

Workers Power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

INSIDE: POLAND
COLD WAR
KEN LIVINGSTONE
SOUTH AFRICA

BREAK BENN'S TRUCE!

"PEACE HAS BROKEN out in the Labour Party" crowed David Basnett after the conference of union and party leaders at Bishops Stortford. "One of the most successful meetings in the party's history" proclaimed Michael Foot.

Yet rank and file supporters of Labour Democracy must have watched the milling crowd of union leaders, PLP mandarins and NEC members with some astonishment. Was that really Tony Benn smiling benignly as the news of peace was trumpeted to the media—Tony Benn who a month before had vowed to "Fight like a tiger to prevent expulsions and proscriptions" (Guardian 10.12.81). The next few days provided no answer to those Bennites who wondered just what had been agreed in the ASTMS centre. Was this the same man who had proclaimed as recently as November 1981 that a major item on the agenda for the new year was "To maintain the pressure at every level for greater openness and democracy within the party" (London Labour Briefing, November 1981). Yet here was Benn and the NEC lefts engaged in striking a deal with the initiators and supporters of the onslaught on Peter Tatchell, the witch-hunt of Militant and other left groupings.

The secret treaty of Bishops Stortford appears to provide for no more changes before the next election, no further witchhunt of the left, no pressure on the right MPs, no re-opening of the old debates and a campaign to win the election based on party policies. Despite Benn's claim that no agreement took place, a summary of it was agreed nem con and without a vote by the NEC of 27th January. The same NEC ignored Bermondsey's letter requesting the re-opening of the Tatchell case despite hundreds of constituency resolutions requesting them to do this. Benn did not attempt to raise it either. The way the wind was blowing could be seen from Benn's brief appearance at the Labour Liaison '82 meeting on the 23rd January. Benn's message was "The task of the Labour Left now is to work flat out for a Labour victory at Hillhead, for Labour gains in the local elections in the spring and for a Labour victory in the General Election". (Observer 24.1.82.)

Repeating his theme that the Conference had been a victory for the left, that the parties policies were the lefts and that for the left to organise vigorously would be to "minoritize themselves." Benn's basic message was that the oppositional campaign was over, the left had 'won' and now the key task was to win the next election:

"The left's focus on election victory follows naturally from the work which we have done to save the Labour party after our massive defeat in the 1979 election. We knew that unless we could change the policies that led to our defeat we would lose again.

After two years of debate and discussion we have won all the policies for which we campaigned, and made significant advances of democracy within the party. The deputy leadership election campaign indicated the extent of support there is for these policies and these reforms throughout the whole movement.

We have also paved the way for an election victory by our work since 1979. It is therefore natural that the left should now be throwing its full weight into the task of campaigning for these policies among the wider electorate." (Labour Herald January 29th 82)

Then he swept off to the founding meeting of the 'Socialist Society' where a carefully chosen piece of demagoguery on rape predictably got him thunderous applause!

The lower echelons of the Bennite movement had been deeply worried about their idol's activities. The January '82 edition of London Labour Briefing muttered darkly:

"For Benn to prove manipulable or beyond accountability to his own supporters at this point would be to undermine disastrously not only the left, but ultimately the credibility of the Labour Party itself. There must be no backstage deals."

These 'Bennites' have only themselves to blame. They never held him to account. They never criticised his past record, his vacillations during the democracy campaign or his high-handed individualism with regard to the deputy leadership battle. Moreover Benn throughout his two years sojourn in the wilderness of the rank and file activists never ceased to hymn and laud Parliamentary Democracy as the central weapon of the labour movement. The 'broad left wing' and the 'hard left' many of whom had closet criticisms of Benn's parliamentarism never once took him up on this issue. Now Benn has shown that he was one of the parliamentary mandarins all along. Like Bevan before him he has used the motley collection of 'hard leftists'—the CLPD, London Labour Briefing, Militant and Socialist Organiser to act as the NCO's of his campaign. They were happy to don the Bennite uniform believing that thereby they would win 'democracy' in the party—a democracy that at a later stage would allow 'hard' socialist policies to triumph in the party.

Idolizing Benn, shielding him from criticism, concentrating all their energies on "the political wing of the labour movement" seemed a small price to pay. The policies they have 'won' are the old rag-bag of 'left' policies. Some, like the anti-Common Market platform, import controls, workers participation and tripartite planning agreements, are downright reactionary. They, and indeed the whole so-called Alternative Economic Strategy, aim at a 'socialised' national British capitalism.

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Benn and Foot - back together again after a summer of discontent.

RAPE FURORE MASKS NEW ATTACKS ON WOMEN

THE BRITISH RULING class was temporarily shaken when a judge amongst their number gave public voice to the idea, encouraged by the bosses press for years, that women in certain places and certain dress have only themselves to blame if they are raped. But their representatives quickly recovered to launch a full scale law and order campaign. Between them, Hailsham and Thatcher rallied the Tory ranks, with Thatcher able to appear in unfamiliar guise as defender of women's rights.

When the documentary 'Police' showed an interrogation of a rape victim typical of those that occur in countless police stations, senior police chiefs hastened to blame the 'other ranks'. Only Peregine Worsthorne of the Sunday Telegraph dared to voice the traditional attitudes: "To ears unused to the vernacular, their language did sound brutal and unsympathetic. But not, apparently to the girl herself. . . Here there may be a very wide gap between what is acceptable and normal to some sections of society and what is acceptable and normal to others." In other words, policemen should continue to bully, degrade and abuse working class women because they are used to it.

The ruling class hypocrites who are presenting themselves as stalwart protectors of women, themselves derive their profit and privileges from a society which depends on the oppression of women for its very existence. They are at present attacking women's rights on all fronts. Their cutback on public spending means tighter social security regulations and poorer social services. It means less and dearer public transport, putting more women at risk on the streets. It means less money for women's

aid and refuges. Alongside such attacks goes a new threat to abortion rights.

After failing to get a passage for the anti-abortion Corrie Bill through Parliament last year, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security used his own powers under Statutory Instrument to enforce a tightening up. New forms SHA4 require the surgeon performing the abortion to state the medical grounds. The 1967 Act makes no such requirements; it asks for any two doctors to certify that the abortion is necessary for medical or social reasons. The majority of abortions since the 1967 Act have been performed under the 'social circumstance' clause; 120,000 of the 140,000 legal abortions in 1970 for instance.

All these attacks on women's rights demand a massive response from the labour and women's movements. This latest tightening up on abortion shows how inadequate it was to campaign simply to defend the 1967 Act. It shows the need to campaign for Free Abortion on Demand.

Rape will inevitably continue in a society which oppresses and degrades women. All forms of violence will flourish in the corrupt and rotten society of capitalism in decay. All the attacks on women's rights at work, and on the social and welfare services will serve to increase violence against women. That is why the feigned concern for rape victims of Thatcher and Hailsham is completely hypocritical.

But the labour and feminist response to the issue of rape has played right into the hands of Thatcher and the law

When the Lord Chancellor expressed his agreement with statutory jailing for rapists all that parliamentary hopeful Harriet Harman of the National Council for Civil Liberties could say was that the guidelines might not be strict enough.

Increased powers for the judges and police will not put an end to rape. What we need is organised struggle to defend women against all the attacks that have been launched against them and to challenge the oppression of women at every turn. Of course we must struggle to win those minimal measures that could be taken now, to increase protection and aid for women—free buses from work, state funds for Rape Crisis Centres.

But such measures, which could only be forced from the bosses as a result of militant struggle, would themselves be no more than palliatives. We need an organisation which would mobilise women in the fight to destroy the "violent, detestable and odious" society which breeds the "violent, detestable and odious crime of rape." This does not mean sitting back and accepting violence against women as a fact of life. It means building a working class women's movement committed to defending and extending women's rights as part of the working class movement to destroy capitalism root and branch. Then the women's vanguard could with confidence organise for the final struggle to rid society of the dead weight of centuries of oppression. ■

FIGHTER LIVINGSTONE, YOU PRESUMED



Livingstone and councillors outside County Hall. Sacked London Transport workers will add to the total of London unemployed, thanks to "Red Ken".

ON OCTOBER 23rd last year a group of fifty leading British bosses met in London, and with £200,000 formed the "Keep London Free" campaign. Led by anti-union tycoon Sir Charles Forte and GLC Tory leader Sir Horace Cutler, they launched themselves by taking full page adverts in the press declaring that London "would be a happier and more prosperous place without Mr. Ken Livingstone".

They declared their aims to spend £100,000 to "initiate legal action" against the Labour-controlled GLC. A fortnight later, on November 6th, the Tory London borough of Bromley applied to the High Court for an order to prevent the GLC levying a supplementary rate to finance its "Fares Fair" policy which reduced London Transport fares by 25% on October 5th.

Although Bromley lost that battle, they eventually won the judicial war when, on December 17th, the Law Lords backed the Appeal Court ruling the London Transport should be run according to "business principles" and Livingstone's £175 million subsidy was "unreasonable".

Together with Tony Benn, Livingstone has become the "bête noire" of the bosses and their press. It hardly needed an editorial of "The Standard", the viciously

reactionary London evening paper, to remind us that: "Regular readers may have noticed that we do not much like Mr Ken Livingstone" (9/11/81). Screaming "Red Ken" front page headlines personalised the fight against the Labour GLC ever since its election in May 1981.

While Livingstone has, to his credit, publicly defended many of his views against the torrent of press vilification, he has not been capable of leading successful resistance to the assault on the "Fares Fair" policy.

In the end, Livingstone, like Benn, cannot be judged by either the number of column inches that the professional slanderers of the press devote to him, or by the persistent claims (doubtlessly sincere) of a belief in socialism. "By their actions shall ye know them" is the maxim by which left reformists like Ken Livingstone should be judged.

Livingstone's actions in the "Fares Fair" case clearly demonstrate the impotence of left-reformism as a means of defending the working class, let alone taking it forward to socialism.

Indeed, the warning signs were flashing late in 1981, that Labour's manifesto pledges were likely to fall foul of the law. The proposal to lower school meal prices was voted down after a threat of surcharges being levied on councillors. The plan to launch an ambitious council-house building programme was vetoed by the central government, yet in the face of these

setbacks, no lessons were drawn.

Livingstone pursued a strategy of crippling rate rises which, at one and the same time, imposed massive cuts in the living standards of his working class base and outraged the London bourgeoisie, who were faced with a 70% increase in rates at a time when their profits were squeezed by recession. In this way he stoked up the fires of opposition from the bosses and at the same time alienated the workers who could have formed the basis for resistance to the mounting bosses' offensive.

After the High Court decision in November, which ruled the "Fares Fair" policy legal, Livingstone was complacent. There was every possibility that the aged but active ruling class warrior, Denning, would rule against the policy in the Appeal Court. This threat to the cornerstone of the Labour Group's manifesto did not prompt a single call to action by Livingstone. Throughout November and early December, he was content to let the matter proceed along court channels. After Denning's judgement that the GLC policy was illegal, Livingstone reasoned: "I do not think there is much doubt that we would be upheld in the Lords" (Standard, 10/11/81). This faith ignores the whole history of the courts' legal war against the workers.

The truth is the judges will only ever bend to the working class's will when it is mobilised against them or the bosses they serve, industrially or on the streets. The same Lord Scarman who felt safe to savage London Transport, reduce bus services by 25% and thereafter 5,000 jobs, had, only months before, partially retreated in the face of youth rioting on the streets of Brixton and Toxteth.

After the Law Lords delivered their legal body blow on December 17th, a period of confusion ended in a council chamber fiasco. Livingstone did not call on London Transport workers to support the GLC by striking against the ruling. Instead he went straight to the Tory Transport Minister, Howell. His LT Committee chairman, David Wetzel, made clear why they were going: "The only way we're going to reverse the decision is by changing the law through parliament" (Socialist Challenge 7/1/82).

