



CLASS VOTE TO DEFEAT TORIES

STATEMENT BY THE WORKERS NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

AS a general election draws near, the central question facing the working class is — what kind of leadership is necessary to defeat the Tory enemy and establish socialism? What dominates not only an election but the entire life of the working class is the mounting economic crisis, measured in record unemployment and the collapse of basic industry, in Britain and all over the world.

Two Thatcher governments have trebled unemployment, introduced a battery of anti-union laws, laid waste to coalmining, steel, shipbuilding, construction, engineering, transport and the health service. Youth have been forced in their millions onto state-run cheap-labour schemes. They have expanded and centralised the police into a para-military force to use against the youth and workers of the inner-cities and the trade unions.

They have intensified police-military rule in the north of Ireland. The wholesale privatisation of nationalised industries has gone hand-in-hand with the expansion of Britain's nuclear strike force. In its foreign policy, Thatcher's government stands closest of all Western capitalist governments to the imperialist warmonger, Reagan, and the brutal dictatorships of Botha in South Africa and Pinochet in Chile.

If the Tories are re-elected they will not only continue these policies but, under the impact of the deepening world recession, escalate the attack on the working class.

At every stage in the past eight years the Tories have been assisted by the conscious treachery of the Labour and TUC leaders. If Thatcher has managed to retain power over this period, it has not been due to the lack of opportunities to take on and defeat the Tories. A chain of betrayals stretches from the steel strike (1979-80), the hospital workers' dispute (1982), the NGA struggle at Warrington (1983-4), GCHQ (1984), the miners' strike (1984-5) to the Wapping printers' dispute (1986-7). On each occasion the Labour and trade-union leaders actively intervened to isolate these sections of workers and prevent mass strike action to defeat the class enemy.

Each betrayal has discredited the Labour Party and its leadership in the eyes of important sections of workers and the middle class to the extent that under a hated Tory government, Labour's support stands at its lowest ebb since the Tories came

to power in 1979.

The Labour leadership has remained the main political force in the working class solely because of the weakness of the revolutionary leadership needed to replace it.

Labour's programme leaves no doubt that a Kinnock government would be a capitalist government through and through. Labour's pre-election 'pledges' include:

- The reduction of unemployment by 1.2 million over two years through a £6 billion per year plan;
- 'Voluntary' wage controls, through agreement with the TUC and a statutory minimum wage;
- The 'right to buy' council houses for the first time under Labour. Private companies to manage council estates;
- Strengthening of 'community' policing;
- Increased defence spending on 'conventional' weapons;
- Retention of Cruise missiles while the Geneva 'peace process' continues;
- Retention of many clauses of the Tories' three anti-union laws.

This is undoubtedly the most right-wing platform any Labour leadership has entered an election with for decades. Kinnock's jobs plan is a gigantic fraud. It consists largely of an extension of existing cheap-labour schemes under the guise of 're-training' — a programme Thatcher's cheap-labour supremo Lord Young would be proud of. Any reduction of unemployment by 'job creation' would be overtaken in any case by further



SACKED News International printworkers were amongst the SOGAT 82 delegation on this year's traditional May Day demonstration through London. Several thousand joined the trade union and Labour Party-organised march from Temple Place to a rally in Clerkenwell Green. Sacked printers were in action again two days later

when, on May 3, they staged an angry march up to the main gate of Rupert Murdoch's scab plant at Wapping. They were marking the first anniversary of the brutal mounted-police assault which left scores of printers and their supporters injured.

developments of the economic crisis and the emerging trade war.

Kinnock's 'law and order' support for strengthening the police, his speeches calling for more money for the armed forces and his grovelling reassurances to President Reagan that a Labour government would not endanger NATO show his fervent support for the capitalist state. As for Kinnock's 'anti-nuclear' rhetoric, it is only the most

cynical ploy to attempt to win the support of millions of workers and youth alarmed at the threat of nuclear war, not worth the paper it is written on.

On the eve of an election, in an effort to make the Labour Party more acceptable to rightward moving sections of the middle class, Kinnock has launched a major witch-hunt against the left in his own party. Following moves to expel supporters of 'Militant' up and down the country, the latest

target has been the black sections movement within the Labour Party.

While we do not subscribe to the reformist outlook of 'black separatism', the black sections must be defended by every class-conscious worker against the right wing. Despite the fact that there are only six black Labour candidates out of a total of 650, Kinnock and Hattersley have, true to their imperialist pedigree, singled out the black minority as the main enemy.

This racist attempt to find a scapegoat for Labour's electoral misfortunes shows the Labour leaders in their true colours. We call on constituency Labour parties to pass resolutions demanding the reinstatement of Sharon Atkin as candidate in Nottingham East.

Whatever the outcome of an election, Labour Party reformism is entering its greatest ever crisis. If Kinnock is elected he faces carrying through his programme in the teeth of working-class opposition. A third election defeat in a row would no less unleash a bitter struggle within the Labour Party. We will critically support every attempt by rank-and-file Labour Party members to remove their right-wing leaders.

In and of itself, the general election cannot solve any of the fundamental questions confronting the working class — unemployment, bad housing, poor health and social services, attacks on living standards and democratic rights or the threat of war.

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Sarney prepares to welcome back IMF

IMPERIALIST banking circles, headed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), quietly celebrated at the end of last month when Brazil's Finance Minister Dilson Funaro was forced to resign.

As a powerful figure in the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party government of José Sarney, Funaro declared a suspension of interest payments on \$68 billion of the country's \$109 billion debt in February in an effort to buy time for the increasingly unpopular administration.

In early April Funaro headed for Washington to put his case to furious

US officials and other finance ministers at the IMF interim committee meeting. He arrived armed with a written mandate from his party's national executive declaring full support for his and President Sarney's decision to declare a moratorium.

The party document threatened to 'take the process through to its ultimate consequences' and went on to praise Funaro's 'courage'.

Unfortunately for Funaro his cabinet colleagues were not so keen on confrontation. In the teeth of threats from the world banks and Brazil's military top brass, an impor-

tant section of the party withdrew their support whilst Funaro was addressing the IMF in Washington. The vacillating Sarney had no option but to ask Funaro — by now thoroughly isolated — for his resignation.

This capitulation marks a shift to the right in the Sarney regime and leaves the president with even less credibility amongst the Brazilian working class. It is now only a matter of time before Sarney accepts economic monitoring by the IMF and the austerity measures that will come with it. Major class confrontation is now, more than ever, on Brazil's agenda.



Staff picketing Bow Street Magistrates Court in London in their 9-month-old dispute with the Home Office over the decision to cut their 1986 pay award from 8 per cent to 6 per cent. The 3-week strike action by CPSA and SCPS members, which also hit Marlborough Street and Horseferry Road courts, coincided with the civil service unions' national dispute over this year's wage claim. The rolling programme of walk-outs reached the south-east region in the first week of May amidst growing demands for an indefinite national strike.

Caterpillar jobs fight betrayed

By Richard Price

THE betrayal of the 14½-week long occupation of the Caterpillar factory at Uddingston, near Glasgow, which ended on April 26, contains valuable lessons for every section of workers fighting to defend jobs.

The right-wing leadership of the AEU engineering union combined with the Stalinist-dominated Scottish TUC to divert the inspiring struggle into a dead-end search for a suitable purchaser for the US-owned firm which makes earth-moving equipment, and accepted a deal which may keep 100 out of the original 1,200 jobs.

The closure announcement on January 14 was resisted immediately by workers occupying the factory, completing production, under workers' control, of six partly-built tractors and building another from scratch which they intended to donate to famine relief. Nine hundred workers supported the occupation and international links with Caterpillar workers in France and Belgium were quickly established.

Caterpillar's management responded on March 13 by sending individual letters to employees threatening the sack

and loss of redundancy payments if they did not resume normal working in ten days.

Instead of appealing to the working class to give massive support to the occupation and calling industrial action, the leaders of the AEU and the STUC mounted a pincer movement to destroy the resistance of the Caterpillar workforce.

When an injunction was granted to Caterpillar on March 25 to evict the occupation, the AEU (following the minority TASS and APEX unions) withdrew official support. Bill Aitkin, AEU regional officer, echoed national officer Bill Jordan in announcing 'we will not be in breach of the law'. The main issue was not to defend his members' jobs but his 'responsibility to the whole of our organisation to make sure there is no sequestration of our funds'.

The STUC, meanwhile, concentrated all its energies on making Caterpillar an issue for 'the whole Scottish people'. In practice this meant inviting Tory MPs to address rallies and spending long hours holed up with Tory Secretary of State for Scotland Malcolm Rifkind and the Scottish Office searching for a 'formula'. STUC secretary Campbell Christie pleaded with

Rifkind to 'mobilise all resources of government to maintain the plant in production'.

The 'advice' given by STUC leaders to Caterpillar shop stewards was that in order to attract a buyer the occupation should be called off. Jimmy Airlie, a leading Communist Party member and AEU official attempted to get stewards' agreement to allowing management to re-enter the plant.

Following the intervention of the state arbitration service ACAS, and with rumours of a 'recovery plan' being floated by a consortium led by Sir Monty Finnieston, stewards recommended ending the occupation.

Within days, however, Finnieston withdrew, casting doubts on claims that there existed 1,200 orders for a new multi-terrain vehicle, and on the new venture's financial backing. Even the 100 jobs claimed to have been saved look extremely shaky.

The Caterpillar betrayal stands as a monument to Stalinist and right-wing treachery. It signals to the working class the necessity of building a new, revolutionary leadership in the trade unions.

STATEMENT BY WORKERS NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

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However, we condemn all those on the so-called 'left' who are calling on workers to abstain, or are planning to use the election campaign for bogus political stunts (like the Revolutionary Communist Party's 'Red Front' campaign) to divert attention away from defeating the main class enemy.

To all those who say 'You cannot support the Labour leaders — they are too reactionary', we advise them to return to political kindergarten. Fifty years ago Trotsky wrote: 'It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform...For us — yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour.' Lenin, in a famous phrase, called upon British workers to support the Labour leaders against the Tories 'as a rope supports a hanged man'.

Let Kinnock and Co. attempt to administer mass unemployment, cuts in the 'welfare state' and police the unions! This will accelerate the political consciousness of the working class and give it a real experience of its own leaders, unable to hide behind anti-Tory speechifying.

At the same time we call for the building of an independent revolutionary leadership armed with a socialist programme. Only in this way can the mass of the working class break from its old leaders and take the road of conscious revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism.

We call upon workers in their millions to vote Labour to defeat the Tory class enemy! No confidence in the Labour leaders! Build the Workers International League!

World economy and trade war

IN the 1920s, as America supplanted Britain as the world's leading imperialist power, the representatives of the US ruling class strode around Europe issuing directives on the future economic and military activities of the other advanced capitalist countries. Trotsky observed that 'American imperialism...wants to put capitalist Europe on rations'.

Today, the wheel of history has turned so that America once more tries to dictate terms to its capitalist rivals. However, this time the main rival is not Britain but Japan and American imperialism is not expanding but in historic decline.

On April 17, Ronald Reagan imposed a 100 per cent import tariff on \$300 million worth of Japanese-made electronic goods. This represents only a tiny fraction of the annual \$168 billion trade deficit which the United States has with the rest of the world, one third of which is with Japan.

