

Workers Power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

**INSIDE: ENTRYISM
GAY RIGHTS
SPANISH
ELECTIONS**

STOP THE BETRAYALS! STOP THE RETREAT!

THE EMPLOYERS AND the Tory Government have notched up important new victories for their class. Leyland workers have voted to accept a two year package deal that gives them only a 5½% pay rise each year. Mass meetings reversed previous decisions to resist management's plans. Miners have voted to accept the NCB's pay offer and failed to give the NUM executive a mandate to call strike action against the Tories.

The wretched leaders of the TUC Health Committee took these decisions as a signal that they could now prepare the final derailment of the health workers dispute. They called off the November 8th Day of Action, with no new money on the table, in reply to a request from Pat Lowry ex-Leyland hatchetman now in charge of ACAS. Albert Spanswick did not even try to hide this when he declared, "We have been made no specific offer, we agreed to call off the day of action because of the request from ACAS."

While health workers were preparing to ballot on all out action he was telling the press that the dispute was in its final stages and that all that was at stake was whether the horse had enough energy to break the finishing tape! What we presume he meant by this was that the TUC's bureaucratic carthorse was now ready to go off to the knackers yard.

Doubtless the news was greeted with joy in Congress House. The TUC leaders have been let off the hook from organising a fight against the Tories. Two year pay packages in Leyland and the NHS will take the pressure off the officials as the Tories set out to abolish annual pay bargaining. The crew that demobilised the developing campaign against unemployment two years ago, that have allowed through two rounds of anti-union legislation while barely lifting a finger to

oppose them and who are now busy carving out a bosses' Labour Government as their alternative to Thatcher have lived to dodge a fight another day. Or so they hope.

Thatcher, and her primed cheer leaders in the gutter press, are riding high. As a direct result of the spineless parliamentarians in Labour leadership this hated and barbarous government is well ahead in the opinion polls. The government is now set to reap more fruit for its class by introducing yet another round of anti-union laws from Tebbit's stable and a share out of profitable plums shaken from the trees of the nationalised industries and social and welfare services.

These are all defeats for the working class in general. The Tory government is out for even more blood and the Labour and TUC leaders will not stop them. But they represent, in particular, a defeat for the minority of active militants in each of the unions who have failed to pull their members out behind them to resist the onslaught of the Tories. They are the ones who will be feeling most bitter and bewildered in the aftermath of the last month. True they have been hamstrung by the Union bureaucrats and their pathetic do nothing tactics. In Leyland, as in the Health, the bureaucrats wanted to pit one day protest strikes against this resolute and determined class conscious government.

Militants have found themselves fighting to support actions that they know all too well are feeble and inadequate. But we must also honestly recognise that the militants have not been able to take the rank and file with them against the Tories with, or without official support. Even in the NUM, where Scargill and the leadership did campaign for a fight with the Tories the majority of miners steered clear of a showdown.

The bulk of organised workers are not registering any political support for Thatcherism in these decisions. They are giving expression to a deep felt fear that



trade union organisations and trade union principles alone are not strong enough to resist Thatcher. Part of this is based on a real fear of unemployment, more is based on a lack of confidence in the possibility of waging a successful fight. Not only are the Trade Union leaders - on the whole - quite visibly running for cover. The militants themselves lack the political answers for them to stamp the industrial struggle in their chosen mould. The burning problem facing militants is how to reverse the headlong retreat of the officials and a mounting mood of fatalism amongst significant sections of workers.

One answer to this question is to be found in the pages of Socialist Worker, now the chief prophet of doom on the left. The Socialist Worker catches one-sided glimpses of reality. They realise that there is a serious crisis of perspective confronting the 'active minority' of militants. But they turn recognition of that fact into a rationalisation for head-banging pessimism. They can offer no way out themselves except ever heavier campaigns of general semi-marxist propaganda to keep their membership intact and a perspective of building their own organisation in every workplace as a pre-requisite of revival "at the end of the day". In the post Leyland and miners decision editorial - No Time to Mourn - Socialist Worker's followers are enjoined not to think too big. They are to seek out argument "with smallish groups of workers" as the first small step in reversing the tide of Thatcherism

Socialist Worker's editors are doubtless worried about the depressing effects their recipe of gloom and doom can have on their own members. In case their readers are trudging desperately to throw themselves off the nearest tall building they are told in big print that, "Periods of defeat and demoralisation like the present do not last for ever." and why should the Socialist Worker supporter believe that this ever darker cloud that hangs over us all will turn out to have a silver lining? It's not because of anything the militants could do to reverse the situation. The SWP thinks the times are depressingly unsuitable for organising a movement of the militant minority. They cannot recommend anything to the 'active minority' except that it somehow keeps its mind and body together until the upturn comes.

So what is the SWP pinning its faith on? Believe it or not they place their

hopes on the possibility that the economy may expand and remove the material fears of millions of workers for us. "Several things can create such a change of mood. An expansion of the economy can, by reducing unemployment marginally and making workers feel their jobs are no longer at stake if they strike." The SWP could feel at home again with Trade Union business as usual. But the SWP leader writers know they can't put all their eggs in the basket of waiting for the economic upturn. The CBI and the Tory government themselves could give the SWP a hundred and one reasons for doubting that one. So, just in case, the SWP hold out the prospect of a catastrophic political mistake by the government "showing how weak and vulnerable our rulers really are" and, if all else fails, the possibility that a section of the down, but not out, working class will rise in spontaneous revolt!

One thing runs like a thread through all this baseless reasoning. They have nothing to offer as a way forward to the minority of militants except that something will turn up somehow to relieve their present woes. Micawber-like they pin their all on the belief that something will turn up.

"One or other of these developments is inevitable in the not too distant future."

A mirror opposite of the SWP's unhinged world view has recently made an appearance on the pages of Socialist Organizer. Writing in S.O.107, correspondent Bill Peters reviewed the implications of the Leyland and NUM decisions. For Peters there could be no question of admitting that workers were in anyway ducking out of a fight. Responsibility for the Leyland vote is placed entirely at the door of the official leadership. "In BL, a militant workforce which has been looking for a fight with management was confused by repeated sell outs over recent years and the stupid tactic of one-day strikes linked to an overtime-ban." The members sampled the wares on offer from the officials, decided they were not lethal enough and declined to be hoodwinked by their leaders. That is what Peters would have us believe. It was the piecemeal policies advocated by the leaders - and not an all out fight with the management - that the workers rejected.

What Peters cannot tell us is where there were significant numbers of organised militants fighting for all out actions

at the mass meetings and carrying groups of workers with them. Even with the aid of the Leyland Action Committee's (LAC) intelligence network Peters can only evidence the Cowley Assembly vote for all out strike action. Elsewhere the militants were not capable of mounting a serious opposition to the official line whatever their intentions.

The logic of Peters' argument is that if only the officials in Leyland had waged a Scargill-like campaign then the members would have proved ready and raring to go. But if this is the case for the working class as a whole, then how does he explain the fact that Scargill failed to secure the mandate he sought from the miners?

Peters has no criticism of the way Scargill waged his campaign. In fact he gives "100% support...to the way Arthur Scargill conducted the campaign." Instead he argues that Scargill's forthright leadership made a 'tactical mistake by linking pay and pit closure together on the ballot paper. That explains the outcome of the miners' ballot.

We do not think that the miners are finished as a result of this ballot. But we are prepared to look reality in the face. Scargill was not able to secure a vote backing him in a firm stand against the NCB and the Tories. The majority of the miners did not want to give the go-ahead for a fight. Scargill's campaign - despite its razzamataz and enthusiasm - was a fatal substitute for building the necessary rank and file based leadership in the pits that could have taken the campaign to give real confidence to rank and file miners that they could take on the Tories and win.

Peters, like the SWP, fails to understand the very real crisis of leadership that exists within the rank and file of the working class itself. The bureaucratic betrayals can succeed precisely because of this crisis. It cannot be wished away by pretending that the working class is moving forward on all fronts and only ever tripped up at the last minute by a wily and traitorous leadership. Nor can it be solved by turning away from big questions like pay(!) and a concentration on (unspecified) "little things" until a militant sunshine once again brightens up the lives of SWP members. Communists must confront this crisis of leadership with clear answers. It is becoming more urgent than ever to organise the militant minority around a political programme that can lay the basis for a fightback against Thatcher. ■



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

Health Steward's Conference

ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 30th, over 150 health workers, the majority shop stewards, attended a national conference of health services shop stewards. The conference, called by the Sheffield Area Joint Shop Stewards' Committee (AJSSC) and Leicester Health Services Co-ordinating Committee, attracted stewards from all of the main unions involved in the dispute. Over twenty-five towns and cities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were represented. This positive response to the conference was especially heartening given the opposition of the trade union officials to it even being held.

South Yorkshire and Humberside NUPE officials, for example, had changed the date of their own regional stewards' meeting (which was to be held on October 23rd) to the same day as the Sheffield conference. This was an overt attempt to prevent NUPE stewards in South Yorkshire from attending the conference.

Opening the conference, Chairman of the Sheffield AJSSC, Martin Robinson, made clear that one of its purposes was to begin to organise shop stewards in the health service at a national level. The JSSCs, he pointed out, were the bodies that "have to organise plans advanced by the TUC Health Services Committee", yet there was "no existing machinery to consult with the TUC".

The Conference also set itself the task of taking forward the struggle for all-out indefinite strike action to win the full claim. In the light of the TUC's moves towards putting together a sell-out, and their sabotage of the November 8th Day of Action, a Conference to discuss both of these issues was timely indeed.

Paul MacNulty (Chairman of COHSE, Wadsley, Sheffield) :

"They (the officials - WP) tried to undermine the conference. That's why they called the other meeting. That meeting of stewards in Leeds today called by the South Yorkshire and Humberside TUC, had its date changed from last week to today purposely so they could undermine us. The conference here has been a positive step towards getting democracy back into the unions. The rank and file stood up and said we don't really need you. We want you to work for us and not against us".

The morning session of the conference heard speakers from the ISTC, the NUM and the POEU, declaring solidarity with the health workers. The theme of public sector unity in the face of the Tory onslaught was repeatedly raised by speakers. While the morning's debate suffered from not being focussed towards a specific resolution, it did at least provide a forum for rank and file health-workers to air problems and exchange experiences.

The afternoon session debated a series of resolutions concerning the future co-ordination of stewards and the struggle to win indefinite strike action. In an atmosphere of democratic debate, that was a breath of fresh air for militants, the problems and possibilities of action were thrashed out.

Workers Power fully supported the resolution put forward by Nether Edge JSSC and the Leicester Health Services Committee (see box below). Moving the resolution, Jane Bruton of Leicester NUPE, and a Workers Power health worker, made clear why it was vital to try to use November 8th as a launching date for indefinite action:

CLASS STRUGGLE

NO. 11 WINTER 1982-83 ISSN 0332-2690

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THE ALTERNATIVE TO BETRAYALS AND SELL-OUT

"The most important question is how do you mobilise for all-out strike action? We can organise mass meetings on the 8th and demand that the officials attend them. This would be the quickest, most effective and the most democratic way of winning a mandate. I'm not saying it's an easy thing to do, but we can't let the 8th November slip away. If we fall in behind their (the TUC's - WP) strategy and try to make it a bit more democratic, then I think we will lose our fight".

