

Workers Power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

INSIDE: NICARAGUA

DEBATE WITH IRANIAN SOCIALISTS

STOP TEBBIT'S BILL BECOMING LAW!

THE TORIES ARE pushing ahead with the second installment of their plans to legally shackle effective Trade Unionism. Tebbit's Employment Bill—if it is allowed to become law—considerably strengthen the anti-Trade Union armoury of the Tories and the bosses.

Prior's 1980 Act severely curtailed picketing rights. Tebbit goes much further. He aims to remove Trade Union immunity from civil action in the courts over a much wider range of industrial action by restricting the forms of trade union action that remain within the law.

If Tebbit has his way the following actions would become unlawful and workers involved in them therefore liable to prosecution:

■ All action that a judge deems is not "wholly or mainly" related to a trade dispute between "an employer and his own employees" will be outlawed. This would effectively ban secondary or solidarity action. Blacking of products of another firm in dispute would, for example, make the workers liable to court action for damages from their own employer.

■ All action that a judge considers a dispute between "workers and workers" would similarly be liable to court action for damages. This means that organised action against the use of non-union labour, or inter-union disputes, can land the unions in court.

■ Political strikes and all action not aimed at a specific employer in pursuance of a trade dispute. Action against the imposition of Tory anti-union laws, industrial action against public spending cuts and strike action in support of workers in struggle would all be liable to court imposed damages.

■ "disputes relating solely to matters occurring outside Great Britain". This means Tebbit would outlaw solidarity action—blacking or strikes—with workers in Chile, South Africa, Poland or even Northern Ireland. The Massey Ferguson workers decision to black goods from the Ursus works in Poland would make them liable to court action.

There should be no doubt at all that if these proposals become law then the ability of workers to protect jobs and maintain living standards "within the law" will be fundamentally restricted. As the Economist crowed recently "for the first time since Edwardian days, union funds will be at risk for damages by employers hit by an 'unlawful' dispute." Unions with up to 100,000 members will be liable to a maximum fine of £125,000. Bigger unions will be

liable to fines of up to £250,000. What Tebbit and the Tories hope is that this will be enough to force the Trade Union leaders to police their own rank and file members so as to protect their union assets from civil damages.

But the Bill does not restrict itself to Trade Union immunities:

■ Tebbit is also out to break up the closed shop. £2 million has been earmarked for compensation to scabs who were sacked between 1974 and 1980 for refusing to join closed shops. Compensation for future claimants is to be dramatically increased with trade unions liable to pay towards it if a judge is convinced that the employer was unreasonably pressurised into entering a closed shop arrangement.

■ The Bill requires 5 yearly secret ballots to be held to "test" support for existing closed shops. For closed shops to continue they will have to be ratified by 80% of the workforce. In this way Tebbit wants to give the green light to every miserable scab to start organising against the closed shop in a bid to isolate the militants from the majority of the shop floor workers.

■ The Bill would outlaw 'union-only labour contracts'. "Clauses in contracts requiring the employment of only trade unionists by subcontractors are to become unenforceable in law." (para 26). This would outlaw Labour council contracts to ensure subcontractor work is done by union labour. It will deliberately encourage the growth of lump labour contractors and further undermine trade union organisation particularly in the construction and printing industries. It is significant that almost every employers organisation called for the inclusion of this proposal in the Bill.

The Tebbit Bill places the onus for bringing civil actions against the unions on individual employers. For the Tories this has the advantage of avoiding the creation of a Heath style industrial relations court which might act as a focus for union opposition. While there are minor differences of opinion amongst employers about the proposals—the Institute of Directors, for example, take the view that even harsher anti union laws are needed—all are agreed that the Bill will result in a substantial strengthening of the collective bargaining position of the employers. THEY ARE RIGHT.

Having witnessed such an easy ride for the 1980 legislation and expecting little fight against the Tebbit Bill voices within the ruling class are already calling for further, more stringent measures.

WORKERS



Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

RESPONSE

The Financial Times of 1st December 1981 reported that the Tories are actively preparing a third instalment of anti-union legislation. Next time it will include the introduction of mandatory secret ballots for all strikes, mandatory secret ballots for all union elections and a new requirement that Trade Unionists should opt in, rather than opt out, of the political levy paid by the Trade Unions to the Labour Party.

FAILURE TO MOUNT A SERIOUS FIGHT BACK NOW CAN ONLY FUEL THE DESIRE OF THE TORIES AND THEIR BACKERS TO STRENGTHEN THE PRESENT LEGISLATION WITH MORE IN THE FUTURE.

Anti union legislation is but one part of a two-pronged Tory strategy. The legal crackdown is intended to provide a statutory back up to the ravaging effects of the recession on the working class. Since 1979 Tory economic policy has been to force up the number of unemployed so as to weaken the ability of the working class to defend its jobs and living standards.

In this they have been remarkably successful to date. Although the workers organisations have in no sense been broken the ruling class has strengthened the position from which it intends to carry out further attacks.

A few facts and figures illustrate the ground they have gained so far. Shop floor militancy has noticeably declined. In 1981 there were just under 4.2 million days 'lost' through strikes compared with 12 million in 1980 and an average of 13 million a year for the ten years 1971-81. In fact the number of disputes in 1981 was the lowest for 40 years.

Wage claims have been pushed steadily downwards. The percentage annual increase in average earnings fell from 20.2% in January 1980 to 9.4% in September 1981. The trend has been further downwards since

TORY LEGAL ATTACKS

Employment

A BILL

To provide for compensation out of public funds for certain past cases of dismissal for failure to conform to the requirements of a union membership agreement; to amend the law relating to workers, employers, trade unions and employers' associations; to make provision with respect to awards by industrial tribunals and the procedure of the Employment Appeal Tribunal; and for connected purposes.

Presented by Mr. Secretary Tebbit

supported by
Mr. Secretary Whiteley,
Mr. Secretary Younger,
Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Jenkin,
Mr. Secretary Biffen, Mr. Secretary Lawson,
Mr. Michael Alton and
Mr. David Waddington

Ordered, by The House of Commons,
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SOLIDARITY ACTION

THE CLOSED SHOP

then with the average annual increase in earnings going up by only 7.2% in January 1982. Average earnings rose overall in 1981 by 10% while the official rise in the cost of living was 15.5%.

During 1981, UK industry successfully carried through an unprecedented 'shake out' of labour which resulted in an equally unprecedented 8% gain in productivity. For example, Talbot has led the motor industry in cutting its workforce by 67% since 1973, two thirds of that coming in the period since 1977. Dunlop cut its labour force by 33% since 1977 and British Steel has shed 130,000 of its workers since 1972, 60% of them in the last two years!

There is understandably therefore an increasingly confident mood emanating from the board rooms of British industry. As the Economist has noted: "during 1981 a generation of union restrictive practices has been giving way to the demands of more cost conscious managers."

Since these gains for the employing class have been achieved by slimming workforces, rather than through significant new capital investment, the chronic low profitability of British industry will remain and the pressure to reduce real wages will intensify. The prospect of a necessary and prolonged economic offensive against the working class makes it more and more crucial for the employers that they step up, and utilise, anti-union legislation. There is no room for complacency. THE WORKING CLASS WILL PAY DEARLY IF THE TORIES GET THEIR WAY AND TURN TEBBIT'S BILL INTO LAW. The employers are confident and prepared to use it. The court house benches are crammed with judges itching to wield their legal axe to break working class resistance to the employers attacks.

The 1980 Employment Act passed into law with no active opposition from the Trade Union leadership. As Workers Power wrote in September 1980: "The Employment Act is on the statute book after the feeblest opposition that organised labour has ever motivated, against anti-union legislation." The Trade Union bureaucrats and Labour Party politicians in so far as they protested at all, restricted themselves to claims that the Trade Unions were more reliable custodians of order in industry than the Tory wreckers.

Their arguments are much the same this time round, and once again no militant organised opposition has been forthcoming from the head offices of the Trade Unions or the TUC. There have been isolated calls for action—from Bill Keys of SOGAT for example—but there is no evidence that the TUC will make any move unless it is forced to by mass pressure. On Monday 22nd February the TUC Employment Committee rejected calls for the organisation of protest strikes and for TUC withdrawal from the NEDC. The TUC want to keep on talking with the Tories and to make sure that any protest is kept under tight rein by the Trade Union leaders. Hence their special Conference of Trade Union Executives planned to discuss Tebbit's Bill on April 5th.

The most that the TUC has come up with so far is the suggestion that no trade unionist should sit on industrial tribunals hearing unfair dismissal cases under the new closed shop proposals. But even that has proved to be much for some TU leaders who are reluctant to withdraw from such bodies. As for industrial action the TUC Employment Committee has officially stated that 'ultimately the choice must be for the unions to make' while going

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'SOCIALIST ORGANISER' FOOT'S FETISH

THE SHARP RIGHT turn in the Labour Party leadership reflects a serious slump in membership from 358,950 in 1980 to 303,953 in 1981.

The most optimistic interpretation Labour Weekly can put on the figures is a real loss of 21,500 or 6% over the year.

The long projected influx of aroused militants has not materialised. In fact the decline in the level of class struggle as measured in strike figures and union membership is reflected also in the exit from the Labour Party. Hence the renewed offensive of the Right and the disarray and retreat of the Left.

But this retreat is reflected not only in the official or 'legitimate left' but also in the ranks of the 'hard' or 'revolutionary' left. Socialist Organiser's chief ideologue John O'Mahoney, under pressure from the Right offensive, has behaved like a cuttle-fish - he has spilled gallons of ink hoping to beat a retreat in the murky waters of the debate over "Socialism and Democracy".

Having spent the last three years attempting to 'organise' Benn's socialist bandwagon, John O'Mahoney has adapted Trotskyism in much the same way as Kautsky once adapted Marxism.

His long-running series "Socialism and Democracy" should be reprinted as a pamphlet and thoroughly studied as a prime example of the inner collapse of the 'Trotskyism' of the 1970s.

O'Mahoney manages to discuss the question of Socialism and Democracy without once raising the central issue of the class character of the state. On the basis of private ownership of the great bulk of the means of production arises a machinery of state, a permanent unelected bureaucracy, judiciary, police force and army. The senior civil servants, judges, police chiefs, generals are all flesh of the flesh of the industrialists, bankers, landowners that constitute our ruling class. This is the bourgeoisie and parliament belongs to it.