While said by Reagan to be an attempt 'to enforce the principles of free and fair trade', it was taken by the protectionist wing of the US ruling class as a signal to promote trade war. On April 30, shortly after the Prime Minister of Japan, Yasuhiro Nakasone, and Reagan announced an accord on interest rates to stabilise the dollar and avert trade war, the House of Representatives narrowly carried a trade bill which would cut imports from Japan, West Germany and Taiwan by ten per cent a year. Although this measure was expected to be vetoed by Reagan, its passage is an indication of the depth of the world economic crisis, which centres on the United States.

Although reflecting clear divisions within the ruling class, it is a pointer to the future. It shows that the US ruling class will attempt to solve its problems in the traditional manner: at the expense of the rest of the world, in

particular the working class of Japan and Europe. In this, the grandees of imperialism have the blessing of the US trade-union bureaucracy.

Like their TUC counterparts in Britain, the leadership of the American Federation of Labour/Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL/CIO) are fervent nationalists. The trade bill passed by the House of Representatives had their wholehearted support. Indeed, in February the AFL/CIO made support for such a measure a condition for their supporting Democratic candidates in the 1988 presidential election. No doubt the AFL/CIO bureaucracy approves also of the anti-Japanese sentiment which is being whipped up in the United States as part of the preparations for further trade war measures.

The transformation of a modest trading surplus in the 1970s to the world's biggest trading deficit today was paralleled by a tremendous growth in the US government's internal budget deficit, which was \$212 billion in 1985. While the trading deficit has created the conditions for trade war, the budget deficit has, in large part, funded an enormous increase in military expenditure, the basis for a shooting war.

The brief upturn in the US economy in 1984, which helped to return Reagan to power, was an immediate consequence of this double deficit. High interest rates, used as a mechanism for attracting speculative funds into the US to finance the budget deficit, led to a short-lived consumer-spending boom and the expansion of light-weight service industries designed to make a quick killing. But its very brevity underlined the bankruptcy of US

capitalism, with the decline of industry at its centre.

Steel production has dropped in both absolute and relative terms. By 1980, the United States had been overtaken by Japan as the capitalist world's biggest steel producer. Since then, the decimation of US steel plants has taken it even further down the league table. But, in spite of its economic strength, Japan cannot replace US imperialism in its role as policeman of the capitalist world.

The more successful the US is in shutting out Japanese goods, the more Japanese imperialism will look greedily at the massive potential market in China, where it can expect the co-operation of the 'capitalist roaders' in the Peking Stalinist bureaucracy.

At the same time, in the United States, the attempt to restore a trading balance will not mean the regeneration of industry but rather the destruction of the living standards of the working class. America has been living beyond its means and the working class will be required to pay the bill. But any attempt to substantially reduce the budget deficit must also open a period of unprecedented class struggle in the US.

Europe will be caught in the cross-fire between America and Japan. The substantial trading surplus which West Germany has with the United States will be a secondary target for the protectionists. The turn of the United States towards trade war thus has revolutionary implications for both Europe and America. The working class of both continents will be forced onto the path of struggle. To succeed they must be united under revolutionary leadership. Given that, they will enter the fight under exceptionally favourable circumstances in which imperialism is tactically divided and historically weak.

EDITORIAL

Local government workers vote for strike action

OVER 300 employees of Westminster City Council have voted to ballot for immediate strike action if the council proceeds with plans to withdraw from the national wage-negotiating machinery.

The Tory-controlled local authority is the first to declare its preference for local pay bargaining, which the Thatcher government sees as a means of weakening union organisation and driving down wages in areas of high unemployment.

The successful vote came at the end of a meeting which was part of a day of strike action on April 29. Westminster Local Government branch of NALGO called the strike in opposition to

the council's plans to privatise 13 of its services, including road sweeping and the provision of meals-on-wheels for the elderly.

While the branch executive committee supported a resolution calling on members to oppose the tendering-out of services, it did not support the resolution calling for further strike action.

Resolutions were also passed in support of the Hanger's limb makers and the Civil Service workers. A speaker representing local health workers was enthusiastically received when he moved proposals for borough-wide joint action to defend jobs and services.



The demonstration called by J.E. Hanger's artificial limb makers through south-west London on May 2. The workers at the BTR-owned company's Roehampton factory were sacked eight months ago and have since been waging a determined fight to gain reinstatement. The na-

tional executives of TASS, the manufacturing union, and the craft union, FTAT, have accepted a compensation-deal worked out through the government conciliation service ACAS.

Sacked miners step up reinstatement fight

ON May Day, sacked miners from Kent joined others from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and elsewhere in a lightning picket of pits in the Doncaster area. 17,000 men struck for the day and the nine pits were brought to a standstill.

The action was organised by the sacked miners independently of NUM officials. It is the opening shot in a campaign of guerrilla action. The objective is to make British Coal open negotiations on reinstatement.

Sacked Kent miner Peter Holden described the action as a real breakthrough. 'We felt we were up against a brick wall.

Branch policy was just to go home and sit tight. That is why we organised this ourselves.

'The response was tremendous. The men from Frickley said that, if we wanted, they would have marched on the following week to make it a national strike.

The anger in the coalfields is boiling over. We don't just want negotiations about sacked men, we want to talk about conditions in the pits as well — issues like safety bonuses, incentive schemes, the breach of agreements and the right to be represented by people of our choice.

'We want to build unity between the sacked men and those in work.'

By Colin Harrison

Another victimised Kent miner, Ken Ridyard, commented: 'The lads from Barnsley rang to ask us why didn't we picket them but Sammy Thompson (recently elected NUM vice-president) was on the phone complaining about us. There is no way I could put much faith in him.

'Some union officials here like Terry Harrison, secretary of Betteshanger branch, said we were undermining the branch.

He only wants to put four of the remaining 35 sacked Kent miners forward to the next review of cases.'

British Coal completed a review of the cases of 322 men who remain sacked since the 1984-85 miners' strike in April and agreed to re-employ only 135. In Kent only two men were re-employed and ten others were told they would be considered as jobs became vacant. One of these ten has since been re-employed.

Peter Holden believes this is an attempt by British Coal to divide the sacked men from working miners: 'There are indiscriminate sackings for long term sickness and bad time-keeping. As soon as they said

ten more sacked men would be reconsidered, the union was given a list of ten working miners and told they would have to buck their ideas up. It is divide and rule.

'In any case, re-employment is not acceptable. The re-employed men are getting low-paid surface jobs. We want reinstatement in our original jobs with all our rights preserved.'

On April 21 the miners of Betteshanger gave their reply to the management's review decision by striking for a day.

It seems that British Coal, along with the Euro-Stalinists and others in the NUM who want to bury the miners' strike and forget the victimised men, have got a fight on their hands.

Duty-free?

YOU can't turn on the TV these days without being subjected to one of those commercials promoting the British Airports' Authority prior to its privatisation. You know the ones — three men and a woman in forties clothes watch a group of Nissen huts on a muddy, nondescript aerodrome turn into Heathrow Airport before their very eyes, thanks to the miracle of modern video techniques.

A fortune has been spent trying to convince us that the sell-off of BAA will be the most inspiring event since the Battle of Britain. To do this they use the crude method of taking a piece of history and using it to lend authority to the Tory philosophy of 'if it moves, privatise it'.

Of course, there's a good fee to be earned by the actor with a strong stomach and few scruples — though it's a job that anyone who considered themselves a socialist would have refused point-blank.

But then Roy Marsden and Polly Hemingway have come a long way since they were practising circuits and bumps with the Workers Revolutionary Party back in the heady days of the early and mid-seventies... whoops! There we go, getting all nostalgic. Must face up to the new realism. Happy landings!

Miner's letter to Kent leadership

THE letter which we reprint below was sent by a Kent miner, sacked during the 1984-85 miners' strike, to Laurence Knight, the Acting Area Secretary of Kent NUM. To date he has received no reply.

Mr Knight (Acting Area Secretary, Kent Area)

I am writing this letter on my own personal behalf, having been on strike for one year and victimised for two years along with many other miners.

I find it very hard, very hard indeed, to believe that the Area is not going to take further action over the latest, and only the first offer given to the Kent victimised miners after two years, from British Coal.

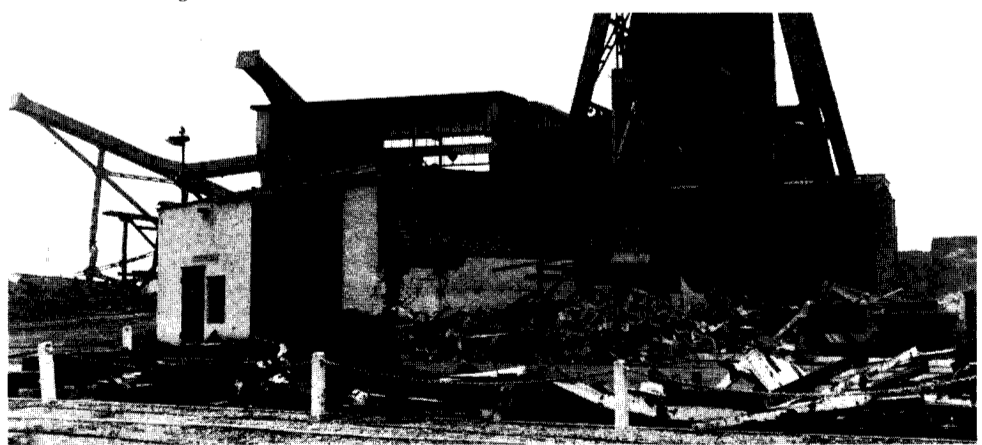
Two victimised miners are to be re-employed immediately with another ten to be considered for re-employment on the grounds of natural wastage.

I have it on good information that ten working miners at Betteshanger Colliery have been noted to the Betteshanger Branch Committee by British Coal for Long Term Sickness (LTS). Is this a coincidence or is

it that ten working miners would have to lose their jobs for ten victimised miners to be re-employed? I certainly hope not.

There have already been indiscriminate sackings at Betteshanger Colliery for LTS and it looks to me as if British Coal want to sack ten working miners to re-employ ten miners who are victimised. This is scandalous and totally unacceptable. It is also against union policy — the consequences on the union as a whole would be very difficult, trying to represent members who were sick and members who are victimised, regarding securing employment and reinstatement.

I am very disappointed and many other miners, working and victimised, are disappointed that the Area voted not to carry on industrial action and also not to support the request for an Area conference on the latest



Tilmanstone Colliery in March after contractors had moved in to demolish it. Only Betteshanger and Snowdown pits remain in the Kent coalfield.

situation in the Kent Area.

Victimised miners are relying on those miners who are working to sustain them financially. Some victimised miners receive unemployment benefit — in fact, many don't receive it, or supplementary benefit.

Having to beg for coal to keep warm is scandalous in the Kent Area — seeing victimised miners cutting down trees, mending cars, painting and decorating, doing plumbing and carpentry, just to get a few coppers to keep united. Don't ever let this unity fade away. Enforce Motion 7 of the 1986 National Conference.

I would also like to note that not only are the victimised

miners having flak thrown at them but also the working miners have their problems as well. They have no full representation at the colliery, canteen meetings are disallowed, past agreements cancelled, no concessions at all. There have been indiscriminate sackings and safety conditions are at their lowest (this from reports). Men are being, or are supposed to be, re-deployed to other work after carrying an injured comrade out of the mine — custom and practice and collective bargaining have completely collapsed.

I would like to quote you, Mr Knight, from a letter you wrote to me on the 18th December

1986: 'As you know, from now on a greater combined effort will be needed to look after our victimised members.'

'Moreover, the political campaign will have to be stepped up on reinstatement.'