Many stewards present felt that this perspective could not work. A militant from Coventry, Gerry O'Reilly felt that getting members out on the 8th would even be impossible: "I am against the dispute on 8th November because we will not get our people out". A COHSE member from Edinburgh felt that to call an "indefinite" strike from November 8th was impossible because the work hadn't been done for it and because the mood wasn't there for it. He concluded: "It is pie in the sky to think that on November 8th we can launch an indefinite strike".

Answering these arguments, Ron Giles, a steward at Sheffield Nether Edge Hospital, and a Workers Power supporter, argued forcefully that:

"The best way in which we can secure a "Yes" vote is in a situation where the rank and file of the health workers are actually taking strike action". The only focus we have in the coming period where we can take up the question of winning a "Yes" vote in a democratic way through mass meetings and a cross-union discussion, is to call for that strike from the 8th. The point about this motion is that we are trying to get the commitment from shop stewards present to go back to the areas and argue that we should be calling for an indefinite strike now. The best way is to go back to our areas and argue for that perspective and where we win it, we stay out and demand official recognition for the action from the TUC. We say to them 'We've consulted our members, we want action - give us backing'".

In other words, Workers Power recognised the problem that the conference itself was not able to issue a call for action from the 8th. But, unless the stewards left the conference committed to a campaign for action from the 8th through mass meetings, and carried out that action, then the bureaucracy would be given the breathing space they need to stitch up a deal with Fowler. They had been forced to make their recommendation for an all-out strike because of the action consistently taken by the rank and file. The way to maintain that pressure, we believe, was to step up the action and use the focus of November 8th to do that.

Dermot Murphy (NUPE steward, Lodge Moor Hospital, Sheffield) :

"I think it has been useful to get shop stewards from around the country together. There isn't any official set-up where stewards can meet nationally and if this is just the grounding of such a movement then I think the conference today has been useful. It's been very helpful in building a stewards' movement nationally, which I think is vital whether you are in dispute or not".

The alternative, we argued, would be a long drawn-out ballot campaign would lead to demoralisation amongst the membership and make a betrayal by the bureaucrats all the more likely.

Our strategy is not an easy one to win. The calling off of the day of action on the 8th and the ACAS talks do go to prove that the bureaucrats now feel the pressure is off. That's why, despite the difficulties, our strategy would have been the best way of denying them the leeway that they have now got and are using. In the light of these developments it is obvious that it was not our proposals which were "pie in the sky". In fact, it was the suggestion that the balloting process was the answer. As Jane Bruton pointed out in her summing up:

"People have said we won't be able to mobilise people for the 8th. Does that mean we'll be able to mobilise them for March, which is when the ballots will be all over and done with? If we accept the lead that's been given by the TUC on the question of the ballot then we are leading ourselves down the wrong path. If we leave it there then we are handing over to the leaders the opportunity to sell us out".

Unfortunately the conference chose that path by roughly 100 votes to 30, with some 25 people abstaining.



Workers Power supporters Jane Bruton (left) and Ron Giles (right) speaking at the conference



The conference went on to debate a number of motions on the campaign, on solidarity action and on the cuts, that were all accepted overwhelmingly. Workers Power supported the motions from Manchester and Northern Ireland. We regarded it as vital that the conference committed the stewards present to some form of action. Workers Power health worker, Andy Bisset, an ASTMS steward at Sheffield's Northern General Hospital, speaking in support of the Northern Ireland resolution made clear the sort of campaign that was needed. The unity that had been built up on the ground, had to be maintained, he argued. This could be done through "a campaign of mass meetings, section meetings, bulletins and leaflets in every hospital". We also supported a proposal from Coventry to call on the TUC to take steps to assist the building of regional and national stewards' committees in the NHS.

Geoff Williams (NUPE steward, Cardiff) :

"We need to build for stronger shop stewards' organisations on a hospital and area basis - and co-ordinate them nationally"

Since the conference, Workers Power health workers have organised in the localities to implement the decisions of the Conference. In Leicester, for example, we successfully proposed that the Health Services Co-ordinating Committee should organise mass meetings to mobilise for the 8th, and hold a mass rally in the city to be addressed by national union speakers. A leaflet campaign was also initiated, with a Joint Union Bulletin arguing for all-out strike action on that day.

The other major debate of the afternoon was whether or not to establish a Steering Committee from the conference, to co-ordinate the actions decided upon. Despite opposition from those - including Socialist Organiser supporters - who felt that there was a danger of becoming "an alternative TUC", most militants did feel the need for some form of national co-ordination. The motion to establish a steering committee, moved by Workers Power supporters, was accepted by the conference.

Representatives from many of the areas put themselves forward for such a committee, and Sheffield has been charged with convening it. It was also given the power to reconvene the conference itself in the event of a sell-out taking place.

Workers Power members were in the forefront of organising for the October 30th conference. It is no boast to say that without the efforts of our members, who travelled all over the country addressing stewards meetings, visiting hospitals, leafletting marches and so on, the conference would not have got the wide-ranging support that it did. Why did we see such a conference as important?

The seven month history of the dispute has been dominated by two things. On the one hand there has been massive rank and file support for a struggle to win 12% for the health workers. On the other the trade union leaders have shown themselves completely irresolute in carrying out the fight for the full claim. While the NUPE conference passed a motion in support of indefinite strike action back in May, the TUC Health Committee did not seriously discuss it until October. The NUPE leadership itself made not one single serious effort to campaign for the conference decision. The trade leaders are not merely irresolute. They are traitors. Spanswick will quite simply betray. Bickerstaffe will accept the betrayal, perhaps under protest, but will organise no action against it. Both courses of action betray the health workers who have fought long and hard for a decent wage.

Lilian Richards (Chairperson NUPE, Newcross Hospital, Wolverhampton) :

"It's a good idea. We can meet people from other areas, talk to them, find out what they think and see if we are all going in the same direction".

Amongst the health workers a definite militant minority exists. In the seven months it has been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

THE DEFEATED RESOLUTION

Proposed by Leicester Health Services Co-ordinating Committee

Seconded by Nether Edge Hospital (Sheffield) JSSC

"This national meeting :

- calls on the TUC Health Services Committee and the executives of all unions on the Health Services Committee to call an all-out indefinite strike from November 8th, and to consult their members on that day through mass meetings to approve such action.
- Commits the stewards and representatives from strike committees present to a massive campaign of publicity and democratic mass meetings of all health workers in every hospital to win support for an all-out indefinite strike from November 8th. All areas winning support for such action through mass meetings should stay out from the 8th and demand official recognition for those strikes.

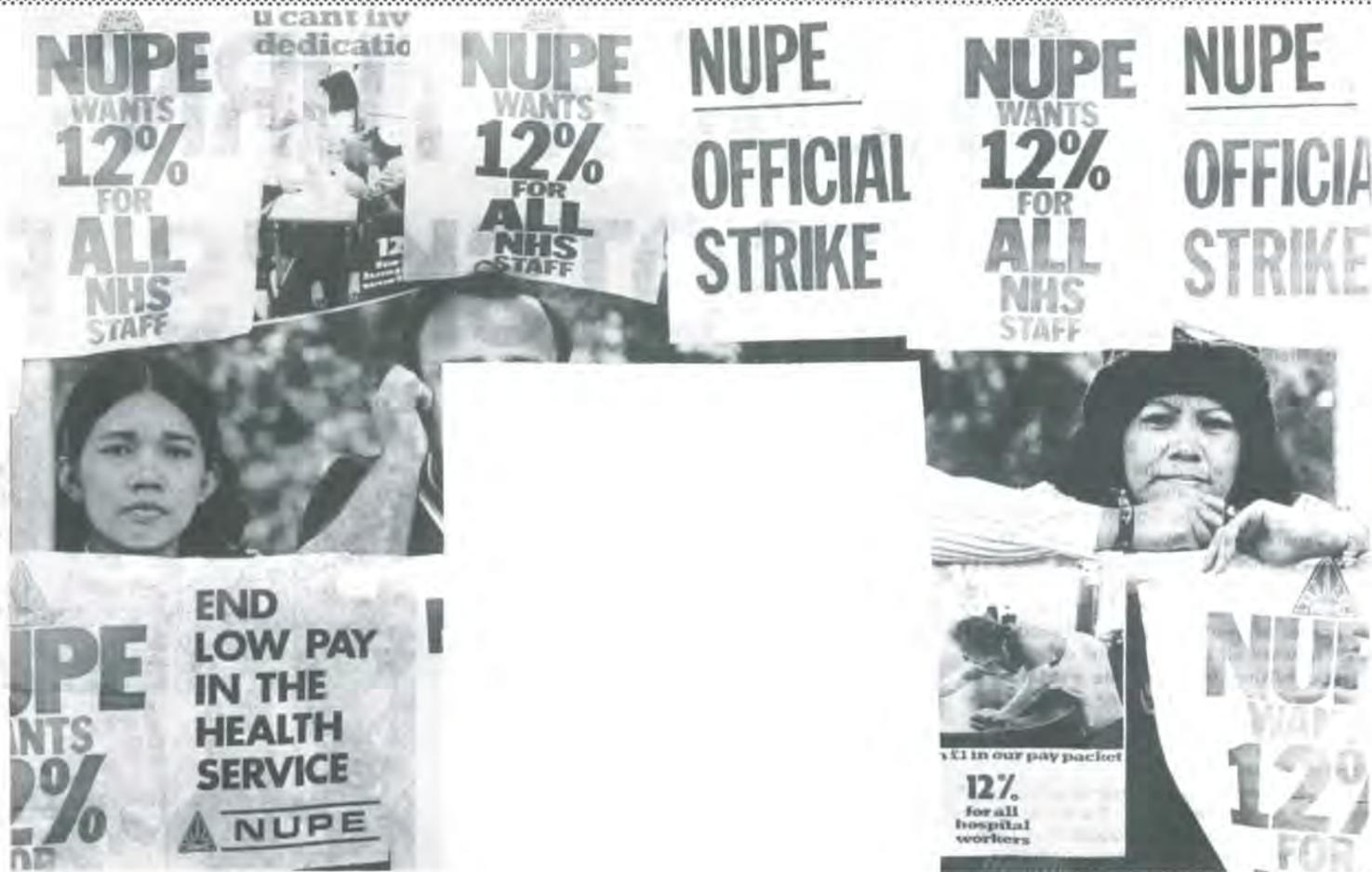
- Commits the stewards and representatives of strike committees present to building open democratic strike committees and a national delegate strike committee to control all negotiations in the dispute.