Tony Benn is quite wrong when he claims the labour movement created democracy. In reply a Guardian writer once wittily quipped "that would be the Athenian Labour Party." Ancient democracy was a minority slave owners democracy. There was no democracy at all for the majority of the population. Bourgeois democracy is wage-slave exploiters' democracy. It came into being as a weapon against the feudal landowners and their King. With its property qualification and its exclusion of peers it was the 'democracy' of the gentleman farmers and the city merchants. Peasants, artisans, the poor were all excluded from this democracy.

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

From 1867 the function of Parliament began to change by a series of stages - 1867, 1888, 1918, 1928, 1947 - into an instrument for legitimizing and concealing the real power of the bourgeoisie. For the bourgeoisie, Parliament's function now is to convince the working class and lower middle class that they have endorsed the actions of the government which directs the state machinery.

On the basis of a five yearly vote, supposedly on the basis of a manifesto but more realistically on the basis of TV commercials, posters and the popular press, each individual citizen is supposed to have made a free choice. It is this formal equality in the right to vote and the 'omnipotence' of a parliamentary majority that makes parliament seem so tempting a vehicle for any kind of social change including the overthrow of capitalism.

But this formal aspect of democracy is completely hollow. As long as a government or a parliamentary majority keeps within the guidelines of the defence of capitalist property the machinery of state 'obeys' its instructions more or less. Should a parliamentary majority be elected that seriously attempted to attack capitalist property in its vitals, or even failed to act as the agent of the bosses in resisting an extra-parliamentary working class offensive, then - parliament or no parliament - the military bureaucratic machine would suddenly cease to be turned by its Parliamentary handle.

Of course matters rarely come this far. Capitalism has its means of preventing 'radical' solutions being endorsed by its democracy. Trotsky understood this apparatus of force and fraud very well: "The capitalist bourgeois calculates: 'while I have in my hands lands,

Democratic Platform Speaking Tour on Repression in Turkey

The Turkey Solidarity Campaign (TSC) is organising a speaking tour in Britain to publicise the repression being carried out by the military junta in Turkey. The tour will include a number of speakers from Turkish trade unions, including DISK, 52 of whose leading members are on trial for their lives.

Details:

March 24/5	London area
March 26	Glasgow
March 27	Edinburgh
March 29	Manchester
March 30	Newcastle/Leeds
March 31	Sheffield/Oxford
April 1	Cambridge
April 2	London

We urge all our readers to attend the meetings: exact details of times and venues can be obtained from TSC BM Box 5965 London WC1 N3XX



Foot's idea of extra-parliamentary activity

factories, workshops, banks; while I possess newspapers, universities, schools; while - and this is the most important of all - I retain control of the army; the apparatus of democracy, however you reconstruct it, will remain obedient to my will. I subordinate to my interests spiritually the stupid, conservative, characterless middle class, just as it is subjected to me materially. I oppress and will oppress its imagination by the gigantic scale of my buildings, my transactions, my plans and my crimes. For moments when it is dissatisfied and murmurs, I have created scores of safety valves and lightning conductors.

At the right moment I will bring into existence opposition parties, which will disappear tomorrow, but which today accomplish their mission by affording the possibility of the lower middle class expressing their indignation without hurt therefrom for capitalism. I shall hold the masses of the people, under cover of compulsory general education, on the verge of complete ignorance, giving them no opportunity of rising above the level which my experts in spiritual slavery consider safe. I will corrupt, deceive, and terrorise either the more privileged or the more backward of the proletariat itself. By means of these measures I shall not allow the vanguard of the working class to gain the ear of the majority of the working class, while the necessary weapons of mastery and terrorism remain in my hands" ("Terrorism and Communism")

DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

In case anyone should think that democracy and dictatorship are incompatible opposites, they should muse upon the dictatorial methods imposed during the two World Wars by the governments 'defending democracy'. Suspension of elections and legal rights (habeas corpus etc), suspension of normal parliamentary supervision and rule by 'orders in council', etc., censorship, internment without trial, arrest and imprisonment of revolutionaries, pacifists etc.

In fact bourgeois democracy is always in the last analysis, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie' ie the forcible, arbitrary defence of private property against the working class or against rival capitalist states.

Just so with a workers state, with a society attempting to create socialism. It too will be a dictatorship and a democracy. A dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, suppressing its every move of resistance, as it has always and everywhere bloodily suppressed the working class revolts. A workers democracy; wider, more responsive, freer than any parliamentary system.

Within the periods of capitalism's growth and relative stability, within successful world dominant countries like Great Britain and the United States, the bourgeoisie could maintain its rule behind the facade of 'parliamentary democracy'. It paid a price in secondary concessions to the working class in terms of wages and social welfare.

Parliament, with its associated paraphernalia of committees, commissions, boards and agencies, became a refined mechanism of corruption. Here the workers' leaders 'parleyed' with the representatives of the bosses. They put forward the partial or immediate interests of the workers with more or less sincerity and vigour.

The bosses, of course, did not willingly concede crumbs from their table of their profits. Working class pressure and struggle were the motor force behind each concession. Reforms, as Rosa Luxemburg astutely observed, are a by-product of revolution. The periods of considerable social reform, 1906-11, 1918-20, 1945-48 were, on a European scale, periods of revolution and mass struggle when the revolutionary sword of Damocles hung over capitalism's head.

Such reforms, as those enacted by Labour in 1974-75, were carried not on Labour's slender majority in the House of Commons but on the shoulders of the miners and dockers who caught Heath and the bosses totally unprepared in 1972 and 1974.

Revolutionary Marxists can affirm on the basis of the last sixty years that not a single Labour government has made any attempt to settle accounts with capitalism. The famed parliamentary or democratic road to Socialism has proved its bankruptcy both as a road to Socialism and as a means of permanently and progressively ameliorating the worst features of capitalism.

In his Socialist Organiser articles, the first three of which we discussed in our last issue, O'Mahoney seeks to bowdlerise Trotskyism and, consequently, the programme of Marx and Lenin, in a right-centrist manner. Firstly he wants to express the revolutionary programme as an 'extension' of existing parliamentary democracy. Why? He wants to castigate Foot and company for worshipping and fetishising existing repulsive parliamentary democracy, 'the backside of bourgeois democracy' whereas he wants to form a political bloc with Benn on the basis of his programme of extending democracy (i.e. its, "shining face"). "Thus Marxists have much in common (How much? What? - WP) with people in the Labour Movement whose best notion of democracy is parliamentary democracy. We can agree to fight to rejuvenate the existing system, we could agree to defend it with guns against, for example, a military coup." (SO 4.2.82.)

O'Mahoney explains that there have been two, "distinct but interwoven" attitudes to parliamentary democracy in the Labour Movement. One, "was and is ardent championing of parliamentary democracy and democratic liberties" of, "reshaping the existing parliamentary system". The other is, "the drive to create new, different, specifically working class organs of democracy - either by converting the old forms for the purpose, or by establishing completely

new ones". An intermediate position, O'Mahoney claims, was to, "graft on" to parliament, "features of the workers' council system." Our zealous epigone then informs us, "In 1934, Trotsky suggested a united front with reformist workers in France for a similar programme."

To bolster this claim a sizeable quotation from Trotsky's Action Programme for France is included as a forepiece to the concluding article of the series. The quotation, we are told, expresses the attitude of Marxists to, "deepen, develop and preserve democracy".

First of all the Marxist attitude to bourgeois democracy could never be expressed in a necessarily episodic and tactical bloc. Moreover, the creation of a tactical bloc (united front) with reformist workers, "democratic socialists" and their leaders, in Trotsky's specific action programme is predicated on the fact that the ruling class is set upon the, "suppression of all reforms! Suppression of the democratic regime" vja Fascism.

FALSIFYING TROTSKY'S ACTION PROGRAMME

The O'Mahoney article grossly distorts this quotation by obscuring the political context of the united front to defend democracy - eliding the defence against Fascist and Bonapartist attack with a general commitment to, "deepen, develop and preserve" 'democracy' 'in general'. Marxists certainly defend all democratic rights and the democratic constitutional forms themselves against fascist or Bonapartist assault. But this implies no general or permanent programme of democratic development. The Transitional Programme itself made this clear, "Of course, this does not mean that the Fourth International rejects democratic slogans as a means of mobilising the masses against fascism. On the contrary, such slogans at certain moments can play a serious role. But the formulas of democracy (freedom of the press, right to unionise etc.) mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat and not a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie's agents (Spain!!)".

Perhaps this is in contrast to the Action Programme of 1934? Not a bit. The two sections preceding the one quoted by O'Mahoney are entitled, "Down with the Bourgeois 'Authoritative' State! For Workers' and Peasants' Power!" and "The Struggle for the Workers' and Peasants' Commune!". Perhaps these are some sort of 'deepening' of parliamentary democracy? Not at all. The essence of the former is that, "the task is to replace the capitalist state ... by the workers' and peasants' proletarian state." The conclusion of the latter is that this commune will be erected on the basis of "organs of power of the workers and peasants".

DOCTORING THE QUOTES

In fact O'Mahoney has been obliged to trim his quote. The sentence preceding it, the opening sentence of the whole section, "For a Single Assembly", declares, "We are, thus, firm partisans of a Workers' and Peasants' State which will take the power from the exploiters. To win the majority of our working class allies to this programme is our primary aim." This alone makes it clear that no, "grafting on" of soviets to deepen bourgeois democracy is envisaged. Certainly it is not envisaged that the "democratic socialists" will, or can, carry through such a misbegotten programme.

O'Mahoney helps obscure this fact by a doctoring of the quotation. Between the sixth and seventh paragraphs of the Socialist Organiser version is omitted a



Trotsky

CAN'T KICK

paragraph which says: "If during the course of the implacable struggle against the enemy, the party of 'democratic' socialism (SFIO), from which we are separated by irreconcilable differences in doctrine and method, were to gain the confidence of the majority, we are and always will be ready to defend an SFIO government against the bourgeoisie."

Furthermore Trotsky called on reformist workers to draw inspiration for the defence of democracy *not* from the Third Republic but from the Convention of 1793. This was not a call to deepen and extend constitutional provisions but to defend vigorously and ruthlessly 'the people' against reactionary attack.