Mr Knight, will you please inform me when this is to take place, not only on behalf of the victimised miners but also the miners who are working in the mines? For all our sakes I hope it doesn't take another two years.

Your fraternally,

P. Holden

8th April 1987



SACKED MINERS BENEVOLENT FUND

Kent Appeal

Thirty-five Kent miners are still victimised after the 1984/5 strike. Give generously to support them and their families. Please send donations to Kent Victimised Miners Benevolent Fund

c/o:-

MR. P. HOLDEN
3, CIRCULAR ROAD
BETTESHANGER
Nr DEAL
KENT CT14 0LT

Palestinians face new conspiracy

THE eighteenth session of the Palestine National Council (the Palestinian parliament-in-exile) met in Algiers from April 20-25. It saw the main factions of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) reunited behind the leadership of PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat.

The main resolution passed made a renewed call for the establishment of an independent secular state of Palestine, based on the West Bank of the Jordan river, and the Gaza Strip — lands seized by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

The Council brought together the previously warring factions of Fatah, led by Arafat, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The DFLP and PFLP were, until recently, backed by the Syrian regime of President Hafiz Assad which attempted to establish and control a breakaway anti-PLO front. The leaders of these two organisations, Nayef Hawatmeh and George Habash have, according

By Ian Harrison

to some Arab sources, been warned not to return to their headquarters in Damascus, Syria.

Assad is reported to be furious at the decision of Hawatmeh and Habash to support the re-election of Arafat as PLO chairman. Syria's attempts to defeat Arafat's leadership were heavily undermined by its support for recent sieges of Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut.

In the face of growing Palestinian unity, the Syrian regime was forced to use its influence to lift the blockade of the camps. Behind the apparent shift in tactics by the Syrian leaders lies the current foreign policy being pursued by the Gorbachev leadership of the Soviet Union. In order to pursue its treacherous policy of 'peaceful co-existence' with US imperialism, the Gorbachev leadership wants to be in a position to influence any outcome of

a possible Middle East peace conference. It is not interested in a united Palestinian struggle for national liberation, but seeks to use the Palestinian resistance as a diplomatic pawn in its search for an arms-reduction treaty with imperialism.

In order to appease US imperialism and its Zionist lobby, the Soviet Union has increased the number of exit visas for Jews wishing to emigrate to Israel, and has also indicated its willingness to reopen diplomatic relations with the Zionist state. The Stalinists are trying to demonstrate to imperialism that they are the indispensable power-brokers in any Middle East 'peace initiative'. In return for a nominal Palestinian statelet, the Stalinists will bring all their influence to bear to force the PLO to accept the existence of the state of Israel. This is what lies behind apparent Soviet 'support' for Palestinian unity.

The manoeuvres of the Stalinists have been rewarded by six seats on the Palestine National Council going to the small Palestine Communist Party.



The devastated Palestinian refugee camp at Shatila in Beirut.

As well as restoring unity between the main Palestinian groups to its highest level since the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon in 1982, the Council agreed to set aside its 1985 agreement with King Hussein of Jordan to pursue jointly negotiations with Israel. (This agreement was declared null and void by Hussein last year.)

Much speculation surrounds a possible secret agreement between Jordan, Israel, Egypt and the United States on the terms of a Middle East 'peace' settle-

ment. Informed sources in Jerusalem see the renewed commitment of the Palestine National Council to armed struggle as excluding the PLO from this process. This suggests that, despite Jordanian denials, Hussein is prepared to sign away Palestinian sovereignty without the presence of the PLO.

The Likud-Labour coalition in Israel is clearly showing the signs of strain. The right-wing Likud bloc, headed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is op-

posed to any recognition of Palestinian rights. Labour leader and Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, is seeking a way to bring Arab 'moderates' into direct negotiations with Israel. Peres has threatened to table a motion in cabinet calling for a referendum on the withdrawal of Israel to its pre-1967 borders. This would mean returning the Golan Heights to Syria, and the West Bank to Jordan.

The return to the PLO of the Syrian-backed factions undoubtedly strengthens the hand of the PLO and the struggle of the Palestinian people on the West Bank and in southern Lebanon. While Yassir Arafat was criticised at the Palestine National Council for his relations with Egypt and Jordan, he went out of his way to leave open all possible diplomatic links with the Arab states.

The struggle for national liberation and a Palestinian state cannot be won within the framework of diplomatic combinations with the various Arab bourgeois regimes, but turns on the axis of the class struggle and the socialist revolution in the Middle East. Throughout the Arab region, the impact of the world economic recession has polarised the interests of the different classes. The interests of the Arab masses come directly into conflict with Assad's goal of a greater Syria; with Hussein's unspoken alliance with Israel; and with Mubarak's prostration before US imperialism.

The national liberation struggle of the Palestinian people resolves itself more than ever into a class question, requiring a revolutionary socialist leadership. This means developing a class alliance across the Arab world to overthrow the enemies of the Palestinian people and unite Arab and Jewish workers to defeat Zionism and establish a socialist state of Palestine.

* * *

systematic extermination campaign operates on two fronts — the activities of KMS in Sri Lanka are complemented at home by a vicious immigration policy which refuses to accede to the principle of 'refugee status', thereby condemning thousands of Tamils to misery, torture and death.

The British working class must use every forum to denounce and campaign for the smashing of the racist Immigration Act and offer its unconditional support to the embattled Tamil people in their fight for a separate national state of Tamil Eelam.

EMERGENCY APPEAL

Medical Aid for Palestinians

• After months of continuous siege, life for Palestinians in the camps in Lebanon has sunk to inhuman levels.

• Thousands are suffering under appalling conditions, without food, shelter or even water.

• Now that the siege has been relaxed, supplies must be sent in immediately.

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S.A.S. linked to Tamil repression

HARD evidence has come to light of British imperialism's connivance in the genocidal onslaught against the Tamil people. When reports of the rift last year between a group of British mercenaries and their Sri Lankan paymasters eventually appeared in the press in March, the Foreign Office was forced to admit the existence of an 'official' connection.

In 1984 the government of President Junius Jayewardene, engaged in an escalating military struggle against the Tamil liberation movements, approached the London-based private security firm KMS to establish a Special Task Force within the Sri Lankan army. Subsequently, up to 100 KMS men at a time, many of them former members of the elite Special Air Service (SAS) regiment, were sent to Sri Lanka to train the Special Task Force troops in 'counter insurgency' techniques.

Last year, however, 60 members of the KMS contingent left their £20,000-a-year tax-free jobs in an atmosphere of acrimony and recrimination after a dispute with the Task Force leaders over the kind of military tactics to employ in the war against the Tamils. The row had ex-SAS major, David Walker, who ran KMS from an office in Kensington until his recent 'early retirement', on the first available flight to Colombo to try and pour oil on troubled waters and save the highly-profitable contract.

The opening up of such a division between the Sri Lankan armed forces and their erstwhile British 'friends' is a tribute to the fighting capacity of the long-suffering Tamil people and their

main organisation of armed struggle, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Their persistent battle against the ruling Sinhalese majority to achieve the status of an independent Tamil nation state has dealt severe blows to the army and the Jayewardene regime. In this instance, they have also shed further light on the influence that the British bourgeoisie continues to exert in the region.

KMS is no crackpot outfit of balding, middle-aged Blimps. It is the main security firm employing ex-SAS personnel and has a record of close and official collaboration with the British government. The Foreign Office has confirmed that they employed KMS in 1978 to guard ambassadors and as recently as 1982 for an undisclosed task. The company currently holds contracts for embassy guarding in Amman and Beirut and is estimated to be earning a staggering £12-14 million a year bolstering up the pro-imperialist regime of Sultan Qaboos in Oman.

The Sri Lankan expedition was cleared by the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, and carried out with the prior knowledge and approval of the Thatcher government. In the wake of the quarrel with the Special Task Force, a KMS team was secretly re-deployed to a base in Honduras to both train and fly missions for the Contras who are waging a cowardly, hit-and-run war against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. KMS involvement in Central America, revealed by the Tower Commission in-

vestigation into 'Irangate', was engineered by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North and authorised by Whitehall.

Originally, Jayewardene requested the direct use of British troops to protect his administration from being toppled by the liberation forces. This was refused on the grounds that it would jeopardise good relations between Britain and India, whose southern-most state of Tamil Nadu has a population of 50 million Tamils.

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi lives in fear of seeing the guerrilla war for Tamil secession cross the 22-mile stretch of water that separates the two countries and is therefore compelled to maintain an appearance of supporting Tamil aspirations.

Britain, for its part, is anxious that both Gandhi and Jayewardene should continue holding the line on behalf of imperialism. An SAS unit would help to defeat the Tamils but the cost might have to be counted in the destabilisation of India — forcing Gandhi into the unlikely posture of an 'anti-imperialist' would embolden the masses throughout the continent to press their demands. Not to assist Jayewardene, on the other hand, could lead to a similar catastrophe in the strategically-important 'pearl of the Indian Ocean'.

The formula which sought to side-step both unthinkable possibilities was to send KMS as a proxy for the SAS. In this way, the best of the British bourgeoisie's experience in brutally quashing liberation movements throughout the

world could be brought to bear on the Tamil Tigers. KMS, it can be clearly seen, is a covert arm of British imperialism. Its role is to intervene world-wide in 'delicate' situations where the direct intervention of British troops would be counter-productive.

In 1833 Britain, the colonial power in Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon), forced the Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms into a single, unified state. It then proceeded to transform the island into a huge tea and rubber plantation, smashing up the feudal economy and importing hundreds of thousands of impoverished Tamils from southern India as wage-labourers.

The British rulers employed a judicious and sophisticated policy of divide and rule. By encouraging the top layer of educated, high caste Tamils to dominate the middle and lower levels of the colonial administration, they were able to channel Sinhalese frustrations away from themselves and towards the Tamil minority as a whole, most of whom remained plantation labourers. In this way, Britain was able to maintain its lucrative exploitation of Ceylon until the post-war upsurge of nationalism brought independence in 1948.

The roots of the present conflict — the national struggle of the Tamils answered by Jayewardene with a racist pogrom — were planted and watered by British imperialism. Today, Britain continues its former role, though in a somewhat modified form. Its complicity in Jayewardene's



President Raul Alfonsín

ARGENTINA - MILITARY REMAIN IN THE WINGS

By Martin Sullivan

AFTER two mutinies by troops loyal to the former military junta, the civilian regime of President Raul Alfonsín remains highly unstable. Having made important concessions to the rebels in order to secure their 'surrender', Alfonsín is now urgently searching for a formula to avoid further confrontation with the ultra-right heads of the armed forces.

The rebellion of the two units was prompted by attempts to bring before the civil courts members of the armed forces named as having participated in the murder and torture of thousands of workers and youth under the military junta which ruled Argentina from 1976-83.

Under cover of a 'war against communism and terrorism', the

junta launched violent repression against the trade unions, workers' parties and students, during which between 20 and 30,000 people were murdered or 'disappeared'. President Jorge Videla defined a 'terrorist' as 'not just someone with a gun or a bomb, but also someone who spreads ideas that are contrary to Western and Christian civilisation'.

Alfonsín's Radical Civic Union Party was swept to power in the elections of 1983, following the fall of the junta after the defeat in the Falkland/Malvinas war, on a programme of constitutional government and opposition to 'human rights' abuses.

In December 1986 legislation was rushed through preventing prosecutions of the military for crimes committed under the junta after February 22 1987. Civil rights organisations named a thousand members of the

armed forces guilty of murder and torture, and as the deadline approached some two hundred were summonsed to appear before the courts, including four retired admirals.