- Resolves to elect a steering committee of representatives of the areas present here to meet in the week of November 8th to assess the success of organising all-out indefinite strike from the 8th, to co-ordinate areas taking action and to have the power to reconvene this national meeting. It should, further be responsible for producing a national bulletin and organising national speaking tours."

FROM PAGE 2

militants on the stewards' committees and strike committees who have got the members out. They have been the ones on the lobbies barracking Spanswick, demanding action from Bickerstaffe. This minority, however, has not been able to seize the initiative from the bureaucracy. They have not been organised and co-ordinated into a fighting force. They have not been won to policies that can win the mass of the members behind them and prevent the bureaucrats from outflanking them. In our opinion the Sheffield conference presented a possibility of taking a step to overcome these weaknesses. It was a means of bringing together the minority in order to organise it.

The Conference was not a diversion from building for the days of action. Although the conference defeated resolutions which we believed to be correct, we do not think that the conference failed, or was in any way a waste of time. Far from it. As the reactions from militants at the conference show, it met a felt need. The establishment of a steering committee means that resistance to a sell-out can be organised across the country. Most vitally, while militants must not yet concede defeat on the pay struggle, if the bureaucrats do secure a sell-out, then some form of coordination exists to prevent the defeat on pay leading to a rout of hospital-based organisation. One of the most open and democratic genuine rank and file conferences to be held in this country for decades has taken a small step in ensuring this. It has shown that the militant minority can be and want to be organised. Communists have an absolute duty to commit themselves wholeheartedly to carrying out this task. That was why, despite our meagre resources, we threw ourselves into making the Sheffield conference the success that it was. ■



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

'SOCIALIST ORGANISERS' AND 'SOCIALIST WORKERS' - NOTHING TO OFFER MILITANTS

THE SHEFFIELD NHS Stewards conference threw a spotlight on the strategies that various would-be revolutionaries had to offer health workers. Most of them were found wanting. Ranged against the revolutionary position argued by Workers Power health workers, were the muddled and plain wrong-headed policies of various centrist organisations. By "centrist" we mean: organisations which claim to be revolutionary but which act in a reformist manner.

The great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky once described centrism as coming in all the colours of the rainbow. The two main shades on display at the conference were the supporters of Socialist Organiser and the supporters of the Socialist Workers Party. In their different ways, both groups proposed courses of action that, in essence, involved submitting to the existing treacherous official leadership of the dispute.

The supporters of SO, via "Health Workers for the Full Claim" (HWFFC) which, despite its claim to be a rank and file organisation, is in fact an SO caucus, were originally against the idea of a conference at all. On the justified pretext that HWFFC could not organise such a conference it was decided to try and get the call through a stewards committee. Workers Power members, working in HWFFC on the grounds that it claimed to be an open rank and file group, took this call up. The call was made initially from the Leicester Health Service Co-ordinating Committee. At the following meeting of HWFFC, Anna Lunts of SO revealed the real attitude of the SO's leadership. Despite the fact that the call had been made, she argued that such a conference was a diversion from building for the days of action. After some debate it was agreed that the day of the conference (then planned for October 23rd) should be reviewed. The call for the conference, however, remained the position of the Leicester Committee.

Despite this the very next issue of the HWFFC bulletin carried not one word about the Leicester call. This bulletin, freely distributed at the Conference. It saw fit to reprint a Coventry Stewards Committee's call on the TUC to organise a conference, but did not mention a conference actually being planned!

It comes as a bit of a cheek, therefore, to read in SO's post-conference report "Despite the difficulties of contacting stewards throughout the country, Edinburgh... (a list of towns follows - VP) were all represented". One of the "difficulties" was the attitude of Socialist Organiser, some of its supporters and HWFFC. With the honourable exception of the South Glamorgan area which brought a large delegation thanks to the efforts of individual

SO supporters, it was by and large left to WP members to overcome "the difficulties" of making the conference a success.

The fact is that SO's strategy was centred on calling on the TUC to organise a stewards conference. They were not prepared to organise for such a rank and file conference with TUC backing if possible, but without if necessary. They were not primarily concerned with organising rank and file militants. They were more concerned with engaging in a literary "exposure" of the TUC being demanding of it something it would not do.

Up to the last minute, therefore, SO maintained this attitude. Even when it moved to support the conference publicly (one week before it was due to take place!) they argued against it being a forum for organising action: "Although the event has rightly been billed as a meeting - links between local committees are not yet sufficiently developed that a representative conference of stewards can be called unofficially - it can also help to develop the campaign for such a conference" (Anna Lunts in SO no 105).

It came as little surprise to Workers Power health workers that on the day, many SO supporters were in the forefront of attempts to prevent the conference from becoming a launching pad for either decisive action, or rank and file organisation. Speaking against the Leicester / Nether Edge resolution on campaigning for indefinite action from November 8th an SO supporter from Edinburgh counterposed the struggle for a recall conference of COHSE as the task of the hour. Work had to be carried out in this field because "It has to be done to make sure that the campaign is started in COHSE and that a delegate conference is called". Rationalising this opposition, Jane Rees in the SO report of the conference states: "Our assessment was that at this stage of the dispute a patchy indefinite strike would lead to a crushing defeat" (SO No. 107)

On the other hand, a campaign around the TUC's balloting procedure would "create the conditions for the widest all-out action, and give the minimum leeway to those in the bureaucracy who want to end the dispute in a confused, protracted, piecemeal collapse, and huge demoralisation".

The November 8th action was called off. There are no signs of ballots being pushed through. Bickerstaffe has sat silent while Spanswick has flirted with ACAS. A sell-out is now, more than ever, on the cards.

The proposals supported by Workers Power offered a chance of preventing all of this. Acted on, they would have given the bureaucrats - all of them, not just some of them - "minimum leeway". The SO position of accepting the bureaucrats' ballot play as the only road open to militants has, in fact, given the bureaucracy all the leeway they need.

It was not only on the action call that SO accepted the rule of the bureaucracy as, for

the time being, unshakeable. Many of their supporters opposed the setting up of a steering committee. Ellen Taylor, an SO supporter in Sheffield, argued that a steering committee was not on because "We as a meeting aren't as representative as we could be". True, but why is that an argument against national co-ordination? Surely the task now is to win affiliations from stewards' committees, so as to build the steering committee into an authoritative, representative body of the rank and file.

The rationale for their position was made perfectly clear by other speakers. One speaker from Edinburgh (heartily applauded by the SO) opposed the steering committee on the grounds that: "Any committee that should be formed cannot be done from here. I think we show ourselves in a bad light if we decide that. I mean that's setting ourselves up as an alternative to the TUC".

No room was left for doubt when SO supporter from St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, Colin Kenny, argued that the conference was "not to start opposition to the TUC or anything along those lines". In other words, the argument returns to SO's refusal to really organise the rank and file in opposition to the misleaders if that proves necessary, as we think it undoubtedly will. This does not mean we ignore the officials. It does mean that the surest way of forcing them to act - and not just exposing them in the literary sense - is to organise a rank and file movement with the strength to fight for its demands independently of the officials.

While the SO fell in behind the TUC's preferred strategy, the SWP opted for avoiding a struggle with the bureaucrats. Their speakers at the conference talked as though the pay dispute had already been lost and that therefore nothing at all could be done except preparation for future battles. Not surprisingly they treated the conference with the type of cynical contempt that flows from their abject pessimism. In the Socialist Worker report of the conference, Kevin Murphy - SWP member - is quoted as saying: "We can pass as many resolutions as we like, but when it comes down to it, its what we do when we get back to the hospitals that really matters."

This is a doctored quote. Murphy's speech was in fact an insult to the stewards who had assembled for the conference. He bawled at them:

"Bugger all of these resolutions, they don't mean a bloody thing and you know that as well as I do. What do 200 shop stewards in the health service mean? Bugger all. We've got to start organising amongst the rank and file. The rank and file is going to get a right load of shit thrown at it. We're going to get cuts, victimisations, hospital closures, jobs cuts and the rest. What we should consider is how we should organise the rank and file...It doesn't matter what resolutions this conference passes. They don't mean a thing".

clearer".

From all of this it is plain that these centrists are no alternative to the existing leadership of the working class. They are, in fact, not even capable of mounting an independent challenge to that leadership.

In both of their reports of the conference, SO and SW criticised those arguing for action from the 8th. They criticised them but refused to name them. Neither SO nor SW could bring themselves to mention that it was Workers Power who had fought for resolutions in local labour movement bodies and brought them to the conference. Their motives for this are completely dishonest. They polemicise against us, but do not admit doing so. The reason is simple. We represent an independent revolutionary alternative to them. Our arguments clash with their fake strategies. But increasingly our arguments are according with the experiences and needs of rank and file militants, including members of the SWP and supporters of Socialist Organiser.

Workers Power, despite our small size and slim resources will, in every forum available to us, fight honestly and openly for a communist strategy inside the working class. That way, while the centrist papers may continue to refuse to name us, militants will get the opportunity to hear the revolutionary case put. ■

THE 'FRENCH TURN':

TROTSKY'S FORGOTTEN

IN THE MANY probes, investigations, and background pieces printed in the bourgeois and social democratic press preparatory to the witchhunt endless references have been made to entryism (or entryism). The claim that it was developed by Trotsky with regard to the French Socialist Party in the 1930s is repeated with the unchallenged assumption that all the groupings inside today's Labour Party that claim some adherence to 'Trotskyism' are thereby carrying out Trotsky's tactic.

There is, in fact, nothing specifically or distinctly Trotskyist about the entry tactic. Marx and Engels advocated a version of it in the Communist Manifesto: "The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties....The Communists therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."¹

Lenin supported and advocated the affiliation of communists to the Labour Party. The British Communist party, undemocratically excluded from Labour Party membership, practiced traditional entryism between 1921 and 1928. In essence entryism - the claiming of membership of the mass workers' parties by revolutionaries where they are too small to constitute a mass communist party themselves, is a variant of the united front. It indissolubly links them in unity in action with the mass of the working class on limited or immediate issues, with the utilisation of workers' democracy to expound the communist programme and warn of the mistakes and treachery of the reformist leaders. As with the united front tactic in general, there can be no question of entryism supplanting the communist programme or the historic need for a revolutionary party. Only such a party which wins the adherence of the broad mass of the working class can ensure the successful overthrow of the class rule of the bourgeoisie and the construction of socialism.

This method is clearly the *method* today of Militant, of Socialist Challenge, and of Socialist Organizer. The 'perspective' may have faded into history but the method of operation remains qualitatively identical with Pablo's and qualitatively different to that of Trotsky.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN FRANCE IN 1934 - 1935

In France in January 1934 a financial scandal broke involving a swindler named Alexander Stavisky. It was rumoured that certain ministers, Radical Party members were involved. Though the scandal was no worse than a hundred others that had marked the history of the Third Republic (1871-1940) it became the subject of a massive wave of agitation and public disorder. Why? France, still a heavily agricultural country was 'late' in being drawn into the great depression that had been raging unchecked in Britain, the USA and Germany since 1929-30. In France the real plummet into depression came in 1932-3. Industrial production in late 1933 stood fourteen per cent below its 1928 level. By April 1935 it was 24% below. The delicate balance of Centre-Left ministries which had governed France for a decade or more was decisively upset.

