

Workers Power

30p/10p strikers

Monthly paper of the Workers Power group

ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID NOW

YET AGAIN THE South African government has stymied negotiations aimed at 'reforming' Apartheid. In the last few weeks it has once more lashed out beyond its borders, attacking ANC bases and refugee camps in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Prime Minister P W Botha has declared his intention to "smash the ANC". The Commonwealth peace mission of 'Eminent Persons' has left empty-handed.

Botha is under pressure from the international investors and trading partners who want to see changes in South Africa before revolution threatens their profits. But equally he is trapped by the right-wing whites who are now looking to the Conservatives and HNP parties and resisting any reform. The fascist AWB has demonstrated how far sections of Afrikanerdom will go to defend Apartheid. Apartheid can deliver only more terror and repression, every weekend more funerals, more young people laying down their lives.

In the face of all this, Thatcher still refuses sanctions. Even if the Commonwealth Heads forced her into gestures, we can be sure the Tories will ensure that their banking and business interests won't be threatened. The task of isolating South Africa and breaking Apartheid's lifelines falls to the international working class.

In South Africa, trade unionists are in the front line. After the success of the May Day Stay Away, another national strike is planned for 16th June, Soweto Day. Their action must find a response here.

It is time the British trade union movement enforced workers' sanctions through an effective trade boycott and action against companies with major South African connections, like slave labour mining firm Consolidated Goldfields.

Leicester hospital stores workers have now followed the example of their colleagues in Portsmouth in refusing to handle South African goods, and now the Health Authority has agreed not to place orders. More actions like these can build a campaign that can provide effective support for workers taking boycott action in docks, transport and manufacturing industry.

This support needs to be built at rank and file level and through a campaign demanding action on this question from the trade union leadership. Demand that the national executives follow the call of the Dunnes shop workers in Dublin and organise workers' action to isolate Apartheid.

March for Freedom in South Africa and Namibia.

Assemble Hyde Park

11am Saturday 28th June

Stop Jobs Massacre

THE TORIES ARE in a hurry. Their 'shake-out' of industry has not yet created the total wasteland in working class areas that they are aiming at. So, sensing the possibility of a defeat in the next elections, they are sanctioning a jobs massacre on an enormous scale.

The Tories' pet hate - the nationalised sector - is to be hit hardest. British Shipbuilding, whose workforce has been cut by 40,000 since nationalisation in 1977, is down to lose another 3,000 jobs, cutting the entire workforce down to 5,500. The yards in the North-East and Scotland are the major victims.

Getting in on the act, British Rail announced the loss of 400 jobs due to a cancelled contract with the Post Office, and then 7,650 redundancies in the engineering workshops. And the NCB, already closing pits by the dozen, promised 4,000 job cuts in Yorkshire alone.

Taking their cue from the government, the private sector began throwing redundancy notices around like confetti. Ford promised that 800 jobs would go at Bridgend in South Wales over the next four years. Kodak bosses got into the picture by sacking 900 workers. Boots are to kick 750 workers out of their jobs. British Caledonian joined in the slaughter with 1,000 redundancies, followed by 790 redundancies at NEL.

The list has far from ended. Signs of contraction in the economy will lead to yet more redundancies. The overall effect of this mass unemployment on the working class is devastating. The latest official figures show 3,325,058 on the dole (13.7% of the workforce).

But this obscene total is far from the whole truth. In order to massage unemployment figures the government has changed its method of calculating the number out of work fifteen times since 1979. Whole sections of the population, such as school leavers, youth in dead-end and share-labour YTS schemes, married women and others are simply not counted. Including these the real figure for unemployment is nearly 5 million.

To the Tories these figures are just numbers in their ledger books. In pursuit of profit a few more thousand will be sacked. But those thousands are working class people and communities. Lives are devastated by unemployment. Living on the breadline is living in misery.

And in areas like Liverpool, the North-East, Glasgow and South Wales, there is no way out. Industry in these areas is fast disappearing. Middlesborough - about to lose shipyard jobs - has seen employment in steel slump from 25,000 in 1979 to 7,500 today. The other main industry in the area, chemicals, has cut its workforce from 15,000 to 6,000 in the same period.

Mass unemployment is poison for the labour movement. It can demoralise the unemployed themselves. There is a great danger that this bitterness will be turned against employed workers. Lord Young's statement that high wages were to blame for unemployment is designed to fuel hostility and division between the employed and unemployed.

For the employed too such disunity is dangerous. Made desperate by years on the dole, unemployed workers can be used as scabs in management operations to break the unions. Wapping is but the most prominent example of this actually happening.

In the face of the jobs massacre the leadership of the labour movement have responded in a fashion that has delighted the bosses and the Tories. Where was the TUC in the week that the massacre reached its peak? Nowhere to be seen or heard. Not one march, let alone strike, has been considered or called by these men of inaction.

In the individual unions the response has been equally woeful. In the shipyards despite years of defeat rank and file workers showed a willingness to fight. On Friday 16th May the entire workforce at the threatened Smith's Dock in Middlesborough, walked off the job and demonstrated in the town. The response to the day of action the next week was rock solid throughout British Ship-



Shipyard workers march to defend jobs

building.

Despite this will to resist the union leaders are dragging their feet. Instead of defying the Tory anti-union laws and taking action now Alex Ferry of the CSEU and Jimmy Knapp of the NUR are hiding behind calls for a ballot . . . at some stage!

Ferry warned after the solid one day strike of shipbuilding workers, that

"... the mechanics of a ballot are something that will have to be decided at a later stage." When, Mr. Ferry? Perhaps when the bosses have closed the yards!

The working class needs to resist the jobs massacre by taking decisive action now to counterpose its interests, its livelihoods, against those of the bosses. The first line of defence must be the occupation by the workforce of the shipyards, rail workshops and threatened factories.

The bosses have a fortune tied up in their plants - machinery, equipment, stock, etc. They will be loath to close their plants if it means abandoning these assets. By occupying now we can hold these assets to ransom and physically prevent the closures.

The full weight of the law and

police would be used against such actions. But occupations are harder to hit with either truncheons or injunctions than picket lines. They can be defended effectively. They can become a focus - as UCS was in the 1970s - for action by other sections of workers. They can become a beacon of resistance and hope to those already unemployed.

The occupation of the bosses yards and plants poses point blank the question of control. It challenges the bosses' right to hire and fire. It challenges the bosses' right to manage. In the fight against unemployment workers must not shy away from the issue of control.

To answer the bosses' lies about order books, we must demand that all the business secrets are exposed to workers' inspection. In nationalised industries where orders are short government funds must be granted to enable what work is available to be shared by the whole workforce, and for the length of the working week to be reduced. Work and hours must be firmly under workers' control.

In the private sector the same measures of control must be exercised by the workers but they must also demand - in cases of threat-

ened closure - that the entire capitalist class take responsibility for funding the enterprise that their system has driven to the wall, through nationalisation, with no compensation and under workers' control. This must include the re-nationalisation of all firms privatised by the Tories.

A strategy based on these policies can defeat the Tories' onslaught. It can defend jobs. Any other road will, sadly, ensure that the dole queues are swelled. Militants across the threatened industries must reject the passivity of their leaders. They must organise at a rank and file level to challenge any leaders who won't fight. They must be won to a bold policy that puts working class interests first.

OCCUPY TO DEFEND JOBS!

FOR WORK-SHARING WITH NO LOSS OF PAY!

CUT THE HOURS NOT THE JOBS!

FOR WORK OR FULL PAY - MAKE THE BOSSES PAY!

FOR (RE-)NATIONALISATION WITHOUT COMPENSATION, UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL!

DEFEND ALL JOBS!

WORK OR FULL PAY!

RESULTS AND PROSPECTS

"WE NOW JUST keep right on with our policies and redouble our efforts. This was Thatcher's response to the hammering the Tories took in the recent local elections where they lost 700 seats.

Tory misery was increased by the loss of a safe seat (Ryedale) and a massively reduced majority in another (West Derbyshire) in the two parliamentary by-elections. But with the Tory bicycle visibly wobbling Thatcher and Tebbit are exhorting the faithful to pedal faster.

The share of the Tory vote, on a national scale, was down by 7.4%. With a general election on the horizon such a slump is significant. Repeated in a General Election it would, almost certainly, result in a Tory defeat.

There have been two responses in the Tory ranks to this crisis of credibility. Tory elder statesman John Biffen has become the latest in a long line of distinguished critics of Thatcher. Smarting from the series of policy disasters that have hit the Tories - Westland, British Leyland, Libya - Biffen criticised Thatcher's style and public spending policy.

INSURANCE

He talked of the need for a leadership in the party representing a 'balanced ticket'. He argued, along with another senior Tory, Malcolm Rifkind, for a shift of emphasis away from tax cuts and towards public spending:

"We have allowed the impression to be created that we do not care about public services."

The second response to the elections was that of the Thatcher/Tebbit camp who now realise that they may lose the next election. As an insurance policy, therefore, they are set on completing their programme of vicious attacks on the working class as quickly as

Elections

possible. Tebbit stated that the task now facing the Tories was to take policies forward:

"perhaps at a slightly quicker pace than we have in recent years".

What he meant by this was quickly revealed in the jobs massacre in shipbuilding, on the railways and in the pits. It was revealed by the announcement of plans to boost the DHSS snooper brigade by 500. It was revealed by the swindling of the nurses out of pay rises due to them in April, but not commencing until July.

As for Thatcher's attitude to Biffen, it was just as intransigent, as it has been to all the other "wet" oppositions. Her press secretary, the odious Bernard Ingham, described Biffen as "eccentric". Even the apparent concession to the 'wets' of appointing Kenneth Baker as the new Education Minister was cancelled out by the promotion of arch right-winger Nicholas Ridley and of John Moore at Westminster as a Thatcherite 'true believer'!

The overall situation in the Tory party then is that the Thatcherites remain firmly in the saddle, but popular hostility to them is causing divisions within the



ranks. In this situation what should be the response of the labour movement?

Conflict in the Tory ranks is to be welcomed. We can and should exploit their divisions - but not be taking sides in the conflict. Biffen disagrees with Thatcher only over the tempo and style of the attacks on the working class, not their necessity.

Rather, the way to exploit Tory difficulties is to fight their attacks in the here and now. Occupations of the shipyards and the rail workshops, strikes to defend and extend pay levels, can deal a real blow to Thatcher's job and wage cutting plans. If such actions are not launched now, then there is a real danger that Thatcher's crew will demoralise the working class.

But Kinnock is singing an entirely different tune. He was, of course, delighted with the election results - "on course for Downing Street", he claimed. Yet, behind the celebrations, there were fears that Labour was still not doing well enough against the Alliance.

"CARING ROLE"

Tribune ruefully admitted that the strong showing in the local elections "may not have been quite enough to ensure a majority in Westminster". (16/5/86). Indeed a breakdown of the voting patterns showed that the rise in the Labour vote was 2.7% overall (it in fact fell by 1.5% in England) while that of the Alliance was up 4.3%. In terms of council seats this

meant a 570 seat gain for Labour and a 380 seat gain for the Alliance. Clearly Labour has not yet regained the ground lost to the Alliance in the early 1980s. Above all else this is fashioning Kinnock's strategy.

Desperate to woo the Alliance's middle class base, Kinnock is distancing the Labour Party ever more quickly from the class struggle and any kind of socialism. Hence, Kinnock's emphasis on Labour's 'caring role', its commitment to keeping the unions in their place, and the purge of Militant. It also explains Hattersley's re-assurance to the tax conscious middle classes and the profit-anxious capitalists the next Labour Government, far from seriously expanding public sector spending, would oversee "a tough framework of public spending" and "a nationally calculated ceiling to public borrowing".

Instead of putting themselves at the head of resistance now, union leaders like Bickerstaffe are advising a 'wait for the election' line. This is disastrous. It may help Kinnock's respectable image but it will leave more workers on the dole now, more factories, pits and shipyards decimated now. It will ensure that Kinnock - if he gets to power - will 'inherit' a demoralised working class.

Make no mistake, by signalling his intention to manage capitalism and to attempt to nurse it back to health, Kinnock is signalling his intention to betray every progressive Labour policy and attack the working class. A further deepening crisis of British capitalism - output fell by 0.3% last month, the first major fall for some years - will

propel him, inevitably, into such attacks. A working class that cannot fight now will be in poor shape to fight him then.

Of course, these attacks will come heavier and quicker if a hung Parliament leads Labour into a coalition with the Alliance. Those sirens of the subordination of the working class to an all class popular front, the Communist Party, are already advocating such a course. From the election results they concluded that Labour must take the Alliance seriously because on many issues, "they have important and persuasive points to make". (7 Days 17/5/86)

EXCUSES

While Kinnock, for electoral purposes, is formally rejecting all talk of a coalition, his policies are preparing the ground for one, should it be "thrust on him" by the electorate. Such a coalition would give Kinnock a convenient excuse for the attacks that he would launch.

The watchwords of the day are clear for those who wish to fight against capitalism. There should be no holding back on the class struggle to serve Kinnock's electoral ambitions - act now to defend jobs and services. Don't give Kinnock any excuses - oppose all coalitionism and moves towards it. Force the Labour leadership to use the divisions in the Tories' ranks to encourage and support active resistance now to their attacks. ■

by Mark Hoskisson

THORN IN KINNOCK'S SIDE

THIS YEAR'S LABOUR Women's Conference was held in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. Whether or not this was a deliberate attempt to get it as far away from Kinnock as possible is debatable, but it certainly had the effect of ensuring that no reports of its decisions reached the national press. Which was very convenient for the Labour Party leadership since the conference took some decisions which would spoil Kinnock's new found image for the party.

For a start, the conference voted to oppose witch-hunts in the Party against Militant supporters, Labour Committee on Ireland members and Black Section supporters. It voted for the reinstatement of any Militant supporters who are expelled, and agreed to support and build for the Conference Against the Witch-hunts on 21st June.

The conference also called for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, opposed the Anglo-Irish Accord and called for greater pressure to end strip searching. It reaffirmed support for Black Sections within the Labour Party, called for the withdrawal of Britain from NATO, condemned the US bombing of Libya and called for the removal of all US bases from Britain. It supported the phasing out of nuclear power and called for the resignation of pro-nuclear John Cunningham as Environment Spokes-person.

The Labour Women's Conference has a history of adopting embarrassing anti-leadership positions recently, including its opposition to Britain's war in the South Atlantic. The Labour Party and trade union leaders must view the women's organisation with some trepidation these days. Gone are the days when you could rely on the women to make the tea and run the jumble sales.