While Alfonsín's 'Final Stop' law was clearly intended as a sop to the military, the flurry of prosecutions brought forward by the deadline had the opposite effect on the officer caste, determined to thumb its nose at the civil courts. A campaign of provocative advertisements defending the accused officers was launched in the press; Masses were said in their support and a spate of bombings carried out in March.

The 'Final' date of February 22, however, overran as lawyers contested which courts had jurisdiction over the accused. Tension mounted as senior military figures, including Admiral Arosa, intervened to warn off the government from allow-

ing new prosecutions to be brought.

On April 15, Major Ernesto Barreiro — charged with kidnapping and torture — and 130 troops of the 14th Airborne regiment seized control of their barracks in Cordoba, 500 miles north west of Buenos Aires. Fearing for its own necks, the government called for a demonstration of popular support, and 100,000 workers took to the streets against the military. No sooner had the revolt in Cordoba been quelled than a second mutiny took place on April 17 at the large military base at Campo de Maya, 22 miles outside Buenos Aires, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Aldo Rico.

When Alfonsín returned from negotiating the rebels' surrender on April 19 he was greeted by a vast cheering crowd numbering 400,000. He claimed the ringleaders would

be swiftly brought to justice.

Behind the scenes, however, Alfonsín had come to terms with the rebels and agreed, as the price of their surrender, the removal of army chief-of-staff, General Rios Erenu, who had called on the accused officers to face the civil courts. It was also strongly rumoured that the government had agreed to take a 'softer' line on prosecutions.

The appointment, as Erenu's successor, of General José Caridi, has led to further threats of revolt in army circles. Caridi himself has also been accused of causing the death of a conscript soldier at an army base in 1983. In the wake of the mutinies, Alfonsín removed eight generals and ten middle-ranking officers.

Whilst the military crisis proceeded, business and trade-union leaders were locked in two weeks of negotiations with the government. Following a

wage increase in late April, sections of the trade-union bureaucracy are reported to have reached agreement on a corporatist wage and price freeze, combined with a tight monetary policy. In his first public statement following the army crisis, Alfonsín appealed on May 1 to the opposition parties and the trade unions to combine in a 'social pact' to defend democracy. This has an ominous ring to it. The 'Social Pact' concluded between the government of Juan Peron, the trade unions and the employers in 1973 assisted the military in its preparations for the subsequent coup.

Alfonsín is desperate to break the resistance of the trade unions to his austerity measures which are aimed at stabilising the country's \$51 billion debt to the international banks.

All indicators point to the fact that the events of April were not regarded by the military as a serious attempt at a coup, but rather as a 'dry run' to test out the regime's weaknesses. Although the response of the working class was massive and immediate, the army chiefs will take heart from Alfonsín's concessions. They are tactically divided as to how and when to strike and in their assessment of the risks involved. One school of thought among the military favours allowing the Alfonsín government to run its course, convinced it will be overwhelmed by the economic crisis and the growing militancy of the working class. Such a conjuncture would, they feel, swing the ruling class firmly back behind the 'military option'.

Although middle and junior-rank officers were the 'fall guys' for the April mutinies, the chain of conspiracy undoubtedly leads right up to the military tops — to men like General Vidal, former adjutant to junta leader General Videla, who remains firmly entrenched in the top brass.

The coup threat cannot be answered by defending Alfonsín's hypocritical 'democracy' which permits the mass murderers and torturers of yesterday to remain at large, actively conspiring to bring in a second edition of the junta. It requires the mass mobilisation of the working class, the creation of workers' militia to defend the parties, publications and meetings of the working class and to prepare the offensive to smash the military and state apparatus once and for all.

Strike-wave puts Gonzalez under mounting pressure

By Daniel Evans

THE savage attack on working-class jobs and wages introduced by Spain's social democratic Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez has blown up in his face.

The so-called 'austerity' programme which he desperately requires the working class to accept in order to haul the economy onto an even keel has precipitated an explosion of resentment, which in the first four months of 1987 turned into an almost unbroken strike-wave.

In January and February demonstrations amongst secondary school and college students, protesting against an unemployment rate of 45 per cent amongst Spain's 18 to 24-year-olds and demanding an end to university admission tests, were quickly joined by trade unionists and violent confrontation with the riot police ensued.

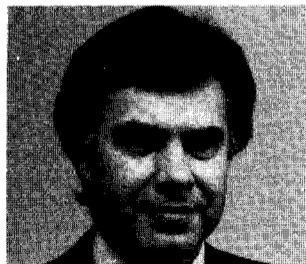
There were 273 separate demonstrations in March in Madrid alone, including doctors from state-run hospitals protesting against health sector closures and farmers faced with bankruptcy following European Economic Community (EEC) directives to cut their milk and grain quotas.

In the northern town of Reinosa, where the three factories which provide the bulk of employment are threatened with closure, workers took on the Civil Guard who came equipped with 16 armoured cars, rubber bullets and tear gas to enforce a demonstration ban. Miners from the northern Asturias region, armed with sticks, surrounded the Industry Ministry when the state coal company Hunosa announced plans to reduce the 21,000 workforce by 6,000 during the next six years.

Thousands of workers from the construction industry to the

railways have united against a wage-rise ceiling of five per cent imposed by Gonzalez and over the Easter weekend a 24-hour general strike paralysed the whole country.

Gonzalez and his PSOE (Socialist Workers Party) were re-elected with a large majority for a second term last June, under the slogan 'Spain is on the right track'. He dedicated his first term in office to the 'modernisation' of industry which, under the fascist dictatorship of General Franco, had fallen far behind that of the rest of Europe.



Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez

Francó's regime rested predominantly on the big landowners and the church. These ultra-conservative forces attempted to wall the country off from developments in the rest of the world. Protectionist barriers, however, conflicted with the requirements of the industrial and financial bourgeoisie for, though the barriers kept competitors out, they also prevented access to the world market. Huge state taxes and the difficulty of obtaining credit prevented the shift of investment away from the 'outdated' labour intensive industries where profit rates were declining ever faster, into the capital intensive technological industries now prevalent in Europe.

By the time Franco died in 1975 his dictatorship, no longer

in step with the present needs of the bourgeoisie, had already lost much of its authority. Gonzalez set about the task of supervising the change-over with relish and with the complicity of the trade union bureaucracy.

In the name of his Industrial Restructuring Plan of 1984, Gonzalez has decimated Spain's traditional industries, throwing thousands of steelworkers, coalminers, factory hands and dockers out of work. A social contract was agreed between the reformist leadership of the General Union of Workers (UGT), the Stalinist leaders of the Workers' Commissions and the employers' association to limit wage increases and keep inflation low to attract foreign investment and skills and prepare Spain for the rigours of the 'free' market.

In January this year Spain joined the EEC but, with import barriers lifted as a rule of membership, was flooded with goods imported from countries which had long ago 'modernised' their economies. Gonzalez demanded more redundancies, to add to the already massive unemployment rate of 21 per cent, and more austerity measures.

Finance Minister Carlos Solchaga intervened in negotiations between the trade-union leaders and the employers' association, who were close to agreeing a new deal limiting wage increases to seven per cent, insisting on a five per cent ceiling and sparked Spain's 'spring of discontent'. Rank-and-file hostility to Gonzalez is so deep that the UGT leaders have been forced to publicly 'fall-out' with the PSOE.

Gonzalez has banned demonstrations, given the riot police a pay rise and has used the Civil Guard to quell unrest. He is currently draughting new anti-union legislation to make striking illegal.



Madrid 1936 — civilians watch for Franco's bombers overhead

FIFTY years ago, on the afternoon of April 26 1937, modern imperialist war came of age with the brutal aerial bombing by the Nazi Condor Legion of the Basque town of Guernica in northern Spain.

Aside from its small armaments factory, this Republican-held town of 7,000 inhabitants, swollen by refugees fleeing Franco's fascists, had little strategic value and no anti-aircraft defences.

Forty-three aircraft dropped a total of 100,000 lbs of high explosive and incendiary bombs, destroying 90 per cent of the houses and killing about 1,000 people, mainly civilians. It was the first occasion in history that bombing of civilian targets had been carried out on such a scale.

Fascist propagandists attempted unsuccessfully to blame the slaughter on the Republican forces. But Guernica became an international symbol of the brutality of Franco and his Nazi allies in the Spanish Civil War and was immortalised by Pablo Picasso's famous painting of the same name.

For the UGT and Workers' Commission leaders, mobilising the working class behind socialist policies is unthinkable. Their treachery has already opened the door to a noticeable shift to the right amongst the middle class supporters of the PSOE. As if to bear witness to the depth of Spain's current economic crisis, in addition to the upsurge of working class militancy, there are, for the first time since Franco's death, significant numbers of fascists on the streets.

The 'phony war' period between Gonzalez and the working class is over. With the social democrats up-front and showing their true colours to the working class, the conditions for the building of revolutionary socialist leadership could not be more favourable.

FUNDS

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Many thanks for helping us complete last month's fund so promptly. The sales of the first edition of Workers News and the encouraging response from readers is further evidence that our paper can play a vital role in the struggle to build a revolutionary party in the working class. Don't delay in sending a donation for this month's fund!

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So far we have only received £52.10 towards our fund for developing the Workers International League and the Workers News. It's a start, but we need a lot more, a lot quicker! If we're to give adequate coverage to, and analysis of, the struggles of the working class internationally, we must start getting this money in. Post all contributions to the Monthly and Building funds to:-

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A BALANCE SHEET

The collapse of the Workers Revolutionary Party

Part two

ON November 26th 1985 the Banda-Slaughter WRP held its first public meeting at the Friends' House, Euston, under the banner of 'revolutionary morality'. Slaughter, as main speaker, invited representatives of the assembled revisionist groups to participate in an investigation into the WRP, and warmly shook the hand of leading Stalinist and arch-opponent of Trotskyism Monty Johnstone. Together with Banda, Slaughter put a question mark over the Fourth International since its founding in 1938.

The wild oscillations of the political line of the Banda-Slaughter group can be traced through its publications of this period — first 'News Line', replaced in December 1985 with 'Workers Press'. It ranges from a hymn to the Liverpool Labour Party (outlining a 'unique system of control' claimed to exist over the Labour bureaucracy in the North West) to an overture to the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers entitled 'Fighting in the UDM' (December 10th 1985). (Supporters of the 'Workers Press' group, who strenuously deny this filthy article meant entering the UDM, may not know that the originator of this 'turn' was none other than M. Banda himself, who proposed it to party members in the Nottinghamshire NUM in the spring of 1985, in the run-up to the formation of the scab union).

In December 1985 Banda, having come to the firm conclusion that the entire history of Trotskyism since the founding of the Fourth International in 1938 should be buried, packed his bags for an extended holiday in Sri Lanka. The uneasy alliance between Slaughter and the remaining International Committee sections also broke when the latter suspended the Slaughter-led WRP on December 16th 1985. This fact the 'Workers Press' group remained silent on for three months. On January 26th, Slaughter's Central Committee broke with the North-led International Committee, and one month later excluded North's 80 or so British supporters from its '8th' Congress.

Slaughter made this split in political solidarity with Banda, who was now moving rapidly towards Stalinism. On February 7th 1986, 'Workers Press' carried a document written by Banda entitled '27 reasons why the International Committee of the Fourth International should be buried forthwith and the Fourth International should be buried forthwith and the Fourth International should be buried forthwith'. In it Banda de-

THE first part of this statement traced the crisis in the Workers Revolutionary Party up to the much-publicised split of October 1985. This second part analyses the subsequent evolution of the two main organisations to emerge — the 'Workers Press' group and the 'News Line' group — up to the formation of the Workers International League in March 1987.

nounced the entire history of the Fourth International since 1938, as he had been threatening to do since August 1985.