The 'Cartel des Gauches' was a ministerial bloc essentially composed of the main party of the French bourgeoisie, the Radical Party, led by Edouard Herriot, and the SFIO (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière) the reformist socialist party. Faced with the crisis the bourgeoisie demanded harder and harder austerity measures. One deflationary package after another was pushed through.



"Unity at last". Socialists and Communists demonstrate together against fascism. February 12th 1934.

The onslaught of the bosses caught the SFIO in the cross currents between its mass base - the working class and the petit-bourgeoisie - and its master, French big business capital. Normally able to deceive the former in the interests of the latter on the basis of the defence or extension of reforms the SFIO leaders generated massive indignation as they colluded with the bourgeoisie in its savage austerity programme. This resulted initially in governmental instability. Between May 1932 and September 1933 there were 5 different prime ministers (all Radicals). In the SFIO tensions reached bursting point in the Autumn of 1933. A group of deputies voted for a wage reduction condemned by the party to 'save the Radical government'. The rebels called neo-Socialists took 30 Parliamentary deputies (out of 129) and 20,000 members (out of a total of 130,000).

In February 1933 Hitler had come to power in Germany - virtually unopposed by the SPD (German Social Democracy) and KPD (Communist Party of Germany), the strongest parties of the Second and Third Internationals. Both parties had obstructed the formation of a militant united front against the fascist menace.

The German events sent an electric shock through the European working class - alerting millions to the enormous dangers that threatened the gains of two generations of proletarian activity - trade unions, political parties, co-operatives, sports and cultural organisations - all had been ground to powder under the fascist jackboot. The French workers looked on in horror at events just across their eastern border.

On the other hand the same social forces that had propelled Hitler to power in Germany were growing in desperation in France too. So was fascism. There was no united French fascist organisation. 'Action Française' led by Charles Maurras numbered some 60,000 with a militant street-fighting group the Camelots du Roi. It was monarchist, catholic, anti-semitic, anti-democratic. The Croix de Feu grew out of a reactionary ex-servicemen's organisation and was led by Colonel Casimir de la Roque. Other leagues included Solidarite Française, the Jeunesses Patriotes. In 1934 they probably numbered approaching one million.

On February 6th 1934 the Chamber of Deputies was due to approve a new cabinet headed by the radical Edouard Daladier. The fascist Leagues called a massive demonstration on the Place de la Concorde, across the bridge from the French Parliament. The French Communist Party was still operating the disastrous 'Third Period' policy which characterised the SFIO as 'social fascist' and resolutely refused the 'united front from above' (ie an agreement with the reformist leaders). A left-wing in the SFIO around the paper Bataille Socialiste and led by leaders of the 'Federation of the Seine' (Paris Region) Jean Zyromski and Marceau Pivert had proposed a united counter-demonstration to the Leagues. Despite the opposition within the CP of Jaques Doriot (leader of the proletarian St. Denis party organisation) the CP central committee rejected this call. Instead it called for smaller local demonstrations including one big communist veterans one near the Place de la Concorde. These demonstrations were to be "at one and the same time against the fascist gangs and against the government which protects and encourages them, against social democracy which by its division of the working class tries to weaken it and thus to permit a rapid worsening of the brutal class dictatorship." (L'Humanite, Feb.6th).

By mid-evening 100,000 demonstrators thronged the Place de la Concorde and fierce fighting developed as the Leagues attempted to storm the bridge leading to the Palais Bourbon (Parliament building). The police opened fire - one policeman was killed, 1,600 injured whereas fourteen demonstrators and onlookers were killed and an untold number injured. Meanwhile 2,000 to 3,000 communists paraded the Place de la Concorde singing the Internationale and with only minor skirmishes with the Leagues joined in combat fighting against the police. This extraordinary scene was witnessed by Daniel Guerin: "And, about 10pm, deploying onto the square from the Rue Royale copying the whole street, came a column brandishing tricolor flags. In the middle of the street were some gentlemen of mature years and respectable appearance sporting their legions d'honneur medals and bawling the Marseillaise. They didn't at all have the appearance of rioters. On the sides of the column, framing it were young workers in sweaters and caps chanting the Internationale. Neither of these two varieties of chorists seemed incommode by the presence of the other nor indisposed by the bizarre cacophony. They gave, rather, the impression of demonstrating together, shoulder to shoulder, sharing the same rage against the powers that be and the force of order."⁵

The fascists did not succeed in storming the Palais Bourbon but they did succeed in ousting Daladier and the Radicals. Invested with governmental office on the 6th by 343 votes to 237, Daladier resigned the 7th to avoid further rioting. A conservative Government of national unity was formed headed by Gaston Doumergue with only the socialists and communists refusing support.

UNITY IN ACTION AT LAST - AFTER FEBRUARY 6th

These events dramatically increased the tempo of working class alarm. The SFIO called for an anti-fascist demonstration on February 12th and the reformist union federation the CGT called a general strike for that day. Socialist demonstrations on the intervening days were joined by communist workers and local party organisations began to break discipline and co-operate with plans for the 12th February. CP leaders were forced, unwillingly and fearfully, to participate. The communist CGTU called a strike the same day and the CP called a demonstration. A general strike paralysed Paris and severely affected the provinces. 150,000 demonstrators filled the streets of Paris. Even so the communist party and SFIO leaders tried to keep their demonstrations as separate as possible. However they met at the Place de la Concorde. The leaders and the marshals held back, trying to 'maintain order'. It was useless as the rank and file swept them aside fusing in a tumultuous mass. Again Guerin recalls the scene: "The communist column turned round the central island in one direction, the socialist column in the opposite direction. Then when they met, their waves joined, melted into one another, to the cry 'Unity! Unity!' Their mass now advanced, in serried ranks across the whole width of the Cours de Vincennes, singing the Internationale."⁶

The working class itself forced the unwilling leaders, social-democrat and Stalinist into the united front. Several more months of manoeuvre and evasion to

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TEN TACTIC

place. Thorez, engaged in a bitter faction fight with Doriot returned to the 'social-fascist' theme. The SFIO leaders demanded the complete cessation of communist criticism as the price of unity. Then came a decisive change. On 23rd May in Moscow Pravda carried two articles; one called 'For the United Front Against Discord' anonymous; the other signed by Maurice Thorez entitled 'The French Communist Party in the Struggle for the United Front'. The communists had the duty to offer the united front of struggle against fascism to the socialist leaders.

What had caused this sudden volte face? Certainly the pressure of the French workers threatened the PCF with disintegration if it continued its refusal to unite. But the self-same criminal policy had destroyed the KPD without turning a hair of Stalin's head. Indeed after Hitler's accession and indeed during his destruction of the German Labour movement Stalin winced and dined with the fascist diplomats seeking a continuation of the German Russian accords. But on April 14th 1934 the German ambassador notified Litvinov of the refusal of his government to sign the Baltic protocol - the last attempt by the Russians to patch up the alliance. Stalin turned dramatically from German to French Imperialism. Meetings began on May 19th and by June 4th an agreement on a regional security pact for Eastern Europe and a Franco-Soviet pact was revealed.

The turn to the 'United Front' now became a possibility for Stalin - even a necessity given the pitiful state of the French communists.

The 'Third Period' had taken a disastrous toll on the PCF and indeed had mightily strengthened the SFIO. By 1932 the CP had (officially) 30,000 members - many sources say the real figure was nearer 12,000. The SFIO at the same time had 137,000 members.

On July 27th the PCF and the SFIO signed a unity pact. Thorez who in April was still calling for a "constant and pitiless attack on the Socialist Party" by June was writing "neither from the mouth of any of our propagandists, nor from the pen of any of our writers, in L'Humanite or even in the Cahiers du Bolchevisme (theoretical journal of the CP - WP), as in our entire press, will there be the slightest attack against the organisations or against the leaders of the socialist party."

Not only was the 'united front' to exclude all freedom of criticism (as the SFIO leaders demanded) but Thorez was soon to go further. On October 12th 1934 L'Humanite carried an article by Thorez called "At all costs, Defeat Fascism; For a Wide Anti-Fascist Popular Front". The 'middle-classes' Thorez claimed were open to a 'common front' and argued for 'local sections of the Radical Party' to be admitted into popular front committees. Yet the actual achievement of anything so epochal as a bloc with the major bourgeois party again had to wait events in Moscow.

On May 2nd 1935 a formal treaty was signed by Pierre Laval for France and Stalin himself. Stalin on the former's prompting made the shattering observation in an official communique, that he had "complete understanding and approval of the national defence policy pursued by France with the object of maintaining its armed forces at a level consistent with its security requirements". The editor of L'Humanite described Stalin's statement as a 'clap of thunder'. Indeed it was. Within a week or so the CP's campaign against civil defence, the two year military service and its denunciations of French Imperialism ceased. Leon Blum, leader of the SFIO triumphantly announced that revolutionary defeatism was dead. At the end

of May the 'Popular Front' which until then had been posed primarily as an alliance with the petty bourgeois base of the Radical Party and prominent anti-fascist individuals now was given the content of a coalition of the Communist, Socialist and Radical Parties.

Thus the collaboration between the USSR and French Imperialism was to involve the PCF in the abandonment of the last shreds of revolutionary internationalism. National defence and parliamentary combinations, even governmental alliances, were now possible.

Trotsky - in exile in France observed "Stalin has signed the death certificate of the Third International in full view of the entire world, he has repudiated revolutionary internationalism and passed over to the platform of social patriotism."

A year was yet to pass before the government of the Popular Front under Blum was installed, but in essence the period from Spring 1934 to summer 1935 saw the transition from 'Third Period' to 'Popular Front', from bureaucratic ultra-leftism to bureaucratic social-chauvinism. In this momentous and difficult period the tiny forces of French Trotskyism had to orient themselves.

TROTSKY AND HIS FOLLOWERS IN FRANCE

As early as June 1934 Trotsky argued to the Communist League, his small nucleus of French supporters: "The rhythm of events is now extraordinarily accelerated in comparison with the preceding period... Concentrate our main forces inside the Socialist Party, and establish therein a firm nucleus and a fraction of sympathisers. In the event of a new favourable opportunity this fraction can address itself to the League with an open appeal to enter the Socialist Party for a common struggle on behalf of a revolutionary Marxist policy".⁸

Trotsky took special care to arm them programmatically and in terms of perspectives, for this new tactical turn created by the upsurge of the masses in France. Trotsky foresaw that the widespread working class desire for united action against fascism and against the attacks of the Doumergue government would have radical effects on the existing parties of the French workers. Indeed it was already having these effects. In these circumstances any hesitancy on the part of the French Trotskyists would result in a crucial opportunity being lost.