And yet the Women's Conference remains essentially toothless. The demands it passes year after year for the right to elect its own representatives onto the NEC, to be able to put resolutions to Conference and to have positive discrimination in favour of women in selection procedures, have always been defeated at that same Annual Conference. The situation remains that the reserved seats for women

Women

on the NEC are elected along with the rest by the male-dominated trade union block votes.

The argument over structure has continued this year. For the first time the big unions seem to be taking an interest - NUPE spearheaded a right-wing offensive calling for the introduction of the trade union block vote into the Women's Conference. In a resolution calling for a more influential Women's Conference, they suggested that Women's Conference should have a 'significant' say in the choice for the women's seats, with the block vote ensuring that it too was under the control of the right.

OPPOSED

This resolution gained support from major unions such as the AEU, ASTMS, EETPU and from the Kinnockite LCC. They saw it as a way of regaining control of the conference from the left. The vote was lost with 206 in favour and 256 against, but it showed that the right is getting its act together.

Whilst the main activists opposed this resolution, and the Women's Action Committee called



on NUPE to withdraw it, it has raised the whole question of how to break out from the current log-jam where the Women's Conference passes resolutions which then get overturned at Conference. The

Women's Conference, like the Women's TUC, is merely a consultative body. But constitutional reforms will not make these two organisations more relevant to the struggles of working class women.

The rights of women to organise in the Labour Party and trade unions must be supported, and their organisations should have rights of representation at all levels of the labour movement. Introducing the trade union block vote into their structures will not help, but other ways must be established of linking up the women in the Labour Party with women in the unions.

ATTACKS

Working class women are facing extreme attacks under the Tories. With the present Labour leadership these attacks would continue with a Labour government, regardless of any Ministry for Women or other cosmetic 'reforms'. Kinnock is set on wage restraint and continuing to balance the books of capitalism, which will inevitably mean women will suffer. This means that activists in Women's Sections cannot restrict themselves to trying to get better paper policy for the Labour Party. This must be combined with getting working class women organised to fight for

their demands on equal pay, better housing and services, against militarism and for their own liberation.

Many women are struggling at the moment - over pay, against privatisation and closures and in the continuing fights in the mining communities and the print industry. It is to these women that the Labour Party Women's Sections should look. They should commit their energies to trying to build a militant working class women's movement. Based in the unions, communities, amongst the unemployed, black women, students and in the Labour Party such a movement could draw together all these struggles, giving solidarity and the confidence to fight.

The Labour Party and trade union leaderships are attempting to reform the women's organisation by incorporating aspects of women's demands, just as they are trying to set up stooze bodies on Black oppression to try and undermine the self organisation of these oppressed groups. We must oppose any attempts to stop women and Black people organising within the labour movement, but at the same time try to turn these organisations out to the struggles of the working class. ■

by Helen Ward
Vauxhall CLP

AT THE END of last month, after a two day marathon trial, Labour's NEC expelled three Militant supporters from the party.

Out went Tony Mulhearn, Liverpool District Labour Party President, after being found guilty on two counts; membership of Militant and abuse of party practises and procedures. Out went Ian Lowes, the convenor of Liverpool's Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, for membership of Militant and joining them was Tony Aitman, 'proven' to be a Militant full time organiser.

There are still another eight of the alleged Militant members known as the 'Liverpool 11' to be tried. Amongst them is Derek Hatton the deputy leader of Liverpool Council. Hatton only escaped the purge this time because, while awaiting trial, he luckily received a telex summoning him to Liverpool to deal with a disputed financial crisis (nice one Derek!)

But, delaying tactics, whether deliberate or not, are not going to save the remainder of the 'Liverpool 11' or anyone else in this witch-hunt. Kinnock means business. His boast after the May NEC meeting that "I don't start anything I don't mean to finish" was not an idle one.

'NATURAL JUSTICE'

Militant claimed that the expulsions and NEC trials was a contravention of 'natural justice'. So the expulsion procedure was changed to incorporate 'natural justice', thereby closing down another legal loophole for Militant. After the May NEC, Kinnock could claim that it had observed "the terms of the Labour Constitution and natural justice". Yet the expulsions have still gone ahead. The lesson

Witch Hunt

should be clear to Militant and others faced with expulsions; do not rely on constitutional or legal devices for your defence!

It even looks likely that Kinnock will change the rules once again at the October Conference. Irritated by the length of time it has taken to expel three members, the goal-posts are set to be moved again by setting-up a disciplinary tribunal, so as not to tax the NEC's time.

Of course, Kinnock and the right would not have been able to push the purge process so far if there had not been a significant shift to the right in the party. Former lefts like Blunkett and Meacher have jumped on the Kinnock bandwagon to No. 10 - or so they hope. In the unions too, there has been a shift. At last year's NUPE Conference union top Tom Sawyer, a former darling of the left, swung the union into supporting the witch-hunt. Since then other big battalions of the unions, such as the T&G, have likewise lined up in support of the purge.

Yet forces of resistance still

DEFY THE NEC!

exist. The Labour Party Women's Conference voted to oppose the witch-hunt (see article on facing page). Constituencies all over Britain have signalled their opposition. So have the LPYS and many trade union activists. The question is how to fight this purge? Here, Militant, despite being the main object of the witch-hunters' attention, seem to be incapable of fashioning a real defence. Militant supporters are hamstrung in two ways though. Firstly, their chronic reliance on the bourgeois courts to mete out judgements stopping the expulsions. Secondly, while Kinnock is witch-hunting them, Militant is making 'unity' overtures to him. This is to fight with one hand behind your back. Militant supporters should break with this rotten approach before it is too late.

Following the expulsions, Labour Party members in Liverpool will be faced with a choice. Derek Hatton's Broadgreen and Mulhearn's Garston CLPs have both voted not to recognise expulsions. Already Mulhearn has attended Labour Group and policy committee meetings since being expelled and commented "there was total acceptance of me".

CONSEQUENCES

This stand is to be welcomed and contrasts sharply with Militant supporters' stand in the last round of expulsion of their editorial board members. Activists must be prepared for the consequences of such defiance. If Mulhearn continues to attend his CLP meetings the whole constituency will face being disaffiliated and replaced by an NEC imposed body. Workers Power supporters have argued since the beginning of the campaign that the left must be prepared to go through with this and if the NEC does disaffiliate any CLPs they should continue to operate independently of Walworth Road.

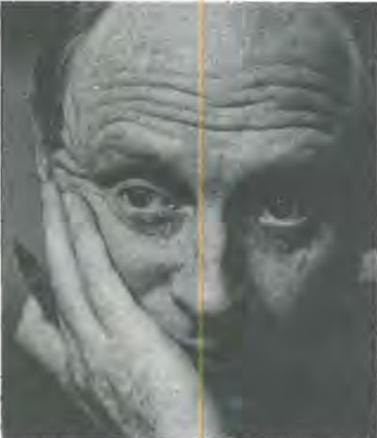
Liverpool activists will find themselves posed with this question very sharply in the next period. If the councillors lose their appeal against surcharge there will be by-elections. If CLPs have been disaffiliated they will be faced with either backing down or standing candidates against 'official' NEC imposed people.

All those who wish to stop Kinnock's purge must be prepared to go this far since it will show the

right they cannot merrily carry out expulsions without reaping the bitter consequences.

Workers Power has argued that commitment to such defiance, up to and including disaffiliation, is an important aspect of any campaign against the witch-hunt. Others on the left throw up their hands in horror at the thought of suggesting we might end up standing against 'official' Kinnockite candidates. Heading the waverers away from any such fight are the increasingly right wing Socialist Action. Ostrich-like they bury their heads and see only that the left is "taking the initiative on a series of key areas". (Socialist Action 10.5.86), and hope that the witch-hunt is only a bad dream.

But the witch-hunt is precisely intended to silence the left and



by Jon Lewis

so make the Labour Party a more attractive proposition to the punters of the middle-class and bourgeoisie at the next election. If the witch-hunt is not stopped in its tracks now, there will not be any lefts around to fight for 'left policies'.

The Conference Against The Witch-hunts on June 21st can become the focus for building a fighting national campaign. Workers Power has been involved in the organising for this conference and in building support.

Socialist Action on the other hand seem set to make it as ineffective as possible. Whilst participating in its organising committee, supporters of Socialist Action have consistently argued against the conference taking any resolutions or statement; against it being delegate based and have tried to oppose plans for an ongoing campaign to come out of the conference.

They shudder at the thought of it agreeing to organise defiance of the NEC, fearing that this will scare away their new playmates like Livingstone. Workers Power supporters will be going to the conference to try and build precisely such a defiant campaign based on a resolution such as the one printed below. We urge all trade unionists, LP activists and YS branches to send delegates, and organise the fightback.

MODEL RESOLUTION FOR THE CONFERENCE AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNTS

This conference opposes the expulsion or disciplining of any member because they read, support or sell any publication of socialist tendencies within the Party. We also oppose disciplinary action being taken against comrades organising the oppressed within the Party via Black sections, youth sections or women's sections, or for exposing malpractice or campaigning for democracy and accountability within the Party.

We oppose the enquiry into the Liverpool District Labour Party as merely an excuse to attack Militant supporters and we condemn the recent expulsion of the three leading party activists in Liverpool.

Conference calls on CLPs whose members are 'expelled' by the NEC or regional executives, or whose candidates are not endorsed by the NEC, to refuse to accept such decisions and to continue to regard them as members and candidates. Where this leads to the NEC/Regional Executive suspending or disaffiliating local party bodies we urge such CLPs to continue to act as the local LP, standing candidates etc, and to refuse to endorse fake candidates or structures imposed by the NEC.

The Party in our view, should not return to the days of proscribed lists and intolerance, but should accept the demand for diversification and that groups, tendencies, strands of opinion,

journals, and newspapers of one kind or another, with widely differing views, are bound to exist.

We will campaign for a positive right for political tendencies and the oppressed to organise within the Party.

To build the campaign against the witch-hunt, conference will elect a steering committee of 12 which will:

1. Organise and be accountable to regular delegate meetings of affiliated bodies supporting the campaign;
2. Be responsible for producing Witch-hunt News as a regular campaigning newsletter in co-operation with other forces;
3. Co-ordinate a register of opponents of the witch-hunts in trade unions and CLPs;
4. Organise meetings of opponents of the witch-hunt in affiliated unions to plan co-ordinated action;
5. Formulate model resolutions for use in affiliated bodies;
6. Organise rallies around the country against the witch-hunt;
7. Mobilise for lobbies of the NEC and regional executives when they are considering expulsions and particularly a lobby of national conference. □



CONFERENCE BACKS KINNOCK

LAST YEAR'S WELSH Labour Party Conference stood firm against the witch-hunt. But this year's conference, held recently at Swansea, was a different affair. The delegates were positively straining at the leash in their enthusiasm for a purge of Militant supporters.

Kinnock led the way. In his address on the first day of Conference, he declared war:

"It is no part of this movement to form covert cliques with separate programmes, principles and politics... If people do have separate objectives, let them show separate courage, separate conviction and go their separate way into a separate party, into separate oblivion."

Conference, packed by the right wing, loved it. The 250 delegates, mostly middle-aged men with few women (no creche) and even fewer youth, proceeded to give teeth to Kinnock's baying.

Militant supporters were subjected to a stream of abuse. They were described as "a cancer", "parasitic", "rabble" and similar. Chris Peace, Militant supporter

Wales

and, until Conference, a member of the Wales Labour Party Executive, was refused the right to speak.

A major change from last year was in the mood and attitude of the unions. Former left, and NUPE delegate, Derek Gregory urged the delegates to action against Militant with a cry of "Let's get rid of them!"

The motion proposing the expulsion of those who, "actively support and sell the Militant newspaper" came from the TGWU. Sig-

nificantly, the NUM delegation also voted in favour of the witch-hunt, whereas last year they had supported Militant.

When the time came to vote more than 90% of the delegates supported the witch-hunting resolution! Last year, delegates voted against the expulsion of Militant supporters by almost three to one.

The 'debate' on other areas of policy confirmed that Kinnock rules the constituencies and unions in Wales. Even a resolution calling for a minimum wage and a 35 hour week without loss of pay was thrown out. But there are still layers amongst the rank and file of both the Labour Party and unions in Wales who are standing firm against the rush to the right and the witch-hunt. It is these forces that can and must lead the resistance in Wales.

by Pete Ashley
delegate - Cardiff North CLP

LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN for PALESTINE

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 31st May
(10.00am - 5.00pm)

Islington Town Hall
London N1

CONFERENCE AGAINST THE WITCH-HUNTS

Saturday 21 June
Regents College
Inner Circle
Regents Park
London

further details from:
Toni Gorton
c/o Hackney North and
Stoke Newington CLP
96a Stoke Newington High St
London N16



LEFT STILL IN RETREAT

ONCE UPON A time it was generally agreed that the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) was a left-wing union. After this year's conference it really does seem like a fairy-tale.

At Bournemouth between 18 and 21 May, the left was by and large marginalised within the 1,000 or so delegates who were present - representing the union's 700,000 members. Without doubt, the three main debates of the conference were low pay, privatisation and Militant. These all took place on the Monday. Most of the other debates and resolutions - ranging from Social Security to South Africa - were largely uncontentious.

On low pay the left rallied around Composite 3 which committed the union against pay restraint under any Labour government, for a campaign of national industrial action to achieve the national average wage for all workers; for a national minimum wage of £110 per week and protected against inflation. It also set out a detailed campaigning strategy.

In proposing the resolution, I made it clear that we had to break with the Executive's strategy of winning over the 'British public' and throwing ourselves at the mercy of the next Labour government - if there is one. Instead we needed cast-iron commitments and a way of mobilising the membership to achieve them.

The Executive bitterly attacked the composite. Bickerstaffe argued it left them "no room to manoeuvre". In summing-up the debate I warned that the rank and file of our union will look increasingly dispiritingly upon a leadership that proclaims fine aims and sends the delegates back empty-handed. Conference overwhelmingly backed the Executive.

On privatisation the story was much the same. The Executive's fire was directed at Composite 17. What so annoyed them was its call

for a national fightback against privatisation. Those of us who work in the NHS have seen the most dramatic fallings of the Executive's 'fight' against privatisation. In each case - Barking or Addenbrooke are classic examples - the workers take the initiative locally, but the Executive isolates the campaign and keeps it local.

CONSCIENCE

The Executive protested that much money has been spent in publicising the union's case or supporting striking or victimised members but this is only conscience money.

As I pointed out in seconding composite 17, Bickerstaffe may think its a local fight but Thatcher has a national plan for privatisation throughout the whole of the public sector. Indeed, as the case of British Leyland shows, the fight against privatisation has international implications. And without national support for local fightbacks, members taking action like those at Barking Hospital, get demoralised and so the fight peters out.

