

Workers power

30p/10p strikers

Monthly paper of the Workers Power group

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DEFEND PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS

HANDS OFF LIBYA!



EVERY WORKER IN Britain must condemn Reagan's attack on Libya. Thatcher's role in that attack - repaying the logistical support Reagan gave her during her own bloody escapade in the South Atlantic - must likewise be denounced.

The bombers that went into Tripoli and Benghazi perpetrated a real outrage. Without warning they delivered their deadly load. As the smoke cleared a picture of misery and death took shape. Almost fifty people, nearly all civilians, were murdered by Reagan's F-111s. Many more were injured.

The carnage symbolised the 'civilisation' that Reagan and Thatcher want to impose on the world. It should remind us too of the calculating brutality these creatures are prepared to use to achieve their aims. Of course every broadcast and every newspaper article has informed us what these aims are. They are to combat 'terrorism' and make the world safe for freedom loving people. The stench of hypocrisy and deceit is overpowering in Fleet Street and Broadcasting House. Lies are churned out by people who have forgotten, if they ever knew, what truth looks like.

Reagan's attack on Libya had nothing to do with a war against 'terrorism'. After all if this man was against 'terrorism' in general, why has he been trying to get approval for one hundred million

dollars of aid for the Contras in Nicaragua. These friends of Ronald Reagan are renowned for torturing peasants because they support the Sandinista government. Then again Reagan is a patron of UNITA in Angola. UNITA plants bombs, takes hostages and kills people, just like the 'terrorists' Reagan is supposed to oppose. Yet they are hailed as an organisation of freedom fighters. Now they are being equipped with Stinger missiles.

PALESTINE

Reagan no more opposes 'terrorism' than he favours communism. The real reason for his attack on Libya is that, under Qaddafi, that country has opposed, and on occasion obstructed, US imperialism's interests in the Middle East. In particular it has given support to the struggle of the Palestinian people for their homeland. This homeland was wrenched from them by America's Zionist allies. The Palestinians were expelled and Israel was created by fire and sword - and car bomb. The systematic terror used against the Palestinians by successive Zionist regimes was not merely supported by the US, it was paid for by them. Little wonder that along with Canada and Britain, Israel joined the miniscule fan-club after the raid on Libya.

Libya has, albeit episodically and insufficiently, supported the Palestinian struggle. It has, on occasion, fired back at the arrogant US Sixth Fleet as it tried to rule the waves of the Mediterranean. These are the reasons Reagan wanted to attack Libya. He wanted to demonstrate to all semi-colonies and all anti-imperialist forces that US imperialism rules.

In fact, in the privacy of their diners clubs and drinking haunts, US politicians are happy to admit that the raid was about getting Qaddafi and not about 'terrorism' at all. The Economist revealed:

"Officially America's aim was to make Colonel Qaddafi change his ways: unofficially, it is accepted in Washington that the only good Qaddafi is a dead, or at least, overthrown, Qaddafi."

The attack on Libya was an act of imperialist aggression. It comes as no surprise that Thatcher fully supports that act of aggression. Britain's own Mediterranean bases on Gibraltar and Cyprus mean that it is as keen as the US to tame any threat to imperialist domination and exploitation in the area.

British workers therefore have a special duty to defend Libya, and to support Libya against US/British aggression. How sickening it was to see Neil Kinnock's example on this duty. Putting

on statesman-like airs that ill-suit him, this upstart advised Thatcher and Reagan that there were better ways of smashing Qaddafi. He argued that: "Qaddafi is without doubt a malignancy" but that financial, economic and diplomatic weapons were more effective in destroying him, and making sure he is "squeezed to nothing".

Shadow Home Secretary Kaufman got in on the act when Thatcher announced the expulsion of 21 Libyans. This was too little and too late for this particularly ferocious Zionist. While the Tories were whipping up their anti-Arab frenzy, Kaufman accused them of "two years of complacency" despite his warnings that "potential terrorists are at large in this country".

CONDEMN

Kinnock and Kaufman differ over the means used by Reagan and Thatcher, not the aims. But we must ask, what if your means are insufficient Mr Kinnock? Will you then sanction the use of the bombs and missiles? The Labour movement must condemn the leadership of the Labour Party for calling for an economic attack on Libya.

Given the use of British bases to blitz Tripoli it is all the more vital that the labour movement commits itself to forcing Britain out of NATO in a fight against

THE PERPETRATORS OF the bombing justify their action as a strike against 'terrorism'. The press is going wild about Libya being a haven for ruthless and motiveless killers.

The seven nation economic summit was due to meet in Tokyo and search for remedies to the world economy's ills. It will now set all that aside and launch a five point plan against terrorism instead. Thatcher and co are whipping up a terrorist scare at home in the hope of reviving her flagging 'Iron Lady' electoral credibility. Those who doubt her and Reagan's wisdom will now be accused of softness on the terrorists, of encouraging the terrorist threat to our happy homes.

That people have taken up arms to attack the Israeli and Imperialist presence in the Middle East needs little explaining. The peoples of the Middle East live under the direct or indirect rule of the major imperialist powers. For the majority of them this means super-exploitation and oppression at the hands of imperialism and its agents. For the Palestinians it means they have been driven out of their historic homeland by Zionism.

That this recent resort to arms should so often have taken the form of small scale raids on what are often civilian targets needs a little more explanation. At the hands of imperialism and the leaders of the Arab states the Palestinians have been physically dispersed throughout the Middle East. The hopes of the traditional leadership of the PLO, of securing a homeland through diplomatic deals has come to naught.

Dispersed and politically disunited groups of Palestinians and their supporters have sought to take action and refused to sit out their enforced exile passive in squalid refugee camps waiting for the next re-transportation or pogrom. It is a tragedy that at the disposal of such forces is only the ability to deploy the

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Kinnock and the Labour leadership. In order to oppose any further attacks on Libya militants must fight in every union branch, in every workplace and in every Labour Party organisation for:

- Unconditional support for Libya against US imperialism and its allies including Britain.
- Britain out of NATO. US fleet out of the Mediterranean. US bases out of Britain and Western Europe.
- Down with all blockades, economic or diplomatic sanctions against Libya.
- Fight to break the Labour Party and the TUC from their critical support for the campaign against Libya.

In addition, Libyans in this country are being targeted by Thatcher. A wave of repulsive anti-Arab racism is being deliberately whipped up. Libyan students are being rounded up and deported. Every instance of such racist attacks must be met by vigorous opposition - demos, protests, pickets, etc.

If the labour movement campaigns effectively against this latest act of imperialist barbarism it will not only aid the defence of Libya, it can also combat the drive to world war that Reagan and Thatcher are fuelling.■

U.S. BASES OUT OF BRITAIN!

BRITAIN OUT OF NATO!

LIBYA'S GREEN REVOLUTION



Qaddafi.

THE LIBYAN ARAB Republic was declared on September 1st 1969. Early that day a group of young junior officers in the Libyan Army (the Free Unionist Officers) seized power in a coup that overthrew the monarchy of King Idris.

Libya had been given its 'independence' - courtesy of British and French imperialism - at the end of 1951, after thirty years as an Italian colony and nine years of British administration after World War II. At independence the tiny population of Libya (1½ million) suffered all the 'benefits' of having been colonised for many years by imperialism. Its population was 90% illiterate, housing was primitive, there were virtually no medical services and little state education. Idris, head of the religious Sanussi sect, was supported by the British and French to help maintain their interests in the region. Britain and the USA developed important military bases in Libya.

The discovery of oil and its rapid exploitation from the early 1960s caused major changes in the Libyan economy. As the big western oil companies moved into Libya and subsidiary industries were developed there was a period of urbanisation - Benghazi doubled in size in ten years - and the working class, while remaining small, became a significant force.

The growing crisis of the Sanussi monarchy, as its tribal and feudal base was undermined, was revealed by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Idris, tied as he was to imperialist interests, refused to take a stand against the Israeli aggression. Libyan oil workers in contrast refused to load Israel's oil tankers. Mass demonstrations broke out in Tripoli and Benghazi against Idris's collusion. The victory of Israel over the Arab states stabilised the situation for Idris, who was able to crack down on the workers' movement, imprisoning many of their leaders. But Idris's days were numbered.

Within the army Muammar Qaddafi had already organised his Free Unionist Officers among the junior ranks. As student activists the group had been clearly influenced by the ideology and politics of Nasser - Egypt's President. Nasserism in the 1950s had been a mass movement, inspiring followers throughout the whole of the Middle East. At one level it represented the yearnings of the exploited and oppressed for relief from daily misery under direct or indirect imperialist domination. The masses of the Middle East also looked up to Nasser as the first Arab leader prepared to stand up to Israel. They looked to him to revenge the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland and also strike a blow at the chief prop and gendarme of US imperia-

lism in the region.

But Nasser represented more than this, he represented the narrow class interests of a small but ambitious Egyptian commercial bourgeoisie. Their appetites were held in check so long as imperialism dominated industry and agriculture, and above all the state. Once grabbing power in 1952 Nasser progressively became the figurehead for this class whose power, wealth and property mushroomed, courtesy of the state bureaucracy, while the condition of the workers and poor peasants barely altered.

NATIONALISM

Qaddafi took from Nasserism its anti-Zionism and its Arab nationalism. Indeed, he took Arab unity - the breaking down of frontiers created by imperialism and the fusion of states - much more seriously than Nasser.

But there was one very important difference between Qaddafi's Libya and Nasser's Egypt. Whereas Egypt possessed a reasonably developed working class, stable peasantry, together with a significant native commercial bourgeoisie and broad urban intelligentsia, Libya did not.

Qaddafi's regime developed many of the features of other nationalist governments in the semi-colonial world - a 'bonapartist' state attempting to pursue industrial development via state capitalism. Throughout the industrially undeveloped countries foreign capital often plays a decisive role, stunting the growth of the indigenous bourgeoisie and tying much of it to the imperialists' interests. This means that in many of these countries the bourgeoisie is relatively weak compared to the proletariat, which poses a constant threat to their rule. It is this factor which gives the state in many of these countries their 'bonapartist' character. The state, to some extent, manages to raise itself above the contending classes, governs, normally through the military, in the interests of the bourgeoisie, which itself is too weak to govern through the classic form of bourgeois rule - parliamentary democracy - for any sustained

period. As Trotsky pointed out in analysing the Mexican government of Cardenas (1934-40), military bonapartist governments could take two forms:

"It can govern either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the chains of a police dictatorship or by manoeuvring with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it, thus gaining the possibility of a certain freedom toward foreign capitalists." (Writings 1937/38 p326)

Qaddafi's regime had various unique features which both explain its stability over a long period and its ability to pursue its state capitalist development further than most other 'left' bonapartist regimes. Its bourgeoisie was extremely weak but so, initially, was its working class, a fact which gave the army and state bureaucracy an enormous weight and relative autonomy within the country. For example, the oil industry only employs 2% of the labour force and became heavily dependent on non-Libyans. Similarly in 1975 66% of construction and 40% of manufacturing workers were non-Libyans - subject of course to threats of deportation if they caused 'trouble'.

CONCESSIONS

Its enormous oil revenues, running to \$6.6 billion in 1974 and making up 60-80% of the state resources allowed it, to a large extent, to pacify the demands of both its bourgeoisie - through large profits, and its workers - through rising living standards. It also allowed it to avoid the stranglehold of the imperialist foreign debt, which entrapped most semi-colonial countries as they tried to industrialise through borrowing.

In 1969 Qaddafi announced he would not be renewing the leases on the US and UK bases and both countries left in 1970. This was followed by the take-over of the property of the Italian settler community of 30,000, who returned to Italy. A land reform was introduced and various semi-feudal remainders of the



Weinberger - Hands 'on' Libya!

Sanussi regime were abolished. However, the 'Revolutionary Command Council' (RCC) which governed the country was a far cry from today's 'socialist' Jamahiriya. Its pronouncements were anti-communist and it forthrightly backed a right-wing coup in Sudan which crushed the Sudanese Communist Party and repressed the trade unions.

The RCC took a cautious approach to the oil companies - the big three producers being ESSO, Oasis and Occidental. The old Sanussi monarchy had given these and others the best concessions in the whole Middle East. Libya's attempt at getting a bigger share of the profits met with stiff resistance. This eventually led to a spate of nationalisation between 1971 and 1973. Yet, only in three cases (including BP), was there a 100% takeover (with compensation). In the case of other companies Libya has a 50-85% controlling interest. Added up it gives Libya a 70% share in oil production today.

This oil wealth has been the mainspring for a drive to industrialisation in Libya. In 1970 Qaddafi created an industrial organisation agency (NPOI) in order to create new industry. All that time investment in industry was static at 5.4 million dinars. Within

a year it had trebled and by 1976 planned investment reached 152.1 million dinars. By 1980 the NPOI had funded 91 projects and as a result the working class in manufacture had increased from 26,000 in 1973 to 56,000 in 1980. The 1981-85 industrial plan heralded a major turn to heavy industry which was to fall foul of the decline in oil prices.

"STRUGGLE"

Whatever the difficulties of the last few years Qaddafi had, by the end of the 1970s, created a highly statist capitalist nation. As early as 1973 over ¾ of all capital formation was from the public sector.

1973 saw a significant shift by the regime. Qaddafi launched his own 'cultural revolution'. Like Mao, he mobilised the youth and students against the 'bureaucracy', and like the Chinese version, Qaddafi's struggle was in reality a struggle between different factions within his regime. A rightist tendency had emerged with the RCC identifying with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's dismantling of many of the state capitalist features of Nasserism. This faction reflected the growing ambitions

QADDAFI HAS EARNED the undying enmity of US imperialism especially because of his support for various liberation movements. Yet, as such movements have learnt to their cost, Qaddafi's 'anti-imperialism' is a fickle commodity when it contradicts Libya's national interests.

Qaddafi's backing for 'hardline' factions in the PLO has, like Syria's, obstructed moves backed by the US to push the PLO into a compromise with Israel. While Jordan and Egypt have nudged Arafat and the PLO in this direction, both Syria and Libya have given material aid to those within the PLO fighting such a sell out. But just as Syria has shown itself in the Lebanon to be a cynical manipulator of Palestinian interests where they clash with its own so has Qaddafi in relation to other liberation movements.

Having supported the Eritrean liberation movement in its just struggle for self-determination against Ethiopia under Haile Selassie, support for the movement was soon dropped once the Soviet backed Dergue came to power. Similarly having aided Polisario's struggle for independence in the Western Sahara against King Hassan of Morocco's occupation, the policy was suddenly reversed.

Under imperialist pressure from both within and without Libya,

QADDAFI'S 'ANTI-IMPERIALISM'



With Hassan - friend or foe?

In 1984 Qaddafi entered into a false 'union' with arch-reactionary King Hassan, hoping thereby to strengthen his position. The quid pro quo was to abandon support for Polisario. In June 1983 after a joint meeting between the two

heads of state, Qaddafi declared: "Libya has fulfilled its duty to the Western Sahara. There will be no further dispute between ourselves and Morocco on this question."