Livingstone and Wetzel's whole emphasis was on getting Howell to change the law so as to make the rate rise and subsidy to LT legal.

But Heseltine, the engineer of a variety of schemes to prevent councils spending money on essential ser-

vices, and the Tory cabinet, were never likely to agree to Livingstone's plea. Livingstone's betrayal of London workers lies precisely in that instead of mobilising and relying on their strength, he encouraged the cruel illusion that the Tories were likely to act on their behalf.

When it came to the crunch, and the Council had to vote for 100% fare rises on January 12th, the pattern of voting made the whole sorry business look like a Whitehall farce. Even before the Labour Group met to decide its line, it was agreed that a free vote should be allowed. This safety net dodged a decisive confrontation with the right (who had already decided to stay within the law) over their willingness to honour a key manifesto pledge to the workers of London. For Livingstone and the left, the free vote meant that there would be no defiance of the law, but that the Lefts could save their consciences.

With the Liberals, SDP and Labour right already committed to support a 100% fares rise from March 21st (and, wrongly, anticipating the Tories to do the same), Livingstone and co were sure, in advance of the vote, that they had lost.

The Labour Group decided by 23-22 to defy the law, on January 12th. Then at the full council meeting the fare rises were passed 24-22, with three Tories voting for them, along with Liberals, SDPs and Labour right.

Still Livingstone refused to stand by his manifesto and base himself on workers' mobilisations. The day after the defeat he was quoted as saying: "I do not believe the government will stand back and watch the decimation of London Transport" (Standard 12/1/82). Moreover he extended an olive branch to the right of the party who had just voted to attack workers' living standards: "I have no intention of engaging in witch-hunts inside or outside this building" (Guardian 13/1/82).

The reason for these friendly overtures is that Livingstone had by now set his hear on uniting the Labour Group in a campaign for legal change. His transport lieutenant Wetzel had earlier gone even further, extending this strategy to all the parties of the council chamber. He was for "an all party public transport campaign" (Socialist Challenge 7/1/82).

Wetzel even saw the vanguard of this campaign as being the socially powerless old age pensioners: "It's essential that the legislation is reversed and I think

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The fact that the bosses and the bankers don't want to be 'guided' to invest along these lines should not fool anybody that the AES is a socialist policy. It is simply a backward looking capitalist policy. Moreover these 'policies' have been the grist to the mill of Labour Party conferences since 1973. Benn himself has stressed quite how useless conference decisions are when there are no means to oblige the PLP and Cabinet to put them into a manifesto let alone to carry them out when in office. The Bishops Stortford deal envisages a status in which

* The NEC enquiry into 'Militant' continues and a number of validly selected Militant candidates are under investigation. Tatchell remains unrecognised. These measures amount to a pistol pointed at the head of parties considering the selection of 'hard-left' candidates to replace sitting right-wingers.

* Benn's exclusion from the shadow-cabinet for advocating Conference policy means that only those who advocate PLP policy will speak for the Party in parliament.

* A ban on constitutional amendments means that Benn has put into the freezer for years the aim of "a strong party, with all power accountable, and democratic" with "mandatory re-selection; the acceptance of an accountable parliamentary leadership of the party; and party control over the manifesto" (Arguments for Democracy p.194). The next Labour Government, if there is one, will be no more bound to carry out the membership's wishes than the last one.

Why has Benn surrendered so ignominiously? His apologists will defend his performance on 'tactical' grounds. The right, they will say, will break the pact and take the odium of being the splitters and wreckers! When they take up the witchhunt, or flout cherished planks of party policy, then Benn will be able to mount his charger again. But this is to place all ones hopes of victory on the mistakes of ones opponent, as well as being a cynical deception of the rank and file. The reasons for Benn's betrayal are not difficult to see and even if a vicious offensive from Healey, Basnett and Co restore him his sullied credentials the lessons of his actions should be learned and learned now.

Anyone who accepts electoral victory and a parliamentary majority as the essential means of creating socialism, must accept sooner or later the right-wing Callaghanite-Healeyite policies that go with these means. It is no accident that the right-wing has always led the Labour Party. Right-wing policies mean doing what the bosses and bankers want, or staying within limits that leave their fundamental power and wealth intact. To go beyond that is to challenge head on the monopolies, the banks, and their millionaire press, the civil service bureaucracy, the unelected judiciary, the unelected police chiefs and generals. To defeat them takes more than a democratic mandate. It needs the mobilised, organised and eventually armed force of millions of workers. At various points along the road to power it means critical showdowns. Even the half-hearted reforms at present embodied in Labour Party conference resolutions, have met a formidable barrage

of resistance at the first hurdle—getting them really adopted as the Party's electoral policy.

The boss-class has pulled out all the propaganda stops with the aid of its agents within the Party and the unions. The SDP has been created as a threat of electoral extinction. Apart from the twenty eight defectors, another hundred at least were poised to reduce the PLP to a rump if the Bennite campaign went on. The union leaders, seeing the prospect of any government amenable to their interests disappearing, rushed to make Foot and Co present Benn with an ultimatum. Foot's ultimatum took the form of a witch-hunt 'exposure' of Benn's 'undemocratic' 'Trotskyite' supporters. The PLP majority told Foot to stop the left or that they would help the media and the SDP to smash the Labour Party. The trade union leaders told Foot, if the Labour Party becomes useless as a vote-winner at the next election we'll take our money elsewhere! Foot fired the opening shots of a witch-hunt at Benn. Benn to 'save the party' agreed to a freeze in constitutional change and the lefts campaign against the right.

Thus the left of the Labour Party has shown yet again its congenital incapacity to take the leadership from the hands of the right. It is tied to the same means as the right—parliamentary and municipal electioneering which excludes the masses of workers except as voters or protesters. It is linked, flesh and blood, like a siamese twin to the right. This despite the fact that the left usually supports the various isolated demands thrown up by workers in struggle and consequently is much more popular with the rank and file activists of the party and the unions. The lefts however know in their hearts that as long as the elections are what matters, as long as the majority of workers remain passive and thus easily manipulated by the media, the right-wingers will be able to manoeuvre this 'silent majority' against the left.

Of course, some of the lefts toy with the alternative of mass mobilisation but here they face a cruel dilemma which is both tactical and strategic. Firstly, "rousing the masses" is unpredictable and can clash sharply with electoral success. Secondly, such activity needs a very different type of organisation to the vote-catching Labour Party ward and constituency machinery. It needs vastly greater numbers of more active, educated and disciplined members. Most importantly if the working class is organised, mobilised, and aware of what it is fighting for there is no guarantee that it will stop short at the utilisation of the constitutional machinery in the face of the desperate and brutal resistance of the bosses.

Of course many honest rank and file Labour Party and trade union militants must be shown that the whole logic of a serious fight with Basnett and Foot is a radical break with parliamentary and municipal cretinism. The viciousness of the Tories attacks, and the pathetic response of the union and Labour Party leaders, poses the need for a revolutionary alternative. That alternative must link day to day tactics—the strike, the occupation, the general strike—to an overall strategy for the breaking of the power of the ruling



Moss Evans (TGWU) and Clive Jenkins (ASTMS) whoop it up at Bishops Stortford - bureaucrats smiling as Benn is brought to heel.

class by the fighting organisations of the working class, and the creation out of them of a workers state that would be 100 times more democratic than the mother of Parliaments. Trotsky unlike most of his present day 'followers' understood the crippling limitations of the 'lefts' of his day—the Lansbury's whom Ken Livingstone and Peter Tatchell model themselves closely on.

"The party continues to be led by extreme right wingers. This is explained by the fact that the party cannot be restricted to various left ventures, but is bound to have a generalised system of politics. The left wingers have no such system, their very nature prevents this. The right wingers have such a system: they have behind them tradition, experience, routine; and most important of all, bourgeois society as a whole is thinking for them and trusts ready-made decisions under their noses. . . The right wingers are victorious despite the fact that the left are more numerous. The weakness of the left wingers comes from their lack of cohesion and this arises from their ideological shapelessness. In order to rally their ranks, the left wingers will first of all have to collect their thoughts. The best of them are only capable of doing this under the blows of ruthless criticism based on the everyday experiences of the masses." (Trotsky on Britain p.163-4.)

For those in the Labour Party who wish to fight against the right wing, rather than collapse before it, for those who wish to fight back against Heseltine's law, rather than pay obedience to the body which produced it; For those who want to do something more about unemployment than make rambling speeches in parliament, the way forward is clear. The

rank and file in the Labour Party and the unions must draw the lessons of Benn and the Lefts betrayal and fight hard against the right wing in the unions and the party around the following policies:

- * No bans, proscriptions or witchhunts within the Party. For the free organisation of tendencies, and the admittance of all who wish to fight for the interests of the working class.
- * No secret deals conducted by the union and Party leaderships. For the left to reveal the details of the Bishop's Stortford discussions.
- * For rank and file control of the block vote in the unions; for discussions of Labour Party matters within the unions from branch to conference level.
- * For conference control over the manifesto—for the lefts on the NEC to press the constitutional amendments necessary to secure this.
- * No subordination of class struggle to parliament—For Labour councils to oppose Heseltine's legal onslaught by breaking the law and relying on the direct action of workers for support.
- * For local Labour Parties to support and participate in the building of action councils to mobilise an anti-Tory offensive.
- * For the Party to support all actions to break the legal attacks on the trade unions rights—for opposition by direct mass action to smash Prior's Act and Tebbitt's proposals.
- * For candidates to stand against Foot and Healey for the leadership on the basis of conference control over the manifesto and NEC control of the PLP.
- * No holding back to preserve unity under an anti-working class leadership in the party or the unions.

the easiest way to get that is probably old age pensioners, who can be used as a battering ram" (Socialist Challenge 7/1/82).

Livingstone is not allowing his pet scheme to die in silence. There is to be a February London Assembly representing 1,000 community organisations. A Trafalgar Square rally is planned. The drive of the campaign, however, is not towards a decisive confrontation with the Thatcher government. Larry Smith of the Executive Committee of the TGWU cautioned: "We want to flood London with pamphlets and posters to explain the decision to every household. If that doesn't produce enough pressure to force the Tories to change the law and allow decent subsidies to public transport, then we'll talk about industrial action". Industrial action is raised only as the last line of defence.

Livingstone himself will not make the call for action. If it takes place, well and good, but he will not be the one to instigate it. Thus in the February London Labour Briefing he declares, in the knowledge that there are official moves towards industrial action: "There must be full support from the Labour Group for any industrial action taken by LT workers to ensure that the Law Lords' decision cannot be implemented". It is difficult to view this as anything other than a cynical statement.

He spent November and December pursuing wait and see strategy. No preparation for industrial action, let alone calls for it, were issued from County Hall.. All that was heard were declarations of faith in the fairness of the Law Lords. Workers were told to leave it all up to their representatives - the Labour Group.

But when all of that came to grief, Livingstone turned round and offered Labour Group support for non-existent industrial struggle. Of course if the workers, left as passive bystanders during the decisive moments, don't respond, Livingstone can always turn round and blame them for failing to save the "Fares Fair" scheme.

Not long after he came to office, Livingstone, in an interview with "Socialist Review", said:

"To succeed in carrying Londoners with us, we've got to produce the services. Now the key one is going to be public transport. If we can avoid U-turns or defeats on that, and stick to our policy...people will perceive that as an improved public transport service, and, I think, will defend it the way they have in South Yorkshire" (SR 14/6/81). Well, the way things are going this "key test" has been failed, and fairly quickly at that.