At the level of programme, Trotsky advised the Communist League to draft an "Action Programme". The programme would set the immediate struggles facing the proletariat of France in the context of the necessity of the masses to find the road to power - it would deal with immediate issues in a transitional manner. Thus on the austerity programmes of the government, the wage reductions and demands for sacrifice, Trotsky raised the slogan of the abolition of business secrecy, the opening of the books, of workers' and peasants' control; control of the banks, finance and industry.

On the threat of fascism he poured scorn on the calls on the government to disarm and dissolve the fascist gangs, then being advanced by the Communist Party. "Our slogan is not the disarming of finance capital's gangs by finance capital's police, but rather a workers' and peasants' militia, that is the arming of the exploited people".⁹



Left to right: Pierre Naville, Leon Trotsky, Gerard Rosenthal (Trotsky's lawyer), Mme Naville.

Trotsky went on to raise the question of the need to reorganise the economy, to create a "workers' and peasants' government" based on "real revolutionary efforts". Trotsky directly appealed to the examples of the Jacobin dictatorship "the strongest government France has ever known" and to the October 1917 Revolution. He continued, "the first condition for establishing a strong government is for the workers to break all their political ties with the bourgeoisie". The only government worthy of being called a workers' government is one "issuing directly from the working people", one which would liberate the small peasants from their crushing debts, expropriating the wealth of the exploiters, nationalize the banks, the large landed property, the key industries and the railways. In the sphere of agriculture, the small farms would be socialised "only with the consent of the peasants themselves".

The starting point would be the struggle for workers' control in the here and now. From this would be posed the installation of a workers' government by an armed workers' militia making possible the organisation of production for need not profit. The transitional method within Trotsky's suggestions can be seen clearly: "Workers' and peasants' control, in its first stages a defensive measure against crushing taxes and wage cuts, becomes quite naturally the preparatory stage for a planned, i.e. socialist economy".¹⁰

The method was in fact embodied in the Programme of Action for France published in June in La Verite (The Truth), paper of the Communist League. The final draft was made by the League on the basis of Trotsky's suggestions. It unambiguously states "The task is to replace the capitalist state which functions for the profit of the big exploiters, by the workers' and peasants' proletarian state". The call for unity in action, which only the Trotskyists had fought for at the height of the Third Period, had now been taken up by both Stalinists and Social Democrats in order to abuse and deceive the masses. It had to be given a sharp clear content - a content of struggle. The programme calls for committees of the workers' parties and unions, and in the countryside for peasant committees, recognising that these are embryo soviets. Indissolubly with this it calls for a "Workers' militia, always united in action even though organised by various parties and organisations".

Nor does the programme ignore the democratic illusions or the reformist prejudices of the working class. Recognising that "as long as the majority of the working class continues on the basis of bourgeois democracy, we are ready to defend it with all our forces against violent attacks from the Bonapartist and fascist bourgeoisie". The programme goes on to pose the question of democratic demands themselves in a revolutionary manner. It calls on workers who cling to democracy to draw inspiration not from the existing corrupt, imperialist Third Republic but from the Jacobin-dominated Convention of 1793. It calls for the abolition of the Senate, the Presidency (a "hidden point of concentration for the forces of militarism and reaction") and consequently for a single assembly combining all legislative and executive power, elected on a two-yearly basis by universal suffrage. Deputies should be elected on the basis of local assemblies and their mandates be revocable by their constituents. They should receive the salary of a skilled worker. This democracy would not, should not be confused with socialism but it would "facilitate the struggle for workers' power".

Whilst revolutionaries are "separated by irreconcilable differences of doctrine and method" from "the party of 'democratic' socialism (SFIO)", the programme states "we are and always will be ready to defend an SFIO government against the bourgeoisie". Finally the programme summed up the inevitable and necessary organisational conclusion of the perspective, demands and goal of the action. Addressing the French workers it states:

"On February 12th you displayed your power and your determination not to submit to this violence (of the state and fascist bands - WP). But on that day your leaders betrayed you; they outlined no concrete slogan, no serious perspective of struggle for you. To attain your strength, to defend your right to live, to work no more for the enrichment of a minority of shameless exploiters - prepare your revolution, join the action of the Communist League".¹¹

Thus Trotsky's programmatic arming of the League was to give it what we would now call the fundamentals of the method and the doctrine of the Transitional Programme - the ability to relate strategic goals to current tasks, to open up a bridge to working class power. This was no centrist programme. None of the essentials of the revolutionary programme were hidden. They were posed pedagogically, starting from the context of united front tactics for the key battles facing the working class. Consequently, when Trotsky advised the League to enter the SFIO there was no tailoring of the programme, no fusion with centrist currents, no "organising" of factions for left reformist leaders, and no attempt to act as midwife to centrist currents.

But first Trotsky had to face opposition from another quarter - from the sectarianism ingrained by five years existence as a grouping restricted to purely propaganda tasks. To help overcome these problems Trotsky drew up a perspectives document for the League which was unsparing in its criticism of its feelings: "our permanent ties with the working class are almost nil", there is "no nationally coordinated fraction in the SFIO", "no fraction in the CGT". "What chance will (the League) have now that the lever of the united front has been wrested from our hands?"

From this criticism he points to the SFIO which has "preserved throughout this whole period a relatively intense life" and points to the analogous situation which preceded the Tours Congress in 1920 - when the CP was born from a majority "split" in the SFIO. He continues: "Its internal situation permits the possibility of our entering it with our own banner. The environment suits the aims we have set for ourselves. What is necessary now is to act in such a manner that our declaration will not in any way strengthen the leading bourgeois wing but rather will support the progressive proletarian wing; that its text and distribution will allow us to hold our heads high in case of acceptance as well as in case of dilatory manoeuvres or rejection. There is no question of dissolving ourselves. We enter as the Bolshevik-Leninist faction, our organisational ties remain the same, our press continues to exist just as do 'Bataille Socialiste' and others".¹²

Trotsky's perspective however came up against fierce resistance. Within the League, Pierre Naville, at 30 years old one of its principle leaders, was vehemently opposed and split away rather than undertake the tactic. Yet within a month he in fact joined

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Leon Blum



Thorez

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

the SFIO and he and his group collaborated with the Bolshevik-Leninist Fraction. Opposition to the turn erupted in a number of the sections or sympathising groups of the Movement for the Fourth International. Hugo Oehler in the American Socialist Workers Party opposed the turn outright, making organisational independence a principle. In Europe a number of leaders, Bauer, Vereecken also opposed it. Trotsky pointed out "Members who insist upon formal independence are always inclined to capitulate before reality when it treads upon their toes". Many of those who opposed the turn were soon to be apologists for the centrist POUM in Spain, and to virulently oppose the declaration of the Fourth International.

At the time of the Bolshevik-Leninist entry the SFIO was a party in turmoil. Its membership was some 120,000 and the CGT which it influenced had over a million members. After the exit of the neo-socialists in late 1933, the left forces had gained in strength. At the Toulouse Congress in 1934 left groups that had split or been expelled were invited to return. Even Leon Blum, the party's leader, uttered radical phrases. As Trotsky pointed out, reformism was disguising itself as centrism, both to keep abreast of its radicalised base and verbally to threaten a bourgeoisie that was not only denying it reforms but roughly asking for them back.

On the left of the party stood a faction that was particularly strong in the Paris region. Led by Jean Zyromsky, its founder, and the 39 year old teacher Marceau Pivert. They produced a paper "Bataille Socialiste". Whilst Zyromsky became increasingly an advocate of CP-SFIO fusion ("Organic Unity") and in fact pro-Stalinist, Pivert initially moved leftwards, declaring "The struggle against Trotskyism, at present, is the sign of a reactionary state of mind inside the workers' movement".

The Bolshevik-Leninists did for a period have remarkable successes. Trotsky's analyses in the pamphlet "Whither France" and in a number of articles for "La Verite" gave them great political superiority over the centrists. They argued openly for a new, Fourth International, against "national defence", against a bloc with the radicals, for a workers' united front against fascism and for the creation of a workers' militia. They were particularly successful in the Youth organisation of the SFIO, recruiting substantial numbers.

Membership went up to 300 adults in the summer of 1935. They also began making gains in the industrial North and South-East. Along with the centrists they set up the TPPS ("Always ready to serve" - the SFIO defence guard). In June 1935 at the assembly of the Seine Federation they received 1037 votes (compared with 1570 for Blum and 2370 for Zyromski's "Bataille Socialiste"). More work was done in the unions than ever before. They even had more contact with the CP workers. And Pivert was pushed far to the left. The Bolshevik-Leninists did not however glamourize Pivert.

They did not blunt the cutting edge of Marxist criticism of "saying what is" even of their closest (temporary) allies. Thus Naville wrote: "What is the aim of our revolution? For Blum the defence of the Republic... Even centrist elements, who consider themselves 'left-wing', seem to have little objection to Blum's conception, which dominates the party. The leaders of the Seine Federation adopt very radical motions, and even demand the dissolution of Parliament, the overthrow of Flandin's government and the organisation of militia. But why all this? Is it to defend the Republic or to prepare the proletarian revolution? The most dangerous equivocation continues to exist over this question."

The resolution adopted on February 25th by the Federal Council of the Seine (SFIO) states that 'parliamentary means are not enough'. According to "Le Populaire", March 4th, (SFIO daily) Comrade Pivert expressed his position as follows before the National Council: "Two methods may be used; one which is above all looks for parliamentary results and one for which parliamentary action is only meaningful when it is supported by mass action demonstrations of the people."

Here we see that Parliament remains the basis of the Party's activity. Because action based on Parliament (even supported or widened by demonstrations of the people) can only have the defence of the Republic as its aim. This is exactly how Blum and Frossard view it; our Comrade Pivert has not demonstrated this.

It is however the fundamental question! Without absolute clarity on this point, without unequivocal political demarcation and polemic on this question, it is useless to talk about revolutionary preparation.¹³

THE "EXIT TACTIC" FROM THE SFIO

The SFIO's thirty second national conference took place at Mulhouse on June 9th to 12th 1935. The Leon Blum leadership was already committed to the Popular Front with the Radicals. They had two thirds of the conference behind them but the voice of revolutionary Marxism was there to denounce their social chauvinist project. The Bolshevik-Leninists, in alliance with the Naville Group, vehemently raised the questions of "national defence" and the need for a Fourth International. They succeeded in winning significant support. On the main political resolution the voting was as follows: for Blum 2,025, for Zyromski-Pivert 777, for the Bolshevik-Leninists, 105. Blum ominously observed that the Bolshevik-Leninists would be thrown out if they obstructed the Popular Front with the Socialists.



The Fascist Leagues and CP demonstrators fight the police: Place de la Concorde, February 6th 1934

The Stalinists had only one sticking point in their dealings with the SFIO leaders. They insisted on getting rid of the Trotskyists. Bolshevik-Leninist leader Jean Rous was elected to the SFIO's national administrative committee none the less.