At various times Libya has

given support to the Irish Republican Army, Nicaragua, Grenada before the US invasion, and to the Chad forces fighting the French stooge government of President Habre. Qaddafi himself has had to seek support against imperialism's offensive by leaning on the Soviet Union for military support and aid. The limits of this were clearly shown by the quick withdrawal of a Soviet cruiser from Tripoli following a warning from the US that they were about to attack Libya!

Indeed Qaddafi's relations with other liberation movements are very much modelled on those of the Soviet Union with its allies in the semi-colonial world. They are seen as bargaining counters in the struggle with imperialism which are supported or sacrificed according to the advantage given to the supporting state.

The Libyan, Arab and African masses need none of this cynical 'anti-imperialism' subordinated to national interests. It is in the interest of the Libyan masses to support all liberation movements which are fighting imperialism and national oppression, unstintingly and consistently. Only such a policy opens up the real possibility of breaking imperialism's grip on the Middle East and North Africa and really defending Libya from US aggression. ■

of the Libyan bourgeoisie. The main source of growing private wealth was property investment, as the vast oil producing wealth was distributed by the state itself into its state capitalist projects and the pockets of its functionaries.

The salaried officials of the Libyan state were amassing fortunes as a result of speculative investment in housing. This sector was booming due to the influx of foreign workers. They wanted further opportunities to increase their private wealth. Qaddafi moved against this source of opposition, the urban middle-class, by restricting ownership rights. By 1978 he had nationalised the entire housing stock.

By 1979 the only potential source of power in the private sector was commerce so he attacked the import, wholesale and retail trade. During 1979 the Libyan government became the sole importer and at the same time it made the attempt to become the sole marketer for agricultural products inside Libya.

This campaign against sections of the bourgeoisie necessitated leaning more heavily on the students and workers as well as ensuring the army was completely under control of Qaddafi's faction. Qaddafi's attacks on the right - the RCC planning minister Omar Al Mihmishi fled to Egypt during this period - were accompanied by the espousal of the 'Third Universal Theory'. Like other 'progressive' nationalists Qaddafi had to develop a populist ideology which purported to find a 'third way' between capitalism and communism. Like Castro's original 'olive green' revolution or the FSLN's 'Sandinism', Qaddafi's 'third universal theory', soon to be expounded in his 'Green Book', drew eclectically from many strands of petit-bourgeois socialism. In Libya it amalgamated with Islam, which Qaddafi had declared in 1970 as being "certainly more progressive than communism".

REFORMS

Visions of 'direct democracy', 'popular power', 'workers co-operatives' and 'partnership' nestled predictably alongside denunciations of the class struggle and the equating of trade unionism with 'tribalism'. 'Basic Peoples Congresses' (BPC's) were set up to carry out this new 'revolution' culminating in the 'General Peoples Congress' in March 1977 which declared the 'Socialist Peoples' Libyan Arab Jamahiriya' (state of the masses). The RCC was abolished and Qaddafi appointed "revolutionary intellectual and master leader".

The BPC's were classic organs of controlled mobilisation for a bonapartist regime which had to lean on the masses in its clashes with the bourgeoisie and imperialism. Elections were not allowed. Instead, a process of consultation and dialogue produced a 'consensus' which happily coincided with the Qaddafi wing's point of view. By 1978 an even more all pervasive method of control was introduced - the 'Revolutionary Committees'. Hand picked candidates, chosen by Qaddafi's office and security services, were given training in providing intelligence reports, making propaganda etc. They were then sent to set up committees by recruiting reliable students, army personnel, workers etc. These were then given the right to veto all nominations to the BPC's, hold recall elections etc, and given both security and police powers. It is through these 'revolutionary committees', directed from the top downwards, and based in the army, workplaces, universities and schools that Qaddafi and his cohorts keep an iron grip on Libyan society.

The workers themselves have not escaped the regime's attention. In May 1970 Qaddafi introduced a labour law which dissolved the existing trade unions and federations. Up until then these unions had a proud history of struggle and had fought bravely against the monarchy. This was particularly true of the oil workers in 1961

and again in 1967.

In April 1972 Libyan workers lost the right to strike. Similarly any independent mobilisations outside Qaddafi's control were mercilessly put down, as, for example, the 1976 student demonstrations in Tripoli - when at least 10 were killed. Qaddafi's bonapartist measures hit even wider afield. In 1972 the death penalty was announced for anyone belonging to a political party and in the same year the Libyan press was subject to strict state censorship.

Yet Qaddafi has not relied upon terror and repression alone. He has drawn on the active support of those layers which have benefited most from the social reforms of his regime - especially the sons and daughters of the petit-bourgeoisie. Without these measures Qaddafi's base would have become dangerously narrow and, in particular, he would have been unable to mobilise support for his policies at those moments when he has clashed variously with opposition from within the army, from imperialism and from other Arab states.

DEFEND GAINS

At a basic level Qaddafi has used oil revenues to keep the poorer masses passive and relatively content through a system of welfare benefits which are impressive by African (and even Middle Eastern) standards. Sickness and insurance benefits are widespread. According to the UN for example, Libya has the best doctor/patient ratio in the Middle East. In the early 1970s the minimum wage was raised, rents were lowered and various profit-sharing schemes introduced. By 1975 one in four Libyans were in full-time education.

But the decline in oil prices in the 1980s has led to growing problems for the regime. Major industrial projects have been cancelled or frozen. Since then there has been a cutback in imports to preserve foreign currency reserves. The acute shortages this has led to has sparked significant discontent. Opposition groups have appeared in the 1980s in a manner not seen before. The National Front for the Salvation of Libya provide the main focus. It is mainly an exile group and overwhelmingly supported by those disappointed urban middle class elements whose ambitions were thwarted in the 1970s. The spectacular increase after 1981 of Qaddafi's sponsored assassinations of dissident Libyans abroad is a brutal indicator of the threat Qaddafi feels he is under.

Within Libya dissent has been contained. In the main the crisis has been off-loaded onto non-Libyans. In the summer of 1985, Qaddafi demonstrated his arab solidarity by expelling tens of thousands of Tunisian and Egyptian workers and blocking their savings in Libya.

The erosion of social benefits, the halt in industrialisation, the emergence of significant unemployment and the restrictions or reversal of gains in wages and working conditions, will all serve to increase discontent among the urban and rural masses. It is in the interests of the Libyan workers to defend the gains made under Qaddafi, the abolition of remnants of feudalism, the nationalisations, the improvements in health care etc, against those backed by imperialism who want to dismantle and roll back these advances and open the country to super-exploitation by imperialism. Around such demands as the struggle for trade union independence from the state, for workers control in the factories and workplaces, for genuine workers councils, for the separation of mosque and the state and the emancipation of Libyan women from the shackles of Islamic oppression, a genuine revolutionary workers movement can be built to settle accounts with imperialism in Libya and the Middle East. ■

by Stuart King
and Keith Hassel.

AFTER TRIPOLI ... MANAGUA NEXT?

TENS OF THOUSANDS demonstrated through the streets of the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, following Reagan's attack on Libya, protesting against US war mongering in the Middle East and Central America.

Nicaraguans know what it's like to be on the receiving end of "state terrorism". For the last five years the US government has been arming, training and directing the bunch of paid assassins, torturers and murderers who have been launching attacks from Honduras into Nicaragua - the "contras".

Nicaragua's "crime", like Libya's, was to have overthrown a government - Somoza's hated dictatorship - which was a complete lap dog of US imperialism. For daring to seek some sort of independence from US domination - by looking to Europe and especially to the Soviet Union for aid and support - the Sandinista government has earned the undying enmity of the US ruling class.

Reagan has tried various methods to force the Sandinistas into submission. Diplomatic 'pressure', trade boycotts, loan refusals and withdrawal of aid have all failed to remove or cow the FSLN regime. Therefore in 1981 Reagan played what he thought was his trump card: covert military action. Through agencies such as the CIA the United States set about helping exiled remnants of the old Somoza dictatorship form an armed force to operate inside Nicaragua.

Yet far from being a catalyst for a challenge to the Nicaraguan government it is apparent that the contras have been gradually eroded as a serious fighting force. In the face of contra murders of hundreds of Nicaraguans and the harm done by their economic sabotage the vast majority of Nicaraguans have rallied to the side of the government.

In 1983 a force of 1,200 contras, who were aiming to set up contra controlled areas inside Nicaragua, were routed and fled back to their bases in Honduras. Thomas Borge, Minister of the Interior was able to declare recently that, "The contras have passed their historical peak... they will never again be able to have the same effect."

It is this potential defeat of the contras which lies behind Reagan's frenzied pro-contra campaign over the last few months. Central to the US administration's plans is its attempt to obtain a further \$100 million in aid from Congress for the contra forces. This is necessary both to rearm and re-equip the contra forces and to offer the necessary financial incentive to an army which primarily "marches on its wallet".

DEFEAT

Despite frenzied political manoeuvring and a concerted press and television campaign costing thousands of dollars, the White House has so far been unable to over-ride the opposition in Congress. On March 20th Reagan's call for aid was defeated in the House of Representatives by 222 votes to 210.

Reagan has yet to convince the majority of Americans that the contras are the "freedom fighters" he claim they are. Also there is a growing fear that the US forces on the Honduran border with Nicaragua which build the military airports, train the Honduran troops and which quite recently airlifted them to confront a so-called Nicaraguan "invasion", will be drawn into a Vietnam type situation in Latin America. Two State governors - of Maine and Massachusetts - have already barred National Guardsmen from their states from joining Army manoeuvres in Honduras.

Yet the "opposition" from the Democrats in Congress is not to what Reagan is trying to do, but, like Kinnock on Libya, to how it should be done. The rightward



Reagan's aims are clear.

moving Democrats do not dispute the need to bash the Sandinistas back into line, nor are they against the arming of the contras to do it. Indeed the "compromise" they offered involved releasing "non-lethal" aid now (e.g. "defensive" portable surface to air missiles!) and tying the rest of the aid to success in negotiations with the FSLN government. That is, if the Sandinistas did not bend to the changes required by Washington the rest would be released to the contras.

CHAUVINISM

Banking on the wave of jingoistic nationalism which the Administration encouraged around the offensive against Libya, the Republicans rejected the "compromise", overwhelmingly defeating the Bill in the House of Representatives on April 16th. Reagan hopes to re-present his proposals to the Congress for the full \$100 million while the war mongering chauvinism is still rife, ensuring as little delay as possible in fully rearming his contra force.

The threat to Nicaragua is therefore very real. Alongside



Contras in Honduras waiting for the word.

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arsenal of the small-scale weapons store rather than the mighty weapon of the international class struggle.

Their chosen targets reflect an intransigent hostility to imperialism and Zionism. Unfortunately their ballistic and political horizons are insufficient to inflict any serious damage to their real oppressors or achieve real improvements for the oppressed people who they fight for. To that extent we oppose the commitment and anger of heroic freedom fighters being diverted into goals that neither weaken the enemy and which, in reality, substitute the brave gestures of the few for the building of a decisive force out of the many.

Such fighters have found friends amongst the Arab leaders before. They have been used as pawns in bargaining with imperialism and Israel and in conflict between the Arab states. Most of them bear no responsibility for the cynical self-interest of those who provide them with temporary sanc-

tuary and occasional backing. They are waging a just war against exploitation and oppression with means that will not secure them victory.

It is impossible for us to equate the carnage inflicted over the years by the world's most powerful imperialism and the results of the bombings perpetrated by fighters against Zionism and imperialism. One terror is that of the exploiters and oppressors, the other is a voice of the oppressed and downtrodden. We have no doubt that we fight behind the same battle lines as the latter.

Kinnock and Hattersley will warn workers off from defending Libya by reviling them for defending 'terrorism'. There is no room for a mealy mouthed response to them. Yes! We stand with those fighting to free the Middle East from imperialist exploitation. Our difference is that we will fight to mobilise the workers' involvement to active support for that struggle and, in so doing, open the road to effective class struggle against imperialism as an alternative to the isolated actions that imperialism is preparing to resist. ■

the \$100 million, in the wake of Libya, Reagan is raising the prospect of direct US military action against Nicaragua. The money is needed for the contras, he has said, "so we will never have to send our American boys."

Direct US involvement is likely to increase in any case with the plan to employ US Green Berets to train the contras at bases in Honduras and the United States.

Increasingly sophisticated weapons are being supplied - including the Stinger surface-to-air missile and the British-made Blowpipe surface-to-air missile - demonstrating the intention of Reagan and his partner-in-crime, Thatcher, to increase the military stakes in the region. The threat to Nicaragua appears more menacing every day.

A defeat inflicted on Nicaragua by the United States would be an enormous blow to all those fighting imperialism throughout Latin America and the rest of the world. It is the duty of all socialists and working class forces to give unconditional support to anti imperialist forces in their fight against the likes of Reagan and Thatcher. Solidarity with the Nicaraguan people is a burning necessity.

In Britain this means raising the question in trade unions and Labour Parties. Resolutions must be passed condemning Reagan's and Thatcher's war-mongering and supporting Nicaragua's right to self-defence. The Labour and trade union movement must commit itself to blocking all aid to the contras and winning support for Nicaragua's struggle.

A victory for Nicaragua against Reagan would boost all anti-imperialist forces worldwide and would aid us all in our struggle against the capitalist class both here and abroad.

- Solidarity with Nicaragua!
- Stop aid to the contras!
- End British complicity in Reagan's attacks!

IN THE DOLDRUMS

IN THE WEEK after the LPYS Conference, Militant gave a glowing account of the proceedings: "The Labour Party Young Socialists National Conference this Easter was a cure for all pessimism about the future of socialism". But 'socialism' apart, it is hard not to be pessimistic about the future of the LPYS.

The overall feature of the conference was its decline; in numbers, enthusiasm and in the quality of political argument. The number of delegates was down this year to 246. Last year, at the end of the miners' strike, it was 320 and, in 1984, it had peaked at over 400. Whereas at the beginning of the miners' dispute there were 2000 visitors, this year the conference consisted of barely a thousand altogether.

The decline of the YS confirms everything Workers Power has said about its Militant leadership. We do not rejoice in the fact that Labour's youth organisation is hardly bigger or more dynamic than the Federation of Conservative Students. But the conference should act as a warning to Militant supporters and those in the YS who follow them.

The real reason for the state of the YS is twofold. First, the working class has suffered major setbacks and defeats over the last three years. The Tory victory of 1983, the defeat of the miners, the climbdown of the POEU, the defeat of Liverpool City Council, the witch-hunting in the Labour party - all these have left their mark on the workers' movement. The second reason is the politics and strategy of Militant themselves.