In the case of Addenbrooke, the Executive even actively helped sabotage the local struggle. A lobby of workers from Addenbrooke were not allowed to speak to the Conference. It is clear why. In February the leadership suspended hardship money because the workers refused to heed the instruction "Stop picketing and take another job offer".

When voting took place, the big vote for Executive Composite 16 actually resulted in a reversal of existing NUPE policy. Until then official policy was not to go for in-house tendering. But Clause (c) of Composite 16 urges members to involve;

"ourselves at every stage in contract preparation in order to represent the interests of our members and retain the contract in-house . . ."

In my opinion this gives a green light for local officials to bid-down our wages and conditions.

Perhaps the debate over Militant and Liverpool best illustrated the problems of the left's response

to date. Resolution 15 - backed by Liverpool City General among others - was passed overwhelmingly. This accused the Liverpool Council of 'deliberate mismanagement' and labelled the DLP activities as 'irresponsible', 'reckless' and 'divisive'. The resolution and debate did not go as far as, say the CPSA leaders, in urging a drive against Militant supporters' positions in the union, but it did give backing for the stance of Tom Sawyer. He sits on the Labour Party NEC for NUPE and has backed Kinnock's purge right down the line - even signing a May Day manifesto viciously attacking Militant's stance. He slanderously declared to conference that Liverpool Labour Council, on which Militant has strong support, had "more in common with the extreme right in European politics than with the left".

The response of Militant supporters in NUPE to these attacks was very 'low-key'. They deliberately kept a low profile in the debate over low pay and privatisation so as not to antagonise the delegates and prejudice their chances in the Liverpool Council debate! Instead of taking the offensive in the debate on Liverpool, Composite 14 was almost apologetic. Rather than clearly outline why Kinnock is attacking the left in the LP and what it means for union members, it merely appealed to the 'democratic traditions' of the Labour Party.

RANK AND FILE FIGHTBACK

All in all the conference witnessed a consolidation of the centre-right in the union. There are two factors involved here. The defeat of the 1982 Health Strike demoralised whole layers of the rank and file, as have the persistent attacks since in health and local government. The creation, from the top down, of a shop steward structure since then has, therefore, been very much done in a climate that favours the 'realistic' approach of the Executive. This is reflected in the delegates' voting patterns.

none of the other unions in the pay claim consortium were willing to challenge the government's 'final' offer of 6%. An emergency motion, calling for the membership to have the final say in a ballot even incurred the wrath of the EC.

"Why go to the expense of a ballot when pay '86 is a dead duck", they argued. "Better to look forward and build for pay '87".

But the members have heard this story for years. Tomorrow never comes!

Hot on the heels of the defeat last year of a proposed merger with the CPSA, the EC was asking for a merger with the Civil Service Union (CSU). But on what terms? The last proposed merger was a bureaucrats 'meal ticket'. It contained nothing that would benefit the rank and file of either the CPSA or SCPS. But these plans seem destined to be offered again to the CSU. It is nothing more than an attempt to consolidate the bureaucracies of both unions by stemming the tide of falling membership.

DISMAL

And what of the newly formed Broad Left in SCPS. Frankly, at its third conference in January this year, it was dismal. It was agreed to campaign against the Tory anti-union laws by refusing to change the rules for electing the Executive Council. This would undoubtedly have resulted in a challenge in the courts as the rule book would be illegal.

This position was argued for by Workers Power supporters and won



Privatisation - a vital struggle.

The left in the union needs to be re-built. The Militant-dominated Broad Left made a brief re-appearance at conference, but has no ongoing campaigning life in the workplaces and branches of the union. A genuine rank and file movement is urgently needed, not a closetted electoral machine, that so many Broad Lefts presently are.

On Wednesday June 4th in London there is a meeting for all those NUPE members interested in organising a fightback against Bickerstaffe and Sawyer's new realism. Be there!

Carlos Sanhueza

conference delegate
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
(in a personal capacity)



Graham & Bickerstaffe - witchfinders general



THIS YEARS Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) conference was a witch-hunting extravaganza. Alistair Graham, the outgoing General Secretary congratulated the Labour Party leadership for getting to grips with the "reactionary revolutionary movement" - the Militant.

He promised to give the Labour Party information on key members of Militant who are active in the CPSA. He also will demand their expulsion from the Labour Party. The Militant controlled Broad Left (BL) took this with the usual misplaced optimism. Great emphasis was put on the four seats that the BL won on the National Executive Committee (NEC).

However all the BL seats were for those from the DHSS section of the CPSA where BL traditionally has a stronghold. No BL candidates from other sections in the CPSA won seat on the NEC. BL also claimed that it was their efforts which forced Alistair Graham out of the CPSA and into the highly paid job with the Industrial Society. This claim was made in the midst of a conference in which there were major defeats for the left.

OVERTURNED

The overtime ban, operational in the CPSA for many years was overturned. A deal (cooked up by the moderate dominated NEC and Graham) which gives the government the right to introduce new technology without agreement on job losses or health and safety was accepted by conference. The political fund ballot was won but the 'new realist' argument "the members aren't ready yet" swung the vote against Labour Party affiliation.

These defeats were made possible by a coalition of the Communist Party dominated Broad Left 84 and the Moderate group.

Broad Left 84, although split over the question of the witch-hunt, are towing the 'new realist' line of Alistair Graham. They argue that the CPSA's membership are unprepared to fight and therefore refuse to provide a lead. Instead they want to wait for the next Labour government before making real demands for better pay and conditions.

Against this view Militant Broad Left supporters passionately assert-

ed that CPSA members did have the will to fight but they had no answers on how to mobilise civil service workers. Indeed, they showed that their own will to oppose bureaucratisation is as flimsy as that of Broad Left 84. For example progressive motions calling for annual elections for full-time officers were opposed by Militant. They said "there is enough democracy in CPSA".

The DHSS section conference really exposed BL's inability to put up a real fight against the new realists. Motions were passed calling for strike action on technology-related job losses and to boycott the social security review. As the DHSS section is also in the midst of a staffing campaign the necessary plan is to link all these issues and start campaigning now. Instead the BL dominated section executive committee (SEC) said that before things go any further we must wait for conditions to worsen for DHSS workers!

BL SPLIT

The Socialist Caucus - a group in BL made up mainly of Independents plus Socialist Organiser and Workers Power - this year reaped gains from the Broad Left split in 1984. More Independents seem to be attracted as the BL itself becomes divided into two major blocks - SWP and Militant. The caucus is grouped around support for the annual election of full time officials, the right of the oppressed to caucus in the union, troops out of Ireland and rejection of a bureaucratic merger with the SCPS.

Workers Power supporters work within the caucus, but on the clear basis of breaking it from its political subservience to Militant. It was uncritical of Militant during the DHSS staffing campaign. In the coming elections for General Secretary it supports the Militant candidate uncritically. We fight against such errors and for a clear programme of action for an independent civil servants' rank and file movement.

The immediate basis for such a movement was spelt out by a supporter Workers Power at the conference who spoke for the annual election of full time officials, against a merger with the SCPS imposed from the top and called for a rank and file fight to end the reporting system and for a CPSA boycott of the social security reviews.

Clare Sowerby
delegate - DHSS SW Essex
(in a personal capacity)

society

of civil & public servants

THE LATEST UNION to join in the procession of capitulation to the anti-union laws is the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) - the union for junior and middle managers in the civil service.

Despite resolutions at last years annual conference pledging to fight the Tory laws on elections, this years conference was presented with the Executive Council's recommendation to suspend the traditional block voting electoral system and replace it with temporary regulations which bring the union within the law. This was done 'most reluctantly' and the union would seek to revert to its traditional system of elections as soon as a change of government could repeal the act.

But the conference was being asked to replace one rotten system with another. Nowhere in the executive's proposals was there any mention of really democratising or improving the system. It was left to branches to move resolutions to bring about even the most basic of democratic advances such as the direct election of president and deputy president. The EC fought these ideas vehemently, as they would lessen the vice-like grip they currently have on the union.

The conference protested loudly about being forced to change its rules but, recognising that no other union has chosen to fight, reluctantly agreeing the EC line. A theme which was to be repeated time and again throughout the conference.

On pay, the EC argued that



majority support in the BL. But, less than a month before the conference, and with no campaign having been mounted, the BL National Committee overturned this policy, and, "even more reluctantly than the executive", agreed to recommend support for the Executive Committee line, arguing it would isolate SCPS if any other course of action were taken. Workers Power will be taking up the issue at the recall conference later this year.

On the other major issues, the BL's record also leaves much to be desired. Apart from winning a skirmish to have election addresses, the BL could only muster limp opposition to the attacks of the Executive Committee bureaucrats. Despite fine sounding resolutions, the BL profile, was low and lacked any base in the membership.

Against the Broad Left's passive electoral approach Workers Power believes that a solid base among the mass membership in the civil service, must be built. This fight must take the form of building a cross union rank and file - with the aim of breaking the old 'grade' based unions and merging the forces of the workers in a new fighting organisation.

Tied to this the iniquitous system of annual reports must be smashed. As long as worker reports on worker, the bosses will be able to drive wedges into their ranks and maintain the divisions. A new workers' union would force the so-called 'middle managers' to choose between siding with the rank and file or pitching in with the bosses and selling out to the state.

Steve Powell
delegate - DHSS HQ (Reading)
(in a personal capacity)

CAN IT BE MADE SAFE?

Statement by Workers Power National Committee 11 May 86

THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR disaster highlights the threat of nuclear power production. This is true whether it takes place under capitalist ownership or under the management of the Stalinist bureaucracies within the degenerate workers' states.

However, the nauseating hypocrisy of the western governments in the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident should repel all honest elements within the labour movement. They cynically used the event to sneer at Soviet 'technical backwardness', to complain of the USSR's 'secrecy' and to praise their own nuclear industries' safety record, together with the virtues of an 'open society'.

This is the most bare-faced hypocrisy imaginable. When it comes to their own nuclear industry the governments of the west systematically deceive their own population, pleading business secrecy and national security. Accidents are covered up, the United Nations monitoring body kept in ignorance.

INTERNATIONAL

The very fact that the effects of a nuclear accident cannot be contained within national borders indicates the desperate need for planning, control and inspection on an international scale. Yet western imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracies are organically incapable of this.

The expansion of the productive forces - vital to the creation of plenty on a world scale - cry out for international planning. It demands the destruction of private capitalist ownership and democratic workers management - of which no shred exists in those states where capitalism has been overthrown. Chernobyl has proven that when it comes to safety, the Soviet nuclear industry is no safer than that of the west.

PROOF

Does this mean, as the anti-nuclear lobby claim, that this is because nuclear power is intrinsically and unavoidably so dangerous that it should be renounced in principle? Marxists cannot take such a position in advance of scientific proof established by the working class itself. Unlike the majority of the Green and ecological movement we stand for the continued and, indeed, increased expansion of humanity's productive forces. This must also include the supply of energy.

If nuclear power can contribute enormously to this without destroying the living and most vital force of production - human labour itself - then we are in favour of it. However, we give no confidence to the capitalists and their hirelings or to the Soviet bureaucracy

to make such decisions. Therefore, we say that a struggle must be launched by the working class around the safety question, which centres on the fight for workers' control and pushes the working class forward to the seizure of power itself, which in turn lays the basis for a planned economy.

Without the most stringent safety standards and methods of inspection the possibility always exists that a reactor explosion can threaten death and increased cancer liability to hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions. Three Mile Island, no less than Chernobyl, shows this to be so. On a lower, but still deadly, scale, leakages from plants and reactors daily threaten workers in the industry and its adjacent communities. Leakages in Britain and in the Soviet navy prove this.

Unless it is vigilant and independently organised the working class cannot guard itself against these dangers. It cannot even detect and therefore protect itself against danger. Both capitalism and Stalinism run their industries in a manner that poses a serious threat to the working class. Under capitalism the interest of profit dictates that the industry is under constant pressure to cut corners and lower costs. That is why the Magnox reactors in Britain, for example, have no protective shielding. Profit and competition also demand that the industry is run behind a vast wall of business secrecy.

BUREAUCRATIC MANAGEMENT

Britain's nuclear drive has also been considerably intensified by the bourgeoisie's desire to free itself from reliance on energy sources which are potentially exposed to the strength of organised labour as well as the OPEC states.

The Soviet nuclear industry is subject to similar, but not identical, pressures. The industry grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s as the bureaucracy diverted its oil and gas resources into a means of earning foreign currency. A failure of bureaucratic management to progressively raise labour productivity and rationally use energy resources intensified the drive to overcome slowdown and stagnation. In part this involved a break-neck push to put new energy sources on tap. Chernobyl was a prestige project for the Kremlin. It was shock-built to media acclaim. Its absence of protective cover is just one result of mismanagement. Gorbachev's current nuclear-based plan to treble Soviet energy output by the year 2000, in order to double GNP, is based on identical logic.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that workers are aware of the

dangers while being prevented from organising to remove them. A letter in the Kiev press just prior to the explosion warned of the corner-cutting and haste in the construction of plants, past and present. Bureaucratic rule stifles such protests at source.

INCAPABLE

The Chernobyl disaster was a product of Stalinist rule and in the ensuing crisis the bureaucracy has shown itself manifestly incapable of responding to the dangers that its own misrule has caused. To begin, information on the immediate hazards was prevented from flowing through the bureaucracy, let alone through society. Thus thousands were subject to unnecessary lethal dangers. The failure to issue warnings to the local population and the failure to evacuate them was criminal.

Secondly, the nationalistic doctrines of the USSR led the Kremlin to a shameful unwillingness to warn the population of the Warsaw Pact countries and other states. The secrecy and deception led not only to lethal dangers but also to panic among Ukrainian

and East European workers. It shows all too clearly just how empty is Gorbachev's talk of 'openness'. Chernobyl shows that the Soviet usurpers must be overthrown if the productive forces in the USSR are to be harnessed to advance human progress and the road to socialism unblocked. The more this is delayed the more chance of further accidents.

In the following period it is essential to win the workers movement to the following perspective:

1. While mankind needs new energy resources and nuclear energy does and will play a vital role in providing that energy, its rational and safe utilisation can only be at the hands of the working class. Within existing societies only class struggle can increase and improve safety levels and minimise the threats posed.

2. To that end we call for a workers' enquiry into the industry that will establish clear safety standards without which a plant must not operate.

□ For the closure of all plants that do not meet those standards and that obviously fail to meet elementary safety standards now;



Containment vessels - not all they're cracked up to be

e.g. Magnox, Sellafield.
□ For those closures to lead either to reconstruction or destruction of the plants.