Far from leading a rising storm of active opposition, the transport workers' leaders have confined themselves to a propaganda campaign. In a situation where half the Labour Council has voted for fare rises, transport workers are not likely to feel confident that they can win a struggle to change the law, let alone defy it. It is little wonder that Livingstone's own broadsheet, the "Labour Herald", reports:

"The degree of demoralisation was evident at sparsely attended meeting of Labour local government leaders in London this weekend. Not one delegate felt that there was any real prospect of a united fightback" (LH 29/1/82).

In addition to the local dimension of this defeat, the GLC collapse has given an open invitation to Tory councils all over the country to challenge cheap fare schemes. The West Midlands Labour Group has already backed down on this - a key plank in its manifesto. And, the much-vaunted South Yorkshire transport policy is being viewed with a greedy eye by the service-cutting Tory predators.

Livingstone and his left friends must bear much of the responsibility for the defeat of Fares Fair, and similar schemes elsewhere. They may be sincere in their concern to improve the lot of working people. But their reformist strategy of persuasion and negotiation as substitutes for the direct action of workers themselves, inevitably means that they end up not even assisting workers to defend what they've got in the way of services, let alone improve them.

This lesson, borne out by the collapse of Lambeth, Lothian and now the GLC, must be learnt if future defeats are to be avoided. Only if the meeting in mid-February of shop stewards representing all 60,000 London Transport workers votes for active resistance to fare rises, job cuts and transport cuts, irrespective of the GLC's position, will there be any real chance of reversing this substantial defeat. ■

A lame reply to Foot

WHEN PARLIAMENT WANTS to delay the resolution of a knotty problem, it appoints a Royal Commission. Socialist Organiser, it seems, has decided to imitate this method.

To delay, or perhaps even to avoid, giving an answer to Foot's ultimatum to the left to produce their credentials as supporters of Parliamentary Democracy, SO has appointed its own version of a Royal Commission - a seemingly never-ending series of articles on "Socialism and Democracy" by John O'Mahony (SO 67,68,70 and with the promise of more to come!).

In essence this series is a lengthy exercise in prevarication. O'Mahony faithfully copies the contours of Michael Foot's convoluted arguments in his "Observer" article on democracy. The nominal purpose of this ramble through the exploits of Wat Tyler and the musings of R.H. Tawney, is to counterpose the marxist position on democracy to Foot. But the articles (so far) do not do this.

They actually distort the marxist position on democracy, dressing it up in terms designed to make it acceptable to the left-reformist Parliamentarians, principally Tony Benn.

The kernel of O'Mahony's case against Foot is that marxists are in fact very good democrats. The Right of the party, he fumes: "lie through their teeth when they say that the revolutionary left is not concerned with democracy, or is opposed to democracy, or will not fight to defend democracy".

In his second article, O'Mahony expands on this theme by laying claim to the mantle of bourgeois democracy, as epitomised by the American Declaration of Independence, concluding: "Michael Foot and all his political brothers worship not the once radiant face of bourgeois democracy, but its historic backside. Its face belongs to us" (SO 68).

Following this line of reasoning, O'Mahony argues that the real difference between the marxists and Foot is that for the latter the "decrepit" and "ancient" British parliament is the highest point of democracy. For the "marxists" of the SO, just as for Tony Benn, the present parliamentary system is a truncated form of democracy: "Tony Benn has done tremendous work to bring to the attention of the labour movement the reality now clothes itself in the traditional garb of the British parliamentary democratic system" (SO 67).

It is in order to go beyond this (we are never told precisely to what) that the much-debated tactic of "extra-parliamentary action" is justified: "The labour movement has every right to struggle outside of Parliament against the government" (SO 68). Taken together, these arguments from O'Mahony amount to no more than a left reformist critique of existing Parliamentary democracy. In the absence of any clear programmatic alternative to Foot, the articles could lead to conclusions not qualitatively different to those reached by Tony Benn - that Parliamentary democracy is in need of "revival" or "extension".

Indeed, every time a distinction is made between "renewal" and "replacement", O'Mahony refuses to make clear which he supports:

"For its effect, the rights' accusation depends on ignorance of what some socialists propose by way of reform of parliamentary democracy, or of what other socialists would replace it by"and again:

"They define democracy in terms of only one of its historic forms and try thereby to rule out of court those who would advocate either a different form of democracy or a more or less radical transformation of the existing parliamentary system." (SO 67).

Behind these seemingly deliberately cumbersome formulations, O'Mahony obscures to the point of invisibility the historical form of democracy that he favours.

This ambiguity has its roots in O'Mahony's unwillingness to counterpose to the parliamentary democracy of Foot and Benn the specific concrete alternative of workers democracy. His tortuous argument explaining that resistance to Thatcher is justified by the American Declaration of Independence is significant. The need for a working class fightback is raised, almost



The politics of Tony Benn loom large throughout O'Mahony's series of articles in Socialist Organiser.

apologetically, as being consonant with the bourgeoisie's own early principles.

Only three times in the three articles does O'Mahony raise the communist alternative to parliament - the workers council (or soviet). In his first reference to it he is non-committal:

"Williams' attempt to discredit advocates of reform of existing democratic institutions, or of their replacement by other democratic institutions (workers councils) as being against democracy per se, was meant as a pre-emptive move then" (SO 67). Hardly a spirited defence of soviet democracy!

In his second article, O'Mahony only refers to workers councils in a polemical aside concerning their advocacy by the SWP. Given that they are described as a party who "have many of the traits of anarchism", O'Mahony cannot be said to be presenting workers' democracy in too favourable a light!

In the third article, O'Mahony comes clean at last, describing the workers' councils in Russia in 1917 (ie in a country and at a time conveniently far removed from Britain today), as a higher form of democracy. Once again, however, this is accompanied by signals to the Bennites that SO perhaps shares some of their reservations about the Soviet strategy and the Bolshevik revolution:

"It is a proper subject for critical study by socialists whether or not everything done by the armed workers and by the workers party led by Lenin and Trotsky was well done, and whether anything they did contributed to the rise of Stalin later on" (SO 70). What O'Mahony is doing here is preparing to distance himself from the dictatorial aspects of Soviet rule.

He argues that the Soviets were the "opposite of totalitarianism", and in doing so obscures the dictatorial nature of soviet power. True soviet power had nothing in common with the Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship of the 1930s that O'Mahony quite rightly disavows. But in the face of terrible blows from imperialist armies and devastating blows to the economy and in order to save the workers state, the Bolsheviks rightly resorted to dictatorial measures including the banning of opposition parties and the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising. The point is that these dictatorial measures were taken in order to defend the workers state, still capable of operating the norms of workers democracy in its own institutions.

For us, unlike O'Mahony, democracy is not an abstract, general thing. It is a social phenomenon - a form of government, a form of class rule.

This means that we defend absolutely all those aspects of bourgeois democracy (freedom of assembly, right to form unions, right to publish etc), that serve the working class whenever they come under attack from the right. But as the bosses and their agents use bourgeois democracy to deceive the working class and make it compliant in the face of attacks on it - just as Foot is doing right now - our principal task is to build the organisations that can overthrow and replace bourgeois democracy - workers councils and a workers militia.

This does not mean, as O'Mahony's attack on the SWP implies, that revolutionaries reject parliamentary action. It does mean that we use it to assist, and subordinate it to, a more important form of action - the direct action of the working class struggling to rid itself of capitalist exploitation and oppression. This is the real significance for revolutionaries of "extra-parliamentary" activities. It is not an adjunct to parliamentary action, but a means of developing the revolutionary alternative to parliament.

O'Mahony's guarded ambiguity on this point impels him, in fact, to choose Tony Benn's alternative. Tucked away in the second article, O'Mahony attacks the right and declares:

"They have forgotten the whole working class notion of developing and deepening the existing democratic system and they denounce those like Tony Benn who want to develop it (I think very inadequately) as anti-democrats" (SO 68). In the absence of a clear statement on the programmatic alternative of soviet democracy, this leaves O'Mahony peddling an unspecified but more "adequate" version of Benn's reformist strategy.

But this strategy, as we have repeatedly shown, is not simply "inadequate", it is wrong and has proved itself disastrous for the working class. Indeed given that the only addition that O'Mahony makes to Benn's programme is that Parliament should be elected annually, he has no explicit alternative to the parliamentary strategy for building socialism.

Of course, O'Mahony has many qualifications in his argument. He has enough respect for the marxist tradition to grant to the working class the right of extra-parliamentary action and self-defence. Warnings are raised about the likely ruling class onslaught would parliament be used to tamper with their wealth and power. But these qualifications ring like the pleadings of a small centrist eager to curry favour with a big reformist.

This Socialist Organiser series has yet to commit itself on the question of parliamentary democracy. After three long contributions from O'Mahony, this in itself is highly revealing. Marxists can make no concessions in the face of Foot's witch-hunt. So as not to confuse any workers who look to us for a lead, it is our duty to demolish the trick-laden arguments of the bourgeois democrat Foot. It is our task to pose the battle for workers democracy as a real and immediate possibility in the struggles ahead. Instead, the SO has opened a discussion in the hope that the long-winded and (like Foot's articles) trick-laden tomes of John O'Mahony will serve as a reply. This evasive and non-committal stance is the mark of centrism - it whispers its revolutionary phrases in private, while appeasing and tailing behind the left reformists in practice.

No doubt O'Mahony will find ways and means of decorating his equivocation in militant colours. No doubt, he would attack our forthright emphasis on the need to clearly counterpose soviet democracy to bourgeois democracy, as crude and tactically unwise. We would do well to remember Trotsky's response to a similar charge laid at his door by the German centrists, the SAP, in 1935:

"To put it in simpler language, we do not hoodwink the workers. But it is precisely our principle of saying what is that is most hateful to the leaders of the SAP, for the policy of centrism is inconceivable without mouthfuls of water, tricks and ...personal insinuations"



What WE mean by workers democracy: delegates to the Congress of Soviets in Russia in 1917. We fight for such Soviets in Britain today.

FROM DETENTE BACK TO

WHEN THE FRENCH tricolour was replaced by the Stars and Stripes in IndoChina in 1954, the US military 'advisers' and the Diem regime in South Vietnam had good reasons to feel confident. The star of American imperialism was very much in the ascendant (as we showed in our last article on the Cold War—see WP 27). The cocksure colonels and their masters in the White House were not to know that the battle for Vietnam was to be the decisive factor in turning the 'American Century' into a 25 year wonder.

The present belligerence of the Reagan regime, its constant desire to turn every international event into a cold war confrontation, must be understood as an attempt to re-establish American hegemony in the world. Its hegemony and role of world gendarme was severely undermined by the protracted war in Indo China. After a lapse of nine years, during which the domestic economic situation has worsened, the Reagan administration is set on turning the clock back on the decline of US imperialism's fortunes. As early as 1978 the influential Kissinger lamented that the "geopolitical decline from Vietnam through Angola, Ethiopia, South Yemen and Afghanistan" had "demoralised friends and emboldened enemies." By friends Kissinger meant the string of brutal right-wing dictatorships in the imperialised world (El Salvador, at the time Nicaragua and Iran, the Philippines, Thailand etc.) that were propped up and subsidised by the United States. By enemies he meant the USSR.

Reagan's new cold war policy is to redress this demoralisation and to cut the USSR back down to size. He aims to reassure the right wing regimes by pumping in massive amounts of military aid. The support for the Duarte regime in El Salvador is intended as a demonstration that the US will not abandon its 'friends'. But the military hand outs go well beyond El Salvador. The Turkish generals are re-equipping their armies with the 700 million dollars supplied by Reagan. Egypt has received 1.65 billion dollars of military aid, while its repressive neighbour Sudan is getting 100 million. To keep Libya on its toes Reagan is giving Tunisia a military hardware package costing 95 million. In the Gulf the US are ferrying arms into Saudi Arabia, are building a base in Oman and are giving Zia of Pakistan a down payment of 500 million with more to come. For good measure the CIA backed guerilla leader in Angola, Jonas Savimbi, is getting military aid to assist in his "internal subversion" efforts.