ENERGY

Despite the defeats, tens of thousands of working class youth have been involved in struggle over the last period. The young miners, black youth in the inner-cities, 250,000 striking school students have shown the energy that exists amongst youth. A youth movement with a real Marxist leadership would have organised and recruited thousands from the upheavals of the last three years. But Militant's politics fall woefully short of the aspirations of the best fighters.

The police and army are portrayed as "workers in uniform" who need trade union rights instead of a good hiding. The threat of war is treated as a "middle class issue". The problems of young women are reduced to the "economic" sphere of low-pay, and the struggles of the oppressed are ignored on the basis of maintaining working class unity. In the miners strike Scargill was hailed uncritically... until the week after the defeat when Militant discovered there should have been a ballot. The mistakes of Liverpool are covered-up. All the lessons and the effects of defeated struggles are ignored as "Marxism grows from strength to strength".

In addition, this year Militant made a conscious attempt to keep the YS a low key affair. This too is 100% in line with their strategy for fighting the witch-hunt. Instead of fighting for their right to hold fringe meetings, Militant kept their heads down, claiming they were 'prevented' from holding a meeting. In reality every other tendency was able to hold a fringe meeting. The real decision to prevent Militant's usual meeting was taken by Militant themselves in their determination not to be kicked out of the Labour Party.

Where is the LPYS going now? It remains under attack from the Labour leaders, who have slashed its budget, threatened to get rid of its full time organiser and will fuse it with the right-wing led National Organisation of Labour Students at the first opportunity.

UNIONS

One of the main themes of the Conference was the need to "turn to the unions". Workers Power has argued that the key to the Labour Party is held by the trade union bureaucrats. All talk of "transforming the Labour Party", of electing "Marxist MPs" and "Marxist" Labour Councils is useless without serious revolutionary work in the trade unions and the workplaces. Militant on the other hand have constantly

LPYS

downplayed this. One result was the Liverpool defeat where Militant had accumulated plenty of 'power' in the wards and DLP, but had failed to organise and prepare the workforce separately from the council. Another result threatens to be the overwhelming support of the trade union leaders for whatever measures Kinnock decides to take against the YS, Militant and the rest of the organised left in the Labour Party.

In warding off such attacks, Militant's work in the unions consists primarily of electing. Their work in BLOC shows this. Nevertheless the 'turn' to the unions should be built upon by real revolutionaries in the YS. Immediately this means fighting for mass youth delegations to Wapping, establishing YS factory bulletins around key workplaces - in particular in the YTS. It also means fighting for rank and file organisations in the unions that can struggle independently of the bureaucrats: not just in the right-wing led unions but also in those led by the soft left like NUPE, and most important the NUM (now dominated by a coalition of CP and Labourite 'anti-Scargillite' characters).

But the YS must also take the lead in the important political struggles of youth. No better demonstration of Militant's inability



to do this could be found than the events of April 19th. Having decided that "union work" was important, the YS totally ignored the mass demonstration outside the US embassy in favour of sending delegations to their own stage-managed BLOC conference in Sheffield. With Libya on the minds of every class conscious youth, with ten thousand young workers, students and unemployed prepared to confront the police in Oxford Street, not one YS banner was to be seen.

Only one element within the YS conference was not in decline. This year Workers Power's delegation was bigger than ever. We have no delusions of grandeur, but the fact that Militant were

compelled to denounce us from the platform is significant. It proves that the key to ousting Militant from the leadership of the YS, and turning the YS into a fighting, revolutionary youth movement is politics.

BLIND ALLEYS

The politics of Socialist Action, Socialist Organiser and International have led each of them in turn into their own particular blind alley; Socialist Action's alliances with the witch-hunters, Socialist Organiser's "democratic" concessions to Ulster loyalism,

International's exclusion of other tendencies from debate at fringe meetings. All of them have declined in the YS and are drifting off to the green and peaceful pastures of the National Union of Students.

Our politics, revolutionary politics, are the only answer to the dire state of the YS. Because we rely on neither a "socialist Labour government" nor an alliance of all the oppressed on the basis of middle-class politics we can steer an independent course for socialist youth. That course is the creation of a fighting revolutionary working class youth movement. ■

by Paul Mason

NO RATE, NO FIGHT

ON THE 2ND April, in the Assembly rooms at Lambeth Town Hall, to the strains of the Red Flag and Internationale, the 31 surcharged and disqualified Lambeth Labour Councillors, saw out their last hours in office.

They had been surcharged for £106,000 and face legal costs of £220,000. Some on the platform were tearful; many in the audience were demoralized and confused. Why had their strategy for fighting rate-capping ended in such defeat?

At the time the strategy was being discussed, supporters of Workers Power argued that, in order to smash the Rates Act, it would be necessary to mobilize the trade unions and community, not just to attend rallies and one-day events, but for all-out strike action, to be extended across the ratecapped boroughs, and to the private sector and non-rate-capped boroughs. We argued that at the end of the day only the industrial muscle of the unions, backed by the community and users of the 100 services, would be able to take on the government, forcing them to concede rather than pleading for talks.

In the Labour Party our supporters argued that the best way to mobilize the unions would be through an expansionary budget based on the genuine needs of the working class and community. We called on Labour Groups to set an illegal rate, to introduce an expansionary deficit budget, and to halt all interest payments to the City and withhold the police precept.

The local councils rejected this strategy of confrontation and mobilisation, and plumped instead for their 'no-rate, wait-and-see' tactics.

Set as they were on 'pressure' by rallies and protests to force

Lambeth

negotiation, they held back from the real task of winning the arguments amongst rank and file Council workers as to why confrontation would be necessary.

In Lambeth neither the council's leadership via Ted Knight nor the trade union bureaucracy via Joint Trade Union Committee (JTUC) leader Jim O'Brien attempted to build a militant movement amongst the rank and file.

At a Lambeth JTUC meeting on the 14th June 1985, three days after the District Auditor had written to the Labour Councillors stating that they would be surcharged for 'wilful misconduct', Ted Knight called on the Lambeth unions to give "whatever support you think possible and necessary". Asked what type of action he thought necessary, and whether he was in favour of all-out strike action, he said he thought it would be 'presumptuous' of a Labour leader to "tell the unions what to do".

The Trade Union leaders in Lambeth also consistently pulled back from calling, or organising for, strike action in support of the councillors or in defence of their own members.

In February 1985 Jim O'Brien stated in Labour Local:

"If any move is made by this government to oust those Councillors, then we will be out in total support of the Labour Councillors. There's no question whatsoever".

These fine words were never accompanied by clear calls for the local unions to take all-out action. As every 'trigger' event for which O'Brien had promised action came and went, the council workers stayed at work, despite unions like AUEW and ACTSS/TGWU having adopted a policy of all-out action.

The truth is that the past year has not represented, as Ted Knight tried to claim in his farewell speech as Group leader, 'a victory' but a defeat. On the 19th March 1986, with the minimum of publicity, the Labour Group complied with the Rates Act and set a legal rate that will mean, by the Labour Group's own reckoning, a shortfall of approximately £40 million. Knight proposes to balance the books by selling off and leasing back council property like the Town Hall. By doing this he argues that the Council can 'muddle through' until a Labour Government is elected and bails them out. In response to criticisms that this strategy would continue to demobilize the workforce and leave them open to job losses and cuts, Knight responded that Workers Power wanted a fight for its own sake.

OFFENSIVE

The task of activists in Lambeth and in every rate-capped borough, is to ensure that the workforce is prepared for the inevitable attack which is looming. In Lambeth, whether the Tories manage to lower the rate at the next council meeting (they plan to cut the budget by 13%), or whether the cuts are made by an in-coming Labour or Tory administration after the May elec-

tions, the fact remains that the huge shortfall in the budget makes cuts inevitable. Workers must be prepared to implement a policy of total non-co-operation with any cuts, rigorously, in every area of council expenditure, and to the last union member. Action committees across the unions must be set up now to co-ordinate this. Workers must also be prepared for strike action as and when the axe falls.

Militant workers must break with the tactics that have led to defeat. The only way to defeat the bosses' plans for cuts, to begin to provide the jobs and services which the people of Lambeth need is through direct working class action, challenging the legal shackles brought in by the Tories, and refusing to pay money out to the banks, finance houses and police. Yes, we want a fight - not 'for its own sake' as Knight accuses us, but as the only way to guarantee success.

Workers Power will be calling for critical support in the May 8th elections, not because we believe that Labour Councillors in boroughs and cities across the country will defy the law and defend workers, and not as the SWP say because they are "the lesser of two evils" but to keep them in the limelight, to put them to the test and to expose their every act of compliance. The experience of rate-capping has raised questions as to the role of these 'left' leaders. We intend to continue to expose the inability of their strategy to defend jobs and services, and to draw out the lessons for workers inside and outside the Labour Party. ■



CRACKING THE WHIP

AFTER THE 1979 General Election defeat for Labour the left's slogan was 'never again'. 'Never again' a Labour Government which slashed wages and jobs, which acted in the bosses interests and launched the biggest round of social spending cuts since the war. 'Never again' a PLP that was out of control of the Party, unaccountable to its base. 'Never again' a right wing Callaghan-Healey leadership.

So seven years later where does the Labour Party stand? Neil Kinnock, darling of the soft and soggy left, but **vanguard** of the right wing, is firmly in control. Kinnock has taken the reins and is launching the General Election Campaign. "Freedom and Fairness" is the slogan of the latest Labour Party roadshow.

Kinnock wants to play the Tories at their own ideological game and prove that the SDP is redundant because Labour has the same policies. The Tories are finding it more difficult to maintain their charade of 'caring capitalism', so our Neil will take over the job for them.

Out of the window go such 'unpopular' images as socialism, red logos and any commitments

Kinnock

to nationalisation, public housing provision and the like. Instead the Labour leadership is set on a course for black and blue booklets, presenting the party as the party of "individual liberty" and law and order. The image creators from advertising are to be used to create a Labour dream world of available cervical cancer screening, exemplary state schools and streets that are safe to walk in because there are lots of friendly bobbies on the beat.

On every major issue Kinnock has sided with the bosses, **precisely** to build up electoral credibility by showing the ruling class he is responsible enough to carry out their dirty work. In the mines he refused to support the heroic struggle and condemned the pickets for 'violence'. In the school students strikes he attacked the young class fighters. During the street rebellions in the inner cities he rounded on Bernie Grant and the black youth struggling to find a voice which the LP has not given them.

The leadership of the labour movement has backed his scheme.

The TUC are themselves embarking on such 'new realism' that the idea of consultation with Prime Minister Kinnock is their highest hope. Even the so-called left in the unions have swallowed the line and are competing to see who can be the most deferential. NUPE's Tom Sawyer has been a key figure in the NEC witch-hunts. TGWU General Secretary, Ron Todd, has promised not to press excessive wage demands on a future Labour Government in order that the priority may be given to bringing unemployment down to 1 million.

BOOST

Todd has persuaded the TGWU Executive to go on a 'back Kinnock' campaign and has been a loyal supporter of the Labour leaders witchhunt.

The recent by-election victory in Fulham has given Kinnock a boost. His public schooled candidate, Nick Raynsford, had little opposition from the discredited Tories who run the local council and the goon from the Alliance whose councillors have voted with the Tories consistently. But the Labour leadership will see this as a victory for 'common sense' and their policies.

Labour is set to court electoral support for a series of

vacuous charters. The 'Charter for Consumers' launched during the Fulham campaign promises "clear labelling and price display, pleasant trouble-free shopping surroundings" It will no doubt join their various other 'Charters' such as the one for women - a series of platitudes and vague commitments to build a 'better world'.

Less vacuous and far more specific is the Charter being discussed for the unions. Labour plan to find a way of maintaining the major planks of the Tory employment legislation but by 'consent'. John Prescott, Labour's employment spokesman, has suggested that the unions be required by law to have pre-strike ballots as part of their rule books in return for certain legal rights to strike!

Neil Kinnock is trying hard to present Labour as a marketable commodity which the left wing of the bosses might buy if the Tories continue to decline in popularity. He has ditched policies on disarmament, forgotten commitments to renationalize and is urging a 'realistic' incomes policy.

Kinnock is firmly set on the mixed economy, home-owning democracy programme which satisfies the middle class and outmanoeuvres the SDP. The purge of militants from the party is also central to boosting this image.

The lefts like Benn and Heffer who led the 'Never again' campaign in the early eighties have refused to take up a serious fight against Kinnock. Although protesting at his lack of 'natural justice'

in the witchhunts, Heffer has cringingly supported the Freedom and Fairness campaign. Even Derek Hatton wants to see Neil in Number 10. None of these left talkers are prepared to stand against Kinnock, to challenge his right to overturn the policy of the party conference.

Kinnock as Prime Minister is, for the reformist leaders, left and right, in the party the only 'realistic' possibility. Therefore they duck out of a real fight. In opposition, many years before the election, fine words are spoken about socialist policies and accountable leaders. When the going gets tough and they see an election looming, anything is worth ditching to get a Labour government. Hence the tough left end up tailing Kinnock. ■



"we are going to clear this matter up once and for all."

- Neil Kinnock

PLEADING FOR MERCY

A CENTRAL PART of Kinnock's campaign to prove his reliability to the bosses is his drive against the left, who sometimes embarrass him by fighting for Labour Party policy. Initially set on a quick purge of leading Militant supporters around the country, he is now having to reconsider his tactics but not his intentions.

The fight against the witchhunts has been led by Militant, the main target of the purge. They have concentrated on two methods. Firstly, they have gone to the courts to get injunctions preventing expulsions from local parties on the basis that 'natural justice' has not been practiced.

In Cardiff, Stevenage, Cannock and elsewhere their lawyers have succeeded in stopping proceedings or getting members re-instated. In addition they have landed local parties with large bills for court costs. So successful has this tactic been that the national office of the Party have written to constituencies disuading them from taking further disciplinary proceedings for the time being.

Another legal case was brought against the NEC proceedings, in which Judge Turnock laid down rules of 'natural justice' for the NEC to follow.

Militant

Tony Mulhearn, asked in an interview in Briefing, why they have gone to the courts, responded:

"Of course, we only used the bourgeois courts as a last resort. Actually it is a scandal that we were forced to use them to get some element of natural justice. Even the bourgeois courts have some semblance of appearing to mete out justice which doesn't seem to apply to the NEC". (Labour Briefing May 1986)

Their use of the courts is wrong. Not only are they asking bourgeois law to intervene in a dispute within the organisations of the working class, they are also sowing illusions in the existence of 'natural justice'.

DIVERSION

The courts are not unbiased arbiters of some absolute 'rights'. Tell that to the miners imprisoned for trying to defend their jobs whilst the bosses sack thousands. Tell that to the unions whose funds have been seized. Tell that to the surcharged councillors, fired for trying to carry out manifesto promises. Tell that to 20 year old Kathy Tyler, imprisoned when she stabbed her father in self defence after a lifetime of physical and mental abuse. Militant's use of the courts against Kinnock reinforces illusions in the neutrality of the very courts that are being used to hammer the working class.