3. We fight for workers inspection of all plants.

□ For workers' control against the capitalists and the Stalinist bureaucracies.

4. We fight for the means to make that inspection effective.

□ For the provision of public radiation monitoring facilities; for the abolition of bureaucratic and business secrecy.

5. To the petit-bourgeois campaigns for closure we counterpose an independent workers' enquiry into existing or planned plants.

□ For shutdown unless all key safety demands are met to the satisfaction of the labour movement. It should be made clear that any workers' enquiry, workers' inspection and workers' control must involve, in these circumstances, both workers within the nuclear industry and outside and in particular representatives of the residents in the most affected areas - especially women.

6. In the USSR we fight for:

□ An end to bureaucratic secrecy. For workers' inspection and management, both in the disaster area and in the entire nuclear industry. For workers' committees to decide what information can be released that is compatible with the legitimate defence needs of the USSR.

□ For new towns, amenities and compensation for the evacuees. Radiation monitoring facilities for all.

□ For international solidarity with all workers threatened by the bureaucracy.

□ For a full discussion of the plan for energy provision at all levels of genuine Soviets and independent trade unions and a fight for workers control of the plan.

□ For the struggle against bureaucratic rule in every industry and town; build factory committees, workers committees.

□ For political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy.

Finally, given the anti-Soviet war drive of Thatcher and Reagan, drawing in their NATO and Japanese allies behind them, we must fight to prevent the labour movement from echoing the anti-Soviet hysteria as a result of the Chernobyl disaster or any future accidents in the nuclear power industry. By fighting to expose the dangers of 'our' nuclear power stations we can cut against this 'evil empire' ideology. We need to win the labour movement in the west to a principled defence of the USSR and other workers states against imperialism, a defence that in no way has to take responsibility for the crimes and errors of the Soviet bureaucracy. ■

THINGS HAVE NOT been going too well for Labour spokesman John Cunningham. Just as he was in the process of launching a campaign against last year's Labour Party Conference call "for the phasing out of all existing nuclear power" the top blew off the Chernobyl reactor. All the signs are that he hasn't got a hope of reversing that policy at this year's conference.

Cunningham is a long term supporter of nuclear power and, more importantly, an ardent defender of the British nuclear industry's deceitful and secretive management which he praised for doing "a good, effective, open and honest job".

You don't need to be a born again Green to oppose John Cunningham. The record of nuclear accidents - from Windscale, to Three Mile Island, to Chernobyl - highlights the fact that the industry presents major dangers and hazards to the working class. Those dangers can only be effectively explored and defended against by the most thorough-going inspection of all plants and all plans for future production and waste disposal.

GREEN AT THE EDGES

By tearing apart the curtain of secrecy that surrounds the industry the workers should decide which plants should continue and on what terms. They should permanently monitor the operation of such plants by workers' inspection. That is the alternative to Cunningham's "economic appraisal" of Thorp which will test whether the reprocessing plant will be profitable enough. It is the alternative to selective checks by civil servants.

The Labour leadership are in disarray after Chernobyl. Kinnock was backing Cunningham's crusade for the present nuclear industry. The case had been defended in the union journals of GMBATU, AEU and NALGO. Cunningham had unanimous support from the shadow cabinet. Now the forces against them on the nuclear issue seem set to win at conference and even secure the two thirds majority necessary to mandate the leadership to include conference policy in the election manifesto.

All the evidence suggests that nuclear power is set to be the key

debate at conference. The Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) in concert with the LCC and Labour CND are coordinating resolutions for conference. In essence they are calling for the scrapping of plans to build PWRs, the closure of reprocessing plants at Dounreay and Sellafield, for the non-commissioning of the nearly completed gas-cooled reactors at Torness and Heysham and the phasing out of existing reactors starting with Magnox.

There are major dangers for the working class in joining the shut down stampede. It is certainly true that the PRs are untested, that Sellafield has proven itself unsafe and that Magnox are long overdue for closure. But this is no reason for immediately pressing for the shutdown of this entire source of power generation. Workers inspection of the plants, drawing in the local communities most directly affected should be the judge as to which plants should operate.

To declare in advance that all

nuclear power plants should be shutdown is to succumb to panic which, if it became widespread, could close the door to an energy source which has enormous potential - particularly for the millions who live in poverty and backwardness.

Ever mindful of the chance of a few votes Kinnock and the Shadow Cabinet are now partially distancing themselves from Cunningham's position. The latest Labour policy statement on the question commits Labour to building no more nuclear power stations and to decommissioning Magnox. But in the spirit of true Kinnockery it is masterly evasive on all the key issues.

The Thorp reprocessing plant is to be subject to "a review" and economic appraisal. Dounreay similarly is to be subjected to a "full public inquiry". The entire industry is to become the source of "candid information and open debate" through the strengthening of a nuclear inspectorate.

The Labour leaders will not

break with the nuclear bosses' hallowed secrecy by opening all the workings of the industry to direct inspection by workers and their representatives. Instead they want to paint up the industry's image and calm workers' fears with yet more public inquiries and profitability assessments.

After Chernobyl blew up Margaret Thatcher declared:

"The record of safety and design, operation maintenance and inspection in this country is second to none."

Clearly millions of workers do not believe her. But the task is to relate progressive suspicion of the workings of the nuclear industry to the struggle against capitalism itself. That cannot be done by attaching a few new government inspectors to the industry. Neither can it be done by shutting the industry down and basing all hopes in alternative energy resources. Only through the struggle for workers control can we both directly confront the problems that nuclear energy poses and unleash the workers power that can overcome those problems in a planned economy with a rational international energy policy. ■



Stalin's foreign policy

EARLY IN 1936 a favourite slogan of the left-wing of the PSOE was "if you want to save Spain from Marxism, then vote Communist". But what was a half serious election campaign jibe turned into grim reality during the Civil War. To understand why and how, it is necessary to start with an understanding of the Kremlin's attitude to Spain in the wake of the Franco rebellion.

After the signing of the Stalin-Laval Pact Moscow felt it was in its political interest to block the rise of fascism in Spain. Stalin argued at one level that this was in the interests of France and Great Britain since Italian and German success in Spain would threaten both of them.

However, Stalin recognised well enough that the leading factions of the French and certainly British ruling class regarded the USSR as the greater evil in Europe as compared to fascist Germany or Italy. They were unwilling to see Hitler defeated to the degree that Germany was a bulwark against the USSR. Stalin's foreign policy was reduced, in effect, to the attempt to get governments elected in Europe which were hostile to German war aims in Europe.

ANTAGONISE

British imperialism, on the other hand, was interested only in deflecting Germany's advance so as to allow it time to re-arm. The Soviet bureaucracy's whole aim in Spain was thus, first, to prevent the success of socialist revolution in Spain, which would antagonise Britain and France and run the threat of throwing them into a block with Germany against the USSR. Secondly, to bend all efforts to enlist France and Britain to help the Republic beat off Spanish fascism. The best statement from a Spanish Stalinist of this perspective came from a PSUC (Catalonian Communist Party) leader at a public meeting:

"In the democratic bloc of powers, the decisive factor is not France; it is England. It is essential for all party comrades to realise this so as to moderate (their) slogans at the present time . . . we should realise that the big capitalists in England are capable of coming to an understanding at any time with Italian and German capitalists if they should reach the conclusion that they have no choice with regard to Spain. (Therefore) we must win, cost what it may, the bene-

volent neutrality of that country, if not its direct aid."

(Quoted in B Bolloten *The Grand Camouflage*.)

'Cost what may' was a threat issued to the Spanish workers. This reactionary schema was based on the false premise that Britain preferred the victory of the Republic over Franco. In fact the reverse was true, because Britain rightly feared that a Republican victory would be but a passing phase in the Spanish socialist revolution or long drawn out instability in European politics.

Thus, the opening weeks of the Spanish Civil War gave the Comintern and the PCE cause for concern. The working class were on the offensive. In the North and East they had disarmed the army, stormed the barracks and everywhere were in control. Within a week dual power had been established in the Republican held areas. By September 1936 Koltzov - Stalin's personal agent in Spain - estimated that about 18,000 industrial enterprises had been taken over by the workers.

WORKERS' CONTROL

In Catalonia about 70% of the factories kicked out all management from the plant. In Madrid it was more common for managers to remain but under the direction of the workers. Only in the Basque region was there hardly any workers' control at all. Whenever the CNT was strongest in an industry the firms were collectivised to use resources more efficiently. In Catalonia the CNT/UGT closed down 46 out of the 72 foundries and did everything in the remaining 24.

The most dramatic upheavals took place on the land. In Catalonia the mass of peasants were smallholders and leaseholders who were glad to be rid of rent and gain more land. Collectivization of the land was limited there. But in Aragon it was a different story. To begin with the fascists had encroached into the Aragon countryside and it took the best anarchist and socialist workers of Barcelona to repulse them. But in the process they were also revolutionary agitators. Durruti, the CNT leader of the militia, said:

"We are waging a war and making the revolution at the same time . . . Every village we conquer begins to develop along revolutionary lines."

The bigger estates were collectivized by the agricultural workers of Aragon. Very soon 70% of the population (about 500,000) in the area were in collectives.

ADVANCES

The greatest advances of all were at the political level. PCE leader Ibarri could reflect in these weeks that:

" . . . the whole state apparatus was destroyed and state power lay in the street."

While the state was not destroyed

it was certainly in complete disarray. The Republic had no army except that of the workers' militia. The Republican government continued to exist but it was impotent. President Azana lamented:

"Faced by the revolution the government had the choice either of upholding it or suppressing it. But even less than uphold it could the government suppress it."



Dual power in Spain

Real political power was being exercised by the workers' militias operating both as an armed and a political force. The cabinet of Giral had no authority beyond the suburbs of Madrid. There, however, the workers' political alternative was weakest. By 27 July the official police had re-established control of the streets. In Barcelona the workers were in power. Workers in ordinary clothes controlled the streets. Tens of thousands of arms had been distributed. No bourgeoisie were to be seen; their posh haunts had been closed down, their restaurants and hotels commandeered. The beggars were off the streets and being cared for.

COMMITTEES

The Revolutionary Committees that ruled Republican Spain went by dozens of different names from region to region and they were under the control of different political parties in each area. In the villages of Catalonia and Aragon the CNT/FAI had exclusive control. In the towns, apart from Sabadell and Lerida, they were also in control but with much greater representation from the UGT, PSUC, POUM and even the Esquerra.

The committees were appointed or elected in a variety of ways. Sometimes they were elected by mass meetings in the factories, sites and villages. In others, they were elected by trade unions or political parties. Everywhere, however, they were the political rule of the armed militia rather than of the factories or villages.

In Catalonia power was exercised by the Anti-Fascist Militia Committee. It existed alongside and over the Generalidad of President Companys - the regional government of Catalonia. In Valencia the Popular Executive Committee existed alongside Barrio's Provisional Junta. In Malaga it was the Committee of Public Safety which ruled!

Yet it was in Aragon that the most democratic power existed - the Defence Council. It was the only regional body in Spain that drew its authority from direct elections from local town and village committees. Enforcing the political power were the armed militia, organised and controlled according to political allegiance. There were fifty thousand in the CNT militia, thirty thousand in the UGT, ten thousand in the PCE/PSUC and about five thousand in the militia of the POUM.

WAR FOOTING

In these first weeks nothing was done unless it was through or by these revolutionary committees. The anarchist leader - Sentillan - gave a good picture of all of them when he described the functions of Catalonia's Anti-Fascist Militia Committee:



POUM militia in the Karl Marx barracks, Barcelona

THE REVOLUTIONARY ASCENT

"An establishment for revolutionary order at the rear, an organisation of forces more or less on a war footing, with schools for communications and signals, food and clothing, economic organisation and legislative and judiciary action, the Anti-Fascist Militias Committee was everything, supervised everything; the transformation of the peacetime industries into war industries, propaganda relations with the government in Madrid, help for all the fighting centres, relations with Morocco, the cultivation of available land, frontier, supervision of coasts and frontiers, and a thousand and one problems of every kind."



The flawed revolution

Despite all of this the revolution suffered from considerable internal weaknesses that were a reflection of the failings of the politics of anarcho-sindicalism and left reformism. First, there were certainly 'excesses' in the sense that in the towns even the smallest petit-bourgeois - opticians, bakers, etc - were 'collectivised'. On the land the CNT refused to consider at all the possibility of land division even where it may have been more appropriate. The PCE was to use these mistakes as ammunition against the revolution.

Secondly, the factories, rather than being taken under workers' control as a stage on the road to



CNT militia in commandeered trucks

played this weakness when he accepted the offer of 'advice' from President Companys:

"We could have remained and imposed our absolute will, declared the Generalidad null and void and imposed the true power of the people in its place, we did not believe in dictatorship when it was being exercised against us, and we did not do it when we could exercise ourselves only at the expense of others. The Generalidad would remain in force with the Independent Companies at its head."

Felix Morrow accurately summed up the contradictions and limitations of the revolution in its early period: a weakness that was to allow Stalinists to take back the initiative. He correctly stated that at a local level the power of the revolutionary committees was no greater than pre-October 1917 Russia and certainly greater than that of the German revolution of 1918/19. But unlike those examples the Spanish revolution gave rise to no national, centralised authority.

GLOSSARY

CNT (CONFEDERACION NACIONAL DE TRABAJO)

The National Confederation of Labour, founded in 1910, was the anarcho-sindicalist trade union.

FAI (FEDERACION ANARQUISTA IBERICA)

The Iberian Anarchist Federation was mainly an anarchist pressure group within the CNT

PSOE (PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO DE ESPAÑA)

The Spanish Socialist Worker's Party had a 'left socialist' wing which followed Largo Caballero, and a 'right socialist' wing which followed Prieto and Negrin's social democrat direction.

UGT (UNION GENERAL DE TRABAJADORES)

The trade union of the socialists.

PCE (PARTIDO COMUNISTA DE ESPAÑA)

The Spanish Communist Party.

PSUC (PARTIDO SOCIALISTA UNIFICADO DE CATALUÑA)

The United Socialist Party of Catalonia was an amalgamation of Catalan socialist parties in the early summer of 1936 which was completely taken over by the communists.

POUM (PARTIDO OBRERO DE UNIFICACION MARXISTA)

The Workers' Party of Marxist Unification was led by Andres Nin (Trotsky's former secretary from whom he had disassociated himself) and Joaquin Maurin. Its main strength lay in western Catalonia. The party was not 'Trotskyist' as the Stalinists claimed.