Reagan's aim is clear. There must be no more victories for movements of the oppressed and exploited like those that have overthrown the Shah of Iran and Somoza in Nicaragua. Right wing friends who are prepared to help America smash anti-imperialist struggles and keep the world free—that is open to American imperialism's exploitation—will be armed to the teeth.

But if Reagan is to guarantee the armed enslavement of the imperialised world then he must, of necessity, ensure that America can dominate and so destroy, the Soviet Union. The planned economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are an obstacle to American imperialism. They are a severe obstacle when that imperialism is wracked by a crisis intensified by shrinking markets and a collapse of profitable areas for investment. The reconquest of the Soviet Union, the transformation of it and the other degenerate workers states into colonies of imperialism is the overriding desire of the Wall Street magnates. Their ability to realise this desire, however, is conditioned by the military strength of the Soviet Union and the successful sweep of the national liberation struggles in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Thus for Reagan to be in a position to launch an assault he first has to overcome these barriers to American supremacy. The military strength of the USSR serves not only to defend the Soviet planned economy but also to sustain and bolster anti-imperialist struggles against the USA and regimes attempting to break the stranglehold of US imperialism over their impoverished economies. For the US imperialists all battlefronts lead to a clash with the USSR.

Reagan's plans for a one trillion dollar re-armament programme are aimed at restoring the gap between the US and USSR's nuclear firepower (which the USSR had narrowed but not closed during the 1970s), to its 1950s/60s level. More significant, however, Washington is attempting to turn Europe into a theatre for a 'limited' nuclear war that it could win. This is what lies behind the NATO Brussels decision in December 1979 to site Cruise Missiles in Europe. With this superiority the US can bully the USSR into line in all parts of the world. Crucially it can use its superiority to check what it calls Soviet 'infiltration' (actually occasional and limited aid, usually given to serve the reactionary objectives of the Kremlin bureaucrats) into national liberation struggles or other flashpoints of international conflict. The slavishly pro-American British organ of big business, the Economist, summed this up thus: "It (the USSR) has already started to use its military muscle in Africa and South West Asia. If it is allowed to keep its emerging across-the-board superiority, the temptation to exploit it will become irresistible. The only way to remove the temptation is to remove the superiority."

A Reagan official put it a little more bluntly "the Russians only respond to pain".

There is another feature of the present cold war that indicates the American are serious in their threats against the USSR. The Polish events have produced a chorus of influential voices calling for the renouncing of the Yalta 1945 agreement that placed Poland in the Soviet sphere of influence. The openly revanchist Brzezinski called on Reagan to "think publicly of renouncing the Yalta agreements." Mitterand, voicing France's historical indignance at not being invited to Yalta declared: "Anything that rids us of Yalta is a good thing". Haig and the Pope have added their voice to the chorus. Even the man the American bourgeoisie see as being too soft on the Russians, Helmut Schmidt said: "It is morally unacceptable to divide the world into spheres of influence."

AN ANTI-SOVIET CITADEL?

The 'liberal' American journal Newsweek, in a review of Roosevelt's life asked: "At Yalta 1945: Did he yield too much?", while he virulently anti-Soviet Economist was adamant: "But doesn't Poland 'belong to Russia' under the Yalta agreement? No." (9.1.82). Nervous at the doubt being cast on the sanctity of Yalta, the Kremlin bureaucrats, who view the Yalta pact as a permanent one facilitating a strategic peace with imperialism, have called on the US to stop tampering with "the results of World War II."

The avowed intention to reverse the Yalta agreement—which was not a formal and binding peace treaty—does indicate the seriousness of the imperialist war drive. Talk of redrawing boundaries (even of spheres of influence) is only slightly less dangerous than actually doing it. In Poland the West do see an opportunity for, at the very least undermining the planned economy. At most they undoubtedly hope to prise Poland from the Soviet sphere of influence and build an anti-Soviet citadel on the European border of the USSR. For the US imperialists, with their own economy sliding deep into recession, this is a prize worth fighting for. Their cold war drive can and does indicate their longer term hot war intentions.

To many who thought detente marked a new era of peace the present war drive appears to be simply the product of a fanatical President. This merely reveals that those like the Morning Star of the Communist Party and indeed the Kremlin bureaucrats themselves, did not understand that the period of detente was, for the Americans, merely a post-Vietnam breathing space. When they went into that war they went in to win not to lay the basis for detente.



"A new man was needed..." - Reagan, dressed up as Commander-in-Chief

The US sent its first large influx of troops into Vietnam in 1961 at the height of its economic power. By 1965 the US was bombing North Vietnam and by the late 1960s over half a million troops were embroiled, costing millions of dollars a day. But by then the fragmenting morale of the US army began to coincide with serious signs that the US's absolute dominance over its imperialist rivals was at an end.

In 1953 US imperialism could claim 70% of world GNP in imperialist nations. By the early 1970s this was down to barely 50%. Meanwhile, Japan and West Germany accounted for 30% of GNP in the mid-1970s compared to a combined 1953 figure of less than 10%. These two rival imperialisms, buttressed and strengthened by the Cold War needs of the USA in the 1940s and 1950s began, by their very success, to penetrate the markets of the US.

Moreover, industrial and commercial profit rates of US companies slid slowly and surely in the 1960s from a 9.9% high at the start of that decade to 7.97 in 1975 and a miserable 3% in 1979. By 1968, when Nixon was elected to the White House, the effects of the economic decline and the strain of the war determined US foreign policy deliberation. The haemorrhage of dollars in Indo-China created a balance of payments defeat. The printing of more money, with its inflationary implications, was completely at odds with the US dollar's role as a currency 'as good as gold'. Defence cuts were essential. In 1969 Nixon formulated the new outlook thus: "We shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nations directly threatened to assume primary responsibility of providing manpower for its defence."

DETENTE - A TACTICAL COMPROMISE

The situation however did not improve. After the dollar collapse of 1971 (the end of Bretton Woods,) Nixon decided to attempt a 'thaw' in relations with the Kremlin by offering to negotiate an end to the Vietnam war. As in the 1944/45 'thaw', this manoeuvre sprang from the relative weakness of the US. Like Roosevelt and Truman before him Nixon used a willingness to deal with the Kremlin on friendly terms—what became known as detente—to contain revolution. The Kremlin bureaucrats responded eagerly. In the Paris Accords on Vietnam, though the US formally acknowledged defeat and began to withdraw troops, they also secured the Kremlin's aid in containing, for a short period, the struggle of the NLF in the South. In return Kissinger cajoled Congress into an agreement for a massive increase in trade with the USSR and other degenerate workers states. The way was paved for full scale detente. Though on America's part the detente was always seen as a temporary, if unavoidable, tactical compromise.

It did not involve a self-denying ordinance on the part of the Pentagon as far as its own reactionary practices were concerned. Although Nixon conceded in March 1973 that 'there is a growing sense of isolation after Korea, after Vietnam', and the need for 'polycentric management' of the 'free world', this did not involve abstaining from propping up reactionary regimes or, as in Chile from 1970-73 and Angola after 1974, from CIA covert action to bring down anti US governments. Furthermore long standing US/USSR frictions such as that over the Middle East conflict (which led Nixon to put the US on a nuclear alert in 1973) remained unresolved by the 'thaw'.

The first phase of detente did not give America the breathing space it needed to recuperate. Rather it was a prelude to a series of blows that further weakened America's capacity to play the role of gendarme. The 1973 quadrupling of OPEC oil prices helped synchronise the world's worst recession (1973-75) since the war. It further exaggerated the size of US defence budget in comparison to national wealth. In 1974 the self-confidence and cohesion of the American ruling class was rocked by the Watergate crisis and more importantly, by the final defeat of the US backed South Vietnamese

regime at the hands of the NLF in April 1975. Insult to injury the downfall of the pro-American dictatorship in Portugal galvanised the anti-imperialist movements in Portugal's former colonies: Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.

Following the fall of Nixon (and the severance of Ford) President Carter gave detente a new twist combined it with a 'human rights' campaign. This of the US as aggressor was to be replaced with the US as freedom lover. This campaign was enshrined in the Helsinki agreement. Within the terms of the agreement the Western powers recognised State Interventionism—although not social systems—in Europe. The agreement served to satisfy the Soviet bureaucracy. But in return the Soviet bureaucracy was obliged to uphold a code of 'human rights' practices.

Carter described his human rights campaign as 'soul of our foreign policy', but its heart and head was unmistakably aimed at preserving US corporate power and providing a lever to use against the USSR. It was out to deflect attention from America's repressive dictatorships by focusing international attention on the violation of various freedoms which degenerate workers states.

In addition Carter wanted to use increased economic penetration of Eastern Europe as a means of opening pro-capitalist forces in those countries open to prising them loose from the USSR. For 'The Economist', for example, this economic deterrent was the most important aspect of detente. "According to this theory, the growth of economic links made possible by detente would liberalise Eastern Europe—partly by making equally more confident communist governments feel safe to liberalise, and partly by giving the means of discouraging anti-liberal moves by the governments through the threat to reduce trade links (9.1.82.)"

That is, detente gave the west a stranglehold over planned economies of the workers states under the text of a 'liberal' campaign for human rights. In this policy of necessity, required some action on the part of US imperialism to ensure that the US imperialist dictatorships were not entirely human rights abuses. As Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, said as late as 1979:

"These moves towards more democratic and liberties in Latin America are distinctly in our interest. The great strength of democracy is its flexibility and resilience... By encouraging compromise and moderation, it fosters evolutionary change." What underpinned this strategy was the hope that from above could obviate revolution from below.

COSMETIC CHANGES DID OCCUR

The 'human rights' policy in practice sought to strengthen the structures of imperialist holding only partially loosening the grip of the local capitalists and landowners whose venality and corruption tended to incite the urban and rural poor. Most proved unresponsive, having been entrenched by all previous US policy. Certain cosmetic changes did occur. Congressional hearings too 1976 on human rights in Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and a 1977 state Department report rejection of further military supplies to Guatemala via Congress in 1978. That same year Vance even interceded in Guatemala to prevent leftist PRD party being deprived of power via elections. Of course, in each case, significant changes were allowed so as to make backdoor supplies. Nevertheless, the very existence of a diplomatic pressure weakened the client regimes in the Middle East and Latin America. Whilst few imperialists were taken in by Carter's rhetoric, imperialist in minor details gave movements like the FSLN in Nicaragua room to operate more effectively. At the same time, Cuba remained a source of inspiration, 'Communism', then for desired levels of health and democracy.



The changing face of the US soldier. On the left, a conscript voices his opinion of his role in Vietnam in the 60's - a hired gun for President Johnson. Above, a soldier on last year's "Operation Brightstar" in Egypt, designed to defend US oil interests, shows his support for Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive

COLD WAR

But with the fall of the strongest client state in the Gulf—Iran in 1979, together with the defeat of Somoza in Central America and a left-wing takeover in the Caribbean (Grenada 1978) the credibility of Carter's foreign policy was totally undermined. Human rights and detente had not delivered the goods.

It was the last period of Carter's government that saw American imperialism turn its back on the tactic of detente. The first front in the New Cold War was set up in the Caribbean and Latin America. In October 1979 a Caribbean task force was established. Operation Shield took place there with 20,000 personnel, 42 ships and 350 aircraft. A 'cordon sanitaire' was set up around Nicaragua with increased aid to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador and Honduras.