The other problem with using the courts is that it has been a diversion from waging an effective fight against the witch-hunt.

Mulhearn might say it was the last resort, but in fact it was their first move. It has been backed up by Militant rallies around the country with Militant speaker after Militant speaker urging unity in the fight against the Tories.

In reality they have refused to unite with any other forces inside the Party to build a real campaign against the witch-hunts.

The Black Sections are a key group facing expulsion. This is the case for Amir Khan in Sparkbrook. The NEC has refused to endorse Russell Proffitt's selection as a Parliamentary candidate on the grounds that a Black section was involved in the procedures. But Militant, who don't support the right of oppressed groups to organise in the Labour Party, have refused to unite with the Black Sections in the fight against the witch-hunt. Similarly they are absent from initiatives like the Conference Against the Witchhunts being organised by CLPs in London.

In constituencies where they are not confident of winning support, Militant supporters have refused to even raise resolutions condemning the witch-hunt.

This is no way to defeat Kinnock. His setback at the NEC has forced him to change the rules. But he intends to press on. The court cases around the country have persuaded him to attempt further rule changes - "Kinnock bids for tougher rule-book" is the headline in Labour Weekly, April 4th 1986. The article points out that Kinnock, backed by the largest unions (TGWU, NUPE, GMBATU) will introduce a "tight new disciplinary code which they hope will be impregnable to any challenge in the courts".

PREPARE

This seems likely to succeed with the backing of people like Ron Todd who accused the Labour lefts like Heffer of being 'irresponsible' and 'preposterous' for walking out of the NEC's kangaroo court, and said they were creating "a damaging image of disunity".



Militant's tactics will not be able to take on this kind of offensive. The only way to stop the purge is to organise the strength of the left to show Kinnock that he will be unable to expel socialists and get away with it. That means building the campaign against the witch-hunt at all levels of the Labour Party and trade unions. Kinnock must be stopped by a campaign rooted in local bodies committed to opposing all expulsions and demanding the right of socialists to organise within the Labour Party. Rather than campaign for that, Militant seem set on proving that they are just hard done by loyal LP followers. ■

by Helen Ward Vauxhall CLP



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The Second Republic is born

SPAIN IN THE early 1930s was a predominantly agricultural nation. Agriculture accounted for half the national income and some two-thirds of all exports. About 70% of the population was rural. However, the agricultural yield per hectare was the lowest in Europe; the techniques of production were extremely primitive. The brief agricultural boom of the war years 1914-18 had boosted profits but the landowners had not re-invested these on any scale.

The world depression, especially after 1929, hit Spain particularly hard. Fierce competition from the more productive plains of South America and Australia put enormous pressure on the landlords to reduce wages in this labour-intensive industry. This was added to by Anglo-French retaliation against Spanish agriculture due to the high tariff walls that had been erected to protect Spanish industry from collapse.

One-third of Spain's agrarian land was owned by the great landlords. Sometimes an 'estate' covered a whole province. Another third was in the hands of smaller - though still large - landlords. Alongside this small landlord class lived five million peasant families. Two million of these owned small tracts of the least fertile land. The rest were either sharecroppers or semi-proletarians, hiring themselves out for starvation wages to the estate owners for 90 to 150 days a year.

In the depth of the world recession the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera collapsed in January 1930. The monarchical rule of King Alfonso VIII was left exposed and fragile.

Over the next period a rising tide of opposition swept away the last supports of the King. First municipal and then national elections in April and June 1931 brought a Republican-Socialist coalition to power, which drew up and passed a bourgeois-democratic constitution for a second Spanish Republic.

DOWNFALL

The bourgeoisie played virtually no role in the downfall of Rivera and Alfonso. During student and worker demonstrations in May 1930 and general strikes and the arming of the workers in the spring of 1931 they resisted the downfall of the monarchy. Only the massive popular hostility to the monarchy forced the bourgeoisie to call itself republican. Significantly the oldest and largest republican group - the Radical party led by Lerroux - turned its back on the government of the Second Republic almost as soon as it was born. Power was left in the hands of the smaller left republican parties and the social democratic PSOE.

The weak Second Republic did little to solve the real task at hand: the handing of the vast estates to the peasantry and the provision of state aid in order to boost agricultural productivity.

Yet there was a spurt in the growth of the agricultural unions and significant wage rises were achieved. But the failure to advance a radical solution to the peasants' plight by the republican bourgeoisie led to despair, apathy, and as a result, the election of a reactionary Catholic nationalist government in November 1933.

Spanish industry was weakly developed. The country only accounted for 1.1% of world trade in 1930. There were few centres of industry which accounts for the meagre eight thousand miles of railway in Spain at the time. Yet Spanish industry, and hence

the working class, was highly concentrated. Of the two million industrial workers most were in one province - Catalonia, in the North-East. Barcelona, the largest port and industrial centre, accounted for 45% of the Spanish working class! This high concentration, allied to immense union organisation and their political tradition placed the working class in the leading role in the Spain of the Second Republic.

In early 1934 the right wing republican Lerroux took power. He began to undo such reforms of the Second Republic as the raising of the minimum agricultural wage. Wages on the land fell by as much as 50%. In many areas peasants worked for food only. By the end of 1935 rural discontent was intense.

The Third Period

Throughout this period the small Spanish Communist Party (PCE) operated under the sway of the policies of the Communist International's 'Third Period'. From the ninth ECCI in February 1928 its Stalinist leadership declared that the Comintern had now entered a new period of revolutionary offensive. Capitalism was declared to be in profound crisis. A fresh series of imperialist wars was predicted, with "gigantic class battles". Every strike would assume "a political i.e. general class character" and it was declared that the:

"more militant elements of the working class were abandoning the social democrats and coming over to the communist camp". (Theses of the Sixth Congress on the International Situation)

The major obstacle to communist revolutions was Social Democracy, "the main social prop of the bourgeoisie". These parties were now designated as being as dangerous, if not more so, than the fascists. They represented, "social fascism". In Stalin's words at the time, "social democracy and fascism are not antipodes, they are twins".

From 1928 to 1935 this 'third period' dominated the Comintern. The tactics that flowed from it involved the complete rejection of the united front except under the leadership of the communists, and then only 'from below'. Therefore no approaches were to be made to National or local leaders of Labour or Socialist parties. Revolutionary trade unions were encouraged as 'Red Unions', organisationally separate to the majority 'scab' unions affiliated to the Second International. All electoral co-operation with the 'social fascists' was to be stopped immediately.

This line was to have disastrous consequences for the fledgling PCE which claimed less than 1,000 members. In 1930 its National Conference rejected the idea that a bourgeois-democratic regime was possible in Spain. Events over the following year and a half refuted the PCE's claims but failed to change either its mind or its tactics. Even the Communist International was to find the PCE overly sectarian in its passive application of the Third Period line.

An article in *Communist International* in Spring 1931 called the PCE "very sectarian". The article claimed that in the Spring of 1931 the PCE's:

"organisation in many towns followed incorrect tactics. When the masses streamed into the streets to celebrate the proclamation of the Republic, the Communists, together with the Monarchists cried: 'Down with the Republic' so isolating themselves from the masses".

Above all the Stalinists refused to recognise that after 17 years

of dictatorship the masses had profound democratic illusions that had to be positively related to.

The PCE did argue for the disarming of the civil guard, the dissolution of the secret police and the arrest of the monarchist ministers - all correct in themselves - but they refused to advance slogans of political democracy that could test and break through the illusions of the workers and peasants. At best, they could only agree to not contest those illusions - for opportunist reasons - with an anti-Republican slogan. In contrast to their later slavish attitude to bourgeois democracy, the Stalinists at that time turned their backs on the revolutionary democratic character and potential of the struggle against the monarchy. In this they were entirely at one with the entire Third Period of the Comintern.

DENUNCIATIONS

The tiny PCE was left isolated offering the mass of workers, who looked to either anarchist or socialist leaders, a 'united front from below' while denouncing their leaders as "the mass bulwark of the counter-revolution" or servile props of the bourgeoisie.

This line was persisted in and insisted upon right up until the summer of 1934. There were regular denunciations of the Socialist Party (PSOE) and anarchist leaders. Moreover, the then Prime Minister and the future President of the Republic and chief Republican ally in the Popular Front - Azana - was referred to as a 'fascist' constantly in these years. In the November 1933 national elections the leader of the PSOE left - Caballero - was denounced as a social fascist and leading Stalinist Dolores Ibarruri (La Passionaria) even compared his legislation while Minister of Labour between 1931 and 1933 with that of Adolf Hitler.

Consistently the PCE reacted to Lerroux's attempt to undo the social reforms of the Second Republic by insisting that he was no different to the previous government.

In April 1934 the PCE finally got round to forming their own trade union federation - the CGTU - which was affiliated to the Profintern. It counted for very little in the Spanish labour movement but 'red unions' were an obligatory third period tactic. At the same time the Communist Party of Catalonia (CPC) was founded to contest Maurin and Nin's grip in that province (Maurin and Nin established a 'Left Communist' Party in 1931. This was later to become the centrist Workers Party of Marxist Unification - POUM - in September 1935).

Most revealing, however, was the PCE and CPC's reaction to the 'Workers Alliance' - set up by Caballero in February 1934 as a united front organisation to resist the new government's counter-reforms. The First Congress of the CPC called it "an abortion" and "an alliance against the united front and the revolution". In response the PCE tried, without success, to launch its own anti-fascist front completely in line with the 'united front from below' perspective.

BITTER FRUIT

The Third Period was to reap its most bitter fruit in Germany. It meant that the largest non-Soviet Comintern section - the German Communist Party (KPD) - concentrated its fire against the 'social fascist' Social Democrats and grossly underestimated the threat of real fascism. In reality the policy itself coincided with the Soviet bureaucracy's view that German nationalism was less a threat to its interests than was Social Democracy's attempts to integrate Germany into an alliance with France and Britain. As triumphant German fascism increased its hostility to the USSR so the Stalinist regime's foreign policy - and with it the tactics of the Comintern - underwent a profound change.

DURING THE NIGHT of July 17/18th 1936 General Franco launched the Spanish army's long prepared rebellion against the Spanish Republic. During those same days, thousands of miles away in Mexico, Leon Trotsky was revising the final draft of his book, *The Revolution Betrayed*.

Charting the degeneration of the Russian Revolution under Stalin's bureaucratic regime, Trotsky noted;

"At the present time, the Communist International is a completely submissive apparatus in the service of Soviet foreign policy, ready at any time for any zig-zag whatever". (*The Revolution Betrayed* p186-7)

The events in Spain over the next two years were to tragically confirm the first half of that statement. Soviet foreign policy, in the wake of the Stalin-Laval pact and the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in the summer

of 1935, dictated that the Spanish Revolution be crushed. And so was - consciously, mercilessly, and murderously

This fact in itself required Trotsky to re-evaluate the nature of Stalinism. Until Spain had continued to view Stalinism as 'bureaucratic centrism', pursuing a policy of zig-zags. Trotsky had recognised that the Seventh Congress was important,

"... because marks - after a period of vacillation and fumbling - the final entry of the Communist International into its fourth 'period' ..." (*Writing 1935/36* p127)

This policy of reconciliation with the 'peace loving' democratic bourgeois states at the expense of the socialist revolution succeeded the ultra-left Third Period. For a while Trotsky did not rule out the possibility of the Popular Front (i.e. the 'fourth period'), lead

SPAIN'S RO



Asturian peasants rounded up after fleeing to the woods, October 1934



Just as the Third Period squared with the Stalin group's orientation to alliance with the German bourgeoisie, so the jettisoning of that line was the result of a major re-orientation of the Stalin clique's foreign policy. Once its attempted bloc with Germany was definitely broken the Kremlin bureaucracy set its sights on securing an alliance with 'democratic' imperialism - principally with France - and embraced a new set of tactics for the Comintern in order to exert maximum pressure to that end.

The French Communist Party (PCF) was given the go ahead to pursue 'a united workers and broad popular front' in 1934. This entailed political unity with the social democrats and bourgeois radicals. The Comintern's Seventh Congress in August 1935 committed the entire Comintern to the pursuit of the Popular Front. Meanwhile the USSR had secured the Stalin-Laval pact with France in May 1935 which was based on what Stalin called his:

"Complete understanding and approval of state defence, carried out by France with the aim of maintaining its armed forces at a level commensurate with the needs of its security".

The effects of this shift on Spain and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) were not immediate although the Popular Front line was eventually to triumph. In early 1935 the Comintern did not see the threat of fascism in Spain as being as great as in France. The Republic's government was so right-wing as to not be an obvious candidate for being placed in the camp of the USSR's 'democratic friends'. However a shift of line on the part of the PCE is observable from the summer of 1934.

In July 1934 the PCE wrote to the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) executive informing them that they would be prepared to cease all attacks on the PSOE leaders if their proposals for united front action were accepted. The PSOE replied that the PCE was free to join the 'Workers Alliance' formed against the right-wing government. This the PCE refused to do.

to impassé and further defeats, and being succeeded by another turn to ultra-leftism.

However eighteen months of Stalin's intervention in Spain forced Trotsky, once and for all, to abandon this view. If the Popular Front was born in France, in Spain it was to be baptised in blood. In early October 1937 Trotsky told his American comrades that in the light of the Spanish events the term 'bureaucratic centrism' was out of date. In December of that year, in *The Lessons of Spain: The Last Warning*, he elaborated;

"I once defined Stalinism as bureaucratic centrism and events brought a series of corroborations of this definition. But it is obviously obsolete today. The interests of the Bonapartist bureaucracy can no longer be reconciled with centrist hesitation and vacillation. In search

of reconciliation with the bourgeoisie, the Stalinist clique is capable of entering into alliance only with the most conservative groupings amongst the international labour aristocracy. This has acted to fix definitively the counter-revolutionary character of Stalinism on the international arena." (The Spanish Revolution p311)

The actions of the Spanish Stalinists and Stalin's international agents during the Spanish Civil War, in particular during its first year (July 1936-June 1937) led the whole Fourth International to conclude that Stalinism was "the crudest form of opportunism and social patriotism". It is these actions, imbued with cynicism and carried through with murderous vindictiveness against the flower of the Spanish proletariat, that today's Stalinists celebrate fifty years on.

tees held political power.

The weakness of the revolution, however, as with the Paris Commune, was its isolation from the rest of the country. In days the Republican government assembled a massive army led by General Franco and marched on Asturia. Headed by the Foreign Legion, the army savagely destroyed the uprising. After fifteen days of fighting, nearly 2,000 workers were killed and some 3,000 wounded. More were butchered in the atrocities that followed: about 30,000 were taken as political prisoners in the following weeks.

REPRESSION

Severe repression of the workers continued unremittingly throughout early 1935. When the Republican leaders decided to let up on this, CEDA provoked a crisis by resigning in protest at this leniency. That crisis was resolved in CEDA's favour in May when they were given two extra Cabinet seats. One of them - the Ministry of War - went to their hated leader Gil Robles.