OLUTION IN ANCY



ative to the government of the Republic. Despite its immediate disarray, this gave the bourgeoisie a toe hold on power. Morrow observed:

"One power, that of Azana and Companys, without an army, police or other armed force of its own, was already too weak to challenge the existence of the other. The other, that of the armed proletariat, was not yet conscious enough of the necessity to dispense with the existence of the power of Azana and Companys."

Finally, the revolutionary committees did not embrace the widest layers of the exploited and oppressed. They represented - Aragon apart - the political rule of the vanguard, organised in militias, rather than the masses.

STALINISTS

Nevertheless, the anarcho-syndicalists did want to see the revolution go forward. The PCE, on the contrary, wished to see it halted and reversed from the very start. Even in the period of revolutionary rise, when the most left of the Republican bourgeoisie dared not contest the situation, the Stalinists assumed total responsibility for standing against the stream of revolutionary events. Even before the Stalinists entered the government they railed against the land seizures. The PCE repeatedly stated in its press:

"To embark on such projects is

absurd and equivalent to playing the enemy's game".

Springing to the defence of the Republican landlords - who, although being considerable employers of agricultural labourers, were consistently dubbed 'small farmers' - the PCE declared ominously:

"... that those who attack this property must be regarded as enemies of the regime."

Needless to say their attitude to workers' control in the factories was the same. They supported only the nationalisation by the Republican government of openly pro-fascist capitalists, rather than workers' control. They constantly attacked the collectives as 'wasteful' and as undermining the maximum mobilisation of resources for the war effort.

LIMITS SET

Politically, Stalin and the PCE had set definite limits to the Spanish revolution. On the day of the fascist uprising - 18 July - the PCE declared: "The government commands and the Popular Front obeys." Later the Spanish delegate to the ECCI said that the PCE's motto must be "All for the Popular Front, all through the Popular Front." For the Comintern Andre Marty stated:

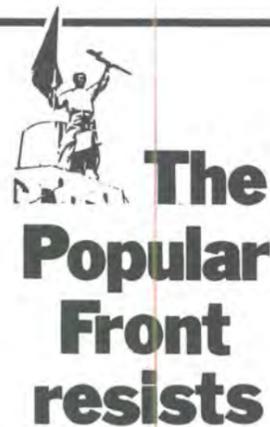
"The working class parties in Spain, and especially the Communist Party, have on several occasions clearly indicated ... that the present struggle in Spain is not between capitalism and socialism but between fascism and democracy. In a country like Spain, where feudal institutions and roots are still very deep, the working class and the entire people have the immediate and urgent task, the only possible task ... not to bring about the socialist revolution but to defend, consolidate and develop the bourgeois-democratic revolution."

PROPERTY

This argument was false to the core. The techniques of production on the land may have been 'feudal' but the property relations were thoroughly capitalist. Land had been bought and sold for years, like any other commodity. The big landowners were, in fact, completely tied up with - in many cases identical with - the captains of industry and finance. The notion of fascism as being a feudal reaction to democracy was a threadbare justification for the Popular Front. Spanish fascism, as with its German twin, was an instrument of finance capital against the working class.

'La Pasionaria' herself, for the PCE, assured the bourgeoisie:

"Cease conjuring up the spectre of Communism, you generals, ... In this historic hour the Communist Party ... places itself at the side of the government which expresses this will (i.e. of the people), at the side of the Republic, at the side of democracy."



The Popular Front resists

The PCE did not confine itself to mere propaganda. During the early weeks, while the workers and poor peasants were consolidating and extending their gains, the Stalinists tried to intervene to call a halt. In Valencia, for instance, as early as 23 July the Provisional Junta challenged the authority of the Popular Executive Committee (PEC) and declared the latter's rule null and void. In response the PEC split; the CNT, UGT, PSOE and POUM rejected the ultimatum, while the PCE and the Republican left alone urged compliance with the edict. The Junta took fright and dissolved four days later. Nevertheless, the PCE remained unabashed.

DEMOBILISING

In Aragon, the PCE consistently attacked the town and village committees as 'factionalist' and 'cantonalist'. In Madrid where the rule of the revolutionary committees was weakest, the Republic tried early in August to demobilise the militias. To this end, they passed conscription measures. The PCE immediately agreed. Fortunately, the CNT/UGT did not and the cabinet was forced to allow recruits to join the militia.

Without doubt the worst example was in Catalonia. On 2 August the bourgeois nationalist Casanovas attempted to restore Republican authority by forming a cabinet. He offered the PSUC three ministries which they immediately accepted. The CNT and POUM workers reacted so ferociously that on 8 August the PSUC had to resign or lose all credibility with the masses.

ANTI-LABOUR

So concerned were the Stalinists for the interests of the bourgeoisie that the PCE formed the GEPCI - a federation for traders and small employers in the towns, which had a membership of 18,000 within a month or so of the civil war. The CNT mercilessly exposed this organisation of "intransigent employers, ferociously anti-labour" which included one of the main textile employers who had backed the failed army rebellion of 1932.

At an international level the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Kremlin coincided completely with this conservative line. During the

last two weeks of July Moscow's press carried a good deal of coverage on the civil war. Trade union levies were organised and money - strictly for medical aid - was sent to the Republican government. Relations with the revolutionary committees were shunned. This period of support culminated in a mass rally in Red Square of 120,000 workers in support of the Republic on 3 August.

At the end of that week, however, Britain proposed a Non-Intervention Committee. On 6 August the USSR replied:

"The government of the USSR subscribes to the principle of non-interference in the affairs of Spain."

To show its sincerity the Kremlin ceased reportage on Soviet support for the Spanish Republic, and no attack was made on the policy of neutrality. Nothing was done to hinder negotiations between the imperialist powers leading to the creation of such a committee. The USSR ratified the treaty setting up the committee on 24 August and Germany the next day. The Non-Intervention Committee met on 9 September for the first time with 26 countries present.

From its inception to its demise this committee was a pure farce whose only purpose was to restrain the hand of the USSR and absolve Britain and France from giving military aid to the Republic. Meanwhile Germany and Italy continued to pour troops (e.g. 40,000 Italian troops) and arms into Spain to help Franco.

Many Stalinist writers have claimed that the lack of arms doomed the Republic from the start and that it was impossible to provide more. Even those with POUM sympathies - such as Orwell - came to the same conclusion.

NO DIFFERENCE

The truth was that fascism succeeded above all because the Republic failed to arouse the peasantry to its side with a bold programme of land reform. Eventually the peasantry fell into despair and saw no qualitative difference between Franco and the Republic and hence no reason to defend the latter.

Everything the Stalinists did in Spain from the very first weeks of the uprising was designed to prevent the success of the revolution. While they did not wish to see Franco triumphant, their murderous policies ensured it nevertheless.

by Keith Hassell

to be continued...



PERU UNDER GARCIA

The following article was written by a member of the Fraccion Obrera Trozkiista (FOT) for Workers Power. The FOT originated from a group of militants from the Oruro region of the POR-LORA (Bolivia) who were bureaucratically expelled from that party in November 1985 for opposing the political line of the Lora leadership. The FOT, now made up of militants in both Peru and Bolivia, is working towards a founding conference on a principled programmatic basis.

After a series of initial discussions the FOT and the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI), of which Workers Power is a part, agreed to continue these discussions with the aim of discovering a basis for establishing fraternal relations within the MRCI. The translation and footnotes are by Workers Power. The article has been edited for reasons of space.



Election meeting in a Peruvian village

WHEN THE ANNIVERSARY of the victory of the APRA in the presidential elections took place the government of Alan Garcia still maintained a high level of popularity. Elected with 45% of the vote he has more support than any president in Latin America. Now he is attempting to transform himself into a leader on a continental scale.

On his recent visit to Argentina he received a mass welcome. He partially eclipsed Fidel Castro's proposal of a unified refusal to pay the continent's external debt with his stated intention of only making repayments of up to 10% of the country's export earnings. International Social Democracy has been boosting him as a means of increasing their influence in the Third World. In the next few months a congress of the Socialist International will take place in Lima.

Why is Alan Garcia so popular and how long will this popularity last?

STABILISATION

APRA has reduced Peru's contribution to the IMF and put money into projects of social reform. Whereas the previous government prioritised the increase of exports by means of reducing real wages and generally reducing the costs of production, Garcia, by contrast, has raised real wages in order to increase demand and stimulate production for the internal market.

He wants to strengthen native industries. There has been a stabilisation of prices which have been subject to government controls. The government has also launched a programme of temporary income assistance to create jobs for tens of thousands of unemployed.

This has meant taking on workers, especially the women of the shanty towns, on low wages and employing them in public works schemes and on the improvement of conditions in the 'barrios' that surround the major cities.

Current bank accounts in dollars have been frozen and the level of US money and bank credits in circulation has fallen. Garcia is implementing a system of interest-free credit for small traders and also for the peasants of the depressed areas, above all in the areas where Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) is active.

In contrast to the previous government of Belaunde, which favoured the development and colonisation of tropical forest regions of the country, the APRA seeks to develop the southern Andean region, that is the most marginal and poorest area of the country. This region has seen the most guerrilla activity over the past few decades. It is also an area quite different to the 'solid north' that was always the electoral base of the APRA.

In 1985 the APRA gained the presidency for the first time since its foundation sixty-one years ago, but it did so with a new style. The APRA was founded by Haya de la Torre in 1924 as a front whose aim was to unify Latin America in a single anti-imperialist state.

It had a programme for the nationalisation of both the land and industry. Like every bourgeois nationalist party the APRA eventually abandoned its radical methods - terror, military coups and insurrections. It was slowly transformed into an organisation at the service of imperialism and committed to preserving the existing social order. Despite its servility before the ruling class and its armed forces however, the latter especially, remained suspicious of the party of Haya because of the fright it had given them in the early years of 'Aprismo'.

The working class and the student movement slowly but progressively broke from the APRA. In the elections of the 1970s and in 1980 APRA suffered a sharp decline in votes and paid dearly for their turn to the right.

The task of opposing Belaunde, the turn towards moderate left positions and the renewal of its cadres gave the APRA a new dynamism. Alan Garcia developed a new political style and an open and unsectarian attitude to other political forces. An old political party came to power with a very young leader - a new style combined with an old aspiration.

For the reactionary right and the bourgeoisie the APRA is a barrier against the possible dangers of a popular front 'Marxist' government and also a barrier against the growth of the radical left and the proliferation of the Mao-Stalinist guerrillas.

SUPPORT

It is not for nothing that all the TV channels, traditionally right-wing, have given their support to Garcia. The reaction has not launched a campaign against the APRA, neither has the US Embassy taken any measures yet against a government that had promised to break relations with the USA if the latter attacked Nicaragua.

The bourgeoisie tolerate the Aprista government and allow Garcia to use left-wing poses in order to neutralise the 'Marxist' left. But how long will it tolerate this government? There are already signs that they are demanding more moderation in foreign policy, in relations with the IMF and in its economic measures at home.

Between 1977 and 1980 Peru went through a revolutionary situation in which the forces of the extreme left grew.

The destruction of the ARI (an electoral front based on an anti-imperialist revolutionary programme led by Hugo Blanco that

had the possibility of coming first in the 1980 elections), the ebbing of the revolutionary situation of 1977-1980 and the containment of the movement in the last years of Belaunde, the strengthening of popular frontism within the left; all created a better climate for the growth of the APRA. (For Workers' Power's analysis of Peruvian left electoral blocs see **Workers Power 73**).

With the moderate left placing itself on the same political terrain as him, Alan Garcia had the advantage. The convergence of the 'Marxist' left and the APRA leadership was underlined when one prominent leader of the 'United Left' (IU) said that the IU and the APRA had both chosen the wrong candidates. Garcia should be the candidate of the United Left and Barrantes should be the candidate of the APRA! Without opposition from the radical left, Garcia could give himself the luxury of pretending to be an anti-imperialist and a left-winger.



Alan Garcia wants to get on well with everybody. He has made approaches to the armed forces, even donning military uniform, and has tried to eliminate past frictions between the army and the APRA. In return the APRA is a useful support for the army in its attempts to contain the Sendero Luminoso insurgency.

He has included in his cabinet the Christian Democrats and 'friends' of various other political parties. He has approached Barrantes (Mayor of Lima and leader of the IU) for a mutually convenient relationship. Both intend to push aside the United Left.

Internationally, Garcia has opted for a 'third worldist' position and for continent-wide alliances. The problem is that in South America there is no nationalist government which is willing to risk serious conflict with the White House.

The wearing down of the APRA is inevitable. They are obliged to start a disguised offensive against the left, though this is taking place amidst smiles and embraces with Barrantes. The APRA has attacked the teachers of the SUTEP (Teachers' Union) in one of the important colleges in the country (the Guadalupe), attempting to

discipline that union as an example to all rank and file teachers throughout the education system. The limited increase in salary given to the teachers was another example of the escalating attack.

In the civil servants union the APRA has launched another attack with the cancellation of the summer working day (which was three hours shorter). Also they have attacked the miners, although in a more subtle manner.

RISKS

The anti-imperialism of the APRA is completely demagogic. Their measures are actually more moderate than those taken by Valasco Alvarado, leader of the reforming military regime which ousted a previous Belaunde government. They have announced that they will raise the 10% quota on debt repayment. They have struck pro-multi-national agreements on the question of oil.

Nevertheless the Aprista's economic policy runs many risks and could lead to a catastrophe such as that brought about by the UDP government in Bolivia. To control prices is extremely difficult in a market or 'free enterprise' economy, where the supreme law is the thirst for profit of each entrepreneur.

Price control could only be firmly established in a planned and statified economy. Speculation, shortages of foodstuffs, the flight of capital formerly invested in agribusinesses to another sector, the need to import food to put pressure on the big landowners who traffic in the people's hunger, have all increased.

The economic policy of Alan Garcia has been maintained so far because of the social stability and the low level of strikes. A climate of social agitation would strike a hard blow against his populist reforms, losing him the support of the bourgeoisie that have been willing to sacrifice some of their immediate interests in the name of social and economic normalisation. There would be serious discontent from the sectors of the bourgeoisie most closely linked to finance capital. This could push Garcia to the right at the level of international policy.

A prominent US magazine has commented that Garcia has many possibilities for transforming himself into a Peruvian Peron. This is untrue. Peron's strength was based on the reconstruction era after the Second World War, on the particularly favourable economic situation of Argentina at that time and on the creation of a new proletariat without political traditions.

On this basis the left was destroyed in the unions and paid the price of its own political treachery. Peronism was able to domesticate and integrate the workers' organisations.