It was in late December 1979 and early January 1980 that the new, Cold War proper was unleashed. It was at this time that Soviet troops moved into Afghanistan—the first time that Soviet combat troops had gone into any non-Warsaw Pact country since the war. Afghanistan itself was of no great significance to US imperialism. It merely served as a pretext. In fact the SALT II agreement had already been backed by the American Senate. The MX missile and the Cruise Missiles were in full swing and the idea of the Rapid Deployment Force had already been concocted. But Afghanistan was used to prove the US propaganda lie that the danger to world peace came from Soviet expansionism. The invasion could be used to illustrate Kissinger's 1978 warning that the US was facing: "an unprecedented Soviet assault on the international equilibrium;"

Carter gave his National Security Adviser Brzezinski free rein. He pinpointed the Middle East, and particularly the oil rich Gulf states as the first line of defence. He drew the 'arc of crisis':

"along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries."

HIS TOUGH STANCE RINGS FALSE

Carter belatedly donned the uniform of a Cold War warrior warning the USSR in January 1980 that: "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the USA, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

He further warned: "But we must understand that not every firm application of power is a potential Vietnam."

Carter was a victim of his own earlier policy and his new tough stance did not ring true—particularly after the Iranian hostage rescue debacle. A new man was needed for the new Cold War.

The election of Reagan in November 1981 has given rise to an intensified anti-USSR rhetoric. With his base in the small-medium capitalists, oil magnates, defence industries and the 'Moral Majority' Reagan has proceeded to arm Brzezinski's 'arc of crisis' front and re-equip the original Cold War Front that divides East and West Europe.

The new policy was summed up by Reagan's Defence Secretary Weinberger: "If the movement from cold war to detente is progress, we can't afford much more progress." Reagan has embarked on a five-year plan to construct and expand a chain of bases across the Middle East at a cost of \$2 billion. The spending includes the creation of 3 new naval battle groups for the area. While Egypt and Israel have been the principle recipients of US hardware the Reagan administration is desperate to bolster the feudal monarchy of Saudi-Arabia and pro-imperialist Kenya. There are already 1000 US military advisors in Saudi-Arabia and planned sales of tactical jet fighters and AWAC reconnaissance planes will require a sharp increase in US personnel. With its eyes on the Indian Ocean the US is spending \$26 million on improving Mombassa port for the US Indian Ocean fleet and \$237.7 million on improving facilities on Diego Garcia. From these bases the US will be able to move a Rapid Deployment Force of 12,000 troops directly into the Gulf should any of its chain of armed puppets come under threat. In all the US defence budget is planned to increase from \$171 billion in 1981 to \$365.5 billion in 1986.

But as well as shoring up this chain of pro-US regimes the Reaganites, in the last period, have stepped up their physical pressure on those regimes which potentially stand as an obstacle to the stability of US imperialism. Desperate to protect South Africa at all costs the US vetoed the United Nations condemnation of South Africa's September invasion of Angola. Once again—as it did in the early 70s—the US has given its approval to the South African racists should they move against Mozambique and Angola. On at least two occasions this year units of the US sixth fleet have provocatively violated Libyan air and sea space. The message from the Reaganites to all of these regimes is that the US is prepared to use its military might to bully and intimidate them and in this way the White House hopes to force them into line—by encouraging Sadat type pro-imperialist factions within them if possible, by physical force if not.

Reagan's drive to hold the line for US imperialism of necessity means trying to force the soviet bureaucracy out of its new-won gains. This means not only using force against pro-Soviet regimes in the under developed world but also trying to tie the USSR down in Europe. An anti-Soviet frenzy has gripped the US ruling class the more its international fortunes have declined. Major General Schweitzer—a top defence specialist—gave voice to this when he declared to an assembled audience that the Soviets were 'on the move' and 'going to strike' against Poland and the Gulf. But the rational kernel—from the viewpoint of US imperialism—is that the Soviet Union must be weakened if US imperialism is to reassert itself. Reagan and Haig hope that by commissioning a new round of armament spending in Europe, by hinting that they are prepared for the exchange of tactical nuclear missiles in Europe..... "I could see where you could have the exchange of tactical weapons in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers into pushing the button." (Reagan) then the Soviet bureaucracy



American tanks on manoeuvres in the Mojave desert. War "games" designed to increase US strength.

facied with economic stagnation at home, and an increasing burden of aid payments to Indo-China, Cuba and Ethiopia etc - will be forced to climb down and back off from aiding anti-imperialist struggles.

This war drive is not 'missile madness' on Reagan's part. It is fuelled by the energy of an increasingly worried bourgeoisie. In November 1981 unemployment in the US reached 8.4%, the highest figure since the 1975 recession. More alarming, in the last two quarters of 1981, US GNP fell by 1.6% and 0.6% respectively, indicating a stagnant level of investments. Inflation is running at 9.5% and the fiscal deficit for 1982 is feared to be as high as 100 billion dollars. Perhaps the most revealing is that in America, the land of the motor car, car sales are at their lowest since 1958. With nothing but gloomy predictions for the future, the American ruling class is beginning to look to other ways out of its crisis.

For its part the Soviet bureaucracy maintains the reactionary strategy of peaceful co-existence. Its message to the Imperialist bourgeoisie is "If you leave us alone, we won't touch you!" Every time Brezhnev bends the ear of Helmut Schmidt this is his refrain. The defence of the Soviet Union for the Kremlin oligarchy, simply means the defence of their privileges, their political rule, their sphere of influence. The USSR was the driving force behind SALT I and SALT II during the detente period. It was willing to negotiate an unfavourable peace at Paris between North Vietnam and America. Its invasion of Afghanistan, part of its sphere of influence, was seen as a legitimate act of defence against destabilising rebels, not as an act of expansionism. It has been on the defensive in the face of the cold war - offering to withdraw its SS20s behind the Urals and pull troops out of East Germany. Its aid

to national liberation struggles is limited in the Middle East and Africa and non-existent in Latin America. It is clearly not substantially aiding Nicaragua and does not aid the El Salvador rebels at all. It supports national struggles, like that in Vietnam, in a limited way and with the main intention of strengthening its own bargaining position with the US.

That is, the interests of the world revolution are sacrificed at every step by the bureaucracy in the interests of its own self-preservation.

But the nationalised and planned economies of the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states represent a historic gain for the working class. This property form is the prerequisite without which the working class cannot build socialism. That is why the break up of the planned economies by imperialism would be a set-back for the international working class.

The present war drive is placing the imperialist countries on a lead-on collision course with the workers state and with the movements of national liberation in the imperialised countries. In these conflicts we are not neutral. We say clearly:

- ▶ Full support to all genuine national liberation struggles.
- ▶ Down with the Thatcher/Reagan war drive - out of NATO now.
- ▶ Defend the USSR and other degenerate workers' states against the restorationist aims of the imperialists.

by Keith Hassell and Mark Hoskisson

POLISH WORKERS MUST BEWARE OF FALSE FRIENDS

THE ARMED SQUADS of Jaruzelski have temporarily succeeded in crushing the open resistance of the Polish working class. At least 70 workers were killed as occupied mines, factories and docks were surrounded and stormed by crack riot police. 8000 steel workers held Huta Katowice, 3000 miners held the Ziemawit and Piast mines until driven out by armed force. Radom—the scene of the fiercest fighting in 1976—was sealed off from the rest of Poland for at least 10 days after the coup.

But the arrest and incarceration of over 5000 Solidarity activists and the dismissal of thousands of workers because of their record of struggle, or their refusal to sign anti-Solidarnosc 'loyalty' pledges, has not succeeded in crushing passive resistance or rooting out underground organisation. Solidarnosc bulletins are continuing to appear in the principal cities and industrial centres. At the time of writing Solidarnosc leader Bujak remains in hiding and committed to organising resistance to the Jaruzelski regime. Sabotage and passive resistance in the factories shows the deep hatred of the regime felt by millions of Polish workers.

The Jaruzelski junta now has to brace itself to push up basic food prices by between 200 and 500%. It does so at a time when the morale of its conscript army for further repression is unsure, and when mass defections from the Polish United Workers Party, particularly in the factories has obliterated the social roots of the party destroying it for the immediate future as the instrument of bureaucratic rule. Its propaganda machine is dredging the depths of Polish nationalism to appeal to the most backward layers of society against Solidarnosc. The party paper in Szczecin, for example, has carried viciously anti-semitic material blaming all the problems of Poland since 1947 on the Jews, claiming that Jews controlled the secret service in the 1950s and that KOR supporters such as Michnik and Modzel-

ewski are Jewish. The national party paper Trybuna Ludu has stepped up its campaign against 'Zionists'—code name for Jews in the Polish Stalinists black nationalist propaganda. This in a country where Nazi genocide wiped out three million Jews and where there are now only 5,000 to 8,000 Jews.

Thousands of Polish workers are asking themselves 'What went wrong?' How did a movement comprising 10 million workers fall prey to this hated and discredited regime? And, most vitally, where do Polish workers go from here?

Some sections of the Solidarnosc activists are already beginning to publicly answer these questions. For Bujak, one of Walesa's 'radical' critics, the problem was that they tried to negotiate and bargain with a party and army leadership that was not prepared to concede via negotiation any of its material privileges or one iota of its absolute monopoly of political power. In a clandestine interview Bujak outlined his understanding of the flaws in the reformist strategem that he himself had advocated:

"Many people compared the construction of Solidarity to a revolution. But this revolution precluded the use of force and kept the arrangement determining the Polish raison d'etat—alliances, economic cooperation, the leading role of the PUWP.

It was supposed to allow the party and government authorities to reform the system of rule in the country and find a new formula for the leading role of the party taking into account the social changes that were occurring. It is known now, that nobody was thinking about such changes and reforms and that our hopes—that we would find even a token of good will on the other side—were illusory. Its clear the current situation could not have been avoided." (International Herald Tribune 19.1.82).

The Jaruzelski coup has disabused many Solidarnosc activists of their crippling belief in the reformability

of the stalinist bureaucracy. That is to be expected. But the clandestine bulletins circulating inside Poland show, through their frequent support for Reagan's sanction campaign and appeals for support from the Pope, that the workers movement still labours under other chronic illusions as to where the force can be mobilised to break the Jaruzelski regime.

The western powers may be prepared to operate sanctions against Jaruzelski; but only with the end in view of turning Poland into a semi-colony of the US and Western Europe and to strike against the USSR. Their interests are not those of those millions of Polish workers who struggled for equality and workers rights in the face of the bureaucratic regimes of Gierek, Kania and Jaruzelski. The same forces who call for action against Jaruzelski openly support the Turkish anti-union martial law Junta and accuse the Solidarnosc leaders of having gone 'too far too fast'.

Similarly the clerical hierarchy still looked to by Solidarnosc activists counselled compromise with the Stalinists up to, and after, the coup. In the interests of strengthening its own position as a bridge between the workers and the bureaucracy, and hence augmenting its already considerable social and political power, they have obstructed and condemned active resistance to Jaruzelski.

Archbishop Glomp has made no secret, visiting western politicians, of his exasperation with Walesa's refusal to negotiate with the authorities. The first US senator to visit Poland after the coup reported "I got the impression that the primate was being critical of Walesa's intransigence. Archbishop Glomp said Mr Walesa had not long been in politics and did not know how complicated things are" So craven are the Church's attempted dealings with the Jaruzelski regime that it has, while condemning internment in principle, offered to intern Walesa incommunicado in one of its own secluded monasteries!

Whether Polish workers will break with their clerical misleaders and see through Reagan's anti-working class war drive depends, to no small extent, on the kind of solidarity movement that is built in the capitalist countries. A movement in solidarity with the Polish workers that remains in the tow of anti-communist bourgeois politicians and their agents in the labour movement will only further strengthen the hold of reactionary ideas in the minds of Polish workers. That why the left has to struggle to make the cause of the Polish workers the cause of all those struggling against capitalist exploitation and seek to ensure that the Polish workers hear of, and see, concrete solidarity action on the part of the organised working class.