JACOBINISM AND PARLIAMENTARIANISM

What were the methods of 1793? The 'levee en masse' ie the arming of the sans cullottes and the peasants for the defence of the revolution, the institution of the Committee of Public Safety and the Terror against the agents of feudal reaction (including those who claimed to be revolutionaries). The methods of 1793 included the suspension of the constitution! In short they add up to what is known to history as the Jacobin dictatorship. What were the methods of the *Third Republic*? Peaceful Parliamentarianism, endless speeches in parliament. Coalitions with the liberal bourgeois parties and the socialists in the name of blocking reaction. Trotsky is saying to the reformist workers threatened by Fascist dictatorship - by all means 'defend democracy' but you will need revolutionary means to do so. If you wish to take governmental power you will have to strike at bourgeois counter-revolution as ruthlessly as the Jacobins did, in order to survive. In every step towards doing this you will have our support. Trotsky does not hide that such a situation would pose both the need for, and the possibility of, transforming such a government into the proletarian dictatorship. It is clear from this that the methods of Tony Benn are those of the "Third Republic". It is clear too that John O'Mahoney's are nearer Benn's than Robespierre's or Trotsky's.

For Trotsky then there is not programmatic identity with the French reformist party, only a proposal for a united front with it against a fascist attack. O'Mahoney is motivated by completely opposed purposes. He has no need to offer the LP a united front to defend it against fascist attack. He offers to refine the Marxist programme of the proletarian dictatorship (democracy for the workers via soviets; repression of the counter-revolution - its parties, press, generals, fascist bands) into Benn's programme of developing democracy. Certainly O'Mahoney thinks that Benn wants to develop it 'very inadequately'. He thinks workers' democracy is the ultimate development or 'grafting on'. But lest this put him on the wrong side of an irreconcilable difference of doctrine and method, he makes it clear that he advocates the strictest constitutionality by arguing with 'those on the Right of the Labour Movement who insist (I think rightly) that a socialist government should be willing to accept its own dismissal by a majority of the electorate (in Britain anyway, that would be a clear working class majority)'

The struggle between classes for power is thus transformed into the small change of electioneering. A 'socialist government', that is a government carrying through the expropriation of the bourgeoisie is envisaged as bowing gracefully out on a majority vote in parliamentary elections. This ludicrous scenario is the true and deserved outcome of O'Mahoney's servile accommodation to Bennery. He, or more importantly, his readers, no longer know the difference between reform and revolution, between parliamentary and soviet power, and between the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is no wonder that in his eagerness to embrace 'democratic socialism' he can't find words bad enough to distance himself from Stalinism. We are told that the Stalinist bureaucrats have "all the worst features of historic ruling classes" with none of their 'historic virtues' and that the 'only connection' that they have with socialism is that of 'murdered to victim'. O'Mahoney claims that Trotskyists call the workers' revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy 'political' for technical reasons! In the face of Foot's deeply chauvinist



(Photo: Laurie Sparham (IFL))

Benn.

attacks on the Soviet Union, the Trotskyist O'Mahoney tries to hide behind phrases which hide any estimate of the class nature of the Soviet state and the duty of revolutionaries to unconditionally defend it against attack by imperialism.

Many supporters of Socialist Organiser must be deeply embarrassed at O'Mahoney's excursion into the realms of democracy. Some doubtless object on the good old principle that "one does not say such things; one does them". Socialist Organiser's practice of uncritical Bennery is long established. But a disjunction between theory and practice is a permanent danger when it may be seized on by the witch-hunters looking for 'juicy' quotes. Sooner or later theory had to be lowered to the level of practice. We doubt however that lowering the banner of Trotskyism will ward off the enemy. For SO to strike its colours, along with all the other 'left' forces in the party will in fact encourage the Right to press home the attack. It will not strengthen their bloc with Benn. He is already tottering under the impact of the secret treaty of Bishop's Stortford.

In the face of the 'democratic' witch-hunters, the principled position of revolutionaries including the

supporters and sympathisers of Workers Power within the Labour Party must be as follows: We criticise sincere reformist because they desire an end to capitalism, yet will not take the only means available to achieve it. Instead they wish to tie the working class to the parliamentary form of the bourgeoisie's rule. But the choice arises in every serious struggle for socialism between parliamentary forms or workers' rule, between workers' democracy or bourgeois dictatorship. The Paris Commune stood against the Versailles National Assembly; the Congress of Soviets against the Constituent Assembly; the Berlin workers against the Weimar Assembly. Nor do such confrontations lie in the past. In 1973 in Chile and in 1975 in Portugal parliament or a constitutional assembly became a rallying point for all those forces bent on bloody dictatorship over the working class. The 'peaceful' continuity of British parliamentarianism (if one ignores the anti-union acts and a myriad of vicious anti-working class measures) may have lulled many workers into belief that parliament and democracy are weapons in our arsenal. It is the duty of Marxists to warn them sharply of the fatal error of this assumption. ■

by Dave Stacking

Labour Committee on Ireland NO WAY TO FREE IRELAND

ON FEBRUARY 27th, 270 delegates and 120 observers from the labour movement met in London to discuss, "Ireland: Time for Tory Policies to go".

The conference was called by the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland. The latter organisation, dominated by the SWP, played no independent or significant role at the conference. The LCI was the dominant force on the day.

The conference was the first labour movement conference on Ireland for a long time. As such it did have the opportunity of becoming a launching pad for a renewed campaign inside the trade unions.

Workers Power attended the conference committed to pushing the LCI in this direction. In arguing for this position, however, we clashed with the left reformist organisers of the conference and the centrists (IMG, SWP, SO) who were following their line.

From the platform, Richard Balf MEP and Clive Soley MP repeated the dead end formulae of official Labour Party policy as established at last year's Brighton Conference. This is a policy of verbal support for a united Ireland but with no practical steps envisaged that may make the proposal anything other than a dream. It pays lip service to the national aspirations of the 6 county minority yet enshrines the concept of the Unionist veto. In short, their new alternative to the Tories on Ireland is little more than a Labourite re-colouration of pro-imperialist ideas. The Tories themselves have even debated the option of an eventual united Ireland and have warned the Unionist leadership of being too inflexible in considering options.

In common with the Tories and CBI, the Labour Party policy leaves intact the vital imperialist structures and is openly hostile to any solution that may be forced upon them from below.

The MPs, and their reformist and centrist followers in the LCI, do not place a central emphasis on building action for Troops Out Now inside the working class. They seek to have a highly visible campaign, involving as many people as possible because they feel under pressure from the Republican movement to be seen to be doing something and getting somewhere. However, they recognise the difficulty of 'raising Ireland' in the workplace (and even its impossibility in some unions, e.g.

the NUT). Consequently, they search for any device which may help to smuggle the issue in. The speech of Don Flynn, secretary of the LCI, made clear where this leads - to a prioritised orientation to the 'progressive' elements in the labour bureaucracy. That is to wooing those who will raise Ireland at some level, however they may raise it. After all it is the bureaucrats who have the apparatus at their disposal to make a visible campaign!

The LCI is presently compromised by this attitude. This was illustrated at the conference when a fierce split occurred between the UCATT (and CPGB) official Lou Lewis who spoke from the platform and John Higgins, a rank and file UCATT building worker from Northampton. Lou Lewis spent most of his platform speech attacking those who raised Troops Out Now, rather than the Tories. With classic bureaucratic logic, Lewis argued that his building workers were not ready for the anti-imperialist arguments. They could, however, understand the case for a Bill of Rights and a campaign against the PTA.

Higgins replied to Lewis by referring to his right to build a rank and file caucus of 20-30 UCATT members around Troops Out Now, Self-Determination (and support for the armed struggle.) He made it clear that in building such a caucus, the militants had had to struggle against the obstruction and opposition of Lewis.

This story can be repeated on a lesser scale by militants in the National ASTMS rank and file caucus who have met with, at best, indifference, from the same officials who are prepared to associate themselves with the LCI.

It is this conflict which Don Flynn and others seek to paper over in their desire for a consensus view. The LCI's current leadership refuses to make a distinction between political compromises over principle and tactical compromises over action. They lead a Jekyll and Hyde existence, holding a closet position of Troops Out Now at AGMs and then watering it down for day to day use. Their 'basic aims' appear in public propaganda as, calling on the next Labour Government 'to immediately begin the process of this full political and military withdrawal.' This compromise does *nothing* to further the building of a Troops Out Now movement.

Of course, we cannot rule out a block for action, even with the likes of Lou Lewis. If he is prepared to marshal a portion of UCATT's resources in a campaign that draws in his members against plastic bullets and the PTA then that is to be encouraged. But it cannot be the priority of Troops Out/ Self-Determination activists who have yet to implant this position even within a small layer of the working class.



British armed thugs charge youths at Catholic Divis Flats in Belfast

Photo: Steve Benbow (Network)

The skewed priorities of the LCI were illustrated both by the desire to focus in the next months upon the PTA and plastic bullets and by the agnostic attitude towards the building of rank and file caucuses that sprouted up at the conference. No time was set aside for them to meet, nor was it considered. Eventually, they were allowed to have 20 minutes at the end of the day at the back of the hall to plan future activities. If the LCI is to develop in a healthy direction it must recognise that it is helping to build these caucuses, within AUEW, APEX, ASTMS, NUPE and NALGO, which should receive the *major part* of its time and energy. If this means hard work, low visibility and few immediate returns, then that's how it has to be.

Our insistence on Troops Out Now/Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole as the basis for building a movement rooted in the working class is not a sectarian debating point. Only Troops Out Now expresses the principle that the working class must be won to. There is *no* progressive role for British Imperialist Troops in Northern Ireland.

The call for Self-Determination is inextricably linked up with Troops Out Now because this slogan avoids compromises with the chauvinist 'get the boys back home' call and makes clear our opposition to ruling-class moves to devolve military responsibility for a unionist state upon the UDF or RUC. It directly condemns partition. For Workers Power (as we argued, alone, at the conference), these positions are principles, from which all tactics flow.

Against this a sectarian position was put by the Irish Freedom Movement (alias RCP) who demanded that support for the armed struggle be a pre-condition for

labour movement solidarity. We are opposed to this view. Troops Out Now and Self-Determination are the minimum positions around which consciously anti-imperialist action can be built. They are demands directed against a common enemy - the British State - and can help destabilise its rule.

Where these demands have yet to see significant forces mobilised behind them, the position of support for the armed struggle as a precondition for united action can act as a barrier to building an anti-imperialist campaign. It does not immediately lead to self-activity by British workers dominated by reformist ideas and in the present conditions can be used by reformist leaders as an excuse not to engage in any action at all.