In contrast, Alan Garcia cannot rely on an international economic boom, nor does Peru have any commodities for export vital to the world economy. In addition, the Peruvian labour movement is not without an independent leadership and it has a tradition of struggle against his party.

The Peruvian workers have a history of no confidence in the APRA and even if its influence is growing now amongst some layers, as soon as the APRA runs into difficulties this distrust will increase dramatically.

The APRA has also not hit the interests of the big companies which are such an obstacle to developing the country's agriculture. It cannot give any strategic solution to the historic weaknesses of the Peruvian economy, especially in a period when crises are more and more frequent.

But for the moment Alan Garcia is at the pinnacle of success. Other political forces are obliged to watch and wait. The traditional right-wing is looking for an opportunity to attack the APRA. They left office in serious disarray after five years. For the moment their objective is to avoid political life turning into a two pole conflict between the APRA and the United Left. The municipal elections at the end of the year will be extremely important in affording a viewpoint of political life in the coming years.

Belaunde has decided not to take part in them. His party, Accion Popular, is repeating its tactics of the 1978 elections to the Constituent Assembly and absenting itself from the electoral battle, hoping thereby to avoid the humiliation of a very low vote and to evade the criticism of its opponents. For the moment it must try to assemble its scattered forces and confront certain internal problems that may well end in a split.

The Popular Christian Party - the third largest party - is, on the other hand, obliged to mount a serious campaign. A big collapse in their electoral support could mean the disappearance from political life for many years of the non-APRA traditional right-wing.

EXPECTATIONS

The crushing victory of Garcia's APRA over the Peruvian right has led to growing expectations of the Peruvian masses for reform and for significant improvements in their living standards. Garcia has already, after less than a year, shown that he is willing to bow before the demands of the IMF and imperialism.

Further rightward moves and attacks on the working class would lead to a mass upsurge in struggle against his government. Barrantes and his 'Marxist' United Left waits in the wings to lead the Peruvian masses into the jaws of a popular front government - a Peruvian Allende in the making.

Our task is to work patiently to lay the political basis for the construction of a Trotskyist nucleus which can intervene in a communist fashion in the coming struggles of the Peruvian masses. ■

APRA and Sendero Luminoso

APRA (the Popular American Revolutionary Alliance) is a bourgeois nationalist party. Now affiliated to the Socialist International. For background to the APRA victory in the 1985 elections see **Workers Power** Number 73 June 1985.

Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) is a rural Maoist guerrilla movement which is extremely active in the southern Andean province of Ayacucho where the Peruvian army is involved in a virtual civil war with the peasants.

WINTER OF REVOLT

WITH EACH NEW day the heroic struggle to overthrow apartheid in South Africa grows in intensity. The May Day 'stay away' (General Strike) drew over one and a half million black workers into action. Nearly 70% of African workers struck in the industrial centre of PWV and Durban, and over 90% in the Eastern Cape.

In recent weeks the township and student committees have organised a more effective network of self-defence organisations in response to the accelerated attack of the police, army and state-backed 'vigilante' groups. The latter are a vicious attempt to wipe out 'comrades' (black militants) under the guise of intercommunal strife.

WHITES SPLIT

The determination of the black people has caused fissures to appear in the ranks of the whites. At one extreme, the neo-fascist Afrikaaner Resistance Movement (AWB) has come out of the woodwork. From his stronghold in the Transvaal, their leader Terre' Blanche threatens that they will grow by leaps and bounds on a programme of fierce resistance to any concessions to the black resistance. At the other extreme, a small band of whites braved the overwhelming hostility of their own community to mourn at the gravesides of those recently butchered in Alexandra township.

Presiding over this polarisation is P W Botha. Seeking to stem the

threat from the parties to the right (CP, HNP) and the AWB, Botha sent troops into three frontline states on murderous raids. But while Botha's actions have effectively scuppered the peace plan of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, the dangers of the struggle against apartheid being derailed remain.

At present, neither Botha nor the ANC could be publicly associated with the proposals advanced by the Commonwealth group. These included talks about black representation in government following the release of Mandela in exchange for an ANC ceasefire. Right-wing white organisations have grown in strength and now openly challenge Botha's National Party base in the Transvaal. They leave Botha little room to manoeuvre. Yet the pressures for reform remain. Barclays Bank and other key institutions are attempting to use their financial muscle to encourage reform. They have announced their unwillingness to again reschedule South Africa's £24 billion debt. With the South African economy still in a trough and its reserves dwindling, these are significant worries for Botha.

Replying to Botha's attacks on ANC bases, ANC President Oliver Tambo has called for a major escalation of the struggle. The trade union federation COSATU has already called for June 16th, Soweto Day, to start a two or three day National Stay Away. Now the ANC has followed suit. Sechaba, the ANC's magazine, refers to the growth of organs of peoples power in the townships and the onset of 'people's war'. But these rallying calls appear to be in contrast with the statements

being made by the ANC over the winter when a procession of foreign dignitaries and business interests visited Lusaka. Said ANC Publicity Director Thabo Mbeki at the beginning of March:

"We are reaching out exploring all these forces trying to isolate the most stubborn racist elements in the South African government and to mobilise the political weight of all these forces to the point where Botha feels he can't go on confronting them and agrees to talk."

Mbeki made clear that, while the ANC would maintain the call for an offensive, it would be looking for a realignment of forces within South African society:

"We are talking not of overthrowing the government but of turning so many people against it that it would be forced to do what Ian Smith had to do."

STAGE ARMY

These apparently contrasting positions are part of a broader strategy of the ANC of forcing the regime to the negotiating table. It could spell disaster for the South African working class which has the potential power to overthrow and smash the apartheid state and establish working class rule.

It should not allow the fate of South Africa to be negotiated over its head. It should not have to use its industrial weight to usher in a government to continue to administer capitalism. It should not be used as a stage army by the exiles in the ANC, however loyal it feels to the earlier generation of fighters and leaders.

Workers in South Africa are adopting increasingly militant and effective forms of struggle, notably the sit-down strike and organised defence. COSATU's first National Stay Away on May Day was a resounding success. But this militancy alone cannot prevent the workers' struggle being directed along the road mapped out by the popular front coalition of classes within the ANC and the United Democratic Front.

One section of the COSATU leadership, recognising the potential dangers of the ANC's strategy and seeking a clearly socialist road, wants the working class to assert its own independent interests through COSATU itself. COSATU is at present discussing a political programme. Moses Mayekiso told *Socialist Worker* that he did not consider a Workers Party necessary at present:

"The shop stewards have been talking of a sort of structure like the party. But our people assessed the whole struggle. They felt that forming a party at this stage would be divisive. Therefore what we can do at the moment is to form a programme for the organised working class which will be socialist."

The prestige of the ANC, the pressure for unity, the wide support enjoyed by the UDF - all this makes the argument against a separate working class party look plausible. But in reality the choice is not between the workers' organisations asserting their own leadership or sharing (in reality conceding) leadership with the ANC. While the ANC has a perspective of a capitalist democratic stage in South Africa, it is inevitable that national and international capital will eventually seek to deal direct with Congress. To give independent political direction to the workers' organisation in townships and factories, to give them a revolutionary lead - for this a party is needed.

To lead a successful revolution in South Africa, such a party would need to be built in the trade unions on the basis of a revolutionary programme that connected here and now the struggle against apartheid with those working class goals that strike at capitalism itself. To make the revolution permanent, not to restrict the revolution to democratic goals, this is the historic mission of the black South African masses. Their sacrifice demands no other result.

by a member of
the Irish Workers Group

by Sue Thomas



THE PARTITION OF Ireland made it possible for the Catholic Church to gain a powerful influence on the Southern state. They secured massive state support for Church-run hospitals and schools, which now make up the bulk of the health and education sectors. They also maintained an effective veto on almost all legislation for the first fifty years of the state's existence.

A minister in the early 1950s who tried to extend free medical care was forced to resign in a famous case when the Church simply told the government not to proceed with the reform because it would 'undermine the family'. Church morality was written into the state law. Divorce, contraception and abortion were all subject to a blanket ban.

By the 1970s this situation was becoming untenable for sections of the Irish bourgeoisie. Thousands of women were crossing the sea to get abortions. Contraception was available in major urban centres in defiance of the law. An increasing number of marriages were breaking down and separated spouses were openly setting up in new couples.

It was increasingly clear that the attempt to keep state law in line with the Church's harsh moral code was not sustainable. They have sought, therefore, to loosen the law slightly in order to save it from a more complete collapse.

Change has not come without opposition. The Church hypocritically claims not to be concerned with politics while doing all in its power to oppose reform. Small right-wing 'pro-family' groups have tried to pre-empt change by getting the ban on abortion written into the Constitution. But the Fine Gael/Labour coalition has already succeeded in cutting off the fight for contraception rights by legalising non-medical contraception while keeping the ban on the sale of the pill to unmarried people.

REFERENDUM

In April this year the Government attempted to repeat the same manoeuvre in relation to divorce by producing a proposal to replace the constitutional ban on divorce with a text allowing divorce after five years of marriage breakdown.

The proposed constitutional amendment will be voted for on 26 June in a referendum. The Church has condemned the proposal. It is organising a pulpit campaign. With over 90% still attending mass every Sunday this is no



small step. Papal Knight Oliver J. Flanagan condemned the proposal in the Irish parliament as a licence for adultery.

The main opposition party Fianna Fail, while nominally neutral, is organising at the local level to oppose the change. Polls still indicate a majority in favour of the proposal but the threat to even this modest reform is clearly very real and raises the issue of how the pro-divorce campaign should be organised.

For the larger party in Government - Fine Gael - the main effect of the move to reform divorce law has been to stem defections to the new "Progressive Democracy" party from its own liberal wing. Win or lose the amendment, Fine Gael will gain the credit with young voters and in strategic marginal urban constituencies in the general election due in the next year.

Their enthusiasm for campaigning in favour of the reform has so far been confined to repeated assurances that the legislation they will introduce if the constitutional amendment is passed will institute

a strict and long drawn out divorce process which will prevent many from getting divorce. As many as a third of their own parliamentary party will be pushing for legislation which is significantly more restrictive than the amendment itself.

In this situation it is of the greatest importance that both the Irish Labour party and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions are committed to fighting for the amendment. But their support is confined to a promise to produce posters and leaflets, leaving the leadership of the pro-divorce campaign to the middle-class led Divorce Action Group.

This group has existed for more than six years and has done little to build a campaign for divorce. It has the leadership of the pro-divorce campaign only because the labour movement has deferred to its approach. That approach in this campaign has centered on the refusal to criticise the highly restricted form of divorce and a refusal to organise for a mass campaign.

This approach threatens the passing of the amendment in the referendum, as the church's anti-

divorce campaign begins to win the undecided vote. Yet even if passed it still leaves the government free to draw up legislation which is more restrictive than the constitutional amendment and which avoid providing adequate support services.

Therefore, what happens to this amendment and whether it proves a starting point for a renewed fight for women's rights and the separation of Church and state will depend on the kind of campaign built in support of this amendment.

To date neither the weakened forces of Irish feminism, the various Stalinist groups nor Sinn Fein have proved willing to face up to the challenge of fighting for a campaign based on the labour movement. Such a campaign would have to mobilise working class women to force through this amendment and the further reforms needed to make it worthwhile, against the opposition of its church opponents and its fainthearted bourgeois and reformist supporters.

ORGANISE THE UNEMPLOYED!

THE LATEST WAVE of redundancies and closures make one thing clear: neither the much talked up "boom" of the last three years, nor any 'softening' of the government's image to escape disaster at the polls in 1988 will halt the onslaught on jobs.

The government and the employers, sensing that the next election will bring in some sort of government pledged to do something about unemployment, are determined to make the most of Thatcher's last years to close unprofitable capacity and cut the workforce to a bare minimum.

The effects of mass unemployment have been disastrous, both for the unemployed themselves and for the trade union organised workforce. Serious divisions have opened up within the working class. Whereas the average earnings for a full-time male worker in manufacturing stand at £170.58 per week an unemployed man with two young children and a wife not working would receive £73.95 in benefit.

The conditions of the young unemployed are even more desperate. "Employment" at starvation wages rates in one of the government schemes is likely to be only "something to do" rather than useful training or any guarantee of a job.

Over a third of the officially registered unemployed have been so for over a year. The government's policy is to use the unemployed to force down wage levels all round but especially for the young. Young workers are now to be deprived of even the feeble protection of the wage councils and their minimum rates. In fact since 1979 young men's wages have risen by 23% less than the adult male rate, and young women workers' wages by 30% less than adult women's pay.

WILLING

The unemployed and those under threat of redundancy have fought back. The great struggles, from the steel strike to the printers today, bear witness to this. The incredible twelve month resistance of the miners and the revolt of black youth in the inner cities proved that there has been and still is no lack of a will to fight. What has been lacking is the leadership and organisation of that fight-back.

The trade union and Labour leaders have sabotaged, split, demoralised and betrayed every one of these struggles. They have been petrified of an all-out, generalised fight-back of the whole working class. Their trade union and parliamentary cretinism has led them time and time again to block the road to a general strike against the Tories' legal shackles. And the reward for betrayal each time was a further round of anti-union legislation, together with punitive rulings from the judges.

In these conditions working class struggles have remained on the defensive. And it has been the unemployed who have received the least attention from the "official movement". Apart from two national rallies and two regionally initiated "Peoples' Marches for Jobs" prior to the last election no agitation on unemployment has been launched.

Instead the under-funded unemployment centres have been kept going on the basis of a strict ban on politics and organised action - even of the most harmless protest variety - by their users. We have the conditions of the 1920s and 1930s with us again and yet we do not have the organised movement of the unemployed. Why?

The blame for this cannot simply be laid at the doorstep of the TUC. These conservative bureaucrats have not changed their spots in the last 50 or 60 years. In the 1920s and 1930s the General Council and the union executives did next to nothing for the unem-



1930s: South Wales workers march to demand action from the TUC

employed. Indeed they did all they could to sabotage the hunger marches, instructing local unions and trade councils to have nothing to do with them.

The actual movement of the unemployed - the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) - was created by the initiative of revolutionary communists. It was sustained by the efforts of the victimised militants of the trade union struggles of the early and mid-twenties.

Nor was the Communist Party a mighty mass force, averaging throughout the period about 4,000 members. The number of people claiming to be revolutionaries in Britain today is several times larger than this. Why then has there been no attempt to build what the trade union leaders manifestly will not build - a movement of the unemployed?