Banda wrote: 'It must be stated emphatically, nay categorically, that the Fourth International was proclaimed but never built'. The remainder of this edition of 'Workers Press' was devoted to a document by Dave Good calling for a public discussion on 'Healy's IC'. In the 'Workers Press' of March 15th John Spencer contributed an article accusing the Fourth International of abandoning its principles during the Second World War, and degenerating ever afterwards. Slaughter remained silent on Banda's document for months.

Banda's subsequent evolution was dramatic. In June, together with his brother Tony, Dave Good, John Spencer and a handful of followers, he deserted the



Gerry Healy — now an admirer of Gorbachev's 'reforms'

'Workers Press' group amidst a squalid altercation over the assets of the WRP's publishing house, New Park Publications. In July, Banda was expelled from the 'Workers Press' group.

By November 8th Banda was on the platform of a faction of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the 'Leninist', accusing Trotsky of 'intellectual arrogance' and 'peevishness'. He went on to justify the suppression of workers' democracy and the soviets by the Stalinist bureaucracy and to speak of his admiration for Mikhail Gorbachev.

The abandonment by the WRP ('Workers Press') group of any intervention into, or turn to, the working class and youth has led its shrinking band of 120 or so members into Anti-Apartheid, into 'Troops Out', into 'Printers Support Groups' etc., where they merge with the political surroundings under the slogan of 'ending the isolation

of the WRP'. This is nothing more than the Fabian theory of 'permeation' turned inside out. Turning their paper into a glorified discussion bulletin with anti-Trotskyists and pro-Stalinists of all hues participating has inevitably led this group further down the Pablo road, whatever its protestations to the contrary.

Having abandoned the struggle to win fresh forces itself, Slaughter's WRP ('Workers Press') is now following the well-worn revisionist path of fusion with other revisionists. On October 26th 1986 Slaughter organised a public meeting, nominally to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, but actually to facilitate Slaughter's plans to 're-group' with his new-found friends.

Among the speakers was one Bob Pennington who walked out of the Trotskyist movement in May 1960 and joined the anarchist 'Solidarity' group. The following month he co-authored a document which denounced 'the ideological bankruptcy of Trotskyism'. By the 1970s Pennington had changed his allegiance again and as a leader of the Pabloite International Marxist Group (IMG) played a despicable role in exonerating one of its members, Gery Lawless, who had acted as a police nark. In August 1973 Lawless had issued a statement to the press and TV claiming that the Provisional IRA was responsible for a spate of bombings in London. He repeated these allegations to Detective Chief Superintendent Roy Habershon of the bomb squad. Subsequently, Lawless was cleared of any misconduct by an IMG Control Commission which Pennington sat in on with the express purpose of obtaining that result.

Following his flirtations with variously 'Workers Power', the Spartacist League, Thornett's 'Socialist Viewpoint', the Pabloite 'International' group, the PCI (formerly OCI), to mention but a few, Slaughter has issued a call for an international conference to 'rebuild the Fourth International' (see 'Workers Press', January 31st 1987).

Not surprisingly such a call has attracted opportunists on an international scale. Front-runners in this bogus 're-groupment' are the international tendency led, until his re-



The Women Against Murdoch contingent on a demonstration outside News International's scab plant. The WRP ('News Line') group failed to warn printworkers of the treachery of the SOGAT leaders.

cent death, by veteran Argentinian revisionist Nahuel Moreno and his MAS (Movement to Socialism).

The history of this group is indeed an odyssey of opportunism. It has at various times operated within the Peronist movement, the Argentine Socialist Party, the International Committee, the Pabloite United Secretariat and as part of the international tendency led by the French OCI. It has assisted at every turn the destructive influence of Peronism in the Argentinian workers' movement, and in particular in the trade unions. Peronism disarmed the working class and opened the door to the military coup of 1976 following which 20 to 30 thousand workers, including 100 of Moreno's followers, were slaughtered. In 1982 the MAS called for the reunification of the bankrupt reformist Argentine Socialist Party which had supported the military coup of 1955.

Currently the MAS is engaged in an electoral bloc with the Argentinian Stalinists and several bourgeois parties. Of the

role of the Argentine Communist Party, Moreno's electoral partners, authors Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano write in their book 'Argentina: The Malvinas and the end of Military Rule':

'After recovering from the blows of the 1967-68 military government, it was able to reach agreement with the 1976 Junta and to continue operating freely in the worst years of repression. Its chain of co-operatives and its Institute for the Mobilisation of Co-operative Funds allowed it to take advantage of the 1977 banking legislation and to begin functioning in the manner of the big banks. It was thus able to weather the 1979-80 financial crisis and to consolidate its position in the capital market. It is common knowledge that the PCA now uses its banking system to recruit small and medium-sized capitalists and all kinds of people desperate for credit.'

Having polled considerably less votes in the 1983 general elections than it claimed members, the MAS was

desperately in need of political credit. This has taken it and more into the dead embrace of the Stalinists' Popular Front. Slaughter hopes to a 'big' movement to boot flagging fortunes of 'Workers Press' group, offers in return his professional stamp of authority to Popular Front politics of MAS.

Also responding to the has been one of the real dogs of British revisionism: 'Socialist Organiser'. This of personal followers of Matgama have included their international 'peevishness' over recent years the ping of opposition to the mon Market in favour of transforming (!) it into a U.S.S.R. Socialist States of Europe took a neutral stand in the Falkland/Malvinas war. In February 1986 Matgama wrote to 'Workers Press' that his group considered the WRP had not been a part of the labour movement for past seven to eight years. In doubt Slaughter will in these little difficulties!

STATEMENT BY THE WORKERS

T OF REVISIONISM



Wapping.

Slaughter seeks an 'International' on the lowest common denominator of 'anti-Healyism'; an 'International' of mutual back-slappers, who want to carry on their own national opportunism under a more glorified heading. Hungarian revisionist Balzacs Nagy describes this descent into the grossest form of pro-Stalinist liquidationism by the 'Workers Press' group as 'springtime in the WRP'. In fact it represents the rejection of the last vestiges of Trotskyism by this group as it prepares to enter into alliance with the most right-wing revisionist trends. What was implicit in Slaughter's hand-shake with Monty Johnstone has become explicit.

The group formed on October 26th 1985 by the minority of the WRP Central Committee contained the *possibility* of reorienting itself in relation to the accumulated mistakes of the previous decade. Healy, contrary to the propaganda of Banda and Slaughter, played little or no role in the group at the outset, not least because of the widespread revulsion in the

group's ranks as to his personal history. Moreover, Healy's inner clique constituted a small fraction of the membership. Nevertheless, his presence hung like an albatross round the neck of the organisation from the outset.

There was initially considerable discussion within the new leadership on the necessity to break with the numerous errors of the recent history of the WRP — notably to correct what Paddy O'Regan called 'Gerry's opportunist streak on the national question' in the Middle East, and wrong positions on Ireland. There was, during these first months, no prospect of Healy being restored to the leadership or, indeed, of occupying any role other than that of a 'retired member'.

In spite of the press witchhunt and confounding all the expectations of Banda and Slaughter, the Torrance-led WRP ('News Line') group did not collapse but, on the contrary, refounded a twice-weekly 'News Line' which went daily on February 1st 1986.

Unlike the Banda-Slaughter

group, locked in interminable conference sessions, the 'News Line' group turned outwards, particularly towards youth, and was able to bring off a Young Socialist AGM in January 1986 with some 350 in attendance. The finances for the launching of the daily paper were not provided courtesy of Vanessa Redgrave. In fact the padlock on her cheque book gained strength in direct proportion to the offers of stage and film work she received.

Any critical review of the past practice of the WRP, however, carried the danger for the Torrance-O'Regan leadership of the 'News Line' group of disrupting their unstable coalition with Healy and the Redgraves. Torrance and O'Regan had previously expressed some doubts on the 10th World Congress perspectives. But the perspectives for the '8th' Congress were merely a stale rehash of the 10th World Congress — a worldwide revolutionary situation of indefinite duration, not based on any real analysis of the world economic crisis. The elections to the Cen-

tral Committee, taking place for the first time without Healy in the driving seat, revealed the real level of support for him in the group — only 29 out of 50 branches nominated him.

A compromise arrangement was cooked up behind the scenes — where else? — and Healy was given, and consented to, an 'advisory status' on the leading committees of the group. However, on the morning after the conference, Corin Redgrave, dutifully performing the role of Healy's butler, arrived at the Political Committee with Savas Michael, leader of the Greek WRP, demanding an immediate recalled Conference to restore Healy to full leadership and failing that, threatening to split. Redgrave and Michael were rebuffed, and Healy grudgingly accepted Torrance's olive branch of his 'advisory' status. There followed a bewildering series of articles by Healy in the 'News Line', nominally on dialectics, each one more mystical than the previous.

In May 1986 Alex Mitchell, editor of 'News Line', abruptly departed, turning up in Australia as a journalist for the 'Sun Herald' newspaper. Among Mitchell's 'contributions' in preceding months had been the promotion of American Black Muslim leader and notorious anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan in the pages of 'News line'.

The pragmatic relationship between Torrance and O'Regan on the one hand, and Healy and the Redgraves on the other, left the former unable to comprehend theoretically the rapid chain of developments which took place in the Soviet Union, and led them to capitulate to Healy's latest turn — directly towards Stalinism. In late June came news, first of the election of a former camp inmate Vladimir Karpov to the leadership of the Soviet Writers' Union, and then of the so-called 'abolition' of censorship in the USSR. On July 22nd 'The Guardian' published a document said to emanate from a group within the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Movement for Socialist Renewal (MSR).

The WRP ('News Line') group's Political Committee registered, in a considerable majority, a thorough-going capitulation to Stalinism. Enthusiasm for the Gorbachev 'reform' proposals was *general*. Gorbachev was said to be leaning on the working class in order to fight the bureaucracy. Ray Athow wrote a glowing account of the MSR's manifesto, describing it as 'a document of historic importance', foreshadowing the political revolution ('News Line', July 23rd 1986). Only buried in the last but one paragraph did he mention in passing the strong trend towards capitalist restoration evident even in the 'Guardian's' report.

The debate which took place on the Russian question on the Political Committee was indeed remarkable for a so-called 'Trotskyist movement'. In opposition to the majority which identified the Gorbachev 'reforms' with the political revolution, Richard Price argued that they were an expression of Soviet Bonapartism under pressure from the world economic crisis. This elicited the response from Sheila Torrance that this was a 'sectarian' position, and that

surely the term 'Bonapartism' could not be applied to the Soviet Union — revealing her in-depth knowledge of Trotsky's writings on Stalinism! Healy angrily replied that if this was Bonapartism, it was a 'left' form. The meeting broke up in considerable confusion.

At a further discussion on Stalinism, Price accused Healy of Pabloism, the meeting being hurriedly brought to an end by Torrance. Worse was to follow with the publication in the August edition of 'Marxist Review' of an editorial written by Corin Redgrave, containing the following: 'Today the state property relations of the Soviet Union are the decisive material force in the development of the world revolution and the political revolution in the Soviet Union itself. In the July edition of Marxist Review we analysed the significance of the recent an-



Cliff Slaughter — leader of the bogus 're-groupment' campaign

nouncement of the abolition of censorship in the Soviet Union (!), and the election of a former victim and life-long opponent of Stalin, Karpov, to the secretaryship of the Writers' Union. Gorbachev's recent speech in Khabarovsk... is the most dramatic confirmation (!) that these events were in no way episodic... Gorbachev directs his attack at a section of the bureaucracy of the CPSU.'