The RCP position, which rules out united fronts with labour leaders on principle, condemns them to sterile isolation. Their hardness is a sham since they are doomed to marshalling the forces in their own backyards and little else. They then organise opportunist publicity stunts which inevitably fail to take their line into the working class.

Against both the sectarian and the opportunist positions evident at the conference Workers Power will continue to argue its perspective in the LCI. The coming months will be a decisive period for the LCI. Either it will be won to our position and understand the need for a re-orientation towards the rank and file of the trade unionists, patiently explaining the argument for Troops Out Now and Self-Determination. Or, it will continue to build on sand, winning friends and influencing people, to form an alliance that will blow apart under the strains of any new upsurge of struggle in Northern Ireland. ■

by Keith Hassell

'Strategy' in Iran: Is Permanent Revolution Foot's Fetters?

THE SHARP RIGHT turn in the Labour Party leadership reflects a serious slump in membership from 1978 to 1982. It has been received from student supporters in Britain of the Organisation of the Iranian People's Fedaii Guerrillas (OIPFG—Minority faction). This organisation was originally part of the unified OIPFG, the Fedayeen—a leftist guerrilla organisation founded in 1970 or 6% over the year.

The aftermath of the 1979 revolution as the clerical counter-revolution gained ascendancy, not the revolutionaries began to critically re-evaluate the revolution and their intervention in it. In the summer of 1980 a minority of the Fedayeen moved into opposition to the organisation's membership in the revolution. The Labour Party has renewed its relationship with the Tudeh Party and the Khomeini regime was a popular petty bourgeois regime that could be pushed in an anti-clerical and anti-imperialist direction.

The reaction of these opportunistic positions led to a formal split in early 1981. Since then the Minority faction has developed a clear orientation to the working class of Iran and have attempted to present an independent proletarian programme for the present situation in Iran. The majority on the other hand have become abject apologists for Khomeini along with the Tudeh.

As we show in our own article we do not agree with key demands of the OIPFG's programme. However, we think that it is in the vital interest of revolutionaries in Iran and Britain that these questions be debated openly and in a comradely fashion. Workers Power has stated many times that the revolutionary programme must be an international one. Only by debating programmatic issues internationally can we hope to achieve that goal. It is in this spirit that we print the OIPFG article, and in this spirit that we hope our reply will be received by the Iranian comrades.

In addition we would like to express our absolute solidarity with the courageous comrades of the OIPFG (Minority) in Iran. Their struggle against the butcher Khomeini is a just one and one we think every British labour movement organisation should commit itself to supporting.

O'Mahoney manages to discuss the question of Socialism and Democracy without once raising the central issue of the class character of the state. On the basis of private ownership of the great bulk of the means of production arises a machinery of state, a permanent unelected bureaucracy, judiciary, police force and army. The senior civil servants, judges, police chiefs, generals are all flesh of the flesh of the industrialists, bankers, landowners that constitute the ruling class. This is the bourgeoisie and its organs of domination.

Tony O'Mahoney's article is a typical Labour Party writer once with the Labour Party in the Athenian Labour Party. He writes that the bourgeoisie save owners democracy. There was no democracy at all for the majority of the population. Bourgeois democracy is wage-slave exploiters' democracy. It came into being as a weapon against the feudal and the economic crisis that led to the downfall of the Shah's regime still prevails. The regime of the Islamic Republic, unwilling and incapable of responding to the most basic demands of the Iranian people, has resorted to open terror and repression. The official figure of 4000 executions in less than five months, and the imprisonment of 25000 political prisoners place the regime of the Islamic Republic amongst the most brutal dictators of the century.

But the present rule of terror can only have a temporary effect on the anti-imperialist movement of the Iranian people. If we consider the economic situation and the objective conditions, the basic reasons essential for the reduction of these contradictions do not exist. The imposition of religion into politics, which has brought with it the imposition of medieval institutions, ideas and beliefs on to the political superstructure of a bourgeois state, has induced a series of contradictions in the political-ideological system. In short the regime is faced with such contradictions and inconsistencies that the crisis is reaching new depths every day and a class struggle is intensifying.

In the near future, the recent Congress of the OIPFG concentrated its discussions on the various aspects of the revolution, on the kind of tactics, coalitions and demands that can help the organisations of the working class to take the revolution a step forward. In the analysis of the Fedayeen, the anti-imperialist democratic revolution of the Iranian people was left unfinished after February 1979 when a counter-revolutionary regime came to power. The last three years can be described as a period of competition between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces. The main task of the proletariat is to complete the revolution, to combine the democratic struggles of the Iranian people with its own socialist struggles. The Fedayeen consider the dependence on capitalism and the inseparable characteristics of the Iranian society and are the main obstacle to the development of socialism and the productive forces. Given the level of organisation and consciousness of the working class and the balance of class forces, the Iranian working class must unite and lead the dispersed struggles of the middle and lower layers of the petty bourgeoisie against imperialism and dependent capitalism, insisting on proletarian democracy.

The peoples democratic revolution in Iran must lead to national independence, the destruction of society, as well as the transformation of the socio-economic order. It is therefore a social revolution, a political one. It is a period of transition to socialism.

The principal issue of this revolution is the leadership of the proletariat. Who, in accordance with the strengthened organisations of its class conscious elements, will guarantee the continuation of the revolution to socialism.

Given that the anti-imperialist democratic anti-capitalist struggles are inseparable aspects of the same struggle, the Fedayeen together with other Marxist-Leninist organisations have tried to further the anti-imperialist movement by integrating the movement of the peasants and the wars of national minorities with the struggle against the internal base of imperialism—the dependent bourgeoisie and its protector state.

Today when the largest sections of the people can be united in their opposition to repression, they try to

transform the smallest dissatisfaction with dictatorships and censorship into a protest movement against the state and its organs of suppression.

However, the anti-capitalist aspect of the revolution, strengthens the socialist demands of the revolution, and places the Iranian proletariat in the forefront of the movement. The Fedayeen consider one of their principal tasks is to do political work amongst the workers, to support their spontaneous strikes, to organise strikes for better pay and shorter working hours. They have been successful in uniting the workers against dismissals and imprisonment of revolutionary workers. In preparation for the uprising, the Fedayeen encourage workers to prepare the conditions for national independence as the most important element of the uprising. They have called on workers to take their struggles beyond the walls of the factory and to integrate them with the democratic movement as it is subjected to me materially. I oppress and today, the critical situation in our society compels revolutionary forces to take serious steps towards unity and the formation of a powerful revolutionary front. Under these circumstances that we are unfortunately witness the

alliance between the PMOI (People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran) with a faction of the industrial bourgeoisie headed by Bani Sadr on the basis of a bourgeois reformist Charter. This alliance is presenting a serious obstacle to the unity of revolutionary forces. The National Council of Resistance (NCR) is a provisional government headed by the 'legitimate' president Bani Sadr, who is the line between the camp of revolution and counter-revolution. The programme of the NCR promotes democracy and independence through the forms of the existing system. It is important to emphasise that it is the entire dependent capitalist system which has brought poverty and misery for the masses. It is its system that has violated the most basic rights and freedoms of the Iranian people, while the necessary programme of the proletariat presents an alternative around which the revolutionary forces can unite for a popular uprising.

This programme considers the destruction of the bureaucratic and military machinery of the bourgeoisie state as a prerequisite for any fundamental change. For the transformation of existing relations and the socio-economic order, state power must lie in the hands of workers, peasants and other sections of the masses. For the realisation of fundamental economic and political change, the organisation of the working class put forward a clear programme for the expropriation of all dependent capitalists, nationalisation of major industries, nationalisation of banks and major firms involved in internal or external trade, for the control of all factories by workers soviets. The minimum programme calls for a democratic and land reform through peasants councils and committees, by demands the expropriation of land belonging to major land owners and cancellation of all the debts of peasants to banks, and landowners. The OIPFG calls for the destruction of the army, paralleled with the arming of workers and peasants and the recognition of the Soviets of Soldiers and revolutionary personnel, as it was always and everywhere bloodily suppressed the working class demands. Workers and peasants are more responsible than any religious government within the period of capitalism, and especially after the experience of the last three years the demand for separation of religion from the state has become one of the most basic demands of the Iranian people and it is reflected in the minimum programme of 'parliamentary democracy'. It paid a price in secondary concessions to the working class in terms of workers' councils, commissions, boards and agencies, but the bourgeoisie could maintain as usual its control over the workers. Fedayeen insist on the recognition of armed Soviets of workers and peasants as organs of popular power with legislative as well as executive power, to guarantee the preservation of the gains of the revolution and its continuation for achieving socialism. The Fedayeen believe that on the basis of such a programme unity in struggle can be achieved between the proletariat and other revolutionary forces. The combination of the socialist struggles of the working class with the democratic struggles of the Iranian people can present a revolutionary alternative capable of overthrowing the present regime and establishing a Peoples' Democratic Republic.

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A REVOLUTION CAN either liberate the enslaved or, if it is unfinished, turn into its opposite and enslave the liberators through counter-revolution. This law of revolution has been vividly confirmed by events in Iran over the last three months.

The decisive question—in whose hands does the revolution place state power—is never resolved in an automatic way. It is never resolved by processes unfolding independent of human action but only by the strength, organisation and consciousness of the contending classes in the revolutionary crisis.

In Iran the failure of the working class to go forward from the February rising and seize power in its own name has enabled a weakened bourgeoisie to hold on to its social system via the rule of a counter-revolutionary clergy. The working class and all of the oppressed sections of Iranian society are now paying dearly, in blood, for this failure.

The counter-revolution is working with deadly determination to destroy the gains of the 1979 uprising. In a description of France in 1851, very applicable to Iran in 1982, Marx described the legacy of the unfinished French Revolution of 1848: 'An entire people, which had imagined that by means of a revolution it had imparted to itself an accelerated

power of motion, suddenly finds itself set back into a defunct epoch and, in order that no doubt as to the relapse may be possible, the old dates arise again, the old chronology, the old names, the old edicts, which had long become a subject of antiquarian erudition, and the old minions of the law, who had seemed long deposed, are again' (The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, Marx).

And so in Iran the people who braved the Shah's tanks are now subject to the ancient law of Retribution (Qasas) which allows public stoning and mutilation. We therefore agree with the OIPFG's statement that the anti-imperialist democratic revolution of the Iranian people was left unfinished. We feel, however, that the reasons for this need to be closely analysed in order that a revolutionary strategy for the future in Iran can be worked out.