It was on the basis of these events that the Comintern took the decision to proceed to create a Popular Front in Spain. Early in June the PCE issued its first popular front programme. Gone was the spectre of revolution. It was constructed for the radical democrats and republican bourgeoisie rather than the workers and peasants. Its four points demanded: the resignation of the government and fresh elections, the confiscation of large estates, self-determination for Catalonia etc. and the dissolution of the fascist groups, such as the paramilitary Falange Espanola established in 1933.

There was, however, one major problem for the PCE in winning socialist support for this bourgeois programme. The leader of the PSOE left - Caballero - was himself moving further left under the pressure of events. His star was rising in the PSOE and its trade union federation, the UGT. He was spitting blood at the entire bourgeoisie, whether monarchist or republican. In October 1935 the PCE wrote to Caballero proposing unconditional unity of organisations; that is, on Caballero's programme. Unfortunately, the PCE was forced to recognise that this entailed, "the organic political unity of the proletariat . . . (with) . . . full independence vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie, and a complete break-up of the social-democratic bloc with the bourgeoisie." (E.H.Carr, *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War* p2).

'DEVIATIONS'

This alarmed the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). Stalin immediately decided to go to the heart of the problem. He dispatched the PCF leader - Duclos - as a personal envoy to Caballero to get him to shift his stance, arguing that the Prieto led right/centre of the PSOE should be supported because it could command greater electoral support.

There were to be no more 'deviations' by the PCE. The late summer Seventh Congress of the Comintern had sealed the total victory of the Popular Front. Henceforth, the PCE would be making a hundred and one declarations in tune with the November 1935 speech of Jose Diaz;

"... at the present moment we understand that the struggle taking place is not in the area of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat but in the struggle of democracy against fascism as its immediate objective". (Quoted in D. Catell *'Communism and the Spanish Civil War'* p30/31)

From this time the PCE's main task was to win adherents to the 'Bloque Popular'. With elections only months away, Caballero wanted only a united front with the PCE, spurning the republicans. The PSOE right led by Prieto wanted a popular front with the republi-

cans without the PCE. Only the PCE wanted all three. This was to prove its strength for the bourgeoisie and its danger to the Spanish workers.



The Popular Front in power

The PCE emerged from the Asturian rising with increased credibility. They continued to grow during 1935, recruiting mainly from the left-wing of the PSOE. Estimates for the PCE's membership vary widely but it is likely that by the time of the February 1936 elections they were between 20-30,000 strong. This strength was reflected in the division of seats agreed for those Popular Front elections, since it was agreed that the PCE should receive 6% of the seats (19) in case of victory. Previously, they had had only one.

The election results revealed the rapid class polarisation that had been taking place in Spain. The total vote for the Popular Front (PSOE, PCE, republicans) was evenly matched by that for the Catholic, monarchist, crypto-fascist right. The parties of the centre - the large moderate Republican groups were obliterated; the previous premier, Lerroux, didn't even get a seat.

WATERED DOWN

After the election, the PCE's first programme for the new government was a watered down version of that of the previous summer. Even minimum working class demands were displaced. The PCE called for the immediate seizure of the largest estates, the separation of Church and State, and an end to Church subsidies and the formation of a 'people's army'.

Time and again the PCE and the ECCI stressed the 'democratic' character of the revolution. In his opening speech to the Cortes Jose Diaz said on April 15th that the PCE "loyally supports the left Republican government."

At a May meeting of the ECCI Dimitrov heaped praise upon the PCE for criticising,

"the leftist slogans of the left socialists headed by Largo Caballero, who proposes to begin immediately the struggle for the socialist republic".

Nevertheless, a determination to confine the revolution to democratic tasks did not exhaust the problem of strategy and tactics in Spain at this time. There were urgent democratic tasks to be carried out. The PCE's Popular Front programme gave muted recognition to this.

The key question of February to July 1936 was by what methods were these tasks (eg. land redistribution) to be carried out? Piecemeal by legislative reform at a pace and scope suitable to the Republican government? Or radically, from below, by workers and peasants at a pace and scope that frightened the republican bourgeoisie and even threatened to go far beyond the boundaries of radical democratic demands?

Although the PCE reported favourably some of the early land seizures, after February it became increasingly alarmed when the workers and peasants took steps far in advance of the Popular Front programme. For these reasons the Popular Front government that emerged in February 1936 was doomed. Class polarisation had gone too far. Azana, the new President of the Republic said

in the Cortes on 3rd April, that the government would fulfill its Popular Front programme,

"without removing a period or a comma, and without adding a period or a comma."

(Quoted in B.Bolloten *'The Grand Camouflage'*, p.26)

However, the former was unacceptable to the CEDA and the Falange, while the latter was unacceptable to the workers and poor peasants.

The key to the Spanish revolution was the agrarian question. The Popular Front passed a mild agrarian reform law on taking office. Without satisfying the peasants it encouraged them to action. The peasants

"calculate that the agrarian laws plans fifty thousand settlements a year which means it will take twenty years to settle a million peasants and more than a century to give land to all. Realising this, the peasants just occupy the land." (Quoted in Bolloten p.20)

In the cities the situation was the same. In the spring there were innumerable strikes over wages, conditions, and to win amnesty for prisoners. The prisons had been thrown open and all the victims of the repression after October 1934 had been released by workers and taken by them back into the factories to their former jobs.

ARMED

The decisive strike wave began on June 1st when 70,000 building workers struck indefinitely for higher pay. Although by the 4th July the Ministry of Labour had conceded the original demands the strike had gone far beyond them. Many workers were armed, originally to protect themselves from Falangist attacks. The CNT had formed a Central Defence Committee. The workers were also realising their strength in incidental ways:

"the strikers, weapons in hand, force the shopkeepers to serve them, seized restaurants and ate without paying"

(P.Broue and E.Temime *'The Revolution and Civil War in Spain'* p94)

As the revolutionary tide accelerated the PSOE and PCE leaders in the UGT called off the strikes after the original concessions, but the CNT refused to do likewise.

Faced with this tide the Falange and the army had been making preparations for an uprising. Ever since August 1932 the right had been openly discussing a coup d'etat. A meeting of top generals took place in early March 1936 and preparations were set in train.

BEGINNING

This was well known to the Republican leaders who preferred to cover it up. The Popular Front's War Minister proclaimed on March 18th that he had

"the honour of making public that all the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Spanish Army maintain themselves within the strictest discipline. . . and, needless to say, to obey the orders of the legally constituted government." (B. Bolloten p.27)

On the night of July 17/18th General Franco forced him to eat his words. Fifty garrisons revolted. Only 500 of the 15,000 Army officers stayed loyal to the Republic, together with about 5,000 of the 34,000 civil guards. Within weeks the Army and Falange controlled half of Spain. The Civil War had begun. □

by Keith Hassell

to be continued...



ROAD TO CIVIL WAR



The Asturian uprising

The PCE's change of line on the Workers Alliance enabled it to participate fully in the Asturia uprising of October 1934. The rising was prompted by the entry into the Madrid government of three members of the CEDA, the arch-reactionary party of Gil Robles. He openly modelled himself on Dolfuss in Austria, the bonapartist dictator who had recently come to power. CEDA's promotion, everyone knew, prefigured further attacks on the Spanish workers. In turn, the risings were an attempt to forestall them.

The risings and General Strikes in Madrid and Barcelona were quickly suppressed, but the Asturian miners were more successful. The 50,000 miners were politically dominated by the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT). However the PSOE's General Union of Labour (UGT) and even the PCE had significant support. Within three days Asturia was in the hands of a fully armed proletariat; joint workers commit-

The position on the Workers Alliance was to shift in the Autumn. By this time the Comintern's main agent in Spain - Codovilla - had been present at a July preparatory commission for the Seventh Congress and returned insisting on an unconditional shift of perspective.

The focus of the shift was the Workers Alliance and the occasion was the September 11th/12th meeting of the PCE leadership. In the previous months the PCE had refused to join in the preparations for the General Strikes in Catalonia, Madrid and Asturia. Even as late as September 11th the PSOE was attacked as "the rallying point of reactionary forces". At a fiercely contested meeting of the PCE that weekend Codovilla succeeded in shifting the PCE. A resolution supporting the Workers Alliance was passed. The resolution argued for the Workers Alliance to be broadened to embrace the peasantry.

DANGERS FACING W.R.P.

THE LAST SEVEN months have been stormy indeed for the members of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP). A split with the corrupt Healy last year was followed by a split with the would-be continuators of his politics (minus his degenerate personal habits) in the International Committee (ICFI) earlier this year. A third split is not yet ruled out.

Long-standing WRP members like Cyril Smith and Tom Kemp are attempting to re-consolidate the WRP. The kernel of their argument is that despite Healy the WRP is and always was, a legitimate heir to Trotsky's Fourth International. Thus Cyril Smith wrote, in a reply to Mike Banda's critique of the ICFI:

"I declare: only the continuity of the struggle for Bolshevism, in however distorted and attenuated a form, could account for the events in the party in 1985." (Workers Press 15/3/86)

The expulsion of Healy proved, in Smith's view, that the WRP was a Bolshevik organisation.

CONTRADICTION

This view, as many WRP members are aware is in contradiction to the position adopted at the 8th Congress which categorically (and in our view correctly) stated:

"The WRP was an organisation that was not revolutionary... Our organisation was based on a reactionary anti-theoretical activism and was financially crippled." (Workers Press 29/3/86)

Politics abhors a vacuum. For the last seven months the WRP has been a vacuum. Its programme and perspectives have been non-existent. Its paper has represented the views of individual authors, not a coherent party line. Tom Kemp and others are now moving to fill that vacuum.

Kemp is attempting to reconstitute the WRP on the basis of its own traditions and politics. This is setting the terms of the WRP's perspectives discussion. Kemp's contribution to the perspectives discussion ('Rebuild the WRP', published in Workers Press 19/4/86) is a clear indication of this tendency in the WRP.

To this end the Central Committee is refusing to hold leadership discussions with Workers Power until after the WRP's perspectives have been decided. This makes a mockery of the 'open discussion' project. By deciding a perspectives in advance of an open discussion the WRP leadership is stating that it has nothing to learn from other tendencies.

PROGRAMME

Kemp's document is proof positive of this. If the WRP was the only Bolshevik organisation then what does this mean? It cannot mean that just because self-sacrificing WRP members believed they were revolutionaries their organisation was therefore revolutionary. Such a subjective criterion would make the SWP, IMG, RCP, WSL, I-CL, Militant et al, revolutionary as well. Nor can such a view be justified by the fact that the WRP took some good positions or did some good work in the class. Others have done that too. This tells us little about their overall politics.

Kemp's claim to have the title deeds on Bolshevism can only be justified by reference to the WRP's programme - that is, its principles, strategy and tactics as a combined whole. This programme, as many WRP members now know, was not simply a distorted Bolshevik programme. It was a rotten programme that involved at different stages capitulations to Bevan, Foot, Knight, Scargill, Messali Hadj, Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Khomeini and Qaddafi. To defend this tradition is, whether Kemp

likes it or not, to defend Healyism.

Above all else a revolutionary organisation needs clear perspectives based on concrete reality and a programme of action to guide the working class to power. It has no need for vague formulations telling us nothing about the real balance of forces in the class or for a programme of pious intentions. Yet this is exactly what Kemp serves up.

STUNTS

His self-regenerated WRP would ignore the fact that it is a tiny organisation incapable of serious mass work on a systematic basis. Instead it would aim at "mass YS branches" and "mass work in the main industrial areas". With a membership of a few hundred this is ludicrous. James P. Cannon once gave an excellent description of mass work. He wrote:

"By mass work we mean prepared, planned and developed activity to set masses of workers in motion... We do not mean spectacular stunts."

The WRP's history of mass work is a history of stunts. With a small organisation systematic work in the class can only be truly 'mass' in certain situations (such as the miners' strike). Without these conditions this 'mass work' will inevitably involve a re-run of the 'reactionary, anti-theoretical activism'.

Kemp justifies this mass work as necessary because we are in a 'pre-revolutionary situation'. If the situation is pre-revolutionary then it is all hands on deck to "build the party". This is modified Healyism. Healy said it was a revolutionary situation, so we'll take a step back from this and say it is a pre-revolutionary situation! It is well to repeat what we said in our February Open Letter to the WRP about such formulations, as used by the SLG:

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY

"For Marxists this term has a precise meaning. Trotsky writing on France on the eve of the upheavals that accompanied the Popular Front in 1936, described the situation (in 1934) as pre-revolutionary. He was right. French capitalism was in a severe crisis, pronounced bonapartist tendencies developed in the state, fascism began to grow as a mass force, the proletariat pushed its parties towards unity against the right. For Trotsky this situation meant that arming the proletariat was a task of the day lest the pre-revolutionary situation turn into a counter-revolutionary one. In other words he linked his understanding of the situation to his slogans on the principle that:

"But the most striking features of our epoch of capitalism in decay are intermediate and transitional: situations between the non-revolutionary and the pre-revolutionary, between the pre-revolutionary and the revolutionary or... the counter-revolutionary. It is precisely these transitional stages which have decisive importance from the point of view of political strategy." (Once Again Whither France)

Yet the SLG make no such distinctions between the stages. For them the defeat of the miners' strike alters nothing, since the 1985 riots have apparently kept the pre-revolutionary situation on the boil. This is to render the term 'pre-revolutionary' meaningless. It is to substitute phrases and formulae for a concrete analysis of the reality of the class struggle. Above

all it ignores what Trotsky described as the "reciprocal action of objective and subjective factors". It exudes faith in the objective historical process. In a word it is unregenerate Healyism of the 1950s and 1960s vintage." (Open Letter 16th February 1986)

Kemp's understanding of the Transitional programme is as erroneous as his view of perspectives. It is impossible to go through the mélange of demands advanced as a programme. Suffice to say that a programme worth its salt must be a precise guide to action. Yet Kemp advances demands such as 'No police on picket lines'. What does this mean at Wapping? Is it a demand on the Tories to withdraw the police? If so it is a laughable proposition. Is it a demand on a future Labour Government? If so then it offers no answer to pickets at Wapping

in the here and now. Is it a coded call for picket defence squads? We cannot tell. Yet, a real transitional demand in the print strike would be an unambiguous call for such squads.

The same lack of clarity exists in nearly all of Kemp's demands. We are asked to 'prepare a general strike' but not told how, or even whom this is demanded of. Labour is called on to launch a campaign to 'defeat the Tory government'. Defeat them how? At the next election? By a general strike, or revolution? We are left guessing.

The Transitional Programme is a crystal clear guide to action. Healy subverted that programme in the interests of his unprincipled manoeuvres. Kemp's programme opens the door to a repetition of these errors.