Trotsky, however, was now looking at the new phase that would open with the class collaboration of the Popular Front. He came to the conclusion that the entry tactic had served its purpose. He wrote the Bolshevik Leninists another letter 'A New Turn is necessary' on June 10th 1935. Here he observed the fight prior to and at the Mulhouse Conference, "In all the districts in which our comrades, numerically weak as they are, have unswervingly counterposed our resolution to the others, they have gained votes and sympathisers, and at the same time they have compelled the centrists to draw away a little from the right...." Stressing the importance of the greatest clarity and vigour in denouncing the Popular Front and the Stalinists and the need for raising the banner of the Fourth International as high as possible Trotsky argued for a new course. On 14th July, Bastille Day, the Popular Front took to the streets. The CP called on all who "defended peace and liberty" to rally "under the tricolor". The Communist leaders heaped fulsome praise on the Radical Party "the worthiest Party" of France. 250,000 to 300,000 demonstrators rallied at the Place de la Bastille. The Comintern generalised the French tactic to all the Stalinist parties and enshrined it at the "Seventh Congress" The SFIO leaders stepped up their attack on the Trotskyists.

At the Lille Congress (July 1935) the expulsions of the Bolshevik-Leninists began. Trotsky's pressure on the Bolshevik-Leninists to prepare a final intransigent battle however met stiff resistance. The resistance did not come from the youth who had been

won from reformism but from those like Pierre Frank - today the elder statesman of the United Secretariat - who declared "It would in my opinion be fatal to think of leaving the SFIO."

Faced with Blum's onslaught Pivert, revealing his ingrained centrism, held that "At any price, it is therefore necessary to remain in the party." Just after the expulsions began he split from Zyromsky, setting up the "Gauche Revolutionnaire" faction to limit the number likely to leave with the Trotskyists. Faced with the defection of Pivert the Trotskyists to some extent lost their nerve. Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank fought the expulsions on the basis of the legality of the SFIO and an appeal to unity, calling Blum and co "splitters". Trotsky bitterly replied, "...attack the expellers not as 'splitters' (that's the small talk of Pivert) but primarily as the valets of French Imperialism." In November he observed, "These comrades had taken a liking to their activity in reformist and centrist circles and hoped to progress further and further. It was a mistake."¹⁴ In December he observed even more sharply, "...it is necessary to know not only how to enter but also how to leave. When you continued to hang onto an organisation that can no longer tolerate proletarian revolutionaries in its midst, you become of necessity the wretched tool of reformism, patriotism, and capitalism."¹⁵

At this point the adventurism and opportunism of Molinier and Frank led them to the idea of launching a "mass paper" La Commune with the Pivertists. (Pivert himself refused). This led to a serious split which effectively crippled the French Trotskyists nullifying most of the gains of the previous year and certainly incapacitating both groups for the great period of working class upsurge during June of the following year (1936).

'WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK': LAY THE CORPSE TO REST

THE CARDBOARD CUT-OUT nature of Women's Fightback (WFB) was clearly revealed at its 1982 AGM held last month. Less than 40 women turned up - a far cry from the heady days of WFB's launch in 1980. The previous week, a member of the WFB steering committee, writing in Socialist Organiser, had plaintively asked 'Is there anybody out there?' The answer is obviously a resounding "No"!

Just a handful of WFB groups exist. Rachel Lever's Secretary's report noted: "There is very little system - as the groups are autonomous and some of the best never formally tell us of their existence - let alone their non-existence." She explained that WFB is a ginger group whose role is to mobilise larger forces for certain events in the localities. It can justify its existence by providing a bridge between Women's Sections and campaigns "even though we have no political differences with the average Women's Section."

From its inception WFB consciously chose this perspective of "co-ordinating the fragments", rejecting the proposals from Workers Power to build around a clear action programme which could be used to support and give a lead to the struggles of working class women against Tory attacks and to call left-talking leaders to account.

Instead WFB has, like its partner the Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA), moved steadily rightwards. It has reflected the overall decline of the 'socialist feminist' current which has disappeared into reformist welfare projects or Labour Party branches. The overwhelming concern of WFB has been the battle inside the Labour Party to improve women's position by challenging the 'patriarchal structures' in the labour movement.

At the AGM the Secretary sought to consolidate this feminist drift through amendments to WFB's policy statement. These involved defining WFB as

'an autonomous women's campaign' and asserting that only women would fight for women's interests in the labour movement. Rachel Lever introduced these as 'uncontroversial' amendments which merely gave expression to the policy that WFB newspaper has been following in the past year. On the latter point she was absolutely accurate. On the former, disingenuous. There was enough opposition to Lever to insist on further discussion - but at a later date.

But no coherent alternative to Lever's policies emerged. A call for more trade union work including a campaign in NUPE for affiliation to WFB as decided at NUPE's annual conference, couldn't mean much when nothing had been built after the WFB Trade Union Conference in March. Why? "We weren't sure what we were doing" said the Secretary.

Women from Manchester wanted a newspaper to sell to working class women on estates and in shopping centres. They still hold to the old position of Workers' Action for building a working class Women's movement - a position in practice long abandoned in the move to the right in the SOA project. But the Manchester perspective for building such a movement, concentrating on local work with women on estates cannot begin to build the necessary core of organised women at work. This atomised, localist approach in effect leaves the reformists a clear run in any national campaign.

Other women argued vainly for WFB to pay attention to the action programme which it passed last year, when supporters of Socialist Press joined the SOA and WFB. But the programme has never been taken seriously, never informed or directed WFB's work, and is never referred to except by its original proponents.

These tentative differences could be easily accommodated or ignored. There was no serious challenge to Rachel Lever's perspective for Labour Party

Trotsky summed up the principles of the entry work associated with the "French turn" in the article "Lessons of the SFIO entry":

1. Entry into a reformist centrist party in itself does not include a long perspective. It is only a stage which, under certain conditions, can be limited to an episode.
2. The crisis and the threat of war have a double effect. First they create the conditions in which the entry itself becomes possible in a general way. But on the other hand, they force the ruling apparatus to resort to expelling the revolutionary elements.
3. To recognise in time the bureaucracy's decisive attack against the left wing, and defend ourselves from it, not by making concessions, adapting or playing hide and seek, but by a revolutionary offensive.
4. What has been said above does not at all exclude the task of "adapting" to workers who are in the reformist parties by teaching them new ideas in the language they understand. On the contrary this art must be learned as quickly as possible. But one must not, under the pretext of leading the ranks, make principled concessions to the top centrists and left centrists.
5. Devote the most attention to the youth.
6.firm ideological cohesion and perspicacity towards our entire international experience. 16

It is scarcely surprising that when in the late 1940's and early 50's Pablo, Healy and Co junked the "old Trotskyism" they junked the "entry tactic" in favour of a new form of entryism. Today faced with the onslaught of the Goldings and Healey's, today's 'entryists' show themselves worthy successors of the post war grand masters of degenerate 'Trotskyism'. ■

by Dave Stocking

Footnotes

1. Communist Manifesto . Selected Works Moscow 1969 Vol.1 pp119-120
2. Entryism "of a special type" Michel Pablo. Towards a History of the F.I. International Secretariat Documents 1951-54 Vol.1 of 4 Volumes. pp31-2
3. ibid p 35
4. Minutes of Third World Congress in International Information Bulletin Dec.1951 cited in "The Question of the International" Frank Richards. Revolutionary Communist No.2 May 1975
5. Daniel Guerin "Front Populaire - Revolution Manquee" Paris 1976. p67
6. ibid
7. "The New Jacobins" Daniel R. Brower. N.Y. 1968 p 60
8. Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement 1934-40 p 487
9. ibid p 480 "Suggestions for a French Program of Action" Spring 1934
10. ibid p 482
11. Writings of Leon Trotsky 1934-35 . N.Y. p 32
12. Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement 1934-40
13. From "L'entre-deux Guerres" by Pierre Naville
14. "Crisis in the French Section" L. Trotsky
15. ibid p 116
16. ibid pp 125-6

work. She was seeking support for the formation of a new 'Labour Women's Fightback' which she considered necessary because the CLPD Women's Action Committee, which allied with WFB in promoting constitutional changes, has rejected proposals for a joint Labour Party organisation, and WFB has failed to build its own group of supporters. The AGM couldn't quite swallow this unilateral declaration of independence and in voting to set up a Labour Party working group, added a rider that it should be accountable to the steering committee.

So what lead will WFB give to women in the Labour Party? The AGM plenary did not discuss what proposals should be put to the WFB conference for Labour Women to be held on November 27th. The report from the Labour Party workshop at the AGM contained not one mention of the witchhunt, let alone how to fight it, or any assessment of what the triumph of the right would mean. Yet this victory means precisely that the path is smoothed for a Labour Government of the Callaghan-Healey variety or a coalition, which will continue the Tory attacks on women.

It is this question which should be at the centre of discussion on Nov.27th, along with the need to fight in the Labour Party for support for women workers in struggle. But on present form, WFB will stagger on, blinkered and preoccupied with advancing the interests of feminists in the Labour Party, in which work, as the Secretary put it: "we know the rules and regulations and how to beat the right"!

Critics of this perspective who remain in WFB are simply helping to prolong its existence and shelving the task of developing the methods and programme to build the desperately needed core of women militants. The corpse of WFB needs not reviving but laying to rest. ■

by Sue Thomas

P.S.O.E. OR ARMY - WHO REIGNS IN SPAIN?

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Spain (PSOE) have won a landslide election victory. Despite attempts by Francoite officers to intimidate voters with their threats of a coup d'etat, the PSOE has secured an absolute majority with 201 seats out of 350.

The leading governmental party - the UCD - was wiped out by these elections. Previously, the UCD held 168 seats. Now with a miserable 7% of the votes they are reduced to 13. In its place, the Spanish bourgeoisie are cultivating the Alianza Popular (AP). Unlike the UCD this is a party of the bourgeoisie rather than a motley collection of lack-lustre technocrats who used to staff Franco's bureaucracy. Led by Manuel Fraga Iribarne it held only 9 seats (5.8% of the vote) in 1979. Now it commands 25% of the vote and occupies 105 seats in the Congress.

These elections should not normally have taken place until Spring 1983 but were called prematurely. In August it became clear that the UCD was no longer able to govern, badly shaken as it was by the PSOE's victory in the Andalusian regional elections and by Suarez's desertion to form the CDS. This UCD government had been playing for time ever since it was rocked by Lieutenant-Colonel Tejero's aborted coup d'etat on February 23rd 1981. A quarter of its deputies deserted it over the last parliamentary session, and on October 26th, the Employers' Confederation voted to break with it and transfer its support to AP.

Due to its isolation after the Civil War, Spanish capitalism did not take advantage of the technological revolution after World War II until the 1959 plan. In 1973 productivity was still less than half that of average productivity in the EEC. Increased competition due to the international economic crisis forced the Spanish bourgeoisie to carry out huge numbers of sackings and push down workers' living standards. These attacks, added to inflation, lay behind the increasing strike movements in the last years of Franco's reign. The bourgeoisie was also confronted with the perennial problem of the Spanish state's lack of cohesion and the strength of the nationalist movements, especially in the Basque country and Catalonia.