The Iranian revolution united various sections of society in a battle to bring down U.S. imperialism's autocratic agent the Shah. In this sense the revolution certainly began as an anti-imperialist revolution with the goals of genuine national independence and the abolition of autocracy. However, the realisation of these goals very much depended on the leadership of the revolution. That leadership fell into the hands of the reactionary Mullah caste. The revolution demonstrated that only the working class had the social power to bring down the Shah. The strikes by the oil workers paralysed the Iranian economy in January 1979. The strikes by the bank workers exposed the rottenness and corruption of the Shah's regime to the whole population. These actions perhaps definitively tipped the scales against the Shahary democracy. But the workers lacked a conscious leadership, a revolutionary party capable of capitalising on their dispersal of strength and using it to bring the workers to the forefront of the revolution. Indeed this revolutionary leadership was strong enough to take the leadership of the revolution. The bourgeoisie were failed. The programme of the revolution was also failed. The collapse of the Shah's regime was a failure to fulfil the breach. The national bourgeoisie of the National Front etc. were hopelessly

paralysed by the impact of the mass movement which generated the existing system, we could agree to defend it with guns against, for example, a military coup' (SQ 4.2.82).

O'Mahoney explains that there have been two 'distinct but interwoven' attitudes to parliamentary democracy in the Labour Movement. One, 'was and is ardent championing of parliamentary democracy and democratic liberties' of, 'reshaping the existing parliamentary system'. The other is, 'the drive to create new, different, specifically working class organs of democracy - either by converting the old forms for the purpose, or by establishing completely

new ones. An intermediate position, of course, would allow the clergy to fill the power vacuum. On this way could they prevent the working class a poor peasantry from taking matters into their own hands. For these gentlemen Islamic capitalism is bourgeois capitalism at all. In this way the revolution is a tremendous set-back. As the clerical regime consolidated its power over its bourgeoisie and bourgeois opponents (Bani Sadr from the previous June 1981, Mujahidin elements from the Pasdaran) dark clouds of reaction began to gather on the horizon.

The conclusion that we draw from these developments is that only the working class, ruling Iran in alliance with the peasantry, and carrying through a series of radical measures can complete the revolution begun in 1978/9. The alternative, can only be that bloodily revolution will destroy the working class itself on the way that only Bani Sadr is set upon the throne of a counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie. The suppression of a proletarian revolution in 1979 could have averted the present bloody chaos. On both of these conclusions we differ with the OIPFG.

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seemed to engulf everything that stood in its way. The aftermath of the revolution saw the creation of a power vacuum. But politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. The national bourgeoisie (which consists of a large number of modernising industrialists, a large section of the bazaar based merchant bourgeoisie, and a few big industrialists) would like to rule via their own parties, conscious of the workers' revolutionary system. On this way could they prevent the working class a poor peasantry from taking matters into their own hands. For these gentlemen Islamic capitalism is bourgeois capitalism at all. In this way the revolution is a tremendous set-back. As the clerical regime consolidated its power over its bourgeoisie and bourgeois opponents (Bani Sadr from the previous June 1981, Mujahidin elements from the Pasdaran) dark clouds of reaction began to gather on the horizon.

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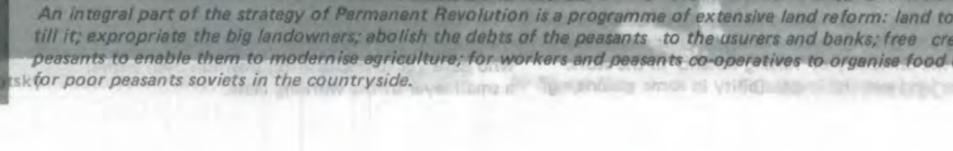
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An integral part of the strategy of Permanent Revolution is a programme of extensive land reform: land to till it; expropriate the big landowners; abolish the debts of the peasants to the usurers and banks; free credit for poor peasants soviets in the countryside.

Sandinistas in power: but for which class?

HENRI WEBER A leading member of the USFI's French section the LCR has written a book which is interesting in two respects. Firstly in what it reveals of the development of the FSLN regime in Nicaragua and secondly in what it reveals about the disastrous strategy of the USFI faced with a revolutionary crisis.

On every major question of revolutionary analysis, strategy and tactics - the nature of the state in Nicaragua, the anti-imperialist united front, the question of 'stages' in the revolution on workers democracy and the revolutionary party Weber manages to confuse and distort revolutionary Marxist tactics, as developed by Lenin and Trotsky, out of all recognition.

For a book that concretely applies the programme and method of Ernest Mandel's USFI one could not do better than to read Nicaragua: The Sandinist Revolution.

Henri Weber starts from the following analysis of the FSLN victory in July 1979 which overthrew the Somoza dictatorship: "For despite its initial weakness the Sandinista Front proved capable of imposing its own solution to the crisis of the system: not the replacement of one bourgeois faction by another at the helm of state but the total destruction of the state apparatus built under the dictatorship; not the rationalisation of bourgeois state power in the framework of a liberal economy, but the construction of a revolutionary democracy bent on a transition to socialism." (WEBER, p.35)

This political characterisation of the FSLN as a party committed to the overthrow of capitalism, and of a Government setting about achieving the 'transition to socialism' in Nicaragua, colours Weber's every judgment and estimation of Sandinista policy. Thus: "The state now being built is thoroughly hostile to the bourgeoisie, fostering a mode of production that strikes at its privileges and implies its eventual disappearance as a class." (p.72) Unfortunately we are required to accept this judgement not on the basis of evidence about what the FSLN is actually doing, but on the basis of Henri Weber's 'good faith' in the Sandinista's intentions.

When the worried reader discovers that before the overthrow the FSLN fairly continuously made alliances with the bourgeois parties, accepted in advance the capitalist nature of Nicaragua, and the domination of the Government by its bourgeois parties, Weber has a reassuring answer. These were not the 'popular fronts' so beloved by the Stalinists in which the interests of the workers and peasants are subordinated to the interests of the bourgeoisie, but 'Anti-Imperialist United Fronts' the revolutionary tactic developed by the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. "It would be quite wrong to identify their alliance policy with the Stalinist type popular or anti-fascist fronts." (p.56)

Should the reader recall that, under this regime, 80% of agricultural production, 75% of industrial production and 70% of domestic trade remains in private hands, that the FSLN has repeatedly declared itself in favour of a "mixed economy" and is extremely reluctant to take any further nationalisation measures, again our author has an explanation.

"The FSLN, like COSEP, (the employers association - Ed.) declared its support for the mixed economy." But for the bourgeoisie 'mixed economy' meant subordination of a limited public sector to the logic of private accumulation; while for the FSLN, it meant subordination of the private sector to a public sector destined to shortly become the dominant force within a planned economy." (p.70)

"Shortly" that is, because at the moment the regime is in the phase of "national reconstruction" which means rebuilding the (capitalist) economy and strengthening the private sector. In fact at least 60% of all loans from the Government went to private industry in the first 9 months of 1981. policies which have led a recent (as yet unpublished) World Bank report on Nicaragua to give its backing to Government economic measures. (Reported in Latin American Regional Reports 27.11.82)

In fact recently the FSLN took exception to an article in Newsweek which suggested there had been a "sharp turn to the left" in the Nicaraguan

Government. A letter from the Nicaraguan Representative to the UN pointed out that the Government reiterated its commitment to the mixed economy in Oct '81 and that "72% of the limited foreign exchange available for imports is assigned to the private sector." Newsweek, 14.12.81.

But again we are re-assured by Weber that this has nothing to do with a "stagist" view of revolutionary development: "Unlike the Stalinist strategists of 'revolution by stages' who idealize the 'national bourgeoisie' so as to fall under its wing, the Sandinista leaders had no illusions about the deep seated conflict between their own socialist perspective and the goals of the Nicaraguan Bourgeoisie." (p.69)

Rather the FSLN are having to seek a 'breathing space', a "special kind of NEP", as Weber puts it.

In using this analogy with Russia, Weber forgets two fundamental differences between Russia in 1921 and Nicaragua today. Not only had the state power of the bourgeoisie been smashed by the working class led by its revolutionary vanguard - the Bolsheviks - but this state was replaced by a state of a new sort representing the organised power of the proletarians themselves through the soviets. Secondly the vast bulk of industry was in the hands of the toilers - the bourgeoisie, bankers and industrialists, had been expropriated - the basic pre-requisite for socialist planning. Yes, between capitalism and communism there is a period of transition and yes, during this period - particularly where revolution is isolated in one country - there will be periods of retreat and compromise, eg. NEP and state capitalist enterprises in Soviet Russia, but to say this is analogous with the policies being pursued by the FSLN in capitalist Nicaragua, as the USFI does, is pure opportunism. Weber is forced to pass over an ABC of Marxism: "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" (Marx: Critique of the Gotha Programme.)

It is not accidental that in Nicaragua not even the commanding heights of the economy are nationalised and that the toilers have no councils or soviets through which they exercise control over their state - it is because the FSLN was never a revolutionary communist party and because there never has been a socialist revolution in Nicaragua.

There certainly was a revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 - it was an anti-imperialist and profoundly democratic movement of the mass of workers and peasants. They rose up with the FSLN at their head and drove out US Imperialism's chosen puppet - Somoza. But it was a struggle in which the FSLN fought in alliance with the anti-Somoza sections of the bourgeoisie, an alliance which guaranteed private property, the position of the bourgeoisie in Government, and even the integration of a powerful National Guard. This limitation to bourgeois limits defines the alliance and the regime it installed as a Popular Front. (See WP no. 10 "A Programme for all Seasons - except Revolution" for an analysis of the alliance.)

The FSLN itself was not a 'party' but a coalition of various groupings and tendencies which

varied from proto-Stalinists on the left, who identified with the Vietnamese and Cuban Road (The Proletarian Tendency and Protracted Peoples War Tendency), to the Terceristas led by the Ortega brothers, who had close links with the Socialist International, the Catholic Church and the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie.

It was this coalition which in combination with the insurrectionary general strike destroyed completely the repressive apparatus of the Nicaraguan state. Like the July 26 movement in Cuba in 1959 the FSLN found itself the only armed power in the state, having come to power at the head of a mass movement of workers and peasants determined to throw off years of exploitation and oppression.