The WRP members need precise answers on how to win the print strike, how to beat the witch-hunts, how to oust the

bureaucrats in the unions, how to rebuild the fighting strength of the NUM, how to defend Libya without making a political bloc with Qaddafi. Kemp's document does not answer any of these questions.

The struggle needed in the WRP must proceed on the basis of programme first, of breaking politically with Healyism. Those who are not willing to make such a break must be fought so that a path to real revolutionary regroupment can be cleared.

Our contributions on the history of the FI, the SLL/WRP and the IC, have been open, honest and extensive. They prove our commitment to principled regroupment. Revolutionaries in the WRP should fight for a real discussion of them at every level to test whether or not the WRP is committed to such a perspective. ■

by Mark Huskisson



THE LEFT AND LIBYA

SOCIALIST ORGANISER was quick off the mark in denouncing the "knee jerk 'anti-imperialism'" of papers like Socialist Action and Workers Press. There was no danger of finding any "knee jerk" anti-imperialism in the pages of Socialist Organiser. Since its refusal to support Argentina in its war with British Imperialism this has indeed been a rare commodity amongst the Matganna crew.

The Socialist Organiser Editorial (24/4/86) takes Workers Press to task for calling not merely for the defence of Libya, but for the defence of the 'Libyan revolution'. It proceeds to deny that there are any gains worth defending in Libya since the overthrow of Idris. Socialist Organiser supports Libya merely because:

"We are opposed to all forms of domination of the weak by the strong and powerful". This is the standpoint of a petit-bourgeois moralist not a Marxist.

Contrast this with the position Trotsky took on the Mexican Cardena's regime, certainly no friend of the workers, and one can see just how far Socialist Organiser is from Trotskyism:

"Semi-colonial Mexico is fighting for its national independence, political and economic. This is the basic meaning of the Mexican revolution at this

stage... Without succumbing to illusions and without fear of slander, the advanced workers will completely support the Mexican people in their struggle against the imperialists. The expropriation of oil is neither socialism nor communism. But it is a highly progressive measure of national self-defence." (Mexico and British Imperialism - Writings 1937/38)

Does this mean, as Socialist Organiser likes to imply, that taking an unambiguous defeatist position is the same as giving political support to Qaddafi? Absolutely not. But it does mean that communists find themselves in episodic united fronts with Qaddafi and his supporters against imperialism, a position apparently eschewed by Socialist Organiser with its slogan "Libya yes, Qaddafi No!" Which army would their supporters in Libya (supposing they had any) unite with if not Qaddafi's?

Where Workers Press does make a serious political error is in political support to Qaddafi. The WRP under Healy's leadership abandoned the programme of permanent revolution in the Middle East. In particular Libya was held to be introducing 'socialism'. Despite the split with Healy Workers Press has yet to carry a single article giving a Marxist analysis of Qad-

dafi's regime let alone mapping out a programme of revolutionary struggle for the Libyan workers and peasants.

The fact that the WRP can write a letter to Qaddafi addressing him as comrade, a bourgeois head of state who has suppressed the trade unions and outlawed the right to strike, says much for the confusion that still reigns within the WRP on this question.

The WRP is not alone in this regard. The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) was quite happy to march its members along carrying hundreds of placards of the great leader Qaddafi. This might win them a few sympathisers among the 'Peoples Party of Pakistan' but it does nothing to win revolutionary workers in the struggle against imperialism.

In an imperialist country, especially one which has taken a direct role in attacking Libya, the prime duty of revolutionaries is to stand four square for the defence of Libya, and fight to win the working class to such a position. This does not mean we have to be uncritical or paint up the Jamahiriya in communist colours. Indeed to do so is to abandon the programme of Permanent Revolution and the fight for an independent revolutionary workers party in Libya. ■

LOYALISTS SHOW THE STRAIN

IT IS NOW nearly six months since Ulster's Loyalists pledged themselves to fight to the death to destroy the agreement between the governments of the Irish Republic and Britain.

In that period the Loyalists of Paisley's DUP and Mollineux's Official Unionist Party were returned to Westminster with a massive vote after resigning their seats in protest at the agreement. The vast majority of Loyalist councillors resigned from local government forcing the British to send in commissioners to run the councils.

On March 3rd there was a massive show of Loyalist strength with strike action, public demonstrations and a show of intimidation and sectarian bigotry. But despite all this the Loyalists have so far failed to significantly shift Thatcher and Fitzgerald from their determination to carry on the agreement.

The Paisley/Mollineux block had optimistically believed that a strategy based upon a growing series of demonstrations, protests and token days of strike action would inevitably shift the balance of forces within Ulster's Protestant majority to a point where the Province would have been virtually ungovernable. Within this perspective it was privately conceded that the conditional loyalty of the RUC to the cause could be relied upon to convince Westminster that the game wasn't worth the candle.

HATRED

Such a strategy ran the risk, as has been shown dramatically in recent weeks, of unleashing the frustrated anger and hatred of plebeian Loyalism. On the evening of March 3rd fierce fighting broke out among sections of Loyalist youth in Belfast, Portadown and Lisburn to be followed after Easter by the outbreak of attacks upon the homes of RUC men and their families.

The months of poisonous sect-

arian demagoguery poured out by Paisley, Robinson and the 'revolutionary' posturing of the Ulster Club's Alan Wright had whipped up hysterical hatred amongst the Loyalist youth.

The extent of their response is not directly under control of the DUP, although the latter are undoubtedly involved in some of the attacks on the RUC. But the vast majority of the sectarian groups who nightly prowl the streets are the semi-lumpenised youth of Belfast's once industrial heartland, the Antrim Triangle.

The experiences of these demoralised working class youth in the decaying misery of life in puritan Ulster is a long way from the austere sense of well-being exuded by the camps of Paisley and Mollineux. All they share is the reactionary bigotry and hatred of Catholics.

But in a very real sense the opposition of these plebeian Loyalists to the Anglo-Irish Agreement is based on the correct perception that if any reforms are to occur in favour of Catholics it will not affect the comfortable leaders of Ulster Unionism. If jobs and opportunities are to be shared equally - although this is a long way from what the agreement is actually talking about - then it will be at the expense of the historic advantage the Ulster Protestant workers have in relation to Catholic workers.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The reality of these privileges can be seen from unemployment figures. Despite massive unemployment engulfing the Province in the last ten years, Catholics are still twice as likely to be on the dole as Protestants. Every report of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Fair Employment Agency underlines the fact that the Protestant workers have been relatively cushioned from the worst effects of the recession compared with Catholic workers. From 1971 to 1985 average

male unemployment increased from 10.3% to 26.4%; for Protestants the rise was from 6.6% to 18.2%, whereas for Catholics it leapt from 17.3% to 38.4%. Figures for female unemployment show the same pattern.

The widening of sectarian divisions on employment has managed to strengthen the support amongst Loyalists for the slogan "A Protestant State for a Protestant People".

When the Protestant workers and youth march and riot under the banner "What we have we hold" they are talking about something real. It is a reactionary sectarian struggle based on defence of material privilege.

Honest reassurances from Thatcher, Fitzgerald and John Hume of the SDLP that the Agreement offers no threat to these Loyalist privileges fall on deaf ears. The very principle of the Republic's involvement is seen as a monumental qualification of Ulster Loyalism's right to be master of its own home.

DISTURBED

The frenzied response of the youth against the RUC and Catholic families has created a real headache for Paisley and Mollineux. In losing control of the movement they are finding it difficult to run the campaign as they wish. They have tried to build support amongst the middle classes and professionals who are the backbone of respectable law and order Unionism. They also seek a dialogue with the Tory Parliamentarians, but these friends are disturbed by the scenes of riot and assaults on the RUC. Thatcher has further pressured Paisley by offering 'talks about talks' and the possibility of slowing down a coming conference on the agreement.

The disarray in the Unionist camp is further shown in the plans for the next stage of the campaign. Announcing the new tactics, the withholding of rent



Loyalist youth preparing for war?

and rates, Paisley attacked those in his own movement who said the new plan was toothless, with the words, "the alternative is to break the law and confront the security forces and the British Army - and I have no intention of doing that." Whilst trying to appeal to respectable Unionism and the rate payers and small businesses with these tactics it seems unlikely that they will satisfy the desire for decisive action amongst the mobilised Ulster youth.

It is important to remember the depth, hatred and fear of the Agreement throughout the whole of Ulster Loyalism. In 1974 it was from amongst the working class and plebeian elements that decisive action came to defeat the Sunningdale Agreement, after Paisley and his cohorts had wavered and retreated. The present divisions and difficulties within the official Loyalist leadership means that such a course still remains, however remote, a possibility. ■

BUILDING A YUPPY PARTY

WHEN FIANNA FAIL (FF) member of Parliament and one time Cabinet minister, Desmond O'Malley, was expelled by the party early last year, few could have predicted the role he is now playing in Irish politics. O'Malley proceeded to launch a new party - the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP). At the time of writing that party has won over three

other FF MPs, several of the party's local government politicians, is recording 20% first preferences in the opinion polls and attracting thousands to its rallies.

O'Malley is a seasoned and experienced bourgeois 'nationalist' politician. His past record includes bringing in the Special Criminal Court which put an end to

trial-by-jury for 'subversives' in 1972, backing the death penalty in 1976, threatening to create 'legal culpability' for strikers in mid-1979, attacking family-planning clinics in the same year and calling for a paramilitary force parallel to the gardai in 1983.

The key to his present prestige lies in his ability to appeal both to Eire's middle class strata and to an important section of the bourgeoisie itself. O'Malley is aware that big changes have occurred in Eire's population in the last thirty years - 60% of the the population is now under thirty years of age - and he has begun to adapt to this. Hence, he has done an about-turn on contraception reform and given cautious support to the removal of the constitutional ban on divorce. All this is meant to appeal to that section of Eire's population which he has targeted - the younger upper middle class strata and top section of younger petit-bourgeoisie. Indeed, for this reason, his party has been nicknamed the 'Yuppies' in the South.

However, the PDP does not simply seek to appeal to Eire's Yuppies. Its economic programme is directed at Eire's bourgeoisie - irrespective of age. This programme is considerably to the right of that of the present coalition government. The PDP argues that the state must be got out

of the economy as far as possible. This means privatising profitable sectors of state owned industry, commerce and services.

The new party also campaigns for public spending to be cut more severely. This means greater cuts in social welfare payments to both workers and small farmers. O'Malley is on record as being in favour of the taxation of social welfare - and a slashing of public sector wages and jobs. The present policy of attracting foreign investment is to be continued and intensified, as the most important key to general economic development. In O'Malley's perspective this is compatible with boosting the fortunes of sections of native Irish capital.

COALITION GOVERNMENT

What is attracting the bourgeoisie of Eire and their foreign overlords to O'Malley's PDP is the prospect of a coalition government of the PDP and Fine Gael (FG). Such a government could clearly face up to tasks defined in O'Malley's programme, and with which FG are in agreement, with a ruthlessness which the coalition of FG and Labour cannot manage.

A general election is due in 1987. It could occur earlier, though this is unlikely. The Southern Irish bourgeoisie fear that Haughey will get an overall majority in this election. The main reasons for this fear has been Haughey's ambiguity with regard to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. First, he sharply rejected it. Then he retreated to a position of support for any improvements it brought to Northern Ireland anti-unionists and of promising neither to re-negotiate it, if returned to power, nor to make it an election issue. He then returned to the attack on his visit to the US on March 8th and 9th. Clearly, at the Fianna Fail congress of April 19th, Haughey consolidated his movement around a rhetorical position of critical and conditional support for the Agreement, signalling their willingness to carry it through if that should be 'best for the country'.

Haughey is trying to have his cake and eat it. Above all, he is trying to preserve the green card as a trump in his pack. The coalition partners, and the SDLP have, with the backing of the most decisive sectors of the Southern bourgeoisie, invested so much political capital in the Anglo-Irish agreement, that its defeat would be a most serious set-back for them. ■

by a member of the Irish Workers Group

The articles on this page are written by members of the Irish Workers Group, the Irish section of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI).

The MRCI is made up of five fraternal organisations, Arbeiter Standpunkt of Austria, Gruppe Arbeitermacht of West Germany, Pouvoir Ouvrier of France, the Irish Workers Group and Workers Power.

The IWG's journal, Class Struggle, is available through Workers Power - price 85p (incl. p&p) - from: Workers Power BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX.

The latest issue contains articles on the Anglo-Irish agreement, the South African revolution and an historical piece on Connolly and womens liberation.





ON SECTARIANISM

Comrades

On page 11 of your April edition, Mark Hoskisson posed the question "Is Workers Power Sectarian?"

If comrade Hoskisson is speaking on behalf of Workers Power in this article then I am sorry to say the only answer that can possibly be given is 'yes'.

At the beginning of his article he slapped in a very good quote from Trotsky. The only possible reason for this unfortunately was to give himself some unearned authority because he then proceeded to ignore it throughout the whole of his article.

A sectarian is one who separates himself from various struggles taking place in the labour movement by refusing to work in or give support to any campaign whose members don't recognise his 'correct' position.

His article is meant as a warning to members of the WRP, that if they have anything to do with the London Health Emergency campaign, then the Bogey Man, in the shape of John Lister, will get them.

Lister is known to 'many' members of the WRP as someone who was bureaucratically expelled from the party in the 1970s along with Alan Thornett in order to stifle discussion on political differences which were beginning to emerge.

The fact that he is Publicity Officer of the LHEC is not at all what he is better known as.

When the Lister interview was published in the *Workers Press* I was expecting some flack from the Rump for associating with a revisionist but I was surprised to see this shoddy piece of work from comrade Hoskisson.

He accused Lister of dishonesty but then proceeded to use the very methods which he condemns, the "unsubstantiated smear", "relying on the hoped for ignorance of his audience".

In fact the question of correct method goes straight out of the window and the "venom" of Lister is replaced by the (with the greatest respect) whining of comrade Hoskisson.

Any weapon will do in this point scoring exercise: the fact that Lister was employed by the GLC, unlike Workers Power members, is supposed to tell us something.

"The bulk of NHS trade unionists," we are told, "have little to do with this campaign". This as comrade Hoskisson knows is a racing certainty seeing as the bulk of the NHS exists outside of London.

This is just as well though because (although no evidence is produced) we are told that the LHE is a bogus campaign.

The word bogus is used not without thought. Any one following the split in the WRP will know that this word is correctly used to describe the activities of the Rump.

They set up a fraudulent *News-line*, WRP and YS. It is a sham, designed to create confusion.

The Hospital workers involved in the campaign to keep open St. James' hospital Balham, introduced me to the LHE paper as a result of which I decided to get an interview with their publicity officer, who turned out to be John Lister.

Luckily he was not harbouring any grudges and in spite of political differences he agreed to an interview and subsequently put me in touch with a number of trade unionists in order to aid the campaign in the NHS.

If I am now to tell these people that the campaign is bogus could you please supply the evidence. □

Yours fraternally,
Phil Penn.