The Massey Ferguson workers blocking of parts from Ursus shows what can be done. But the Polish Solidarity Campaign which is attempting to spearhead solidarity work in the British working class is attempting to tie solidarity work to reactionary anti-working class forces. Its bulletin recommends that banks refuse loans to Jaruzelski—"in their own best interests anyway" they declare. Robin Blick favourably reviews the parliamentary speech of the reactionary Tory Sir Bernard Braine. In comparison the bulletin singles out the 'Totalitarian' Leninist-Trotskyist left for particular scorn. Militants should oppose affiliation to this bloc with right wing Tories, bankers and the Church.

Action to block all imports from Poland is the key task of militants. Every ship returned unloaded, every container untouched prevents the Jaruzelski regime from solving its crisis at the expense of the Polish workers and with the cooperation of the western working class. It is a visible and concrete way of posing the vital lesson to the Polish workers—that it is the workers of the west, and in the bureaucratically degenerate workers states, who are the only allies of the Polish workers as part of the struggle to overthrow exploitation and repression world wide. ■

SACP/ANC - the pitfalls of nationalism

by Sue Thomas

IN A RECENT ARTICLE a leading member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) writing under the name of Toussaint, declared that the really vital contribution of the Party to the struggle in South Africa has been the "development of the real understanding of the relationship between proletarian revolution and national liberation in South Africa. Or, put another way, the relationship between the fight for socialism and the struggle for National Liberation." ("In Retrospect 60 years on" African Communist No 86 Third Quarter 1981).

No one would deny the often heroic role played by militants of the SACP in the struggle against the racist regime in South Africa. It is a struggle that has cost hundreds of SACP members their lives at the hands of the South African police and army, and one which it is the duty of all British socialists to support unconditionally. However it is also the duty of revolutionaries to vigorously combat the political errors of the leaderships of the resistance movements. In the case of the SACP it is precisely their erroneous conception of the "relationship between proletarian revolution and national liberation" that has weakened and misled the opposition to imperialism and the racist settler state at crucial junctures in South African history.

The CPSA was formed in 1921 as the South African section of the Communist International (C.I.) through the merger of the International Socialist League and a number of smaller socialist groups. It was an almost entirely "European" organisation. All the delegates to its founding conference were white and it was built very largely on the traditions of struggle of the European immigrant workers. Its manifesto, while it declared the necessity to unite workers of "all ranks and races", had little to say about the fight for the democratic rights of the black masses—the workers and poor peasants without civil rights and deprived of their lands by the imperialists and their agents in South Africa. The party, marked by the syndicalist ideas of Tom Mann and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), placed almost all its emphasis on the industrial struggle. It was presumed that having first destroyed capitalism the working class would then sweep away the remnants of racism and imperialism.

Such a perspective led naturally to a concentration on the white working class—it was better organised, and not yet tied to the ruling class through systematic privilege. Sections of it had developed an internationalist outlook in opposition to the First World War. But the test of true proletarian internationalism, of a thoroughly communist outlook, was whether the young party could break from defending white privilege and could fight for class unity, not by economically counterposing it to the nationalist struggle of the black population, but by building it through taking up and leading the struggle for democratic rights of the blacks themselves.

The CPSA failed its first major test which was the white miners strike on the Rand in 1922. This was called to safeguard craft positions for whites and the strike leaders raised the slogan "Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a White South Africa." (Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour*, quoted Ernest Harsch 'South Africa' p.19). The CPSA took an active and important role in the strike, stressing that it was objectively a fight against capitalism. While it called for the involvement of black workers and the need to

build a common struggle against the mine owners and their class, it did not launch any determined opposition to the retention of the colour bar.

The crushing of the strike and the resulting alliance between the Labour Party and the Nationalists increasingly tied the white working class to its own ruling class through the ideology of "Baaskap"—white supremacy. (See W.P. No 26 "The Roots of the Racist State"). This development forced the CPSA to re-evaluate its strategy.

While the Communist Party concentrated on mobilising the workers to overthrow capitalism, the struggle for civil rights lay firmly in the hands of an all-class nationalist movement—the African National Congress. Founded in 1912 the ANC reflected both the strengths and weaknesses of the modern African nationalist movement. Recognising the lessons of British imperialism's ability to crush isolated tribal opposition the ANC reflected the desire for a united African movement to win democratic rights within South Africa. However the movement was dominated by the most privileged layers of African society—lawyers, teachers, small business men and religious leaders. Most of them had been trained in the missionary schools designed to produce a privileged elite tied to the existing state. This petty-bourgeois layer had as its aim not the emancipation of the mass of workers and peasants from their exploitation and oppression but the winning of democratic rights and privileges for itself, so that it could govern alongside its white rulers. Thus the campaign initially took the form of defending and extending the political system of the Cape colony where coloureds and a minority of Black Africans had a vote based on a property franchise. Part of the Congress were the Tribal chiefs, maintained by the British, forming an upper house of "princes of African blood."

The strategy of the African Nationalist leaders was one of appealing to the British to extend the rights of Africans, through petitions and delegations. In this they sought aid and encouragement amongst the white "liberal" sections of South African society. Protests were limited to demonstrations and passive resistance modelled on the Natal Indian Congress campaign led by Mahatma Gandhi. Edward Roux describes one such demonstration organised by the ANC: "There was a kind of naive heroism in the spectacle of thousands of black men assembled on Von Brandis Square arguing: 'Down with the Passes!' But then, 'no violence' surrendering their sticks, setting about their defiance of injustice with songs of Britannica, with cheers for England's King and for President Wilson, only to have their meetings roughly dispersed by police." ("Time Longer than Rope" p.18).

Campaigns which threatened to mobilise the black proletariat were feared in fear of offending their white allies and wrecking their strategy of peaceful persuasion. The ANC stood aloof from the campaigns of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU) which after the First World War mobilised tens of thousands of African workers in strikes and political campaigns against the regime. In 1928 the House of Chiefs refused the idea of cooperation with the Communist Party after one of their number perceptively observed that "The Tsar was a great man in his country, of royal blood like us chiefs and where is he now!"

By the mid 1920's the CP had moved away from its emphasis on the white working class. It was active in the militant struggles of the ICU. But by 1928 the Communist International was in the hands of Stalin's supporters and the fight for international revolution was

being subordinated to the politics dictated by the strategy of building "socialism in one country".

The CI at its second congress and under Lenin's guidance had outlined a revolutionary strategy in relation to the nationalist movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries. This recognised the necessity of making alliances with the bourgeois nationalists against the imperialists. This would allow maximum unity in action against imperialism while at the same time allowing the communists to demonstrate the weakness and compromising nature of the nationalist leaders. Only through maintaining complete programmatic independence and freedom of criticism would the communist parties be able to win the masses and demonstrate that only the communists and a socialist revolution could guarantee complete victory in the struggle. Thus Lenin argued at the second congress: "The CI should collaborate provisionally with the revolutionary movement of the colonies and backward countries and even form an alliance with it, but it must not amalgamate with it; it must unconditionally maintain the independence of the proletarian movement, even if it is only in an embryonic stage." ("Theses on the National and Colonial Question" Degras, p.144)

However under Stalin this revolutionary tactic was completely distorted. In China between 1925-27 the Chinese Communist Party was amalgamated in an uncritical bloc with the Kuomintang in the struggle against imperialism, a policy which led to the bloody crushing of the Shanghai proletariat by the KMT in 1927. For South Africa, the application of this strategy meant that the CPSA should fight for an "Independent Native Republic" as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full equal rights for all races" (ECCI Resolution on SA, 1928)

The foremost theoretician of South African Communism in its subsequent period, A.T.Nzula, spelt out this "stageist" perspective. "The basic content of the first stage of the revolution in Black Africa is a struggle for land and a war of national liberation. In this case, the revolution will in its initial stage be a bourgeois democratic revolution." ("Forced Labour in Colonial Africa" Nzula et al.)

This perspective of the democratic stage of the revolution has remained part of the CP's programme since 1928, although it has gone through several mutations and been attached to contrasting tactics from deputations, through passive resistance to armed struggle. But its essence and its danger have remained constant. The Communist Party's programme is, in the last analysis, limited to that of the petty bourgeois layer who lead the nationalist movement. Rather than winning over sections of that layer to the fight for the communist programme, and fighting for the working class to lead the struggle for national independence combining it with the struggle for workers power, the CP ties the black working class to the limited democratic programme of the petty-bourgeoisie. The fatal consequences of this strategy can be seen in the subsequent history of the CPSA.

In the mid-1930's the period of the "popular front" brought the party into increased activity and influence within the ANC. This period saw the ANC continuing its strategy of attempting to persuade the regime to moderate. In this the Joint Councils, set up in many urban areas as a meeting point for white liberals and black churchmen, had an influential role. But while the liberals were dreaming of reform, Herzog was winning his campaign for his totally segregationist "solution to the native problem", culminating in the 1936 Land Act and Representation of Natives in Parliament Act which destroyed the remnants of the old Cape system, allowing a few seats in Parliament for white representatives of Africans, and created an advisory Native Representative Council (NRC).

A groundswell of African protest led to the convening of the All-African Convention in 1935 which included the ANC and a vast array of black organisations and political groupings, including the Communist Party and the Trotskyists. But the opportunity for united mass resistance was squandered when the ANC supported and encouraged by the CP rejected a policy of boycott. The ANC proceeded to stand a number of candidates for the NRC, won several seats and followed this by supporting the election of white liberals to represent Africans in Parliament. Thus the CP had effectively sabotaged the most hopeful movement for non-collaboration and opposition to the Herzog regime in its desire to maintain its alliance with the petty-bourgeois nationalists.

This policy of conciliation and peaceful persuasion won no concessions from the South African ruling class. Neither did the CP's "Defend South Africa" campaign, launched after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in 1942, which meant the CP opposing all strike action and giving full support for the regimes war policies. The consolidation of the white supremacist regime under the Nationalist Party Government after 1949 showed the abject failure of this policy.

An upsurge in the class struggle after the war (over 70,000 African mineworkers went on strike in 1946), combined with the failure of the ANC's previous policy led to a new radical young leadership emerging in the ANC's Congress Youth League including such figures as Nelson Mandela. Under their leadership, the ANC moved into a period of mass protest in the 1950s and adopted a Programme of Action calling for African self-determination and adoption of tactics such as boycotts, strikes and civil disobedience.

After a series of short-lived, but militant protests, the ANC launched the Defiance Campaign in 1952, modelled on Gandhi's methods. Although the protest relied on individual action and was limited by the



Nelson Mandela, currently imprisoned for life by the racist South African regime

ANC leadership, it nevertheless drew massive support and brought a huge increase in ANC membership, creating a mass nationalist movement. But after the Defiance Campaign was halted in 1953, and in the face of severe restrictions and bannings, there was a downturn in activity and the ANC shifted direction back towards the perspective of winning white "progressive" support.

The Communist Party was of central importance in this latter move. The CP had suffered a severe setback in 1950. It was so tied to its perspective of peaceful persuasion and legalism that faced with the threat of the "Suppression of Communism Act" it dissolved itself without preparing any measures for an underground existence. "In fact it was only within days of the actual dissolution that the party membership was informed. Many of them accepted the decision with a mistaken conviction that an underground apparatus must already have been prepared but could not be talked about for security reasons." (60 Fighting Years African Communist No. 86)

The party did not re-emerge as an underground organisation - the South African Communist Party (SACP) - until two years later. Then the SACP encouraged the ANC which it re-established as an influential force, to form in 1955 the Congress Alliance with the white Congress of Democrats (communists and liberals) and the South African Indian Congress. Even the bourgeois United Party was invited to attend the Congress of the People! (Harsch, p.233).