This opened up a special form of dual power in Nicaragua. The bourgeoisie is deprived of the direct control of its state - its repressive apparatus. The FSLN coalition itself is potentially divided between those who stand closest to the proletarian and rural masses, and therefore under their pressure but not under their control - figures like Jaime Wheelock in charge of Agrarian reform - and the anti-communist petit-bourgeois nationalists who view with alarm the growing links with Cuba and the USSR - figures like "Comandante Zero" Eden Pastora who recently 'defected' to Panama. What unites this coalition at the moment and allows it to continue its popular front with the bourgeoisie, despite frictions is precisely 'stageism' in its left wing - ie. their commitment to defend capitalism in Nicaragua for the time being.

Despite the balance of forces being heavily weighted against the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, it draws its strength from two sources. The support it receives from US and European Imperialism, loans etc being conditional on continuing safeguards for private property, and the 'stagist' programme of the FSLN. For what Henri Weber fails to recognise when he approvingly quotes Comandante Carlos Carrion saying "We believe that we will move faster towards socialism if we approach it slowly" is that the idea of building up 'mixed' economy of capitalism independent of imperialism is a Utopia.

Imperialism retains its vice-like grip on Nicaragua. In the last 18 months Nicaragua's foreign debt has increased from the 1.6 billion dollars left them by the Somoza regime to 2.4 billion today. The Nicaraguan capitalists continue to 'de-capitalise' their firms and sabotage the economy, while the workers and peasants are called on to make new sacrifices under the 1981 'Economic Programme of Austerity and Efficiency'.

Weber rejects the idea that Dual Power exists in Nicaragua because for him: "The decisive questions are: who commands the state? What dynamic does the relationship of class forces set in motion?" (p.66)

For us, and for all revolutionary Marxists, the decisive question is what property forms does the state defend? History shows us many instances where the capitalist class did not exercise political power directly - the Napoleonic era, the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon. Marx analysed the situation of 'Bonapartism', where a form of state developed that tended to autonomy from the control of society itself, but argued that this in no way altered the class character of that state as long as it presided over and protected capitalist property relations.

In Nicaragua the situation of dual power was opened up in July 1979 with the armed masses mobilised in the CDC's (Civil Defence Committee) which had and ran the insurrection in the town has been progressively attenuated. As the FS government has raised itself above the content classes it has increasingly taken on the forms of 'bonapartism'. It has attempted to demobilize and subordinate the masses' organisations - the CDC's, the trade unions etc to the Government while occasionally slapping down the bourgeois parties. However to say this is not to say the situation of dual power has been definitively resolved in the bourgeoisie's favour. The armed masses continue to defend and struggle for the gains and promises of the revolution and the FSLN must rely on this support to defend itself from US imperialism and its agents in Nicaragua hence the 30-50,000 strong Sandinist army and the 100,000 strong People's Militia.

Weber documents this development without realising what it is. With the Nicaraguan economy moving further and further into crisis, the FS is forced to strike out against the classes which press their demands - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and peasantry, but because the regime is committed to defend capitalism its heaviest blows fall on the working class. While its long battle with the major bourgeois party the COSEP over the question of elections has resulted recently in the arrest of four leading COSEP members, 3 of whom were gaoled for a few months, the regime's attempts to discipline the workforce has been more serious and deepening.

Weber notes that "Throughout 1980 the FS gave the impression of seeking to integrate the unions into the state apparatus" (p.122). This immediately led to a clash with established unions whose members wished to retain organisation which defended their living standards. At the end of 1979 the Junta tried to supplant the traditional building workers union the SCAAS which was dominated by the pro-Moscow Communist Party (PSN). Its leader Alejandro Solorzano was gaoled for a few days for resisting this move and it took a strike by several thousand building workers in Jan. 1980 to win both wage increases and recognition of the union. Another opposition grouping to fall foul of the regime was the Frente Obrero, a pro-Albanian organisation.

In January 1980 their daily paper 'El Pueblo' was banned following FO members involvement in strike action. The FO leaders were arrested and charged with publishing "declarations, libels or articles intended to damage the people's interests" and were sentenced to 2 years in prison, released after 2 months. In Feb. 1980 it was the turn of the PEN, the other pro-Moscow Communist party whose militants in the Trade Union CAUS had a strike at Fabritex in Managua. Several dozen of these militants were arrested and the office of CAUS and PEN sacked during an 'anti-CIA' demonstration. All these measures were accompanied by denunciations of these organisations as Somozaist and CIA agencies.

More recently, since the publication of Weber's book, the FSLN has introduced a 'state of emergency' which among other things makes strikes illegal. The Economist's Quarterly Economic Review for Nicaragua remarked of the measure, "The principal target for the emergency appears to be labour unrest. The two year plan, unfolded at the start of the year, calls for a sharp fall in real consumption of all groups. Not surprisingly this has met with resistance from labour groups and a number of damaging strikes that took place this summer." (Fourth Quarter Issue, 1981)

Almost immediately the privately owned firm, Fabritex, in which the government has a part share, and which has had a series of labour disputes led by CAUS, was occupied by the police and closed down. It was re-opened later with a drastically reduced workforce and an agreement for increased productivity.

At the same time, Ariel Bravo, leader of the CAUS, together with 23 members of the pro-Peking CP, were arrested under the emergency security laws accused of "promoting strikes and fomenting labour unrest." (Latin America Weekly Reports, 30.10.81)

How one views these attacks on the working class is dependent on the analysis of the regime. For the USFI's section in the US which, like Weber, characterises the FSLN as a "Workers' and Peasants' Government" their position is straight forward, the workers must tighten their belts to support 'their' government. In this schema those who organise strikes can only be incorrigible "sectarians". Thus headlines such as, "Sectarians released from gaol" greeted the El Pueblo journalists in the Intercontinental Press (17.12.79) when they were released. Henri Weber is more sensitive, believing such arrests to breach "pluralist democracy" he criticises them.

The tragedy for Trotskyism in Nicaragua is that while the so-called Trotskyists of the USFI act as "loyal militants" of the FSLN, it is left to the Maoists, Hoxhaists and even pro-Moscow CP's on occasion, to defend the elementary independence of trade unions and political parties.

An F.O. trade unionist, quoted in Weber, puts his finger on the crucial question when he says, "The workers would like to be sure that they are not slaving away so that the bosses can have a nest egg in Miami or Costa Rica." (p.73)

Sacrifices in a workers' state, where power is in the hands of the toilers is one thing; where the workers have no power and the bourgeoisie continues its exploitation of them, sacrifices take on a quite different meaning.



Miners at May Day celebrations in Managua, 1981

Photo: Network

by Stuart King

TO BE CONTINUED

CIVIL WAR ROCKS U.S. BACKED JUNTA

BY INVOKING THE Russian bogey and croaking "Let Poland be Poland", Reagan and Haig were hopeful that international attention would be deflected from their own bloody doings in El Salvador.

The renewed offensive of the FMLN, and the savage response that this has provoked from the murderous US-backed Duarte regime, have exploded their hopes. The civil war in El Salvador has revealed, as Vietnam did before it, that whenever US imperialism is threatened, Washington will do all in its power to crush that threat.

With characteristic and arrogant bluntness, Alexander Haig declared that Washington was ready to do "whatever is necessary" to preserve the dictatorship in El Salvador. The assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders echoed this, stating: "There is no mistaking that the decisive battle for Central America is under way in El Salvador." The failure of successive US governments to find a "middle ground" solution to the crisis in El Salvador and the fear of a repetition of the Nicaraguan revolution, have led to this new intensely aggressive stance.

Reagan has been pouring arms and "economic aid", much of which, through various loopholes becomes transformed into military aid, to the faltering Duarte regime. In the fiscal year of 1982, this amounted to 81 million dollars in direct military aid, as well as 144 million dollars in economic aid. Following a successful airbase attack in January by the guerrillas, he immediately responded by sending a further 55 million dollars in military aid, out of uncontrolled Penatgon funds, to replace the lost air power.

This is the latest step-up in a long US military and economic involvement. Reagan hopes to continue it with an increase in the size of the Salvadoran army from its present 10,000 to 23,000. About 2,000 Salvadoran troops are already being trained by the US army, 1,600 arrived in America in January, and there are also between 51 and 58 American army "advisors" present in El Salvador itself.

This military support has been justified by US governments on the grounds that they are also encouraging both a land reform programme and a move towards free elections, scheduled for March 28th 1982.

In fact, the supposed "land reform", designed by US counter-insurgency expert Roy Prosterman (who designed a similar programme for South Vietnam) resulted, in 1981, in the deaths of at least 90 leaders of peasant organisations, and large numbers of the "beneficiaries" of this programme. An example of how land reform works was given by a Salvadoran agricultural technician, "The troops came and told the peasants the land was theirs now. They could elect their own leaders and run it themselves. The peasants couldn't believe their ears and they held elections that very night. The next morning the troops came back, and I watched as they shot every one of the elected leaders" (FDR Bulletin February 1982).

The real aim of this land reform, however, was to increase the number of small farmers who owned their land. By this means, the US government hoped to create a "middle ground" of pro-capitalist conservative farmers to act as a social base for a less obviously undemocratic government. This way the regime

could have been made more acceptable to the west, and the need for an overt intervention by the US would have been rendered unnecessary.

However the ruling oligarchy of landowners, 1% of whom own 57% of the cultivable land, were intransigently opposed to any reform. They obstructed it, fearing that even this limp reform would arouse the land-hungry peasants against it.

Similarly the much-vaunted "free election" process is fixed in such a way as to make participation by left-wing opponents of the junta impossible. Apart from the fact that anyone attempting to stand as an opponent of the regime would almost certainly be killed, the present electoral system requires that any political party wishing to participate in the election must present a list of 20,000 members. No party, except for the extreme right, can do so without effectively handing over a "hit list" to the army and death squads. A further condition for the participation of the FMLN is that they lay down their arms before the election, leaving them defenceless before the provenly barbarous government forces.

The impossibility of participation by any opposition groups (in fact, even the US government accepts that participation in the election would be possible for only about 50% of the population in the rural areas) threatens to allow the return of a yet more extreme government. It would likely be headed by D'Arbuisson, a notorious right wing candidate who is gaining in popularity amongst the right in El Salvador. He has a history of involvement in attempted coups, with the co-operation of right-wing members of US governments. By removing the fig-leaf of a "Christian Democrat" regime this could further embarrass Washington exposing its claim to defend "human rights" for the hypocritical lie that it is.