We reply:

Comrade Penn concentrates on seven lines on my one page article replying to John Lister. To prove his point that we are sectarian he ignores the catalogue of falsehoods put together by Lister and systematically refuted with proof by me.

Comrade Penn has nothing to say about the politics of the old WSL, the TILC, the history of the FI, the miners' strike, the issue of rank and file movements and the question of democratic centralism. Without dealing with these issues - the substance of the article - comrade Penn comes to his conclusion that we are sectarian.

This is a bad method. It is reminiscent of the shallowness of thought and analysis that, for over twenty years, characterised your organisation, the WRP. The break with Healy needs to break with such methods.

On the issue raised by comrade Penn regarding London Health Emergency (LHE) we stand by our position. First, we did not attack Lister for being an employee of the GLC. Had we done so we would have been wrong. Under Livingstone, the GLC carried through a thoroughly left-reformist project aimed at welding together a multi-class alliance to defend the GLC.

To carry out this project the GLC established or patronised a number of campaigning bodies - GLEB, the various women's organisations, LHE etc. The employees in this campaign were drawn from the left-groups or Labour left - Reg Race, John Palmer, John Lister, to name but a few. They were tied up with a Livingstone inspired reformist project which we, unlike the WRP, have systematically criticised.

As for LHE it is not the rank and file fighting body that the working class needs. At best it is an information exchange. For the most part, as far as organised struggles are concerned, it is an irrelevance. Despite branch affiliations to it, it never has had the perspective of forging a fighting rank and file alliance of health-workers. In fact, health workers have no control over its paper and publicity, something that has resulted in it concentrating its propaganda in the community and consumer aspects of the NHS rather than on the issues confronting workers in the NHS. ■

Mark Hoskisson

Comrades

We are writing this letter in response to the article entitled "Is Workers Power Sectarian?" published in *Workers Power* No.81. We are in solidarity with Workers Power against the sectarian attack of John Lister, and recognise that the use of dishonest slander is a sign of a group going nowhere and without a serious political orientation. We are also familiar with Lister's attempts to create a hysterical amalgam around the issue of 'Spartacism'.

However, we wish to reply to what we consider an incorrect and dismissive attitude towards the TILC and the complete lack of any mention of its continuation, the International Trotskyist Committee. The article criticises the founding document of the TILC, *The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle*, for its "wrong-headed notion that an International tendency could be built on the basis of agreement purely on general principles" and says that for the TILC "the task was always to: reconstruct the Fourth International out of its existing degenerate fragments. Programmatic clarity came low down".

In fact, far from being a "disastrous international adventure" as the article puts it, the formation of the TILC was one of the main achievements of the 'old' WSL and an indication of the healthy aspects of that organisation. The basis of the TILC was an attempt to reassert Trot-

sky's 'Transitional Programme' on an international scale. Its founding document was a starting point, and therefore incomplete. Despite some confusions, it pointed in an essentially healthy direction.

The treatment of the TILC and ITC in the reply to Lister is an illustration of what we regard as Workers Power's wrong method on the question of International regroupment and political regeneration. The article says of the TILC: "We said in 1980 that this was a recipe for future splits. We were right". This sounds as though the basis of the split that did occur in the TILC was the wording of its founding documents!

Yes, there was a split in the TILC, but as a result of a principled struggle waged by its United States, Italian and Danish sections as well as some British comrades against the deep political degeneration of the largest TILC section, the WSL. This degeneration took the form of adaptation to trade union economism (which related to its attitude towards transitional demands) and to Social Democracy. A result of this was a wholly unprincipled fusion with an Anglo-centric sect, the I-CL. The resulting further shift to the right involved a host of wrong positions on Imperialism, Stalinism and Permanent Revolution, among others. When Workers Power talk of a 'squandering of cadres' in this respect, they are absolutely right. Matters came to a head when the WSL adopted what was essentially a pacifist position on the Malvinas War and the result of the ensuing struggle and split was the formation of an international democratic-centralist tendency, the International Trotskyist Committee which has as its programmatic basis the documents contained in the first issue of *International Trotskyist Review*.

On the question of the Fourth International, the task was never for the TILC and is not for the ITC always to reconstruct, WP's emphasis, the FI out of its existing fragments. However, we do recognise that despite the programmatic collapse into centrism that occurred in 1951, the fragments which still claim adherence to the FI remain a pole of attraction to workers breaking from Social Democracy, Stalinism and petit-bourgeois nationalism. The centrism of these groups, reflecting the pressure of alien social forces and taking the form of attempts to liquidate both party and programme is of course a massive obstacle to the political regeneration of the FI.

We regard these fragments as Trotskyist-centrist, because despite their centrism, they do retain a formal adherence to and defence of the Transitional Programme and Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution.

This does not mean that we are 'soft on centrism' or that we adapt politically to any of these groups simply because their origins lie in the FI. Centrism is still centrism, and Trotsky was absolutely right when he said that: "In front of each centrist group it is necessary to place an arrow, indicating the direction of its development, from right to left or from left to right".

However, in these groups there are elements on the left who are constantly attempting to reassert the Transitional Programme and the Theory of Permanent Revolution, although often in a purely national context.

This is how the question of political regeneration and reconstruction should be posed. The ITC sees the importance of intervening in and relating to the struggles within these international fragments, not simply reassembling them. We do not view those fragments in the same way as we would view the Second or Third Internationals. With one or two notable exceptions they have not passed into the camp of counter-revolution, misleading millions of workers in the process. We see the programme of the Fourth International as valid today as when it was written. The nature of the epoch, as opposed to period, and its problems and tasks is as it was when Trotsky wrote

the Transitional Programme. The crisis of mankind is still reducible to the crisis of Proletarian leadership, there has been no resolution of the crisis of capitalism so that it no longer acts as a fetter on the development of the means of production, there has been no restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union.

Of course, the Theory of Permanent Revolution has to be developed to take account of events since World War II and in certain areas, the programme of the FI was never fully developed. It was with this in mind that the ITC developed its Marxist perspectives on work among women and work among Lesbians and Gay men.

Whatever his past role in the formation of the TILC and his authorship of its founding document, John Lister now confines himself to vague remarks about a 'living struggle'. His definition of a reconstructed FI (*Socialist Viewpoint* No.11) seems to consist of "the strengths and positive political lessons of the history of the movement while learning the lessons of its many failures". Ambiguous, to say the least!

This, together with his description of the International Group as a 'break with opportunism' (without any accompanying question mark or qualification, *SV* No.7) and his stated wish to get away from what he calls the 'them and us' mentality in the international movement (whatever this means) indicates that Lister and his group are moving in a thoroughly liquidationist direction, probably towards a marriage of convenience with the International Group.

In contrast, despite the fact that we have felt compelled to write a letter of criticism on this occasion, we regard Workers Power as serious and above all, honest revolutionaries with whom we would welcome the chance for further discussion on this and other issues. □

Steering Committee,
Revolutionary Internationalist
League,
(British Section, International
Trotskyist Committee).

We reply:

The issues concerning TILC and the ITC raised in this letter cannot be dealt with fully in a short reply. We refer readers to *WP* Nos 42 and 45 for a full exposition of our positions on these tendencies.

Two points do need a specific reply. First, the comrades refer to their special orientation to 'Trotskyist-centrist' groups. This is a variation of the Italian section of the ITC's 'centrism sui generis'. According to them, the formal adherence to the Transitional Programme marks out a centrist group as having special characteristics.

This position led the LOR (Italian section of the ITC) to enter the Italian USEC. Their view was that it could be peacefully persuaded to change course from 'Pabloism'. Moreover, they wanted to generalise their tactic of disappearing into the USEC, and concluding alliances with its Mandeliste wing. The comrades of the RIL rightly attack Lister for praising the Mandeliste split from the Socialist League in Britain. Yet the same current in the USA is the subject of unity overtures by the RIL's US comrades in the RWL.

Underlying such unprincipled manoeuvres is an opportunist attitude to the 'world Trotskyist movement' in general and the USEC in particular. The LOR argued that the TILC (now ITC) was the equivalent of the Left Opposition of the late 1920s and early 1930s. According to them the USEC is like the pre-1933 Comintern, except that unlike that organisation it cannot go right along the road of counter-revolutionary betrayal because it lacks a definite social foundation. Hence, the strategic orientation of the LOR (at least) of regenerating the USEC from within.

This is an extremely dangerous position. All centrism, while its base is ill-defined, nevertheless reflects the social weight of the

petit-bourgeoisie. The history of the FI since 1948 is one of capitulation to petit-bourgeois forces - Stalinists, petit-bourgeois nationalists, sections of the labour bureaucracy and now, in the case of the WSL, the petit-bourgeois elements of the Labour left. The suggestion that these capitulations and betrayals do not represent a "complete break from the programme of Bolshevism" as the LOR argue, is to besmirch the programme of Lenin and Trotsky. That they use some of its slogans means not that they are its heirs, but its grave-robbers.

The comrades claim that the ITC represents a homogeneous continuation and developer of the one time healthy TILC. The fact is that the ITC's programmatic basis is extremely thin. Its documents have not corrected the founding documents of TILC which, let it be remembered, allowed the WSL and I-CL to fuse. That fusion began to crumble when opposing factions took different sides in the Malvinas war. Such an issue necessitated a programmatic fight. The truth is that, despite the offer of comradely collaboration in such a programmatic fight from ourselves, the RWL/LOR fought Matgamna and Thornett on an organisational basis. While TILC was split over the question of imperialism and the semi-colonies, the RWP/LOR reasoned:

"... if one considers that such different positions can co-exist, for the time being, within a particular national organisation, one cannot understand why they cannot coexist within an international organisation."

This topsy-turvy logic - of proposing that social pacifism and revolutionary defeatism should 'co-exist' - led the LOR/RWL to propose immediate democratic centralism in the TILC to "enable discussions to proceed more easily" (LOR)

Comrades, the TILC/ITC tradition put programme second and manoeuvre first. Nevertheless if the RIL and ITC wish to demonstrate to us a change of method and discuss the programmatic questions that are at the root of degeneration of the FI, and that must be solved in order to refound a revolutionary International, then we would welcome discussions. ■

SELLAFIELD

Comrades

It appears to me that Dave Hughes mars an otherwise useful article "Should Sellafield Shut" (*WP* 81) in making some highly questionable assertions in his final paragraph which do not flow from his previous argument.

We are told that the anti-nuke movement has the perspective that, "under all circumstances nuclear power is evil and should be opposed". The indeterminate word 'evil' is presumably used to imply that such a viewpoint is simply unworthy of consideration. If anyone does hold such an absolutist view they are surely just as incorrect as Dave who assumes that nuclear power is socially neutral and merely requires "workers inspection and control" in order to make the process safe and to allow it to "display its productive potential in the interests of satisfying society's needs". In fact it can be argued that nuclear power is inherently inefficient, unsafe and justifiable on any large scale only in terms of capitalist political rationality.

Before doing this it may be mentioned that an attempt is made to bolster the argument for nuclear power by arguing that for the imperialised sector of the world economy with its desperate energy needs the prospect of solving this deficiency by means of wind or wave power is a "utopian perspective". Perhaps the author forgot that one natural resource some imperialised countries possess in abundance is solar energy which is capable of being turned into useful energy form with relatively simple technology unlike nuclear

energy which increases the imperialised sectors' dependence on the advanced industrial nations. By the way, if the vast expenditure which has been pumped into nuclear power had gone into research and development in 'alternative energy' areas would these energy sources now seem so 'utopian'. The reason it has not of course constitutes a political decision - initially based on military requirements and to an extent still so - by the industrially advanced countries. Indeed the imperialised countries' energy crisis is not due to the absence of nuclear power but precisely because of their adverse location in the imperialist power structure.

The author poses "the perspective of mastering the present day problems of nuclear power so that the energy problems of the world can be decisively overcome". Two comments are prompted by that statement. Firstly the "present day problems" of nuclear power already stretch far into the future. The nuclear waste storage problem may indeed be unsolvable unless vessels can be manufactured which will maintain their integrity over many thousands of years or geographical areas can be found where the rock composition will remain stable over a similar period. Zhores Medvedev (Nuclear Disaster in the Urals) has convincingly demonstrated that a nuclear waste disaster has already occurred in the Soviet Union in 1957 and that this was kept secret by both the Soviets and the West. Secondly a vast gulf exists between the theoretical potentialities of nuclear power and the useful energy produced in practice. One need only recall the Advanced Gascooled Reactors at Dungeness B, Hinkley Point B and Hunterston B whose 'on steam' time can be counted in months rather than years. Nor do the Pressurised Water Reactors inspire confidence when the supercritical incident at Idaho in 1961 which resulted in the death of three people in a steam explosion or the more recent near meltdown at Harrisburg in 1979 are remembered. This is not merely a question of managerial incompetence - a point graphically illustrated by the author himself in relation to Windscale - but of design deficiency in the plants themselves. The former could be solved by workers control and inspection whilst the latter entails a long term replacement programme in a situation where the emphasis could be placed on design safety rather than on construction and operating costs.

A factor ignored by the author is that the large armed units necessary to protect the waste, transportation of nuclear materials, the plants themselves and the military installations which they supply converges neatly with the state's overall plans for maintaining 'national security' and quelling social unrest. The whole nuclear industry is incompatible with even bourgeois notions of democratic accountability. □

Ted Hankin,
Nottingham.

We reply:

The comrade claims, initially, to only have differences with our closing paragraph. In reality the letter differs with the entire position in the article. While we recognise that nuclear power, as a technology, has its specific dangers and problems we refuse to accept that these problems cannot be overcome as a means of solving humanity's desperate shortage of industry. Wind, wave and solar power have not the proven potential sufficient to justify them as an alternative. The problem is that capitalism will not use the potential of nuclear power to solve the world's energy needs and will run that industry in a manner that threatens the health of our class. Hence the centrality of the fight to take control of that industry into the hands of the working class; as a means of defending the health of our class and answering the desperate need for energy of the majority of the world's population. The last paragraph served to highlight that argument not to mar it. ■

ONE OF TROTSKY'S last surviving secretaries, Jean Van Heijenoort, is dead. Van Heijenoort, one of Trotsky's closest collaborators during 1932-39 died in Mexico on the 28th March.

Born in France in 1912, the son of a Dutch worker, Van Heijenoort was a brilliant Mathematics student. In Spring 1932 he joined the French Trotskyist organisation, La Ligue Communiste. Shortly afterwards one of the leaders of the Ligue, Raymond Molinier, suggested that he should become Trotsky's secretary.

At this time Trotsky was in exile on the Turkish island of Prinkipo. "Van", as he was known, arrived in October 1932. For the next eight years - the rest of Trotsky's life - Van was either his secretary or in close correspondence with him. As Trotsky's secretary, bodyguard and general factotum, Van moved with him from Turkey to France, and then finally to Mexico where Trotsky was assassinated.