This Congress Alliance adopted the Freedom Charter which became and remains the most influential manifesto amongst the black organisations - The Freedom Charter is a democratic programme calling for the destruction of the apartheid state and its replacement by "democratic organs of self government" enshrining equal rights for all races. It includes a call for land reform and nationalisation. But there is no mention of how this programme can be realised, of how the struggle should be conducted. Thus, the Freedom Charter can be all things to all sections of "progressives" It could be used just as well by the advocates of passive protest and persuasion and those who embrace armed guerrilla struggle against the regime.

But even democratic demands and peaceful protest are enough to scare the apartheid regime which continued its repression with the Treason Trials of the late 1950s. Meanwhile, impatient with the "go-slow" policies of the ANC, the "Africanists" formed the Pan African Congress (PAC) which led a new campaign against the pass laws. This culminated in the massive protest in 1960 to which the regime responded with the Sharpeville massacre and subsequent crackdown on the PAC and ANC.

It was no longer tenable for the ANC and SACP leadership to hold on to the strategy of a peaceful campaign against apartheid. During mounting repression, government intransigence and the consolidation of the apartheid regime, the SACP had failed to warn the African masses that armed struggle would be necessary. Now, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) was formed. But the ANC did not adopt armed struggle methods appropriate to a mass revolutionary movement of workers and peasants. This would have meant building for workers militias linked to a guerrilla army. The tactics adopted, with the support of the SACP, were those of sabotage and "exemplary" actions. Further repression followed and the ANC and SACP entered an exile period in which their influence inside SA waned.

Far from strengthening the struggle against imperialism the policies of the Communist Party of tying the interests and struggles of the black South African proletariat to the programme and tactics of petty-bourgeois forces, severely weakened it. When in the 1970s a new era of working class struggle was ushered in by the Natal strike wave of 1972, it was not the ANC and SACP which led it but for a whole period, a new layer of militant youth in the Black Consciousness Movement.

TO BE CONTINUED



South African army troops preparing to launch attack on blacks. In order to defeat these armed thugs, a workers militia linked to a guerrilla army must be built.

Yet another rotten bloc falls apart

IN NOVEMBER AND December 1981, the Fourth International (International Committee) (FI(IC)) definitively split. It lived for less than one year. This product of an unprincipled bloc between N. Moreno's "Bolshevik Faction" and Pierre Lambert's Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI) which proclaimed itself to be the "largest international grouping of Trotskyists" has disintegrated into its component parts. This outcome was not difficult to foresee.

In Workers Power No.22 May 1981 we observed:
"The re-groupment of the FI(IC) has more in common with the cynical "political musical chairs" of post-war degenerate "Trotskyism" than with the principled relaying of the foundations of a revolutionary international. The "Forty Theses" offer only the old menshevik centrism of the OCRFI, combined with the diplomatic cover ups of an unprincipled bloc. The formation of the FI(IC) merely lays the basis for new splits in the future."

In articles in Workers Power (Nos 11, 14, 22) we have analysed the adaptationist policies of Moreno and Lambert's grouping. Moreno has a record of adaptation to the forces of petit-bourgeois nationalism and to the bonapartist figures that they hoist into the saddle in Latin America. The OCRFI leaders were perfectly well aware of this. In December 1976 Lambert's theoretical organ La Verite wrote of Moreno's "adaptation to Peronism": "To criticise the policy of N. Moreno is an indispensable task. It has pushed to great lengths a series of profound deviations from Trotskyism." Lambert on the other hand, has systematically adapted to Social-Democracy for many years. The election of a Social-Democrat as President of France and the coming to power of a social-democrat dominated popular front coalition has not brought about any change in the policy of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI).

In the summer of 1981 Moreno suddenly "discovered" that on the question of the Mitterrand Government "We have differences of 180 degrees" (Correspondence Internationale, No.14 p.10). Moreno has claimed that he wrote to Lambert on July 13th describing the French sections orientation toward the Mitterrand Government as being one of "critical support" for a Popular Front.
"The leadership of the OCI(u) does not dare to put a name to its policy, but it accords uncritical and almost total support to a popular front government." (C.I. No.14 p.11)

A reading of the OCI(u)'s paper "Informations Ouvrieres" from May to September 1981 reveals that this is a justified criticism. But nothing in the OCI's past record could lead one to expect any other response. Since serious programmatic differences had not

been discussed openly before the FI(IC) was founded it was unlikely that Lambert would do so after "fusion" had been achieved. Doubtless Moreno, a seasoned factionalist, knew this very well. When on September 22nd 1981 he submitted a long article attacking the OCI's position on Mitterrand for publication in Correspondence Internationale it was a declaration of war. Events thereafter took on a familiar ring to those who have experienced or studied the splits and fusions of the "Fourth Internationals" since 1953.

The OCI stalled on the question of the publication of Moreno's article. On October 14th, using the pretext of a letter from Moreno to the Central Committee of the Spanish section of the FI(IC), OCI leader Stephane Just claimed there had been a breach of democratic-centralism and that no discussion was possible so long as Moreno characterised the OCI as "revisionist". Despite Moreno's declarations of personal admiration for Lambert, "the most talented Trotskyist leader I have met throughout my political existence" and of loyalty to the FI(IC), "the greatest acquisition of the Trotskyist movement since 1938", Just and Lambert had no intention of tolerating any discussion of the OCI's policies in France.

On October 24th at a National Conference of Cadres of the OCI(u) Lambert pointed to a "provocation" against the French organisation mounted by the fascists, the French Stalinists and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR, French Section of the United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel). Moreover he "revealed" the involvement of ex-Bolshevik Faction members of the OCI(u) in it. On the basis of this crude amalgam Lambert expelled the leading Morenoite supporters from his organisation. On 29th October at a meeting of the International Executive Committee Lambert refused to recognise the voting rights of a representative of Moreno's PST. He announced a ban on public sales of Correspondence Internationale No. 13—the issue which contained Moreno's article.

Moreno's request for 1,000 copies of it to sell and the right to open an office of his party (Argentine OST), ostensibly to work with Argentinian exiles in France was summarily refused. At the same time Napuri, leader of the Lambertist POMR in Peru, who had condemned the expulsion of the ex-BF members of the OCI(u) was ousted from his organisation and accused of being a CIA agent. Lambert and the OCI summoned a General Council of the FI(IC) for November 21st. Moreno's supporters demanded as a precondition of their attendance the reintegration of the ex-BF members of the OCI the reconstitution of the International Executive Committee, the publication of Moreno's articles and the organisation of a democratic debate.

It therefore only remained for the OCI to declare that Moreno had "organised a split" (Informations Ouvrieres No.1028 28th November) and to call a World Congress for June 6th-13th 1982 at which amongst other items to be discussed was to be "The Popular Front and the politics of the OCI(u)" and "the anti-imperialist United Front". In this Alice in Wonderland "Trotskyism" first we have the split and then we have the "discussion".



(Text reads: 14th June: New Defeat for all the bourgeois parties. 21 JUNE: PS/PCF Majority in the Assembly to give Mitterrand the means to govern against the capitalists and bankers.)

OCI weekly paper covers up the presence of the bourgeois radicals in Mitterrand's electoral pact: suggests that Mitterrand plus a majority equals an anti-capitalist workers government

The results of this whole operation can hardly be satisfactory to Lambert and Just. Having failed miserably to "Build the Party of 10,000" in the last year—indeed having lowered their sights to "Build the Party of 8,000", the split in the FI(IC) has obviously decided them to go for broke. Whilst their membership (official and inflated) figures show a drop from 5,300 to 4,600 in the last year they have (on the 30th December 1981) "proclaimed the party". The OCI(u) will henceforth assume the "historic" (late 40s) name Parti Communiste Internationaliste (PCI). The FI(IC) has also had a face-lift. At a meeting on 21st-23rd December the ex-OCRFI rump declared itself the "Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction)".

Thus Lambert has gained nothing except two new and inflated "names". Moreno has probably strengthened his Venezuelan section and now has a small group (some 70 members) in France.

All this has occurred at a time when the United Secretariat is facing deep internal disorder—with the Socialist Workers Party (US) moving closer and closer to Castroism—even to the point of discussing a "new international" to include the FSLN of Nicaragua the New Jewel Movement of Grenada and even Castro himself. The Healeyite 'International Committee' has become a spokesperson for Gaddafi and Khomeini. The tiny International Spartacist Tendency has come out as propagandists for the Kremlin in Afghanistan and Poland. The effects of this debacle in insular Britain will be to accentuate the national centred attitude of many British would be revolutionaries. This will

take the traditional form of "building the party" here first and then at a later date turning to international questions. This is a thoroughly false lesson. The errors of these groupings lie precisely in their lack of an international programme and organisation. The roots of the opportunism and sectarianism of Lambert, Moreno, Mandel, Healey and Robertson lie in their own national soils. Their "international" programmes and organisations are simply their national prejudices writ large. Thus the only unity they can maintain is either that of a non-aggression pact which rules out discussion, criticism and a new programme or subordination of an asteroid belt of small sects around one large group.

Politically all these groups combine centrist adaptation to alien class forces—to Social-Democracy, Stalinism, petty bourgeois nationalism—with gross sectarian antics in the realm of organisation.

The split in the FI(IC) yet again proves that there is no "Fourth International" extant which expresses the method and the developed and extended programme of Lenin's Third or Trotsky's Fourth International. Lambert and Moreno can only drag this historic name in the mud. Workers Power—in collaboration with the Irish Workers Group and in serious discussion with revolutionaries in other countries—sets itself the task of re-elaborating a transitional programme for the new period of Imperialist crisis, of establishing on this basis a democratic-centralist international tendency as the foundation of a reborn revolutionary communist international. ■

TURKEY: repression grows

IN SPITE OF the hypocritical promises of the Turkish military junta to re-establish democracy, the long list of tortures, arbitrary arrests and executions ('legal' and illegal) continues unabated. In the trials of 52 leading members of DISK (the Progressive Trade Union) begun in December 1981, 15 months after the defendants were first taken into custody, the prosecution have called for the death sentence. The court room was surrounded by a massive army presence. Defence lawyers were dismissed and intimidated before the trial. There is little chance that the people on trial for their lives, simply for being trade unionists, will get a fair hearing.

Since the coup in September 1980 there have been ten sentences of hanging carried out. Another 112 people have been sentenced to death and the prosecution is calling for a further 2,449 hangings (figures for December 1981). Clearly the junta's promise of 'democracy' is dependent on them first wiping out any potential future opposition.

This legalised murder campaign only represents the tip of the iceberg. Torture and summary killings are commonplace. A recent Amnesty International report stated that torture is carried out: "as a routine practice in police stations and in some military establishments all over the country."

The left and the militant workers organisations are the prime targets of the NATO backed military regime. Mirza Arabaci, a member of the Revolutionary Miners Union administrative board recounts: "On January 15 1981 I was taken from my house by policemen; . . . I was brought blindfolded to Balikesir. I was subjected to so many tortures that it is impossible to recount them. I was hung by my arms and beaten, naked. I was doused with cold water, given electric shocks, subject to continuous torture for 17

days. They constantly wanted me to admit being a member of an illegal organisation (Kurtulus—Left wing grouping —WP). My body still bears the wounds. I arrived at the prison in a state of coma." (Turkey Information Bulletin, special issue).

The EEC worried about the public image of the junta, has temporarily withheld 600 million dollars worth of aid. However this is no great threat. It is more than made up for by aid directly from West Germany and Reagan. America has just poured in 703 million dollars, the vast majority of that going in the form of military aid. The OECD has also promised \$ 1,000 million to shore up this murderous dictatorship. Besides these funds Thatcher's promised £15 million looks a paltry sum, although it still indicates quite clearly whose side her government is on. While the west sheds crocodile tears about the eclipse of freedom in Poland, it has no hesitation in giving its wholehearted backing to the murderers of trade unionists in Turkey. But then Turkey is in NATO, is friendly to America, and is a bastion in the eastern mediterranean against the Soviet Union. For these reasons the west is quite happy to turn a blind eye (or even excuse) the 'excesses' of the military rulers.