The Duarte regime has already gone a long way to doing this in any case. At the same time as Reagan certified that "a concerted and significant effort to respect human rights" was being made by the ruling junta in El Salvador, news was filtering through to the Western press of a massacre, by government troops, of hundreds of peasants in the Morazan province, (an FMLN guerrilla stronghold on the border with Honduras) which appears to have taken place in December last year.

Journalists visiting the area in January reported seeing evidence of this government offensive in the form of hundreds of decaying bodies buried in the rubble of demolished buildings. In the village of Mozote, for example, reporters taken on tour of the area by guerrillas "were shown the rubble of dozens of adobe houses that the survivors said were destroyed by the troops, in the now deserted village community. Dozens of decomposing bodies could be seen beneath the rubble and in nearby fields...In the heart of Morazan province were found the ruins of what had once been a small whitewashed church. The adobe walls of the smaller sacristy beside it appeared to have been pushed in. Inside the stench was overpowering, and countless pits of bones - skulls, rib cages, femurs, a spinal column - poked out of the rubble. The 15 houses on the main village street had been smashed. In two of them, as in the sacristy, the rubble was filled with bodies". (International Herald Tribune January 19th, 1982).

At the present time the number of deaths is rising, and human rights organisations in El Salvador say



Salvadoran army soldier at work

Photo: Network

that there have been "increasing numbers of disappearances, beheadings, mutilations and torture... since the beginning of December" (Guardian Feb 3rd, 1982). In total, it is estimated that 20,000 civilians died in 1981, and 32,000 have died since the junta took power in 1979, with the backing of the US government.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for the Reagan government to deny either knowledge of, or collusion with the ruling regime's violence. On January 12th 1982, the International Herald Tribune carried a report of a former Salvadoran soldier, Carlos Anrionio Gomez Montano, who alleged that eight US military advisors had been present at two "training sessions" last year when suspected guerrillas (a 17 year old youth and a 13 year old girl) were tortured and subsequently killed by Salvadoran army instructors.

The public image of the junta, and America's close association with it, rather than any concern for "human rights" is one of the reasons for increasing nervousness amongst sections of the American ruling class at their government's involvement.

What is worrying to the US government, however, is its fears that the junta is losing the war. Such fears would seem to be well founded. In January of this year, FMLN guerrillas launched an attack on the military air base at Ilopango, and wiped out half of the Salvadoran air force in one attack, without sustaining any losses themselves. And FMLN guerrillas control large areas of the countryside, where they have set up local administration centres, schools, hospitals, military bases, etc.

In fact, out of the 14 provinces of El Salvador, FMLN guerrillas now control 8, and are able to operate in 13. Whilst they are largely based in the countryside, they are also able to carry out attacks in urban areas, such as the recent 8-hour long attack on Usulután, the fourth largest city in El Salvador.

Losses to the Salvadoran army are currently running at 100% killed or wounded each year. The massive popular support for the FMLN guerrillas is demonstrated by the fact that they can achieve these successes with a current strength of about 5 - 6,000. Against them the government troops number about 10,000 and are also backed by about 9,000 "civil guards" (right-wing local forces usually controlled by the landowners and oligarchy).

Haig and Reagan have tried to explain these military successes by ludicrous claims that the whole thing is being orchestrated by the Kremlin via Cuba and Nicaragua. Despite their claims to the contrary, El Salvador is beginning to look very much like a re-run

of Vietnam. In the name of "defending the free world", the US government is assisting in a brutal war against a people fighting for genuine national independence. Their claims about Cuban arms being supplied to the FMLN have been exposed as, in the main, fabrications. Most arms captured from the guerrillas are of "obsolete European design" (indeed - the very same type as those supplied from the US to the junta and hence most probably captured by the FMLN from them).

In a last bid to obviate the need for direct intervention, the US is at present coordinating support from other right wing Latin American governments for the junta in El Salvador. Thus the Argentinian government has offered troops and urban counter-insurgency advisors, Salvadoran officers and cadets are being trained in Chile, Paraguay and Honduran troops co-operate closely with those of El Salvador - crossing the border twice in 1981, and killing up to 600 Salvadoran peasants and refugees each time.

Reagan and Haig, whatever second thoughts some American liberal bourgeois may be having, do recognise the need to defeat the FMLN. This way not only can they continue to control El Salvador, but also use the victory to turn the tide against the national revolutionary movements in the rest of Central America. There is no doubt that their long term aims involve recapturing Nicaragua, and indeed Cuba, as safe havens for imperialist exploitation. To serve these goals they are more than willing to sacrifice the lives of thousands of workers and poor peasants. The crimes of the Duarte regime are monstrous. No less so are the crimes of those "civilised" gentlemen in Washington who condone and assist in the actions of Duarte.

The civil war in El Salvador must not be won by these enemies of freedom. We stand for the victory of the FMLN against the Salvadoran state and its US backers. British workers must do everything they can to assist that victory. The demonstration in solidarity with the FMLN on March 28th in London must be supported, officially, by every labour movement body. It must be a massive demonstration of working class opposition to imperialism in El Salvador. All military aid to the Junta must be blacked by British workers. If Reagan's visit to Britain goes ahead, the greeting he receives must be a torrent of protest demonstrations.

Such actions, along with material assistance to the FMLN can help them bring down the dictatorship and destroy the reactionary plans of Reagan and Haig.

by Chris Dawson

MUGABE TIGHTENS HIS GRIP

by Sue Thomas

THE SACKING OF Joshua Nkomo from the Zimbabwean Cabinet after the discovery of arms caches in his Party's property, is the clearest signal yet of Mugabe's bonapartist intentions. Having trained a 5,000 strong hand picked 'crack force' loyal to himself, and having denounced Nkomo as a compromiser with South Africa, Mugabe feels confident enough to establish a one-party state (ZANU-PF being the Party) with himself at its head. This drive for absolute control by Mugabe has been carried through not only at the expense of Nkomo, and of sections of the white elite, but also at the expense of ZANU radicals like Tekere and of Zimbabwean workers and peasants.

Mugabe's intentions are twofold. He certainly does wish to secure Zimbabwe from the threat of a South African attack. But this is not prompted by any desire to carry through a socialist programme. His central concern is to make Zimbabwe a stable country for capitalist investment. He is forced, therefore, to play a balancing act, rhetorically claiming to represent the aspirations of the masses (against the whites and South African threat), but actually using the state to defend and extend Zimbabwe's capitalist economy.

This explains why, despite measures such as the raising of the minimum wage for workers, Mugabe has attacked any independent initiatives taken by workers. In a series of strikes last year—of nurses, teachers and railwaymen—Mugabe acted swiftly. Strikers were arrested and fined under the old regime's emergency regulations.

Meanwhile, unemployment—estimated at between 1 and 2 million of the 7.4 million population—and land hunger remain. Two years after independence only 6,500 families have been resettled on land bought from whites. Nearly 160,000 are still waiting. Thousands more are illegally squatting. To purchase the land and develop it requires much more capital than is available at present. Mugabe's policies are aimed at solving these problems by creating a more attractive investment prospect for would-be imperialist investors. Nkomo on the right and independent workers and peasants struggles on the left are both obstacles to the fulfilment of these policies.

The biggest single problem facing Zimbabwe is the stranglehold of South Africa on its neighbours economies. Over 80% of Zimbabwean exports travel through South Africa. Trade with South Africa is three times that with Britain. Migrant workers are an important source of foreign exchange.

The Southern African countries have attempted to counter this influence by setting up the South African Development Co-Ordinating Conference

(SADCC). But although this has set up new trading agreements and attracted some new investment, it cannot, in the face of world capitalist crisis, break the South African/imperialist stranglehold.

South Africa has used divide-and-rule tactics towards the SADCC. While continuing the war against Angola, and supporting right-wing guerrilla movements in Mozambique, it has sought to force and cajole Zimbabwe back into its fold. Until last month, it was threatening to refuse to renew its preferential trade agreement with Zimbabwe. In quick succession, last year, it withdrew 25 locomotives and 150 rail mechanics, repatriated 20,000 Zimbabwean miners and sabotaged the Zimbabwe-Mozambique rail link.

Mugabe's strategy for countering this stranglehold is to make Zimbabwe politically and economically strong. But only in order to negotiate with South Africa, not to actively support the struggle to destroy it. Pretoria recognised this by indicating its willingness to renegotiate the trade agreements. Mugabe's full 3 year economic development plan will be unveiled next April. It is likely to be "cautious and fiscally conservative" says the Economist (5th February). The journal goes on: "If this is indeed so, much of the current depression among Zimbabwean businessmen will lift—even if Mr Mugabe pursues the one party ideal to its logical conclusion."

For the international bourgeoisie and the South African ruling class a strong one-party capitalist state with Mugabe at its head could be a decisive advantage in their aim of maintaining imperialist control of Southern Africa. With Nkomo discredited their best option, for the time being at least, is to give cautious support to Mugabe. Hence, few tears were shed in capitalist circles after Nkomo's fall.

For the Zimbabwean masses economic reconstruction on a capitalist basis and a temporary staving off of the South African threat are no long term solutions at all. Land hunger will remain, strikes will continue to be suppressed and political rights will be curtailed as Mugabe consolidates his bonapartist rule.

More than ever there is a need for the Zimbabwean workers and peasants to build their own independent organisations to defend their vital interests. A revolutionary workers party must be built as an alternative to the populist ZANU-PF. It would fight for a programme which would include—land to the peasants; arm the workers and peasants; nationalise the key industries and banks under workers control; for a workers and peasants government not a bonapartist regime. Such a party would fight for these demands in conjunction with supporting the struggles of the black working class in South Africa. Such an alliance could serve as a solid revolutionary force in the unfolding struggle to rid the south of the continent of the apartheid state and imperialist domination.

workers power

UNITED FIGHT ON PAY!

RAIL WORKERS: PREPARE FOR

THE BRITISH RAIL Board's reluctant agreement to pay the 3% increase hasn't altered one iota their determination to force higher productivity and redundancies on the railway workers. Only days after the settlement BRB renewed their attack with a unilateral freeze on all recruitment, promotions and transfers AND 28 days redundancy notice to ten Scottish train drivers.

Peter Parker and the BRB are merely acting as front men for the Tories. The Tories' plans for BR are the same as for other state industries. Profitable sections, like hotels and ferries, are sold off and subsidies are drastically cut in a bid to run down the whole industry. The BRB's task is to achieve this and crush any union resistance along the way.

The first rounds in the fight were decisively won by Parker when he successfully divided the NUR and ASLEF against each other. Without consulting the rank and file, Weighell accepted flexible rostering for his 170,000 members - 35,000 jobs sold down the river by 1985.