It was under these conditions that the PSOE has emerged as a major force. When Felipe Gonzalez takes office in December he will have to deal with an inflation rate (15%) twice the European average. Unemployment is standing at 16% and rising.

In spite of the PSOE'S main election slogan - Por el Cambio (For Change) - the best bloodhound would not extract the slightest whiff of radicalism from its programme. The only real 'change' is the short change Gonzalez is preparing to give Spanish workers. As the Economist (Oct.2/8) put it: "Mr. Gonzalez does not want to raise the expectations of his supporters with promises he cannot fulfill in government. So the party's election manifesto...has all the left-wing fire of a parish newspaper."

The only nationalisation proposed in the PSOE'S programme is of the national electricity supply system - already nationalised in most European countries. However local electrical companies will remain in private hands. In spite of calls from the UGT'S (General Workers Union) bank workers' federation, to nationalise the financial system, the PSOE dropped this demand, in fact a Catalan banker participated in drawing up one of the chapters of the PSOE'S economic programme. Gonzalez has promised to give handsome handouts to the bosses. Employers' social security contributions will be cut by

20%, the difference being paid for by the State.

The PSOE has promised to create 800,000 new jobs over the next four years. But this figure means reducing unemployment by only 3% down to 12%! And though it talks of reducing the working week to 40 hours, this will be in exchange for productivity increases. Unemployment benefit is supposed to be extended to two years but will still not cover all unemployed workers.

On the wages front, the PSOE accepts that wages should increase on the basis of inflation over the coming year and not real price increases over the previous year. This policy was at the heart of the Moncloa Pact, signed by both the PSOE and the PCE in October 1977. It specified that wage increases should not exceed 11% for an inflation rate that turned out to be 15% in 1978. In 1981 increases were limited to between 9% and 11% although inflation was predicted at 15%.

The two main unions are the CCOO (Workers' Commissions - the strongest union and dominated by the PCE) and the UGT (General Workers' Union, which traditionally supports the PSOE). Less than one fifth of Spanish workers are unionised and both major unions have been losing members recently. Both supported the Moncloa Pact and have consistently signed away their members jobs and living standards in a series of pacts since then. After signing the 1981 National Employment Agreement the leader of the CCOO, Camacho, stated that "The present threat of a coup d'etat makes it necessary for political forces to adapt to the situation...for the CCOO this involves accepting compromises, like this Agreement." With such a spineless leadership intent on class collaboration, Spanish workers are left defenceless. The UGT openly called for a vote for the PSOE while the CCOO discreetly called for a vote for the PCE, ("the party which supports our programme"). Now the PSOE has won we can expect even less resistance from these union bureaucrats.

Although it criticised the PSOE for being "social-democratic", the PCE put forward the ludicrous policy of a Democratic Front with the bourgeois parties. Its main disagreement with the PSOE is, in fact, over the way in which Gonzalez refuses to ally with it or accept PCE Ministers in its government.

The PCE has gone a long way to prove to the bourgeoisie that it is responsible. It flies the Monarchist flag and has given up the clenched fist and references to Leninism. It has also been in the forefront of the Eurocommunist movement in condemning the Stalinist bureaucracy's invasion of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan and denouncing repression in Poland. In 1979 it even proposed fusion between all the unions and the PSOE to create a big Spanish version of the Labour Party. Its programme today does not mention the nationalisation of the banks and talks of the need to aid small companies.

Such tailing of the PSOE however, resulted in great internal dissent (with pro-soviet elements being expelled and the Basque CP splitting away) and a fall in membership from 200,000 in 1977 to 110,000 in 1981, (the PSOE has 100,000 members).

The PCE'S miserable electoral showing should come as no surprise. 1.2 million voters deserted it to vote for the only party that stood a real chance of implementing a piecemeal reform programme as the party of government. The reformist policies of the PCE served only to advertise the PSOE'S platform.

In attempting to carry out 'reform' with the aid of Spain's main workers' parties, the bourgeoisie

has come up against opposition from sections of the Francoite state apparatus.

The bourgeoisie want to use the new democracy to fashion a more competitive Spanish capitalism. Fascist labour discipline was not very productive and failed to halt Spain's decline. However, the bourgeoisie needs to keep the army in reserve in case the working class forces the PSOE along a road it has no desire to travel, or the AP proves powerless to push through a meaningful austerity programme.

Yet events have shown this is no easy matter. The army chiefs refuse to simply be called onto stage at the moment the bourgeoisie wants them.

Although Gonzalez may have the support of many sections of the bourgeoisie (the business review 'Mercado' states that 85% of heads of companies think he is 'qualified to run the country'), many officers do not agree. It is reckoned that only 10% accept 'democracy'. Another 10% are frankly Francoite and ready to organise and support any attempted coup. The remaining 80% are 'passively hostile' and would be won to any coup that seemed likely to win. There are 65,000 officers and non-commissioned officers for a conscript army of 350,000. This means there is one officer or NCO for every 5 soldiers! And the purpose of such an army is clear: the main active service units are based around the main cities and not along the border, ready for internal war.

The PSOE will handle this nest of conspirators with kid gloves. It wants to move the main divisions to the Pyrenees and the coast. Promotion is to be on 'merit' rather than on seniority. The powers of the military courts are to be reduced. (Thanks to these courts only the main plotters were tried after the February 1981 coup and their accomplices resumed their military careers. Some suspect officers were promoted. After the Oct 27th coup of this year only 3 Colonels were arrested and a few other officers cautiously shuffled around.)

Following Tejero's coup d'etat on February 23rd 1981, the UCD passed several 'anti-terrorist' laws, aimed mainly at the Basque nationalist organisation ETA. These laws and the state repression which accompanies them were all supported by the PSOE. Designed to placate potential putschists, they represent a standing threat to all workers' and democratic organisations. The PSOE has no intention of repealing them. Neither does it intend to free Basque political prisoners. It has decided at all costs not to anger the army, which refuses to budge on these questions.

At present the PSOE is committed to organising a referendum on membership of NATO at an unspecified date in the future. NATO membership is dear to the army. Already the right is stepping up pressure to make sure that Spain does not withdraw. El Pais, (29/10) leading bourgeois daily, advised the PSOE to 'keep the referendum for a better occasion'. It cites the 'lack of outside support for the aims of the putschists' (reference to the US government) and points out that this could change 'if such a referendum were to be organised'.

Both the PCE and PSOE spread illusions in the ability of the King to stop the putschists and preserve 'democracy'. In doing so, they hold back workers and poor peasants from carrying out anti-capitalist activities that could endanger their alliance with the King and the centre-right bourgeois parties. Such docility can only subordinate the independent interests of the working class and make it unable to defend itself against an army that will

one day be used to smash its organisations. This is the same strategy that led Spanish workers to a crushing defeat at the hands of Franco 40 years ago. The only difference is that then the PCE's slogan was for the defence of the bourgeois Republic and not the Monarchy as today.

So keen is Gonzalez on the Constitution that during his last election rally he warned his supporters not to fly any other flag than 'the flag of the Constitution'. "Every Spaniard must know that those who fly any other flag on the 28th (election day - WP) or the 29th are provocateurs, enemies of the people, and not the people who want socialism and change." (El Pais 27/10) Having banned the Red Flag that day (unsuccessfully, several did appear in Madrid during the celebrations!) and replaced it with the flag of the Monarchist Constitution, Gonzalez shows his desire to placate the coup-plotting Generals. He believes they are as servile before the Constitution as he is. Thus he can say that he is 'sure that most officers are more concerned with professional efficiency than with politics'. (Economist 23/10).

This willful short-sightedness of the PSOE, shows that nothing has been learned of the lessons of 1936. Servility to the army and constitution is met with the jackboot beyond a certain point in the decline of a bourgeoisie's economic fortunes. Early in 1936 Gonzalez's ancestors denounced charges of plotting by the army as 'fantasies of the male menopause!'. Six months later they began a three year war, unsuccessfully fighting for their political existence. During that time the forefather of the PSOE and PCE continued to crush or divert independent working class resistance to fascism. It thereby betrayed the only force capable of saving it from fascism. The PSOE, by its programme prepares the way for a tragic re-run of this episode in history.

Now that the PSOE is in power, it will unfailingly attempt to compromise with the bourgeoisie and those parts of its state apparatus which are still 'unreformed'. This is unlikely to give rise to a stable regime. The working class will pay the costs of these compromises unless it takes action to defend its own democratic rights through a fight for the establishment of proletarian democracy, involving the destruction of Spanish capitalism. A movement to carry out this revolution must be centered today around *opposition to:*

- * the oppression of Spain's nationalities (Basques, Catalans etc);
 - * attempts to impose austerity through 'social pacts';
 - * reactionary legislation on abortion;
 - * membership of NATO and the presence of US bases;
- and a fight by workers to:

- * defend living standards and eradicate unemployment;
- * expropriate all finance capital and large industrial concerns;
- * deliver the land to those who work it;
- * break the power of the Church and nationalise its property;
- * defend these gains militarily against the capitalist army, whether of a Francoite or a 'democratic' nature.

Only a Trotskyist organisation can lead such a mobilisation towards the conquest of workers' power. ■

by R. Ascal

NATIONALISTS VOTE AGAINST BRITISH PLANS (CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE)

The economic, pro-imperialist 'Workers Party' chalked up ten and twenty times as many votes as PD in the same two constituencies for their belief in the 'democracy' of Prior's plans.

The Militant Tendency, not having in advance a ready-made 'Labour Party' to contest the elections, dismissed them as a sectarian irrelevancy. In the same week, at the Conference of the Irish Labour Party in the South, they failed to have a motion taken in support of building a Labour Party in the North. The argument for referring back the motion, made by an ex-CP trade unionist at the Conference, claimed that any attempt to build a Party in the North would immediately face the political issue of Partition and would shatter the unity (a purely formal and bureaucratic unity) of the workers movement in the Six Counties.

The Irish Workers Group, in its journal Class Struggle, argued that revolutionary communists, given the resources, should stand candidates on a revolutionary action programme

and should take their seats in the Assembly if it convened in order to continue the fight from there to mobilise both Catholic and Protestant workers in action against the combined military, political and economic offensive of capitalist imperialism. Such an action programme would explicitly point to the strategy of Permanent Revolution as the basis for bringing the working class of Ireland as a whole to the lead of all the struggles against the economic offensive, for democratic rights - against repression and clericalism, and against Partition so as to smash both states, north and south, in the fight to establish an all-Ireland Workers' Republic.