The need for it is clear enough. If the unemployed are left as an unorganised "reserve army of labour" willing through desperation to take any job, even to scab on striking workers, then the bosses will have gained a weapon they can use to undermine the wages and conditions of every employed worker. At the bottom of the pile of human misery, criminality and racism will flourish. The conditions for a re-birth of British fascism are being created. Yet the revolutionary 'parties' and 'tendencies' have signally failed to take up the building of a mass unemployed movement.

The Stalinist Communist Party bears a special responsibility for this situation. It was instrumental in organising the People's Marches in the early 1980s. But it organised those marches not to force the labour movement into action, but to provide cover for the inaction of the bureaucracy. On the first

march the CP tried, unsuccessfully because of the militancy of the workers, to keep things "non-political". They tried to stop marchers visiting factories and other workplaces.

When this failed they made sure that the movement that developed from the 1981 march was crushed. Throughout the country they tied the unemployed groups to TUC tea and sympathy centres, where politics and action were taboo.

By the time of the 1983 march the Stalinists were able to exercise a firmer grip on behalf of Congress House. They banned anti-Tory slogans and enforced this ban with the thuggery that is their special trade mark. The Stalinists provided the top leaders with events that disguised their real inaction, and checked all attempts to use the events as real starting points for organising the unemployed.

MARCHES

The Stalinists were able to get away with this sabotage because of the abstention of the major left groups from a fight to defeat them. These groups had other ideas about organising the unemployed.

The three largest groupings of the so-called Marxist or revolutionary left, Militant, the Socialist Workers Party and the pre-split, Healy-led, Workers Revolutionary Party all took up and then dropped the hot potato of unemployed work.

All of them at one time or another launched campaigns or marches. The SWP's "Right to Work" marches and the WRP's Youth marches criss-crossed Britain, and indeed Europe. Militant organised Youth Unemployment rallies.



1980s: Still on the march! Youth have all the anger but no leadership

What characterised all of these campaigns is that although they were all keen enough to collect money and sponsorships from trade unions, locally and nationally, there was not a shred of the workers' democracy and unity in action that was needed to build a real mass movement of the unemployed.

Each campaign was, behind the scenes, exclusively a "party building" activity for these organisations. They kept a stranglehold on them every bit as tight as that of the Stalinists on the 1983 Peoples March. Their results were correspondingly ephemeral. When what was needed was a fighting united front - these sects, for all their hundreds or thousands of members - built nothing lasting despite the best intentions and efforts of their rank and file militants. But this sectarianism was only the other side of the coin of their opportunism.

Marches and rallies - important as they are as means to build - could easily be tolerated and even patronised by union leaders, as long as they demanded nothing serious from these leaders. Providing they did not mobilise significant forces on a permanent basis that could threaten these leaders, such toleration was in order. None of these groups would proclaim the necessity for a permanent organisation of the unemployed - an unemployed workers' movement or union. Such an organisation, if it were to be a serious mass force, would have to be a **united front** not an adjunct of a party (let alone a series of stunts organised by a sect pretending to be a party).

To build such a united front would have meant combining demands on the union leaders locally and nationally for resources to help build it with a willingness to organise directly groupings in every city and town. It would have meant such a movement being open to members of all working class, political tendencies, indeed it would mean actively seeking to involve them. Yet the SWP, Militant and the WRP all feared doing this like the plague.

SECTARIAN

They dared not confront one another within the arena of joint action, where their strategy and leadership could be put to the test. Of course, building such a movement would lead to the same sort of clashes with the trade union leaders, left as well as right, that the NUWM repeatedly faced between 1921 and 1936. And herein lies the political weaknesses of these would-be Trotskyist tendencies - their inability to chart a course politically independent of the bureaucracy. Herein lies their **centrism**, their zig-zagging between opportunism - uncritical support

for the likes of Scargill, Knapp and Todd - and sectarianism - their party building stunts.

The unemployed deserve better from their self-proclaimed vanguards. The objective necessity for building an unemployed workers' movement will not go away. Indeed the need will sharpen during the coming economic crisis. On what should it be based?

A fighting action programme for the unemployed needs to be developed. The unemployed must be rallied to action, to make themselves visible. The old slogans "we will not suffer in silence" and "work or full pay" must be heard again in every town and city. Starting with experienced trade union militants who have been sacked or victimised - the sacked miners are central here - a campaign must be launched in every locality to organise the unemployed. This will necessitate taking up the fight for improvements in the starvation dole and social security benefits - work at present carried on by very weak "claimants unions". It will mean organising marches and pickets demanding work, exposing employers who lay-off workers or who "under-employ".

FIGHT

It will mean fighting alongside workers fighting redundancies or closure plans - getting the unemployed onto the picket lines with them. It will mean building the closest possible links with the shop stewards committees in factories, offices and hospitals, to fight overtime being worked that kills new jobs. Direct action tactics can get the unemployed to enter such workplaces, to put their case to workers and to seek their solidarity.

Far from such a movement being separated from the unions, it would fight for full rights and representation at every level of the labour movement. And as well as being in an unemployed workers' union, all unemployed workers should be allowed membership with full rights but at reduced rates in the union of their choice. This way unemployed workers can organise as **the unemployed** and take their fight directly into every union.

Alongside this agitation, education - first and foremost political education - must be a feature of an unemployed workers' movement. Allied to this must be entertainment and recreation - sports, dances, film and theatre show, discussion on "social questions" (racism, sexism, etc). All of these activities can raise the fighting morale of the unemployed, can prevent them sinking into apathy, drugs or crime.

The organisation of these activities can draw in many thousands of new fighters and provide a powerful addition to the forces of the labour movement - a leaven that can help revolutionise the bureaucratized unions. The unemployed can transform themselves from the objects of pity and charity into deciders of their own fate - makers of history!

The forces to build such a movement lie all around us. It is the task of genuine revolutionaries to fight now to overcome the inertia that dominates the left. Exclusive pre-occupation with the internal battles of the Labour Party, mesmerisation with the existing structures and routine of the trade unions or narrow-minded party-building stunts, all stand in the way of this work.

Revolutionaries, indeed every honest working class militant, should open the discussion in the base units of the labour movement on what policies and fighting demands to take up and how to found the organisation capable of mobilising the unemployed by the thousands and tens of thousands. ■

by Dave Stocking

REVIEWS

BRITAIN, FASCISM AND THE POPULAR FRONT.

Edited by Jim Fyrth

Lawrence & Wishart (pb £5.95 pp 261)

AT ITS 1935 Congress the Stalinist Communist International (CI) adopted the so-called 'Popular Front' strategy. This book, a collection of essays by a gaggle of Stalinist historians and their fellow travellers, examines the Popular Front's impact in Britain and internationally, and also assesses the views of the strategy's critics, notably Trotsky.

As the authors are well aware, this episode is of more than academic importance. The lessons of the Popular Front in the 1930s are vital ones for marxists today.

The authors all start from the same premise; the decision of the 1935 CI Congress to adopt the Popular Front strategy was a good thing, just as the practice of the CI in the preceding 'Third Period (1928-1935)' was a bad thing. Certainly, during this Third Period the Stalinised CI had engaged in an orgy of sectarianism.

Under the banner of 'class against class' the CI denounced the reformists as 'social fascists' and rejected united fronts with them except 'from below' (i.e. without the reformist leaders). As the authors testify, the results of this sectarianism were spectacular.

Firstly the Communist Parties succeeded in losing a high proportion of their members - the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) went from 10,730 members in October 1926 to 2,555 in November 1930. Secondly, and more importantly, the lack of a workers' united front in Germany allowed Hitler and the Nazis to ride roughshod to power.

While the CI was engaged in this criminal sectarian lunacy, it was none other than the 'bete noir' of Stalinism, Leon Trotsky, who was actually propounding the correct political line. This is now generously admitted by the long standing CP member Monty Johnstone in his keynote essay 'Trotsky and the Peoples Front'.

However, Mr Johnstone's generosity is limited. Trotsky, we are informed, was 'intemperate' and 'overhasty' in criticising the 1935 turn to the Popular Front since this 'corrected the serious sectarian mistakes of the Third Period which he himself had opposed'. But did the Popular Front 'correct' the previous mistakes? This is the crux of the matter. And Mr Johnstone's essay provides some of the answers.

NOVELTY

The Popular Front, according to one of its prime architects, the CI functionary, Dimitrov, was a 'wide anti-fascist people's front'. The novelty of the Popular Front, and its point of departure from the proletarian united front, was that it was so wide that it included capitalist parties and organisations. To prove its worth, Mr Johnstone cites the examples of the Popular Front in France and Spain.

It was in France that the Popular Front had been given a trial run. As early as October 1934, Thorez, leader of the French Communist Party (PCF), had urged the formation of an alliance between his party, the reformist socialist SFIO and the capitalist Radical Party. Thorez's dream was to be fulfilled when these parties formed a Popular Front government in 1936.

Mr Johnstone parades this Stalinist inspired Popular Front

as the means by which the fascist threat was averted in France. But a rather different picture of the Popular Front emerges from the massive strike wave which paralysed France in the aftermath of the 1936 election. The only threat that the Popular Front and its Stalinist backers managed to avert was that of proletarian revolution.

During the months of May/June 1936 over two million French workers took strike action. Hundreds of factories were occupied. What did the PCF do in this situation? Far from leading these revolutionary minded workers to power, Thorez for the PCF argued that "There is no question of taking power at the present time", and his party fought to defeat the strike under the slogan "It is necessary to know how to end a strike". (This latter interesting detail Mr Johnstone fails to mention).

Beneath all Johnstone's bombast against Trotsky for the latter's supposedly inappropriate 'revolutionary offensive programme' of the time, lies the fact that the PCF deliberately refused to lead an offensive struggle of any sort and was engaged in strike breaking. Why? To keep intact its Popular Front alliance with the capitalist Radical Party - to whom strike action let alone revolution was definitely not acceptable.

According to Mr Johnstone, it was the Spanish Civil War that showed most clearly "the bankruptcy of Trotsky's opposition to the people's front policy". Trotsky's 'bankrupt' opposition centered on the point that the Popular Front in Spain, like its French predecessor, 'subordinated the proletariat to the leadership of the bourgeois'. (p.103) Consequently, the fight against Franco and fascism in Spain was contained within the limits acceptable to the 'progressive' bourgeois Republicans.

These limits did not include the only guarantee against fascism - the unfolding Spanish socialist revolution. Desperate to appease their Republican allies, the Spanish Stalinists brutally crushed the workers' uprisings in Barcelona in 1937 as well as the anarchist collective in Aragon. As Johnstone admits, Stalin's secret police, the NKVD, were active in shooting worker militants and depriving non-CP militia of arms at the front.

Spain certainly proved the bankruptcy, not of Trotsky's opposition to the Popular Front, but of the Popular Front itself. Perhaps someone should let Comrade Johnstone know that Franco won the Spanish Civil War.

But as other essays in this volume unintentionally show, it was not only in France and Spain that the Popular Front proved to be chronically ineffective in strait-jacketing the working class.

In Britain, the Popular Front in the 1930s was mainly focussed through campaigns such as the 'Aid for Spain Committees' (ASC) which were set up to provide help for the Republicans in the Civil War, and the 'Women's Committee Against War and Fascism' (WCAWF). These two campaigns are particularly interesting since they are held up by the Stalinists today as the models on which anti-Apartheid and other solidarity campaigns should be built.

Doubtless following Dimitrov's advice both the ASC and WCAWF were certainly 'wide' in their social and political make-up. In the WCAWF, Communist party members worked alongside other socialists, liberals, clergymen and even sympathetic conservatives' (see Women Against War and Fascism'



by Sue Bruley p.147). In fact, the only people not allowed into the Popular Front in its various guises were out-and-out fascists and those regarded as Trotskyists (as Margot Heinemann informs us on p.81).

The result of these broad-based campaigns was a non-aggression pact. Bruley admits that 'political differences were never discussed' in the WCAWF. Action and support was tailored to fit the prejudices of the bourgeois 'humanitarians' and not the necessities of the working class.

Just to underline the point Jim Fyrth in his Introduction cheerfully informs us that the CPGB did "not push relief organisations further than they were prepared to go . . ." (p.19). In the case of the ASC, this meant confining it largely to fund-raising for medical supplies. When workers did take action outside the confines of humanitarian concern, such as the miners in South Wales who wanted 'Strikes for Spain', they found themselves knocked into line by the Stalinists - in this case the CP dominated South Wales Miners Federation Executive.

As the above examples show, behind all the rhetoric about 'wide anti-fascist' organisation, the CPs actually practised outright class-collaboration under the banner of the Popular Front. Since the CPs were meant to be Marxist organisations this requires some explanation. Here the authors are unable to help, blind-loyal to Stalinism as they are.

In truth, the turn to the Popular Front by the CI was dictated by the foreign policy needs of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Kremlin. Faced with the threat of Nazi Germany after 1933, the Kremlin began searching for allies, not amongst the European working

CUDDLING UP

class, but amongst the 'democratic' Western capitalist nations. Henceforth, proletarian revolution was off the agenda for the CI, since this would hardly endear it to the capitalist nations the Kremlin was hoping to ally with. On the agenda instead, was cuddling up to bourgeois forces 'friendly', or potentially so, to the Kremlin, and simultaneously muzzling any workers who threatened these bourgeois friends.

Just in case any of the world's bourgeoisie had any lingering doubts that the CI was still a revolutionary institution, Stalin ensured that its 1935 Congress was its last. The ease by which Stalin accomplished this gives the lie to those authors, such as Geoff Roberts, who claim that the CI was a "relatively autonomous institution" (p.83) rather than the pawn in Stalin's hands that it really was.

Similarly, the fact that the PCF adopted the Popular Front in

1934 (i.e. a year before the Congress) is explained by the fact that the PCF was encouraged and guided by Stalin in this simply because he was attempting to woo French imperialism into a mutual aid treaty.

Unfortunately, as Eric Hobsbawm's essay 'Fifty Years of People's Fronts' reminds us, the policy adopted by the CI in 1935 has been pursued by world Stalinism, with some minor hiccups, ever since. To the bloody disasters caused by the Popular Front in the 1930s can be added countless others, not the least of which is the crushing of Allende's Popular Unity (i.e. Front) government in Chile in 1973.

But not content with applauding the Popular Front against fascism as an 'undoubted success', Hobsbawm wishes to portray Popular Fronts at governmental level as 'possible regimes of transition to socialism' (p.246) - the bourgeoisie and proletariat marching hand in hand to socialism? I think not.

Central to this utopian nonsense is the junking of the Marxist position on the capitalist state - that it must be smashed by workers' revolution since it is the instrument of our oppression. Against this, the Stalinists offer the chimera of a capitalist state apparatus that can be modified to suit the working class. Or, as Johnstone puts it in the context of Spain during the Civil War, the Popular Front government witnessed the "creation of a new popular state apparatus" (p.103). But whose class interests does this interesting new state form defend? On this Mr Johnstone is silent.