The necessity of such support - technical and physical - cannot be underestimated. Trotsky's output of books, articles and letters during this period was prodigious. A skilled, politically cultured secretariat was essential. The role of bodyguard was equally significant. There was the continual fear of a Stalinist-inspired attack, as well as regular run-ins with the police and with journalists.

An American journalist described Van in 1938 as:

"a brawny, tall blond young man with a cartridge belt and pistol slung about his waist".

During 1935-36, when Trotsky was in Norway, Van Heijenoort was in France, carrying out political work during the pre-revolutionary situation which gripped the country. It was during this period that Trotsky, disappointed with what he felt to be the rather sluggish behaviour of the French section, made the following proposition to him. Every week, Trotsky was to send him enough material for a small weekly bulletin Le

OBITUARY

Soviet, which was to act as the focus for the revolutionary organisation of the working class. Van was to translate and supervise the production of the journal, although nothing came of the proposal, it shows the confidence Trotsky had in Van Heijenoort.

When Trotsky went on his final journey, to Mexico, Van Heijenoort went too.

For the next two years, the relationship between 'Van' and Trotsky continued as before, although there was more help and more contact with the outside world than there had been in Prinkipo. In 1939, Van Heijenoort, in his own words, decided to step

out from under the great man's shadow. He went to America, to join the American section, the SWP.

It was while he was teaching in Baltimore, in August 1940, that he learned of the assassination of Trotsky by one of Stalin's agents.

Just before the outbreak of World War II, the International Secretariat of the Fourth International had been transferred to New York from Paris. From 1941, Van Heijenoort was the International Secretary of the FI. He supervised the production in New York of a French language bulletin, La Verite, which was smuggled



Heijenoort (left) fending off journalists

ed into occupied France inside American magazines, with the help of American and French sailors. During this time he also wrote around 20 articles for Fourth International, the SWP's theoretical journal, under the pen-name Marc Loris.

In 1948, at the young age of 36, but with 16 crowded years of revolutionary activity behind him, Van Heijenoort decided to leave politics. Disheartened by a recent split in the SWP, disoriented by the revelations of the barbarity of Stalin's rule in Russia, Van Heijenoort decided to go back to his first love, mathematics.

Although he broke with Trotskyism he never became an open enemy of Trotsky's memory. Far from it. He supervised the cataloguing of the 'Closed' section of Trotsky's archives at Harvard some 20,000 items. He was one of the first supporters of the 'Institut Leon Trotsky', a French body which publishes the definitive edition of Trotsky's works, as well as a very useful quarterly journal.

Finally, in 1978 he published a slim book of memoirs, Seven Years With Trotsky: From Prinkipo to Coyoacan. (Harvard University Press). Although a trifle voyeuristic at times, his book is an engrossing account of the struggle of the Trotskyists in the 1930s which all militants should read.

With Van Heijenoort's death, another living link with Trotsky has been broken. The remnants of an entire political generation are fading away. Today's revolutionaries, without benefit of Trotsky's wisdom and experience, can only gain from studying the lives of these militants, their strengths and their weaknesses, their successes and their failures. The politically active years of Van Heijenoort's life are a lesson to us all. ■

by Emile Gallet

Pouvoir Ouvrier (MRCI)

NORTH DERBY NUM

IF THE SITUATION in North Derbyshire is anything to go by then the NCB is not having everything its own way. The resounding vote for industrial action against the introduction of a pit-based bonus system and strikes at two pits are indications that the mood of defeatism prevalent at the end of the strike is beginning to be challenged by rank and file miners.

The area NUM suspended the overtime ban once the NCB asked for talks. Instead of pressing on when we have an advantage our area leadership is working overtime in its efforts to have good working relations with the board. From the start they did not call for a full overtime ban. They settled for a weekday ban with weekend working continuing in order to keep up production. One Markham Main miner told Workers Power:

"The branch officers here (at Markham - WP) recommended first of all to accept the agreement but were voted against by 70% of the men. We are not very pleased with Chesterfield, the area leadership have done nothing to win their case."

Miners at High Moor struck after an area salvage team with UDM members was sent in. The strike lasted a week and there is now a full overtime ban in protest. Miners at Ireland pit (who came out last year when the NCB arranged a police tour of the colliery) are deciding whether or not to continue their action against management cutting water money. Both the night and day shifts have been out while the afternoon shift voted to work.

At both High Moor and Ireland you would have thought we did not have an area leadership. No lead was given to step up the action or link the struggles. The fight against the UDM, Japanese style production techniques and

deteriorating conditions has been left to the rank and file.

The area leadership even called off transport for Wapping. So much for repaying our debt to the printers for their support in the Great Strike.

Red Miner supporters in the coalfield will continue to fight for action against the NCB and the UDM. Events in North Derbyshire confirm the need for the rank and file who are doing the fighting to take over the union, boot out time-serving officials and get back on the road of class struggle. ■

by North Derby Red Miners

CARDIFF UCW

MORE THAN A thousand Cardiff post office workers walked out on the 24th April in support of one of their colleagues. Jimmy Quigley was sacked by management on the pretext that he returned to the depot with undelivered letters in February.

The workforce realised the real reason for sacking Jimmy is that he is an active trade unionist. Management are anxious to get rid of militants in order to introduce new technology.

The action escalated when 50 Newport workers were suspended for refusing to handle mail being transferred to Newport by Cardiff businesses. The Newport workforce responded by joining the strike and demanding reinstatement for the suspended workers. Since then workers in Barry have taken similar action.

Under pressure from a strike that was proving effective and escalating through the use of flying pickets management agreed to reinstate Jimmy and the 50 suspended workers. A mass meeting voted to go back to work but subject to a satisfactory return to work agreement. However management are now insisting on the use of casual labour to clear the backlog.

The membership have therefore refused to go back to work on management's conditions. They remain determined to stay out until a satisfactory work agreement, using their own unionised workforce, is agreed. ■

by Gaynor Jenkins

FORD HALEWOOD

THE COST OF falling to win a recent three-week long strike at Ford Halewood, Liverpool, over regrading is now making itself felt.

In a major rationalisation drive management are planning to sack 2,500 workers some time this year. Speed-ups mean 37 jobs an hour on one line. This is a mind and body destroying track speed.

In addition men on a B grade, working on the line, are now expected to do their own repairs, their own quality control checking and clear their own areas. This break down of demarcation is rewarded by a poxy 2% line allowance.

All of these measures are part of Ford's plans to introduce 'After-Japan' (AJ) - Japanese work techniques. Halewood is being used as a testing ground.

Despite not winning regrading, the workers who struck for three weeks did prove that management are not getting it all their own way. The focus for national strikes in Ford has, in the past, always been pay. While this remains important it is also vital to resist the implementation of AJ. Every local strike in every Ford plant must be sent out to spread a simple but crucial message - AJ hits us all, its time we hit back together.

by a Halewood worker

BRUM PRINT

A RECENT INCIDENT in Birmingham highlighted both the potential for spreading the strike and the

opposition to this from print union officials.

On Friday 4th April some twenty pickets, organised by Birmingham Print Workers Support Group, were picketing W.H. Smith's warehouse. At about 3.00am a Daily Express lorry approached the picket line. The SOGAT/NGA leadership waved the lorry through but the driver stopped to talk to the pickets anyway. He explained that he did not like crossing any picket line. One of the pickets, Geoff Smith, a sacked NGA member, agreed that they would be happy to see all lorries turned around. With that the Express driver turned around and returned his load, Daily Stars, to New Street Railway Station.

The pickets were, of course, delighted. Not so Alan Jordan, NGA full time official. He declared that this was no way to run a picket line, and went home. The episode underlines the vital importance of creating militant, rank and file controlled, organisations which can change the direction of the strike. In Birmingham a co-ordinating committee has now been established as a step towards doing just this.

Printworkers and supporters in the Birmingham area can get further information from Nick Clark on 021 471 4703. ■

by Norman Goodwin

SILENTNIGHT

MARCH AND RALLY

Keighley, Saturday May 17th 12pm

Organised by
Keighley Trades Council
Silentnight Strikers



workers power

FLEET STREET OUT - NOW!

THE WAPPING DISPUTE is nearly three months old. Like the year long miners' strike it shows how bitter the trade union struggle has become.

The increasing length of these strikes is due to two main factors. The first is the increased determination of the bosses to defeat strikes and crush the unions. The second is the increasing isolation of the strikers themselves from the rest of the labour movement.

The bosses are prepared for long struggles. They know that the longer a struggle goes on, the more it tips the scales in their favour. They know that with their economic resources, with the power of the state behind them and with police escorts for their scabs they have the power to tire out and demoralise the pickets.

There are signs of this beginning to happen at Wapping. The pickets are beginning to flag. This is true and we must recognise it. Scab lorries are now regularly being brought out of the front gates even on Saturday nights.

Fortunately many rank and file printers are beginning to challenge the conduct of the dispute. They recognise that the action must be stepped up. The clerical chapel of the Sun have called for a 24 hour Fleet Street strike on May 3rd.

We need to win and end this strike. There is nothing we can do about the determination of Murdoch. But there is everything we can do about the isolation of the Wapping pickets. The first step is to bring out Fleet Street. From the beginning of the dispute Dean and Dubbins have helped isolate the Wapping dispute - from trying to discourage outside pickets to arguing that Fleet Street should not come out. They have argued that bringing out Fleet Street would be counter-productive because Murdoch would then be able to sell more papers due to the non-availability of other titles. They have also argued that escalating the struggle to Fleet Street would lose the pickets the support of public opinion.

Dean and Dubbins were wrong on both counts. A Fleet Street

stoppage would increase the pressure on Murdoch not decrease it. An all out Fleet Street strike would release more pickets for Wapping. It would make it far easier to win blacking from other unions, members of whom have said, "why should I come out and put my job on the line if the printers themselves do not show solidarity."

If we were to take Dean and Dubbins' logic to its conclusion there would be no strikes. If they were in charge of the NUM in 1984 they would have opposed an all out strike because that would have obviously increased the demand for competitive products like gas, oil and electricity.

In fact what has happened is that by holding back the Fleet Street workers the officials have allowed the press barons to press their advantage in deals signed at the Mirror, the Express, the Financial Times and the Telegraph. While Dean and Dubbins have been telling Wapping pickets it is counter-productive to bring out Fleet Street, they have been scuttling behind the members' backs selling jobs all over Fleet Street.

Wapping workers cannot rely on these treacherous leaders. They have to take the struggle into their own hands. To do that they must decisively break from the argument that bringing out Fleet Street is bad for them. Once this is done the Wapping pickets must



John Sturrock (Network)

not rely on the trade union officials to organise the strike. They must appeal directly to the rank

and file in Fleet Street and build links that will ensure the success of any potential strike.■

Recently Workers Power had a discussion with George Hall (News of the World/Sun FOC), Larry Hyett (SOGAT London Machine Branch/Chair of the Union of Print Support Groups - UPSG), Lawrence Jenkins (SOGAT Daily Telegraph) and Steve Masterson (UPSG).

PRINT WORKERS SPEAK OUT

Workers Power: The dispute at Wapping far from confirming Dean and Dubbins to be correct has shown the opposite. Being nice has not shamed Murdoch to the negotiating table, or prevented the judges fining the Unions and sequestrating funds. In fact their "new realism" has been a real block on effective action.

George: That is correct. At the beginning our leadership said we were going to win through a low profile campaign and through the media. They advised our people that they would not be needed at Wapping.

Larry: I would like to put what I consider to be the position of the rank and file striker from the beginning of the dispute. Apart from filling in the ballot paper I have had no other official involvement in the dispute. We have had irregular chapel meetings where domestic grievances have been raised and not political initiatives. The only mass meeting we have had was recently at the Academy in Brixton where a rising determination to escalate the action only made the leadership more eager to terminate the strike in what may be classed a sell-out.

George: We have to make printers aware in the whole industry that this is a national dispute. It will affect us all. The major problem we face is that the national leadership is trying to cook up a deal with Murdoch.

WP: Although there have been no organised attempts to bring out Fleet Street there have been attempts to organise blacking and solidarity in other News International Plants and in suppliers and distributors. The resounding defeat in the ballots, especially Bemrose in Liverpool will enable the officials to say it is impossible to extend the dispute.

George: Regarding Bemrose. Bemrose is a major part of News of the World. They should have been included in the ballot which called us out. However over the last 12 weeks we strikers have made a fundamental mistake. During that period we ought to

have been lobbying places like Bemrose, explaining at mass meetings what the dispute is all about. We were allowing the national Union and also the officers to run the dispute. We are learning quite quickly that if we wish to win this dispute we have got to take our destiny in our own hands.

Larry: At Bemrose the first approach was made by full time officers saying that Murdoch had earmarked this plant for closure and was only looking for an excuse to close it.

WP: In other words the officials did not argue that the best way to save Bemrose was a victory at Wapping, and that this required the printers at Bemrose coming out together with the workers at Wapping.

Larry: No they did not. They have been against escalating the struggle from the beginning.

The only success we have had is when the rank and file have gone out to organise blacking and solidarity themselves. That is why we have set out to build a rank and file movement in Fleet Street beginning with a public meeting in Fleet Street on the 29th.

Steve: Another success has been the Union of Print Support Groups which has sought to bring together the print support groups which have sprung up in the footsteps of the old miners' support groups. However the UPSG is firmly orientated towards the rank and file and not the officials. The majority of activists are agreed

that if we give support we have earned the right to criticise the conduct of the strike. This was not the case in the majority of miners support groups.

Larry: One point is important. Although we may have lost the ballot, and had workers cross our picket lines across the country, there has always been a minority sympathetic to us. It is up to us to provide this minority with the real case for solidarity with Wapping and for them to win their fellow workers over to solidarity action.

WP: George you said earlier that bringing out Fleet Street was the key to winning this dispute. We agree on this. The 24 hour strike called for in Fleet Street on May 3rd is a step in this direction provided it is under the control of the rank and file.

George: It is absolutely essential that we win the vote throughout Fleet Street. That can act as the catalyst to involve the national newspaper industry because it will give us the opportunity to explain to them that the strike is not just about News International. From then on we would be a step closer to a total close down of Fleet Street. The trade unions desperately need a win and I am convinced in my own mind that Wapping could be the victory we all yearn for.

Larry: I have argued from the beginning for Fleet Street out. Unlike the officials I do have confidence in the workers in Fleet Street being won to this position.

There has been an increasing number of motions supporting the militant view.

Steve: The UPSG will throw its weight behind such a strike. A Fleet Street strike will give us a focus around which to build solidarity.

Lawrence: A Fleet Street strike is essential. In the first two weeks of the Wapping dispute Brenda Dean actually said on telly that we missed the boat on Wapping, that we should not have waited for Murdoch to move to Wapping. Now she is doing the same at the Telegraph. It is time we stopped all the press barons in their tracks. If Murdoch wins we are all done. We all have the same interest - for jobs, conditions and against de-unionisation. It is overdue that we all come out.■

workers power

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