In BR it's not just Parker who does the Tories' dirty work for them, it's Sid Weighell as well!

Not content to sell NUR members out, he wants the ASLEF leaders to do the same. But the ASLEF leadership refused to take Weighell's advice, and insisted on the remaining 3% without productivity strings. Why?

The answer has little to do with Ray Buckton's concern for rank and file ASLEF members. He's watched the standard of living drop for all drivers since he's been in office without taking any action to prevent it. This winter's strikes were the first national strikes since 1955!

The key to the militancy of the dispute lies in the fight of the ASLEF members and their determination to defend jobs, wages and the 8 hour day, secured in 1919. They forced the ASLEF officials to put up a fight.

The second vital factor in forcing Buckton's hand was the very survival of ASLEF itself. The union's membership has been declining for years - today it stands at only 25,000 and Peter Parker is demanding the loss of 4,000 of those by 1985! The ASLEF officials are protecting their own interests in fighting the redundancies, the end of ASLEF

would mean the end of their fat salaries, union-funded cars and holidays abroad. But the end of ASLEF is, precisely what BRB want - one of their threats during the dispute was that all ASLEF drivers on strike would be sacked and only re-employed if they agreed to join the NUR first!

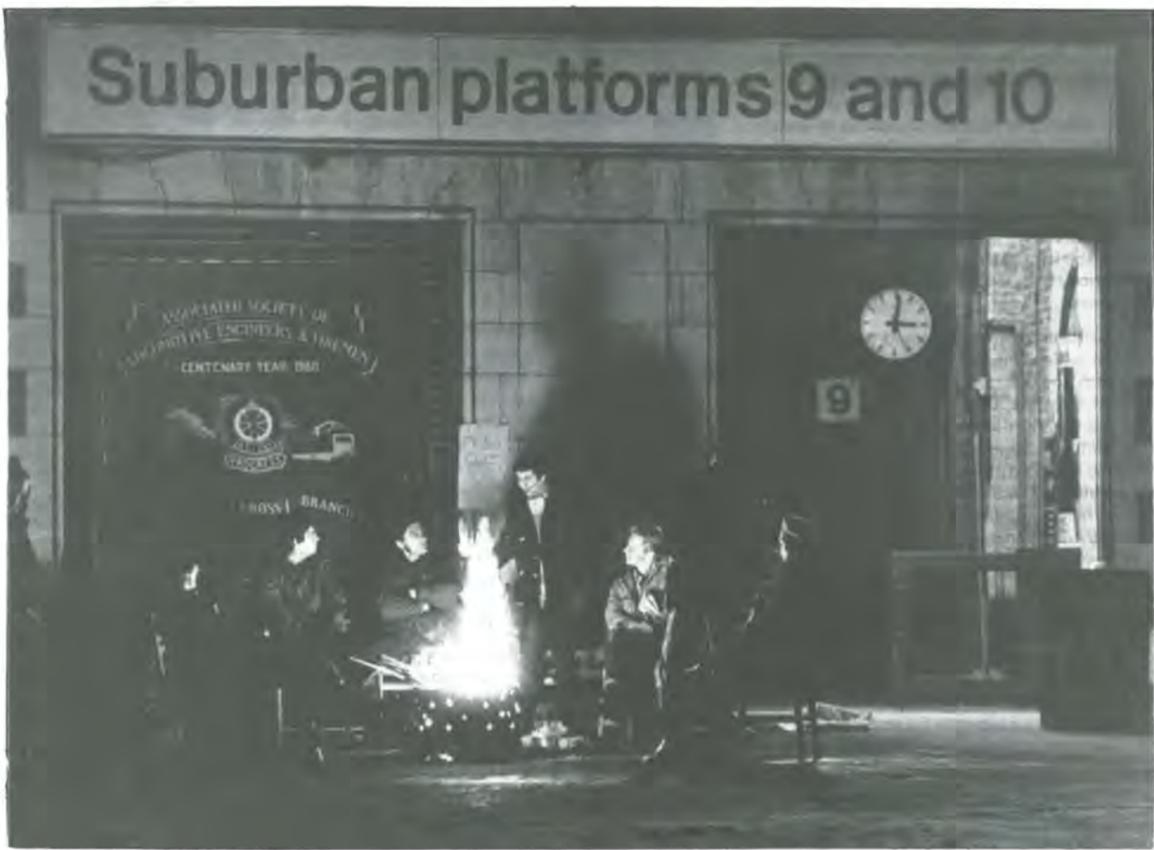
Now an industrial union of all rail workers would be in the interests of all railway workers. But it must not be on the BRB's terms or on Sid Weighell's. A militant joint union can only be built from the sort of rank and file links that began to happen during the dispute, from unity in action. A democratic union, with an elected and accountable leadership that is committed to fighting in the interests of its members, and to defend and extend living standards can only be built from the bottom upwards.

The moves to hold joint meetings and action between rank and file NUR and ASLEF members are crucial to the coming battles against the management. For BRB the arbitration settlement represents at best a temporary breathing space in the struggle. They conceded on the remaining 3% but with the condition agreed to by Buckton, that negotiation on productivity begin immediately.

Failure to agree on productivity could mean strike action on the eve of the next pay round. This falls at the beginning of April. No matter how much Ray Buckton wants to keep pay and productivity separate this April the BRB are going to make absolutely sure that they are tied tightly together. Meagre pay rises will be offered to compensate for the big stick of massive redundancies and drastic productivity increases.

Against this the ASLEF leadership must be forced to stand firm for a lump sum increase of at least 20% and to protect it in future with a rise of 1% for every 1% rise in the cost of living index worked out by committees of ASLEF workers and their wives. Alongside this there must be a commitment to no redundancies and no productivity deals, including the hated flexible rostering.

The best way to ensure living standards are defended is to build NOW for an all-out strike of all railway workers, to back up the pay claim. This time around the strike must be firmly in the hands of the rank and file, both ASLEF



ASLEF pickets at Kings Cross

and NUR, with strike committees elected and recallable, planning a strategy of direct action to hit BR where it hurts - particularly freight. One of the lessons of the recent strike was that two day stoppages were useless for halting freight. The same amount of freight was often shifted as in a normal working week. To stop its movement effective blacking by NUM, ISTC and TGWU workers is needed at coal depots and steel works, as well as careful monitoring by ASLEF members. Where raw materials and fuel have reached the depots or factories, flying pickets will be necessary to see that nothing is touched.

Such tasks cannot be left to the bureaucrats who will, as history shows (at Ansell's for example), inevitably sabotage any action that threatens to take control of the strike into the hands of

the rank and file. This doesn't mean, however, letting the officials off the hook - in any future dispute the resources of ASLEF must be put at the service of the members. The assistance given to strikers during the strike was abysmal all round. £2 strike pay for 13 days lost wages, for example! ASLEF is obviously keen to guard the rumoured £2 million in its coffers. Any future strike action, especially an all out strike, must be backed by regular, adequate strike pay.

It is these tasks that face the serious militants of both ASLEF and the NUR. The momentum of the last strike has to be built on now, rather than being allowed to fade away. Meetings between the rank and file of both unions must continue to prepare the ground for future action. The determination and combativity of the

rank and file will be put to the test in April with the pay claim. It's a battle railway workers can't afford to lose.

Both private and public sector workers will have gained confidence through ASLEF's small victory. Every major industry is facing similar redundancy battles and in this lies the potential for solidarity action that cuts across union and industry divisions. Building an effective Triple Alliance is doomed to failure if its left to the irrelevant bickering of the officials. But built on rank and file action, it could lead the way in initiating a massive, militant general strike, drawing all sections of the class into political action to decisively smash the Tories' attacks and paralyse the bosses' plans. ■

by Sue Dye

Photo: John Sturrock (Network)

STOP TEBBIT'S BILL...

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE



Photo: Mike Abrahams/Network

Norman (on your bike) Tebbit - workers must put a spoke in his wheel

on to warn of the financial penalties for non-compliance with certain of Tebbit's proposals!

As usual the TUC has tried to cover up its inaction on the grounds that it itself possesses no constitutional powers to coordinate industrial action or to instruct individual unions not to cooperate with the law. This is a cynical betrayal of working class interests. The TUC has a responsibility to give a lead, to issue the call for the working class to stop Tebbit's Bill becoming law. But instead they are talking of opposition only after the Bill becomes law and will have thereby gained a degree of legitimacy that will make it all the more difficult to oppose.

Rank and file militants must organise now to stop Tebbit in his tracks. This means first of all alerting the mass of workers to the real meaning of this Tory Bill and winning the arguments as to why the Bill must be fought by working class action. It means organising to force the TUC leaders to act and to prevent them cooperating with the Tory plans.

The April 5th conference of Trade Union executives should be the first focus for action. It should be turned into a Day of Action against Tebbit, a Day of Action that makes it clear to the Trade Union leaders that they must organise to fight the Bill. The LCDTU is organising a mass lobby of the conference. That should be backed by strike action by demonstrations, by factory gate meetings in work time and by delegations to lobby the Trade Union chiefs. The TUC must hear a clear and uncompromising message on that day.

- Stop Tebbit's Bill becoming law!
- For the withdrawal of the TUC from the NEDC and all government committees until the Bill is scrapped!
- For the Trade Union leaders to pledge that they will declare all strikes to be official and organise industrial action in solidarity with any group of workers attacked by the Tories penal code.
- For the Trade Union executives to declare the start of an indefinite General Strike, to begin on the day of the final Parliamentary reading of Tebbit's Bill, until the Bill is scrapped.

There can be no negotiation with a ruling class bent on legislating democratic trade union rights out of existence. Only a clear and decisive demonstration of class power will force them to retreat. To this end the call must go out for a General Strike to destroy the Tebbit legislation.

While maximum pressure must be placed on the Trade Union leadership to organise a class-wide opposition to the Tories, no reliance can be placed on their ability to produce it. To ensure the appropriate measures and tactics are adopted it is vital that a rank and file movement be built spanning every industry and every trade union. It must be a movement based firmly on rank and file democracy and with a programme that goes beyond a militant Trade Union fight for better wages and conditions and defence of Trade Union rights.

In the face of the employers offensive it must declare unflinchingly that the fight to defend the rights and organisations of the working class can only be won when the capitalist class and its system has been destroyed. It must link the fight to defend the unions to active struggle for workers power itself. ■

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