Were Torrance and O'Regan fighting this pro-Stalinist diatribe? No. They were, in all seriousness, preparing to send an invitation to a Stalinist hack, the poet Yevtushenko, to speak at the Trotsky Anniversary Rally to be held on August 24th, and preparing to 'make contact with Soviet youth organisations' (The Komsomol perhaps?). Did they at any rate prepare to defend Trotskyism at the rally? No. They gave over the platform to Healy, Vanessa Redgrave and Savas Michael. Did they at least warn the group's membership of Healy's orientation? No. They commissioned instead a series of adulatory articles for the 'News Line', written by O'Regan and Athow, on 'G. Healy: Fifty Years a Fighter for Trotskyism', to run during late August.

On August 25th a statement on behalf of the 'International Committee' of Healy, Michael and Torrance was drawn up, announcing that 'The Political Revolution in the Soviet Union has begun'. Without once mentioning the Soviet working class, this statement implies the Stalinist bureaucracy is leading

the political revolution — against itself.

But the wholesale concessions of Torrance and O'Regan were not enough to satisfy Healy, who took umbrage at the 'historical' articles appearing in the 'News Line' and was less than satisfied at the conversion of the PC to 'Gorbachevism'. Together with Vanessa Redgrave, he began to boycott all meetings, and for two months a strange correspondence ensued. Letters from Torrance on behalf of the Political Committee regularly insisted Healy and Redgrave resume their 'responsibilities'. Healy's increasingly vitriolic replies demanded that his political 'differences' be circulated to the membership before he would resume his place at the helm. Healy's demands were: (i) that the 'historical' articles be withdrawn; (ii) that immediate legal action be taken to regain control of the College of Marxist Education; (iii) that Alex Mitchell be expelled forthwith and (iv) that Healy be granted minority rights. Healy's demand to expel his loyal bagman, Mitchell, was motivated by the knowledge that he 'knew too much' about the WRP's Middle Eastern dealings.

Further indications of the pro-Stalinist trajectory of the Greek WRP leadership came with a report that a large number of delegates to the conference of the Greek Euro-Stalinist party had signed a petition calling for the rehabilitation of Trotsky and other old Bolsheviks. Instead of smelling a rat, the 'News Line' printed the report as good coin. It emerged that this strange alliance was the result of some unprincipled horse-trading on the part of Savas Michael. He had arranged to support one faction of the Euro-Stalinists who wanted to retain the title 'Communist Party' against another faction who wished to ditch it. This manoeuvre has absolutely nothing to do with Trotskyism. For Trotskyists, Stalinism forfeited the right to term itself 'Communist' over 50 years ago — all the more so in Greece where, in the civil war of the 1940s, the Greek Stalinists murdered Trotskyists who opposed their counter-revolutionary policies.

An international youth conference was held in Athens from September 19th-24th. It was designed by Savas Michael to be a factional platform for Healy. The fifty British youth who attended were subjected to interminable speeches praising the 'founder, leader and teacher' Healy. While the delegation was in Greece full details emerged of a popular front-style electoral bloc which had been concluded between the Greek WRP, both wings of Greek Stalinism and a breakaway section of the ruling PASOK party. This thoroughly unprincipled manoeuvre underlined the direction in which Healy was heading.

In anticipation of head-on confrontation with Healy, Torrance and O'Regan opportunistically shifted their line, arguing that the political revolution had indeed begun, but that Gorbachev was embarking on the restoration of capitalism. Finally, to bring Healy and the Redgraves

A BALANCE SHEET OF REVISIONISM

Cont. from page 7

to heel they called a snap Special Congress on October 31st-November 1st. In the meantime a document reflecting Healy's views under the name of Mick Blakey was discovered circulating in the West Midlands. In it, Healy-Blakey describe Gorbachev as leading 'a left moving section of the bureaucracy...which is de-Stalinizing the bureaucracy'. It goes on to state that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union — the executioner of Lenin's Bolshevik Party — is based on the October Revolution.

The Special Congress revealed that Healy and his supporters had been lobbying support in the West Midlands and Equity-based membership. The logic of Torrance's capitulation to Healy now began to work itself out. The assembled delegates were unprepared for the latest shock. In the confusion, Corin Redgrave was able to rally nearly half the delegates for his challenge to the standing orders report, claiming the Congress was unconstitutional. Torrance and O'Regan were nearly pole-axed by the support for Redgrave's challenge. O'Regan's contribution the following day was utterly conciliatory in tone. 'Comrade Healy would, he felt sure, not endorse his supporters' breaches of democratic centralism!! Only a number of sharp contributions from the floor, denouncing Healy's capitulation to Stalinism, reduced his support to a quarter of the delegates.

Redgrave, in his final reply to the Congress, stated that Healy was unable to participate in the work of the group because his rights as an individual member (sic) had been trampled on, forcing him to break political relations. Redgrave even went so far as to suggest that Healy felt threatened by the group's leadership. Torrance capitulated to Healy once again. In her closing speech, Torrance told delegates that the source of Healy's political degeneration in recent weeks (sic) was rooted in the ageing process: 'Comrade Healy was growing old' and had 'turned into his opposite'. The only other reason advanced was the 200 point fall of the Stock Exchange. This is not the school of Marxism but the school of vulgar materialism.

This 'analysis' convinced only those who wanted to be convinced and became itself the source of much confusion in the group's ranks. To this day, neither Torrance, Banda or Slaughter has been able to explain Healy's degeneration.

Immediately after the Congress Healy's forty cult

followers 'broke relations' with the WRP ('News Line') group, declaring themselves a 'minority in exile'. This was the last opportunity for the group's leadership to settle accounts with Healy's revisionism. But in place of a public break with the political reprobate, Torrance chose a new method of dealing with pro-Stalinists — silence — in order to cling onto a relationship with Healy's allies in the Greek WRP and maintain the reactionary farce that they belonged to an 'International Committee'. Savas Michael — psychiatrist by profession, but a witch-doctor by inclination — responded by refusing to meet Torrance for six months.

In its relations with the national liberation movements the 'News Line' group tried to carry on where the old WRP had left off. In an attempt to get some wind in its sails after Healy's departure, a campaign was launched to 'Arm the South African Workers' in conjunction with the Black Consciousness Movement and the Pan Africanist Congress. What would be entirely permissible as a limited agreement of struggle was presented as 'an alliance for the socialist revolution', thus building illusions that the BCM and PAC could carry out this historic task. To the best of our knowledge this 'campaign' has not as yet provided a single fighter with so much as a penknife! On the other hand, at a Young Socialists active workers' conference on November 30th 1986, Torrance informed the youth that the party did not support the African National Congress *at all* on the grounds that it is dominated by Stalinists — an extremely treacherous formulation under conditions in which young ANC fighters are regularly hanged in the jails of Pretoria.

Meanwhile, in relation to Iran, the 'News Line' group explicitly rejected the theory of permanent revolution and embraced the Stalinist theory of the two-stage revolution. In an article by Steve Colling, heavily re-written by Paddy O'Regan, on 'Trotskyism and the Iranian Revolution' ('Marxist Review', Nov-Dec 1986) an entirely new category had been discovered — a 'revolutionary bourgeoisie' in a semi-colonial country. O'Regan privately claims not to have any information on the class struggle within Iran; however, he argues that 'even if workers are shot down and strikes broken up we have to support Khomeiny'. Here, under the smokescreen of the correct policy of defending Iran against imperialism, O'Regan reveals the opportunist thrust of his position — in order to maintain a 'useful' alliance all criticism of the repression of the



The WRP's Release the Jailed Miners rally at Alexandra Pavilion in north London on June 30, 1985

working class within Iran must be dropped. This is given a 'theoretical' cover by inventing a 'revolutionary bourgeoisie' to which the struggles of the working class and poor peasantry must necessarily be subordinated. By an inexorable logic, O'Regan arrives at the two-stage theory of revolution. First, the bourgeoisie performs 'revolutionary tasks' and defeats imperialism. At some later stage, if you please, the working class may take up the struggle for its own rights.

No less opportunist was the line developed by 'News Line' in relation to the trade union bureaucracy. For the first four months of the News International printers' strike not a single word of warning or criticism of Brenda Dean and the SOGAT executive was issued. One week after SOGAT leaders purged their contempt in the courts in May, 'News Line' printed without comment a full page interview with Dean. When this was challenged on the Central Committee by Colin Harrison he was told that any criticism at this stage would be 'sectarian'. Printers had to wait until June 9th — into the fifth month of the dispute — before they read any serious criticism of the SOGAT leadership. By concentrating its fire entirely against the EETPU and the TUC right wing, 'News Line' consciously created illusions in the treacherous 'lefts' on the General Council. When, on November 26th, the General Council voted by 24 to 21 not to implement disciplinary procedures against the EETPU, O'Regan held that this was the brink of the struggle for power in Britain. The 'lefts' were gaining ground on the General Council; had two votes gone the other way the Tory government would have collapsed and the revolution begun. Those who did not fall in line with this perspective were 'sceptics'. Only two months later the 'stalwart twenty-one' had shrivelled to one when, on January 26th, the General Council voted, with only Scargill opposing, to condemn the 'violence' of pickets and their supporters at Wapping.

This grovelling attitude to the trade union bureaucracy was supplemented by a wild sectarianism in relation to supporters of the Labour Party. 'News Line' editorials repeatedly pumped out the line that Kinnock was 'out-Thatchering Thatcher'. O'Regan took this a stage further, suggesting that Kinnock was about to establish a 'right-Bonapartist govern-

ment'. Here we have a fantastic combination: Willis, Todd and Laird of the TUC are poised to usher in the struggle for power; meanwhile, their close colleague, Kinnock, is about to establish a pre-fascist regime!

As the strike continued, 'News Line' developed a further opportunist and uncritical relationship, this time with the Stalinist and reformist leaders of the London print branches. When, in rapid succession the SOGAT executive and the NGA leadership withdrew official backing from the dispute, the 'lefts' in the London branches folded it up within days. The formula worked out by the Stalinists to cover their retreat — 'the printers' struggle continues in a new form' — was dutifully repeated by the 'News Line'. Unable to provide any alternative leadership to that of the Stalinists, the WRP ('News Line') group could not make any political gains among the printers despite the consistent presence of its members at Wapping.

On the second day of a weekend cadre school held on December 27th and 28th 1986, criticisms were again raised against the 'News Line's' positions on the Irish national liberation struggle, women and

the printers' strike. O'Regan's response was to declare that he was 'a Healyite', that he would ensure that Healy's portrait would be placed on the office wall, and that 'Comrade Healy taught us something about how to deal with oppositions'.

It was under these conditions of political gangrene, and in the absence of any effective party democracy to correct the disastrous political line of the leadership that the forces opposed to both Healy and Torrance's revisionism broke with the WRP ('News Line') group to form the Workers International League.

Torrance and O'Regan's group is now a rapidly disintegrating rump of less than 100 active members with scarcely any of its youth movement remaining. Its members in the trade unions no longer even attempt to put forward its policies of an immediate general strike, the struggle for power and a Workers Revolutionary Government.