Despite the obvious failure of Prior's plan to stabilise the Six Counties through devolving political power gradually on a new assembly at Stormont on the basis of cross-community powersharing, Thatcher is unlikely to discard the Assembly yet. The largest party, the Official Unionists, which stole a considerable march on the more extreme Unionist

and Paisleyite DUP, showed signs of softening their hostility to the Assembly a week after the elections. The abstentionism of the SDLP's leaders was a reluctant concession to popular nationalist feeling but is entirely negotiable. Their own survival as a political party compels them to negotiate their position with Thatcher.

In those circumstances Thatcher still has some room to try to face down the opponents of the Assembly on all sides and begin to devolve limited powers to it. Slim though such a possibility is, and beset by the Provisionals' promise that "The war goes on", she must take consolation from the deepening crisis in the South which seems set to produce a change of government in the Republic, returning the much more collaborative Garret Fitzgerald and possibly reopening the prospect of an "Anglo-Irish" council through which the SDLP may be re-integrated into her plans.

In the South, the Fianna Fail Government, beset by the worst political crisis in the Republic since the Civil War, has finally fallen through a vote of no confidence. The Labour Party Conference on Oct. 23 rejected the left's attempt to absolutely rule out a post-coalition with Fine Gael.

That was the end of Haughey's last hope that there would be no credible alternative government. Even without Labour's possible entry into Coalition, the polls are showing that Fianna Fail's popularity is now matched by that of Fitzgerald's Fine Gael for the first time ever.

Within his own Fianna Fail party Haughey's credibility as leader is finished. The vendetta against him by Fitzgerald and by a section of his own party has even led to the resignation as Labour Party leader by Michael O'Leary. He has simultaneously abandoned his Party and is discussing the possibility of joining Fine Gael! O'Leary, former opponent of coalitionism, was smarting at his Party's conditional attitude to coalition. He had argued for a pre-election commitment to coalition but the union leaders, scared of losing the political camouflage of their rump Labour Party in another election rout, swung the Party Conference against both O'Leary and the Left, leaving the road open to a negotiated post-election coalition but requiring it to campaign on "its own" policies. An outright majority for Fine Gael would allow the union bureaucracy to "rehabilitate" its Labour Party in opposition. But it

would restabilise bourgeois rule for a savage offensive against the working class and also for a new level of collaboration with Thatcher's imperialist plans for the island as a whole.

The only principled alternative to this Republican and Centrist confusion was offered by the Irish Workers Group. In our journal "Class Struggle", we outlined a revolutionary communist attitude to the Assembly.

If the resources were available we would have stood for election to the Assembly and taken our seats if it convened. The election campaign, and the Assembly itself, could have been used as a platform from which to rally the nationalist population to a revolutionary action programme. This programme would summarise the strategy of Permanent Revolution, a strategy for bringing the working class of Ireland as a whole to the head of all progressive struggles.

- * Against the economic offensive!
- * For democratic rights!
- * Against repression and clericalism!
- * Smash partition. For an all-Ireland Workers' Republic. ■

by a member of the Irish Workers Group.

workers power

SOLIDARITY WITH POLISH WORKERS

POLISH

ONCE AGAIN THE Polish working class is poised to do battle with the Jaruzelski regime. A spontaneous strike wave greeted the regime's declaration outlawing Solidarnosc in October. The underground Solidarity leadership has now announced plans for strikes and demonstrations in November and December preparatory to a General Strike in the Spring. In the decisive battles ahead the Polish workers will face the possibility of either taking political power into their own hands or of bloody defeat at the hands of Jaruzelski's murder squads.

The regime's bid to establish new 'self-managing' unions was always bound to be an abject failure. So profound is working class opposition to the new unions that they are to be established on a bureaucratic installment plan which will ensure that these unions don't break loose from the regime. At first they will only be established in industrial plants with no lines of communication with other 'unions' on an industrial, trade, or geographical basis. Tribunals will vet their procedures, have the power to register and de-register them, and be empowered to reject their appointed officers. Any group of 50 employees is eligible to become the registered core of the only union that will be allowed in each plant.

This means of course that the managers and party officers in any given plant will be entitled to form themselves as 'the union'. In January 1984, if the plan proceeds smoothly, the plant unions will be able to federate on a trade and regional basis. And, if these stooge unions behave themselves, they will be brought together in a National Confederation planned for 1985!

The bureaucracy's decision to outlaw Solidarnosc was announced on Friday October 11th. By Monday morning illegal underground Solidarnosc committees were able to pull out the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk and 12 other major enterprises on the Baltic. Without any call from the Solidarnosc

underground co-ordinating committee the strike wave spread to Poznan, to the Ursus works and to the giant Nova Huta plant in Krakow. The strikers were driven back to work, but the Solidarnosc leadership has been forced to respond to this pressure. They have called for a general strike on November 10th and four days of strikes and demonstrations in December.

There are clear signs that workers will respond to these calls. Thousands of workers attended the funeral of steelworker Bogdan Wloski who was shot by police on the streets of Nova Huta. All reports suggest that the new official unions have proved a complete flop in the major plants - at Nova Huta, for example, only 100 have joined the new union out of a workforce of 40,000.

The Catholic Church is also lending its reactionary weight to restraining the working class. Primate Glemp hot-footed back from accompanying the Pope's rally of the faithful in Spain to declare "the conditions for a dialogue between Church and State continue to exist". He announced that he was prepared for an immediate meeting with Jaruzelski prior to the November 10th strikes. The clerical hierarchy is deeply fearful that its own privileged position within 'People's Poland' will be jeopardised by serious clashes between the regime and the working class.

The most influential sectors of the Solidarnosc leadership would now seem to be supporting the strategy that Jacek Kuron has been advocating over the last months. They are preparing to mobilise general strike action and now appealing to demoralised elements in the police and army to break with the regime. But the object of the exercise remains to force the regime to legitimise Solidarnosc and re-open negotiations with its representatives. This was the message recently smuggled out of Bialoleka camp by 9 interned Solidarnosc leaders - "a social compromise has to be won by force." The working class is being called to the streets in order to force the regime to restore the pre-martial law status quo.

Much of this argument is based on false estimates of divisions within the bureaucratic camp. The hardline Stalinist rantings of Tadeusz Grabski against Jaruzelski's supposedly 'more moderate' line are held up as evidence - particularly by the Church leaders - that



Crowd outside Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, middle of October. Banner reads: "Solidarity. It lives!"

FOR POLITICAL REVOLUTION IN POLAND!

there is a reasonable wing of the bureaucracy; the strategy advanced is one of strengthening and pressuring this wing so that the regime does not become even worse. Hopes remain that there is a wing of the bureaucracy that will reach a compromise with the working class. But the bitter experience of Poland shows clearly that, in the last analysis, all the major elements of the Polish bureaucracy always sink their differences over tactics in order to maintain bureaucratic rule. It is a fatal and crippling error to tie the struggles of the working class to expectations of securing lasting support from any section of the bureaucracy.

The fundamental flaw at the heart of all these arguments is the failure to understand that there can be no lasting period of conciliation and understanding between the workers and the Stalinist bureaucracy. Surely the very imposition of martial law showed that concessions wrung from the bureaucracy by force will be taken away the moment the working class is too weak to defend its gains. The only way the

working class could have defended, and extended, its gains of 1981 was to take power into its own hands by destroying the political rule of the bureaucracy through political revolution.

The class struggle in Poland must be waged so as to seize political power for the working class. In the battles ahead this means linking the strike committees in the plants together in delegate workers councils. It means setting up a workers militia under the control of the workers councils in order to defend strikes and demonstrations. It means fighting the bureaucracy to take political power into the hands of the workers councils in order to re-organise the planned economy under workers democratic management. Only on this revolutionary programme can the Polish workers settle accounts with their bureaucratic overlords. Only on this basis can they appeal to the workers of East Europe and the USSR to defend the Polish workers through struggle against their own Stalinist oppressors.

The Jaruzelski regime is prepared to spill more working class blood to

maintain its hold on power and defend the privileges of the Polish bureaucracy. It is all the more necessary therefore for the workers' movement in the capitalist countries to rally to the support of the Polish workers.

* No truck with Jaruzelski's stooge unions - boycott all delegations, establish no links with them.

* Black all imports from Poland. In the next months the Polish workers will be waging a life and death battle with Jaruzelski. British workers must show that it is they, and not Thatcher or Reagan, who are the true allies of the Polish workers.

This can be done by refusing to handle all cargoes from Poland and ensuring that all transports return unloaded.

* Build a Labour Movement campaign of solidarity with the Polish workers. No alliances with the anti-working class Cold War of the Tory Party, the Liberals or the SDP. ■

by Dave Hughes

NATIONALISTS VOTE AGAINST BRITISH PLANS

THE RESULTS OF the Six Counties elections for 'Prior's Assembly have yet again given the lie to the imperialist criminalisation policy of successive Labour and Conservative governments aimed at isolating anti-imperialist fighters. Not only did the Provisional Republican movement win a third of the Nationalist vote but they brought to the polls for the first time substantial sections of anti-Unionist voters such as the young and unemployed who traditionally expressed their alienation from the Northern state by not voting at all.

Having stood 12 candidates in 7 constituencies Sinn Fein topped the polls in Fermanagh-S Tyrone with Owen Carron MP

and in West Belfast with Gerry Adams. Through Martin McGuinness they came second to the SDLP's leader John Hume in Derry and in Mid-Ulster Danny Morrison took a seat from the SDLP's Paddy O'Hanlon. Sinn Fein's 10.2% of the total first preference vote, against 18.8% for the bourgeois nationalist SDLP, seriously contests the claim of the SDLP to represent the anti-Unionist population. It has further served to demoralise Hume's collaborationist party. Despite the SDLP's attempt to also appear as boycotters of Prior's plans, the whole political existence of Hume's party depends on coming to terms with the sectarian structures of the

loyalist state and eking out a few more crumbs for the nationalist population.

But if the results represent a significant consolidation of support for the Provisionals they fail to break in any way the stalemate of the thirteen-year war of attrition. Sinn Fein's electoral campaign failed to pose the active mobilisation of the anti-Unionist working class on a basis that could have dealt a concrete blow to imperialist policies. The wave of liftings and framings of activists have continued without any effective response despite all the protestations of the legal profession against the use of 'bills of indictment' to trample on the few remaining pretences of democratic legal procedure. And however much the results throw into relief the massive obstacles to any imperialist plan to politically stabilise the Six Counties, Thatcher and Prior's stepped-up repression of anti-imperialists will continue.

Sinn Fein's strengthening of its political control over the anti-Unionist working class has remained unchallenged by any alternative leadership or perspective committed to bringing the independent class interests and methods of workers to the head of the struggle. Such a struggle, instead of condemning the masses to be passive witnesses of a guerilla war, must be based in the working class around mass organised direct action against all the day-to-day features of repression and emergency legislation. The election results for the two councillor-candidates of the Peoples' Democracy (self-styled 'Trotskyist' section of the USFI) were 144 votes and 298 votes respectively out of over 34,000 votes in each of West and North Belfast. Given that their political platform was a pure nationalist echo of Sinn Fein, that result for PD represents exactly nothing for revolutionary communism.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 ►

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