In order to publicise events in Turkey and organise supportive action in the British labour movement, the Turkey Solidarity Campaign together with the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey have organised a week of action from 6-13th March. In addition to this, the Turkey Solidarity Campaign is organising a speaking tour by exiled Turkish Trade Unionists from March 24-April 3rd. Labour movement organisations are encouraged to invite a speaker and to sponsor the tour. For further details contact Turkey Solidarity Campaign

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by Gen Doy

IRELAND: coalition crumbles

THE SOUTHERN COALITION government of the Fine Gael and the Labour Party, has come crashing down after seven months of relying on the support of three independent "socialist" deputies who had sided with the coalition austerity measures rather than face a new election.

But the coalition's second and major budget was too savage for two of them, the ex-Labour independent Jim Kemmy, and Joe Sherlock of Sinn Fein, the Workers Party.

Had Garrett Fitzgerald made the simple amendment, now conceded in the budget proposals of his election platform, of not imposing VAT of 18% on children's clothes and footwear, Kemmy would have kept him in power.

The budget offered tiny steps towards more equity in income tax, but meant more taxes on all but the lowest wages. It would raise social welfare in line with inflation but it would tax unemployment and sickness benefits as an "incentive" to work. It would remove subsidies on milk and butter, raise standard VAT from 15 to 18%, and slap it on clothes and shoes for the first time. It would raise the 25% VAT to 30%, it would put 4½p on a pint of beer, 8p on a glass of spirits, 14p on a gallon of petrol, 11½p on 20 cigarettes, 20% on post and telephone charges.

Minimal token taxes on capital, a total levy of £15 million on the banks and a £20 million jobs fund for a new National Development Corporation, were the only sops to the trade union bureaucracy. All this with prices rising already at 20%, wage settlements below 10% an embargo on filling more than 1 in every 3 public sector job vacancies, and 13% of the 3½ million population on the dole.

Since the populist Fianna Fail (FF) party lost the June election, nothing has happened to win them any new support, although they use less of Fitzgerald's crude threats about the "national crisis", but still

offer only savage attacks on the working class. Being the former government which increased foreign borrowing to buy votes, they still fail to reassure the bourgeoisie of their commitment to financial rectitude.

However, if FF seems likely to scrape together an overall majority on February 18th, it is partly because the nationalist vote that deserted them for the H-Block candidates has since been squandered by the republicans, but mainly because the Coalition's back has been broken in a manner which threatens to wipe out the Irish Labour Party's parliamentary presence.

At the time of writing, their party's ruling council is in open conflict with its parliamentary leader who prefers to defend the coalition budget as the platform for joint electoral campaign with Fine Gael. Only the crudest lust for the spoils of office by an historically bankrupt rump of labourites can explain labour leader O'Leary's blind gamble on yet another coalition.

Openly and daily in the media, he and his coterie proclaim that the test of commitment to the "national interest" is the already proven readiness of the ILP to impose austerity on workers to save this rotten capitalist system. The ILP is courting open conflict even with the trade union bureaucracy, from whom it holds its licence to call for workers votes. Its electoral extinction, unfortunately, would not represent the end of political illusions in reformism among Irish workers, so few of whom ever vote for it. But if it opens up the question of building a new all-Ireland Party of Labour, there may emerge a vital forum for revolutionaries to argue their programme as the way forward for a new political organisation of the working class. For neither the present collapse nor any of its likely electoral outcomes offer any hope whatever to the Irish workers. ■

by a member of the Irish Workers Group

workers power

RAIL STRIKE:

No Arbitration

ALL OUT STRIKE NOW !

THE REAL VICTORY of the British Rail Board in last year's "ambiguous" deal over productivity agreements with the NUR and ASLEF, lay in its success in dividing up the rail unions against each other.

The arch-conservative Sid Weighell (NUR), has long exercised an iron grip over his union, at every turn seeking to deliver up his members' jobs as a sacrificial offering to his hero, BR Chief Sir Peter Parker.

Weighell is unstinting in his praise: "If we can get this country governed the way Parker looks after BR, we might get it going again" (Guardian 16.3.81). Indeed, Parker has created massive unemployment in his BR "constituency", with 10,000 jobs axed in 1981, and another 25,000 planned for the chop by 1985. As a job cutter he rivals Thatcher!

The determination shown by the footplaten of ASLEF to defend their guaranteed 8-hour day and the 4,000 drivers' jobs (20% of the total) at stake, stands in stark contrast to their union leaders.

A.S.L.E.F. EXTENDS A HELPING HAND TO BRITISH RAIL

Buckton himself, the ASLEF leader, has had to be pushed all the way to the limited action so far taken. Way back in August last year, he had hoped to sell the "flexible rostering" deal to his own members, as Weighell had imposed his. ASLEF's traditional craftist militancy has prevented this so far. However, despite the increasing calls for an all-out strike from sections of the membership, especially from the Scottish region, the executive of ASLEF has extended a helping hand to the BRB by confining their action to two-day strikes and a ban on overtime and rest-day working.

Despite Weighell's dictatorial attempts to force them back to work, rank and

file NUR guards have spontaneously come out unofficially, in the Southern Region, Crew, Birmingham and Manchester. They are rebelling against a similar agreement to the one BRB are attempting to push onto the locomotives.

The agreement, signed by NUR's Executive, was rejected by the guards as can be seen in the vote against the agreement at the 1981 Guards Grade conference, and by the flood of resolutions from the NUR branches condemning the deal.

LIES AND DISTORTION FROM THE PRESS

Buckton's strategy of limiting the action is not going to win the dispute. The two-day strikes are not crippling BR. They may well lose custom, but the passengers they hit are coping by other means. The action cannot generate enough pressure on BR and the government for a settlement. This is particularly so as each day of the long drawn-out dispute allows Fleet Street to marshal its hack writers to attack the rail workers. From "The Sun" to "The Sunday Times", lies, exaggerations and distortions will serve to isolate the ASLEF strikers.

That's why all-out indefinite strike action is crucial to bring Parker, Rose and the BRB to their knees. The manoeuvres leading towards "independent" arbitration with a Tory Lord have to be scuppered, as it is a device for sowing confusion and crippling the momentum of the workers. The proposal for arbitration at least indicates some weakness on BR's part, and this crack in resolve must be exploited through all-out action.

If an all-out strike is to succeed, it must be controlled by the rank and file from the start, organised in local strike committees at every station and depot, with elected, recallable delegates. Taking shape as a national alternative to Weighell and Buckton immediately, it would help safeguard the strike from the proven



Striking ASLEF rail workers lobby their Executive, and were later able to disrupt Buckton's attempt at secret negotiations with British Rail. The determination of workers like these must be built on to ensure that a full-scale all-out national strike takes place.

Picture: John Sturrock (NETWORK)

treachery of these "leaders", and take control of the negotiations with BRB out of their hands.

A network of rank and file bodies is crucial for three other reasons. First, the hostility or lack of sympathy between sections of the NUR and ASLEF, created and fostered by their leaders and acting as a barrier to the creation of one union for all rail workers, can only be overcome by the daily contact that such organisation brings with it.

Such coordination could prevent the gutter press and the union officials from exploiting the divisions that flour-

ish under conditions of isolation and passivity. Secondly, only the rank and file bodies can ensure the effectiveness of the necessary picketing that will need to be thrown up nationally to prevent any goods which normally go by rail from going by road. In particular, the TGWU, UCW ISTC and NUM must instruct their members to black all such traffic.

Without the authority of the rank and file bodies, phoney "dispensations" for all kinds of "essential" goods will be allowed through by the union officials,

thus undermining the strike.

Finally, the same principle of rank and file unity has to be applied if the much-vaunted Triple Alliance is to become activated. For Weighell, Buckton, Sims and Gormley, the Alliance exists on paper only. But with the continued slaughter of jobs by the BSC, the threat of pit closures still hanging over the miners and battles over issues like one-man operated trains still to come on the railways, the potential of that alliance to knock the stuffing out of the Tory offensive is there. ■

COMMIT LCI TO TROOPS OUT NOW

ON FEBRUARY 27th there will be a conference of Labour Party and trade union activists to debate policy for bringing about the unification of Ireland, long divided by British imperialism.

Organised jointly by the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) and the Committee for Withdrawal (CWI), the conference is a vital one for militants committed to the Irish liberation struggle.

It will be graced by prominent labourite politicians (Benn, Livingstone, Maynard) and trade union official "lefts" (Sapper, Buckton). It takes place six months after the final defeat of the courageous hunger-strike by Irish republicans and socialists in which 10 died, in their struggle for "political status". The hunger strike was a bitterly contested struggle against the Tory government. One of its most disgusting episodes was the sight of Labour Irish spokesman - Don Concannon MP - crowing over their deathbeds at their suffering, and arguing for Thatcher to stiffen her resolve against the dying men.

The Labour left will hope that the intervening months have allowed the memory of their silence (with the partial exception of Livingstone), and their inactivity, to fade. The temporary downturn in solidarity activity in Britain should not

be permitted to allow those who did nothing to ensure that the hunger strikers won to apply new varnish to their justifiably tarnished reputations.

The LCI and the CWI see this conference as a chance to extend the "victory" of the October 1981 Labour Party Conference into the trade unions. That "victory" amounted to a partial break with the previous uncontested Labour-Tory bipartisan approach to Ireland. It passed a vague commitment to a "united Ireland". But the decisive rejection, by the union block vote, of a Troops Out Now position indicates that while it may be relatively easy to persuade the Party to an unspecific commitment to eventual withdrawal, little more can be expected from the Labour and trade union leaders.

Taking their cue from the Dublin-London talks last year, the British trade union leaders do not feel so uneasy now about touting the prospect of eventual withdrawal. After all, such a position does not appear too different from that of certain members of the ruling class itself.

The conference must remember not only the heroism of the hunger strikers, but also the TUC's pernicious role in proscribing Trades Council participation in the Coventry Trades Council conference

on Ireland last year, and overturning the democratic decision of the Southport Trades Council Conference to back the political status campaign.

Militants who wish the conference to be a genuine and meaningful expression of solidarity with those struggling against the British army will have to push the position of Troops Out Now and Self-Determination For The Irish People As A Whole. Only this position takes a principled and unambiguous stand and states clearly that British imperialism has no right whatever to be in Ireland. Only this position, moreover, gives a practical immediacy to the calls for withdrawal, and allows for concrete and immediate demands to be placed on the Labour leaders in solidarity with the Irish struggle.

The record of the LCI to date does not encourage us to believe that it will force this issue to the centre of the conference. The LCI itself is deliberately not committed to Troops Out Now, so as to allow bridges to be built to Parliamentary and union leaders. Our principle task in solidarity work is to galvanise and convince the rank and file of the unions to support the struggle to end British rule in Ireland. This will not be done by cow-towing to the odd officials who are prepared to grace platforms and talk

vacuously of withdrawal and the need for a united Ireland!

The work must be done within the rank and file of the working class itself. The example of national caucuses within the unions - such as exists in ASTMS - bringing together those committed to Troops Out Now and Self-Determination, must be followed. Out of such beginnings, meaningful action such as blacking military supplies and blocking research

on weapons, can emerge. To this end, militants have a responsibility to attend this conference and ensure that it marks a turning point in British labour's silence and studied silence on the enslavement of Ireland. ■

DETAILS:
Labour Movement Conference on Ireland, Saturday, Feb 27th 1982, 11.00 am The Theatre, 309 Regents St London. Delegates and Observers credentials (delegates £2.00) from: 1, North End Rd, London W 14

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