wage cuts being proposed for them.

The key to a successful defeat of the Tories lies in the spreading of strike action across industries and companies. That is what the bosses' offensive is aimed at preventing. With the current uncertainty amongst the government's supporters it is clear that a successful attack, based on such generalised action, would herald the fall of the government. The mounting of that attack, therefore, is necessarily a political question. The union leaders do not want to see the government fall to a rank and file onslaught. Even the Bennite Lefts, such as Scargill of the NUM, Dix of NUPE and Cameron of the FBU draw back from issuing the call for such united action. The rank and file must organise to force them to make such a call, going over the heads of their fellow bureaucrats if necessary. If they refuse to make it then the rank and file itself, through organising coordinated action at every level, shop floor, union branch, trades council, and in every locality, must do it themselves.

Any generalised struggle - on wages, against Tebbit's legal onslaught or against Heseltine's attacks on Labour councils, will pose sharply the need for a political general strike to smash the Tory offensive. Such a general strike will not be able to confine itself to whatever flashpoint occasions it but will pose the question of the destruction not only of the Tory government but of the class rule of the bosses itself.

SUBSCRIBE TO

workers power

NAME

ADDRESS

Send £3 to the address below and receive 12 issues of the paper. Make cheques or POs payable to Workers Power and forward to:

Workers Power,
BCM Box 7750, London,
WC1N 3XX.