But what is loud and clear is that such peaceful transformations of the capitalist state equals reformism. Trotsky was right to oppose the turn to the Popular Front since it was not only incapable of fighting fascism, but signalled that Stalinism had entered the camp of the counter-revolution. What is obscene is how the authors delight in this. Margot Heinemann's relief that the 1935 Congress "helped the left to reclaim patriotism and British freedoms" (sic) (p.177) is almost palpable.

Written to celebrate the turn to the Popular Front strategy fifty years ago, the essays in this volume are, by and large, full of lies, distortions and Stalinist apologetics. But then, trying to justify the criminal consequences of the Popular Front must demand such dubious literary talents. What is worse, is that the purpose of this justification is to offer the Popular Front, under the new label of the 'Broad Democratic Alliance', as a positive strategy for the Left today. As one of the authors notes "It is sad to reflect on how often people have failed to learn the lessons of history". How true! ■

by Jon Lewis

YOUTH IN CHINA

by Beverley Hooper.

Published by Penguin 1985 £3.95, 235pp.

THE BOOK STARTS with two contrasting views of youth. The first, as given by the bureaucrats of the Chinese Communist Party: "on the whole China's young people are enthusiastic about socialism and working hard for modernisation" (p.1). The second, dissident, view is expressed by some of the youth - "What's the use of working hard for modernisation? China is so far behind the industrialised countries. And life here is very boring. No wonder a lot of our people are fed up. No wonder some of us would leave China if we had the opportunity" (p.1). Thus this book explores the growth of a distinct youth culture in opposition to official 'socialist' attitudes.

The book paints a picture of China's youth as disillusioned with socialism. They have been dramatically effected by the post-Mao era of the 'capitalist roaders'. Careerism dominates whole sections of the youth. The majority of students in higher education are members of the Communist Party. Membership is seen as necessary to get a good job in one of the more popular areas on finishing their studies.

The bureaucratic control that the CP exercises over many aspects of life in Chinese society, plus the failure to meet the expectations of youth in terms of employment and educational opportunities, has no doubt contributed to disillusionment. While officially there is no unemployment in China there are large numbers of youth 'waiting for employment'. Or there are workers in jobs which they have little interest in or stuck in areas of the country not of their choosing. Young people often find a solution to this in starting up small scale unofficial private enterprises, which, far from being disapproved of by the authorities, are praised . . . when successful! One such entrepreneur was 'invited to the next Youth League Congress in Peking, as an example of how young people can overcome the employment problem'. (p.90)

The state bureaucracy exercises considerable control over every aspect of personal life in China. At the sharp end of this control are the youth. Puritanism means that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is illegal in China! Young women especially are still affected by pre-revolutionary feudal attitudes towards sexual relationships. Challenges to these attitudes on the ground of the need for sexual liberation are denounced as 'bourgeois' by the authorities.

One young woman declared that "losing one's chastity is no great thing in the West. Isn't our attitude rather feudal?" (p.183). The official reply was: "No it is not a feudal attitude. It is a socialist attitude. Dissolute behaviour between the sexes is a phenomenon of capitalist society." Pre-marital sex is vehemently denounced, but as in traditional China the responsibility of controlling sexual instinct is laid squarely on young women. "It is a small matter to die of starvation but a grave matter to lose one's chastity", has been imprinted on women's minds through the centuries.

The usurpation of political power in China by a Stalinist bureaucratic caste is responsible for the survival of such reactionary attitudes. Its inability to harness the potential of planned property relations has ensured that the youth remain blighted by unemployment and insecurity.

To prevent this turning the youth - or sections of it - into functionaries, entrepreneurs and demoralised cynics, a political revolution is needed in China. Harper's book is not at all concerned with achieving such a goal. But, in revealing the discontent of China's youth under Stalinist rule, she does reveal that they could become a potent force, under revolutionary leadership, in a struggle to smash the bureaucracy and place political power in the hands of the Chinese proletariat. ■

by Kath Tytler

workers power

STOP WAPPING SELL-OUT

THE ROUGH RECEPTION given to Brenda Dean at the mass meeting of SOGAT strikers on 19 May marks an important turning point in the Wapping Dispute. Dean's decision to stop the picketing of distribution depots in order to comply with a High Court injunction was rightly seen by militants as preparation for a sell-out at Wapping itself.

From the very beginning, even before Murdoch sacked the 5,500 printers at News International, Dean and Dubbins (NGA) have been working overtime to derail the dispute. They have done everything they could to prevent it from developing into a showdown with all the Fleet Street news barons.

The strategy of calling for a boycott of Murdoch's titles was the centrepiece of their demobilising tactics. When, despite their efforts, mass picketing of the Wapping plant began to develop, Dean and Dubbins insisted on collaborating with the police to maintain 'law and order'. But since all effective trade union tactics are now illegal, this necessarily meant collaborating with the police to prevent effective picketing.

The rapidly increasing opposition to Dean comes not a moment too soon. It is, however, only the first step towards adopting a strategy that can seriously re-invigorate the dispute. There is now a real danger that militants, incensed by Dean's actions, will concentrate their energies on destroying her - rather than on rapidly repairing the damage she has done.

Dean's disastrous strategy is not simply the product of personal treachery on her part. On the contrary, it has been approved, probably master-minded, by the whole gang of 'new realists' who dominate the TUC and Labour Party. All of them are implacably opposed to escalating the dispute into a major confrontation. From

their point of view the task has been to keep the dispute very much limited to Wapping, while attempting to stitch up a deal with Murdoch and company. The sort of deal they are after would be one that allowed the union leaders to maintain their position as the negotiators for organised labour in the print: no matter if the number of workers in the industry was significantly smaller. Totally wedded to the priorities of the bosses (summed up in the single word - profit) they long ago accepted that new technology was bound to mean maximum job cuts.

Turning the strike round now can only be done by completely rejecting this philosophy. The strike needs a leadership that recognises there can be no common ground with Murdoch and the other press barons. Either they make their profits or the workers keep their jobs. Can such a leadership be built in time to win the dispute?

There is very widespread pressure for a rejection of the current strategy, but that strategy has already done considerable damage to the morale of the strikers.

Recent developments within the strike have shown just how vital it is that the strikers themselves take the strike directly into their own hands. This must be done through building a strike committee directly accountable to mass meetings of the strikers. This, rather than through isolated sectional chapel meetings, is how printers must organise themselves in struggle.

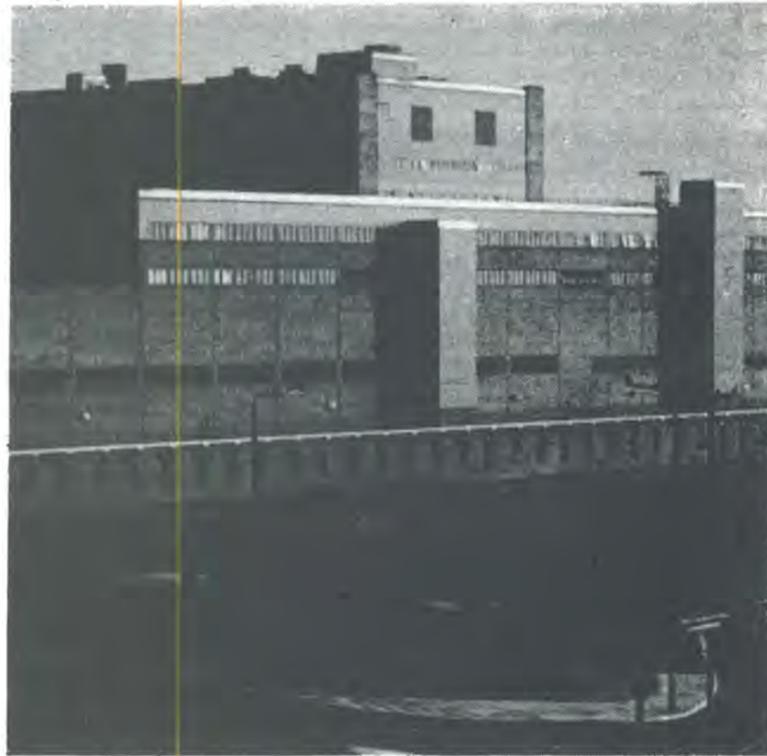
At the 19 May meeting a proposal was put for the immediate election of a strike committee from the meeting. If passed this would undoubtedly have been a major advance. But the call was rejected. Why was this? Firstly, although the call was endorsed by the RIRMA chapel at The Sun, no machinery exists by which it could

have been discussed by members of other chapels prior to the mass meeting.

Secondly, the London District Committee (LDC) presented itself as the alternative leadership to Dean and co. It is an elected body and able to claim that a strike committee would constitute an unnecessary new layer with uncertain authority. Given that the majority of printers seemed to accept the claims of the LDC to offer an alternative leadership, the task of militant printers is to put the LDC to the test and demand that it organises for struggle, and so prove the real need for a democratic rank and file strike committee in practice.

Workers Power believes the building of a strike committee to be a burning necessity. The people chosen to run the normal affairs of the union - the LDC - are not necessarily the best ones to run a major strike. Such a strike always throws up new leaders and newly trusted militants. Hence the need for a democratic rank and file strike committee, formed of direct delegates of the strikers themselves. However, such a committee needs to have the trust of the strikers. As it turned out it could not have been elected out of the blue by a mass meeting of thousands.

The idea of a strike committee needs to be campaigned for by militant strikers in as many chapels as possible. Each striking chapel must be represented on it. In order to win the campaign for a rank and file strike committee the militants must themselves be organised, not as the strike committee, but as a caucus campaigning for a strike committee. Such a caucus could develop out of the Fleet Street Support Unit - provided that body does not attempt to by-pass the problem of winning support for militant tactics



Fortress Wapping

in the striking chapels themselves.

The formation of a strike committee must not be separated from the question of how it can win the strike. Workers Power believes that the essential elements of such a strategy, which militants could agree on, must include the continuation of mass picketing at Wapping and the distribution and supply depots; regular mass meetings of all strikers at least weekly, the right of the strike committee to sit alongside the officials in all negotiations and to put its own recommendations to mass meetings held to consider any proposed settlement.

Such a platform by no means

exhausts the tactics and strategy necessary to beat Murdoch and replace Dean and co. Such problems as the call for an all Fleet Street strike must be argued out both between militants and in the chapels.

The Saturday after the shouting down of Brenda Dean, the Wapping picket was visibly smaller and less determined than in previous weeks. If the growing realisation of Dean's treachery is not to turn into a major demoralising factor, militants must form their own campaigning body immediately - it is now a race against time.

by Steve McSweeney

SILENTNIGHT: ONE YEAR ON

THIS MONTH MARKS the anniversary of the start of the Silent Night Strike. After a year on strike more than 200 men and women are still fighting to win their battle in the face of the apathy of their own union leaders.

The origins of the strike go back to February 1984 when the workforce organised themselves and joined FTAT during a two week

strike. In December 1985 the union accepted 88 redundancies and a wage freeze in return for a promise from Silent Night's boss, Tom Clarke, of no further redundancies. However, within eight weeks Clarke was posting up redundancy notices and refusing any wage rise. The workforce responded by taking all out strike action. Clarke's answer was to sack the strikers.

Since then Clarke has used all the bosses weapons - including busing in scabs and redirecting production to non-unionised factories. He has also taken out an injunction against the union for secondary action because strikers and their supporters have been picketing shops selling Silent Night beds.

Despite massive intimidation by Clarke the strikers are still out on strike and determined to win. They have kept up regular picketing and organise speakers to labour movement meetings all over the country.

FTAT officials made the strike official, but have made no real effort to win - this has been left to the strikers. The bureaucrats have tried to keep the strike localised and have misdirected the energy and resources of the strikers and their supporters into a consumer boycott campaign, which cannot by itself win the dispute.

Meanwhile, throughout Britain, furniture workers are suffering from lousy wages and working conditions. In many factories they are refused union recognition. In Glasgow, Morris workers are still on strike after a year fighting for

union recognition and the reinstatement of a 39 hour week!

After one year on strike, strikers and the rank and file FTAT membership must organise against their own leadership. This means that mass picketing and an immediate union drive in the Furniture trade are key tasks for the rank and file. At the same time the Silent Night and Morris strikes must be linked and the action spread as the guarantee of victory!

Money, requests for speakers, information on pickets, etc - contact

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NUT SETTLE

THE PAY DEAL agreed in May will mean an 'interim' rise of £519 (gross) a year for most teachers. In return for this the NUT has given an undertaking to the employers to restore 'peace and calm'. It will also provide the NUT Executive with the chance they want to get back into the ACAS talks on pay and conditions.

The deal is not the 'triumph' that the NUT Executive have been claiming. The 1986-87 full claim as agreed at conference was for £1700 and a minimum and immediate interim payment of £800. The

£519 is well short even of the latter figure. Though the NUT Executive maintain that the full claim goes into the melting pot of ACAS, the employers have significantly refused to describe the £519 as 'interim', 'on account' or anything similar. These phrases were removed from the deal eventually signed.

While having given the employers the promise to restore 'peace and calm' to the schools, the Executive is only too well aware that it cannot restore the situation that existed before the dispute began. The position of never returning to cover was very nearly successful at NUT conference in Easter.

Many schools committed themselves during the course of the pay campaign to never returning to cover. There is a great reluctance to return to goodwill, or voluntary activities. It is essential that the NUT associations and divisions decide as a body to refuse to return to voluntary activities. What we should be doing now is fighting to turn all the sanctions into conditions of service gains by refusing to go back to any voluntary activities. In the face of the May 23rd's High Court ruling that cover is contractual, we should refuse to accept any form of cover.

The Executive's strategy has seen us fall to make any significant progress towards improved salary levels (increases of 5.1% in 1984-5, 6.9% - 8.5% in 1985-6 and now £519 for 1986-7).

While the STA (Socialist Teachers Alliance) and ILTA have been concentrating on calling on the Executive to support any schools or associations which decided to continue the sanctions, we need to go further and push (via resolutions etc) for associations to actually call on members to continue all the sanctions, despite the Executive:

- *No return to cover - ever.
- *No return to any voluntary duties; consolidate gains into conditions of service.
- *Pressure the Executive to resist the conditions of service concessions demanded by the employers. Organise lobbies of the Executive.
- *Build now in all associations for immediate strike action (unofficial if necessary) if any member is disciplined for refusing voluntary duties.

Abdul Sheir
(Westminster NUT)



workers power

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