The miners' strike of 1984-85 brought to a head and accentuated all the errors and mistakes of the previous decade. It tested the leadership of the WRP and found it wanting. By one route or another, Healy and his epigones, Banda, Slaughter

and Torrance, have been driven to capitulate to Stalinism, reformism and the trade union bureaucracy.

Trotsky wrote in 1933: 'Not in vain does history show us how an organisation possessing authority, but having lost direction, can for a long time keep on piling up errors seemingly unpunished; but finally the course of events brings the inevitable collapse. On the contrary, an organisation that is armed with a reliable compass, but has for a long period remained an insignificant minority, can, with the advance of an historic turn, suddenly rise to a higher level. Under the conditions of a correct policy on our part such a possibility opens up before us' ('Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34', Pathfinder Press, p.44).

The Workers International League, in opposition to liquidators of all varieties, bases its work on the first four Congresses of the Communist International, the struggle of the Left Opposition, the founding conference of the Fourth International and the struggle of the International Committee of the Fourth International against Pabloite revisionism. It calls on workers, students and youth to join and build this party.



September 29, 1985 — on the eve of the split. Sheila Torrance (centre right), then Assistant General Secretary of the WRP, on a demonstration in Bournemouth during the Labour Party Conference

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PLANS to bury the idea of 'education for all' and restructure the whole system in favour of the well-off took another step forward at the beginning of April with the publication of the White Paper, 'Higher Education - Meeting the Challenge'.

In it, the Tories outline an unprecedented increase in state control over universities, polytechnics and colleges. Legislation based on the White Paper will also lead to a major extension of business influence over the planning of higher education.

With the aim of stifling any kind of local government initiative in education policy which runs counter to Tory intentions, the polytechnics and most colleges will be removed from the control of education authorities. The net result will be that about 80 per cent of polytechnics and college student places will come directly under the government through a new body called the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC). The assets of the polytechnics and colleges will be transferred to the PCFC without compensation to the local authorities.

Later in April, as part of the same strategy, Kenneth Baker, the Secretary of State for Education, told the conference of the Secondary Heads Association that budgetary control of all secondary schools would be taken away from local authorities and put in the hands of the head teachers.

The universities will come

By David Lewis

under the control of a Universities Funding Council (UFC). Unlike the present University Grants Committee (UGC), which is composed of senior academics, the UFC will have equal numbers of academics and non-academics. The UFC, like the PCFC, will be tightly controlled by the Department of Education and Science and will have the power to specify exactly how money is to be spent by individual universities.

The only organisation representing teachers to welcome the White Paper is the non-TUC Association of Polytechnic Teachers which has always opposed local control of polytechnics. The response of the trade unions, however, has been hostile.

The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education has said that the White Paper's proposals will halt the improvements in courses and student access which the polytechnics are cur-

rently making, after years of Tory cutbacks. The Association of University Teachers is already concerned at the inability of the UGC to defend the independence of the universities against government pressure and is convinced that the new UFC would function as a direct executive arm of government policy.

The mechanism for exerting control over the universities, polytechnics and colleges will depend on a system of contracts between them and their funding

bodies. The intention is to encourage institutions to be 'enterprising', that is to look for more money from private sources. Instead of education, there will be 'education services'.

Academic staff in universities will be brought into line by abolishing the system of tenure which ensures that they can on-

These moves by the Tories against higher education show their determination to extinguish at source any potential opposition. The right to study the subjects of one's own choice, student and teaching unions' rights to organise and express themselves politically and student grants are all under direct

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV appears to have seen an advance copy of Baker's White Paper. The Soviet leadership's plans for the restructuring of higher education were announced a little earlier than Thatcher's. With the stated intention of bringing higher education closer to the needs of the economy, the 894 universities and other higher education institutions in the Soviet Union will be brought under centralised control. The Ministry of Higher Education will have the power to hire and fire the directors of the institutions even where they formally come under another ministry, such as agriculture or health.

ly be sacked for not doing their job properly and protects against political victimisation. In the case of colleges and polytechnics, the White Paper says that 'good management' is prevented by 'the excessive engagement in their affairs of local authorities'.

attack through the centralisation of control spelt out in the White Paper. They are further proof that the Tories mean to 'overhaul' the entire education system to suit the requirements of a crisis-racked capitalist economy.

Tories to abolish local control of higher education

Council's racist attack

THE Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets Council in London's East End launched a vicious attack on its large Bengali community in April when it announced it would no longer pay the hotel bills of up to 90 homeless families.

A mass meeting on May 2 of Unity Against Racism, an organisation formed to fight the evictions, made plans for a campaign of action against the council, including a possible rent strike.



The packed meeting of victimised Bengali families and their supporters

From Mr Pirani's Irish diary

THESE days the anti-Trotskyist 'Workers Press' group pose as fearless defenders of the Irish national liberation struggle. Among the leaders of this group are not a few who were, before the split in the Workers Revolutionary Party in October 1985, enthusiastic supporters of G. Healy's criminal betrayal of the Irish revolution. One of the most dramatic 'conversions' is that of Simon Pirani.

On October 13 1984 the WRP's daily newspaper 'News Line' carried an editorial which described the bombing of the Tory Party Conference delegates at the Grand Hotel, Brighton, as a 'stupid outrage'. In doing so, it openly capitulated to the state-orchestrated, anti-Republican frenzy unleashed in the press.

As leader of the National March to Release the Jailed Miners in May-June 1985, Pirani submitted the following confidential memo to Healy which led to one young marcher being lined up for expulsion for daring to criticise the WRP's policy on Ireland.

The memo clearly reveals that when dealing with political confusion amongst the youth, which the WRP's chauvinist attitude towards the Irish struggle bore a large responsibility for maintaining and reinforcing, Pirani was quick to toe Healy's line. R.B.'s correct criticism of the 'News Line' editorial is cynically dismissed by offering his raising of the Orange battle-cry '1690' as evidence of political diletantism. In one crude stroke Pirani buries a legitimate questioning of WRP policy and betrays his own servile relationship to Healy.

'ON Friday, June 21, when the National March to Release Jailed Miners reached Corby, Northants, we held a meeting of all marchers after our midday meal, to brief comrades before going out to do an afternoon recruitment campaign in the town centre.

'We had established the practice at these meetings of one comrade making a brief report on important items from that day's News Line. A report was given by comrade P.G. on two items: a front page story on the breakdown of talks between the NUM and NCB, and an editorial on the TWA hi-jack.

'When I asked if there were any questions, R.B. said: 'I would like to ask - why has the



Simon Pirani

News Line got double standards on this question?' He said that when the Brighton bombing had taken place, the News Line had condemned it as a "terrorist outrage". He wanted to know what was the difference between what happened in Beirut and on the Irish question.

'I asked him why he was accusing the News Line of having "double standards". He kept insisting that the News Line had condemned the Brighton bombing as a 'terrorist outrage' and that a News Line editorial had used these words without also putting our position of support for the national liberation struggle in Ireland and defence of the Republican movement from British imperialism.

'I said that the News Line had published at least three statements on the Brighton bombing, and that an article had appeared in the "Labour Review", and that all this material had made the party's position and analysis absolutely clear.

'He said he could only

remember one of the three editorials and had not read the piece in "Labour Review".

'Comrade P.J.A. spoke and condemned R.'s attack on the party and his slander that we had "double standards", and accused him of trying to confuse issues at a meeting with many new comrades. Myself and others supported Cde A. on this.

'R. eventually backed down from his accusation about "double standards". I stated that his intervention was a totally diletante (sic) one, since he had previously proved his own puerile attitude towards Ireland in a previous incident. We then closed the meeting; there was no vote but from speaking to comrades afterwards there was general hostility towards R.

'The previous incident referred to was when comrade R. and a number of others were shouting "1690" as we were marching along. I stopped them shouting, and when I challenged them afterwards they said they were "joking"; I said this wasn't funny and we frequently confronted physical violence from people in Scotland who believed in "1690". Another comrade said he thought it was funny that people still believed in Orangeism.

'On this occasion which was in Barnsley, we ended the discussion with the other comrades and in a further discussion with R. he raised several points about Ireland but never mentioned the News Line's position on the Brighton bombing. He also asked questions about why people got "shouted down for disagreeing" in the party and referred to the conduct of classes at the centre.'

S. Pirani
July 1, 1985

'Lefts' attempt jobless alibi

THE Campaign Group of Labour MPs, led by Ernie Roberts, convened a meeting in the House of Commons on April 27 to propose the setting up of a national unemployed workers' movement.

Roberts introduced himself as a veteran of the unemployed workers' movement led by Wal Hannington in the 1930s. But he quickly revealed the real purpose of the meeting when he said that he was not concerned with the existing unemployment action groups. Roberts wanted to 'kick off' a series of marches which would make 'unemployment an issue' and bring it to the attention of the media.

Gavin Strang, a full-time officer of the Transport and General Workers' Union, told the meeting that the recent occupation at the Caterpillar factory outside Glasgow needed a mass unemployed movement behind it though he would not 'wish to judge why the occupation at Caterpillar had failed'.

A group of unemployed workers from Musselburgh in Lothian were in no doubt as to

who was responsible for the Caterpillar betrayal. Their spokesman insisted that Strang explain why the 'existing machinery of the TUC and Labour Party had not been mobilised to support the occupation?'

Ernie Roberts responded by asking why 'the 22,000 workers unemployed in Hackney were not present at this meeting?' Angry workers insisted that he knew the TUC and Labour Party were responsible for betraying the unemployed and spreading a mood of apathy and despair.

While order was being restored, Gavin Strang left 'to go to another meeting', followed by Eric Heffer and Jeremy Corbyn. Dennis Skinner appealed to the sixty or so delegates not to attack Roberts or the other MPs present. The meeting, he insisted, must be used constructively. The Campaign Group had initiated the marches of the Anti-Nazi League in the 1970s which, he claimed, lost the National Front votes.

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THE Labour Party unveiled its pre-election policy statement on Ireland on April 9. The document promises the 'restoration' of civil rights in the north of Ireland and support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a step towards eventual reunification by consent. The Labourites insist that they would not allow the Unionists to veto these developments. In all this there is barely a single honest or correct word.

The Labour Party has always played a counter-revolutionary role in Ireland. In 1916 it spoke with rare unanimity in condemnation of the Easter Rising. Labour Party leaders welcomed the Treaty of 1921 by which Lloyd George imposed partition on Ireland under the threat of 'an immediate and terrible war'. Eighteen years ago, it was the Labour government of Harold Wilson which first sent British troops to the north of Ireland. Since then, they have slavishly supported the bloody work of British imperialism and its loyalist thugs.

The reality behind Labour's talk of reform was revealed by their response to the IRA's execution of Diplock Judge Maurice Gibson on April 25. Gibson exemplified the counter-insurgency strategy developed by Brigadier Frank Kitson: 'The law should be used as just another weapon in the government arsenal and in this case becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public.' He presided over the conveyor-belt system of justice largely established by the last Labour government. Acquitting three RUC men of the murder of three unarmed IRA volunteers, Gibson praised them for 'bringing the three deceased men to justice — in this case, to the final court of justice'.

The Labour leadership, who have nothing to say about such crimes by the state, were very outspoken about Gibson's assassination. In the Commons, Roy Mason, Northern Ireland Secretary from 1976 to 1979, called for more patrols, more troops and more use of the SAS. Stuart Bell, Labour's Junior Spokesman on Northern Ireland, wrapped himself in the flag: '...this House and this country will never bend the knee to terrorists. To paraphrase what Winston Churchill said, what kind of people do the IRA think we are?'

Bell's remarks were an apt reminder of 'what kind of people' the Labour Party and TUC leaders are: they are the sort of people who condemn the revolutionary or defensive violence of workers at home and abroad, while condoning every form of state repression; they are the sort of people who send the SAS to 'restore' civil liberties; they are 'better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself' (Lenin).

Labour's 'reform' programme is based on the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 between the Dublin and Westminster governments which has been endorsed by US President Reagan. As its pedigree suggests, the purpose of the Agreement is neither the introduction of civil rights, nor the reunification of Ireland, no matter how long-term.

It is the pacification strategy of British imperialism and the crisis-wracked southern Irish bourgeoisie. The objective is to



RUC men delay the funeral of IRA volunteer Lawrence Marley on April 7 for the second day running. When it finally took place the following day, the ceremony drew the largest number of people since the Hunger Strikes

The Labour Party and Ireland

maintain partition along with the fragile stability of the bankrupt southern state by attempting to isolate and smash the IRA. In return for token consultation on issues affecting the northern nationalists, Dublin has agreed to join a co-ordinated offensive with British imperialism against the national liberation struggle. This includes not only the co-operation of the respective security forces, but also proposals that Dublin adopt large parts of British emergency legislation. Major economic rationalisations are planned on both sides of the border. To complete the picture of imperialist domination, secret clauses draw southern Ireland closer to the NATO war alliance.

The adoption of this strategy has caused a rift between the British ruling class and the Unionists, who represent decrepit northern capitalism. However, the separation will not reach the divorce courts. British imperialism cannot afford to take the 'Anglo-Irish process' to the point of threatening loyalist privileges and power. As well as alienating the Unionists and loyalist paramilitaries, that would also put in question the dependability of the almost entirely loyalist Royal Ulster Constabulary and Ulster Defence Regiment. As for the Unionists, they know that the threat of an independent Ulster is a reactionary utopia.

Should Labour come to power there could be no 'restoration' of civil rights — which have never existed for the nationalist minority — without undermining the sectarian foundations of the northern statelet. For that reason, the Labourites would find themselves in the same counter-revolutionary camp as the Unionists and would inevitably have to come to an understanding with them. Every Labour government in the past 18 years has followed that trajectory — from reformist daydreams to repression.

The last major attempt to reform the political structure of the north was the Sunningdale power-sharing executive set up in December 1973 under the government of Harold Wilson. Sunningdale



British troops on patrol in Belfast

was destroyed by the general strike of May 1974 called by the loyalist Ulster Workers' Council. Sections of the state forces supported the strike. There is strong evidence that MI5 helped to organise it as part of a general campaign to destabilise Wilson's government. The army refused to take over the power stations to break the strike because it would have meant conflict with their allies in the loyalist paramilitaries.

In the magazine of the right-wing Tory Monday Club that summer, a British army officer wrote: 'For the first time the army decided that it was right and that it knew best and the politicians had better toe the line.'

Labour capitulated to the Unionists and the state. The ruling class had given Labour a clear signal. Sunningdale was dissolved. In the five years that followed Labour established a record of repression at least equal to the Tories. The 'conveyor-belt' system of justice was established during this period: internment by remand, deten-

tion under new emergency laws and confessions extracted by torture in Castlereagh holding station to be used in evidence at no-jury Diplock courts. In the closing days of the Labour government, Prime Minister James Callaghan plumed the depths of class betrayal. He secured the support of Unionist MPs for his minority administration in return for increasing their representation at Westminster.

Labour had sent the SAS into the six counties and removed political prisoners. In opposition, they followed this up in 1981 by supporting Thatcher's stand against the Hunger Strikers, even sending their Shadow Spokesman on Northern Ireland, Don Concannon, to the dying Bobby Sands to tell him he could expect no support.

Labour's record earned the following recent verdict from Harold McCusker, Official Unionist MP: 'I think I would prefer to judge people by their actions than by their words. And you know the remarkable

By Colin Harrison

thing is, if you judge the Labour Party by their words you would consider them anti-Ulster, anti-Unionist. Judge them by their actions and a slightly different picture starts to emerge' (20/2/87, Channel 4, 'A Week in Politics'). A few weeks later, McCusker revealed that the Labour Party had requested talks with him.

The terms of a possible pact between the Labour leaders and the Unionists were spelt out on March 28 by Stuart Bell. Bell is believed to be in line for the post of Northern Ireland Secretary should Labour form a government after the coming general election. He suggested that Labour might offer a 'package of measures' as part of an 'understanding' with the Unionists. The package would include an early review of the Anglo-Irish agreement, the restoration of local government (in effect returning control of housing and education to the Unionist bigots), and the creation of a Commons 'grand committee for Northern Ireland' (thereby increasing the power of Unionist MPs).

In return, Bell said, 'we would fully expect the Unionists to support Labour on a Queen's speech if there was to be a hung Parliament and return us to the House of Commons'. Although Bell's offer is not official party policy, there is no doubt that his views are shared by many, if not all, of the party's leaders. Far from carrying out reforms, Labour is preparing to line up yet again with the most reactionary forces in the six counties.

The Labour Party's counter-revolutionary role in Ireland can only be fulfilled by means of the most brutal repression. The Labour Party leaders

stand shoulder to shoulder with the Unionists in defence of partition. That alliance is the basis for the speculation about a Parliamentary pact which may or may not materialise.

The Workers International League, in distinction to the Labour accomplices of imperialism, will campaign within the British working class and its organisations for:

- The defeat of British imperialism;
- Unconditional support for the national liberation struggle led by the IRA and Sinn Fein Provisionals;
- The immediate withdrawal of British troops.

• The building of a Trotskyist party in Ireland to unite the working class on a revolutionary socialist programme. A revolutionary party of the Fourth International must be built in Ireland — a party capable of going beyond the limited nationalist aspirations of republicanism; a party which will be committed to the destruction of the capitalist state and its replacement by a workers' democracy in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What, then, should be the attitude of British and Irish workers to the Labour Party in the coming election and afterwards? In Ireland we see an advanced expression of the treachery of these political 'lieutenants of the capitalist class', a treachery already keenly felt by printers, miners and other sections of workers.

The best conditions for breaking the political stranglehold of reformism over the working class are with a Labour government at the helm. We can state with certainty that Labour in power would rule as a thorough-going capitalist party. The first priority of such a government would be to defend capitalism in its deepening crisis against the struggles of British and Irish workers for jobs, adequate services, decent wages and political rights.

We therefore urge the working class to vote Labour; put the reformist leaders in power in order to expose them the better in practice. The task of demonstrating their political bankruptcy, however, can only be completed through the building of the Trotskyist movement in Britain and Ireland.

The rise of Saddam's dictatorship in Iraq



Saddam Hussain

THE continuing repression of the working class, the peasantry and the Kurdish minority in Iraq by a party describing itself as 'socialist' demands the attention of the workers' movement internationally.

If for no other reason than the dearth of books and serious articles on the history of Iraq and the rise to power of the Ba'ath Party, this work, published last year, should have attracted wide interest.

In the period since the Iranian Revolution which smashed the Pahlavi dynasty, there has been a spate of commentary on Iran. Little or nothing has been published in Britain, however, to analyse the corresponding period of Iraq's history, which saw an internal coup within the Ba'ath Party which brought Saddam Hussain to power and led to the attack on the Iranian Revolution.

Mohammad Tarbush's scholarly work, 'The Role of the Military in Politics: A case study of Iraq to 1941', was published in 1982. Its major shortcoming, however, was precisely that it only went up to 1941. Not until the publication of CARDRI's work has there been available, in accessible format, a book covering the history of Iraq from its formation under

'Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction?'; by the Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq (CARDRI); published by Zed Books and CARDRI; £6.95.

Review by Ian Harrison

the British mandate in 1926 until the present day.

In 1979 the Eighth Congress documents of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party of Iraq were published in Britain. The following year the Workers Revolutionary Party produced a pamphlet entitled 'Iraq — under the leadership of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party'. Anyone who took these publications at face value would have concluded that the socialist revolution was being carried out by the Ba'ath Party.

While the Ba'ath Party of Iraq has a vested interest in masking itself as 'socialist' and 'revolutionary', the blanket support extended to it by the WRP (British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International — ICFI) requires serious explanation. This will be the task of a further article, made all the more urgent by the recent pronouncement in the WRP ('News Line') group's 'Marxist Review' that: 'The maintenance and development of the alliances established by the ICFI with the national revolutionary movements remains an essential duty of the

working class of the west.'

If, by the foregoing, the WRP ('News Line') group wish to mobilise support for the old alliance with Saddam Hussain, then the publication of 'Saddam's Iraq' has arrived not a moment too soon.

The book consists of ten essays plus a chapter of interviews with the relatives of young men and women murdered and tortured by Ba'ath Party security forces. All of the essays carry extensive annotations, while the book is supplemented with a useful chronology of major events and bibliography.

The central theme of the essays is the struggle between the old land-owning feudalists, the bourgeois nationalist parties and the Iraqi Communist Party. Behind them can be discerned the break up and dissolution of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of a modern proletariat from the dispossessed peasantry. Supplementary essays outline the struggles of the Kurdish people in the north of Iraq and the role played by women in the resistance against Ba'athist and imperialist

oppression.

However, the major concern expressed throughout the book is with the growth of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and its chequered alliances with various nationalist forces including the Ba'athists. And rightly so!

The essay contributed by U. Zaher, 'The Opposition', is a veritable catalogue of missed opportunities for revolution in Iraq. The author does not set out to expose the criminal policies of the ICP; rather he is intent on giving them credit for sustaining opposition during long periods of illegality and circumstances where their leading cadres were liquidated time and again.

But the maturing, not to say overripe, conditions for revolution were such that the ICP restored and expanded its forces on several occasions only to squander them in the name of Popular Front politics and the Stalinist conception of the two-stage theory of revolution. The full force of the betrayal is clearly expressed through the dramatic decline of the religious leaders' influence over the peasantry in the south and in the urban slums of Baghdad.

In an attempt to bolster their waning prestige and power, sections of the clergy turned to a virulent anti-Communist campaign. Writing of the period

after the July 1958 revolution which broke the back of the land-owning sheiks and saw nationalised control of oil production, Zaher states: 'Calls were made by some of the clergy to combat Communism, to the extent of legitimising the killing of communists...at a time when the term 'Communist' was used to describe all supporters of the July Revolution.'

The Iraqi Stalinists adapted their slogans and programme to woo support from the weak and fractionalised nationalist groups, paralysed the mass movement and blocked the road to revolution. This was at a time when the ICP stood at the head of 12 of the country's 14 trade unions, the peasant organisations and wielded significant influence among Kurdish and student movements.

The weakness of the Iraqi bourgeoisie meant it was unable to rouse the middle class and peasantry to its side. The absence of a revolutionary leadership gave the numerically small Ba'ath Party a second opportunity to mount a successful coup d'état. This it did on July 17 1968.

The inability of the ICP to

learn from its experiences is nowhere clearer than in its formulation of the tasks facing the party in the wake of the second Ba'athist coup. While the Central Committee of the ICP on July 29 1968 adopted perspectives which called for the 'cleaning' of 'the state apparatus', the Ba'ath Party proceeded for a second time to exterminate its leading cadres.

The ICP publicly supported 'the positive steps taken by the regime in the field of socio-economic reforms' and foreign policy, but 'strongly criticised' the Ba'athists' 'anti-democratic policies' (sic) and 'measures to monopolise power'(!).

In this way, with the sanction of the ICP, the Ba'ath Party was given a free hand to manoeuvre over the following years through a series of alliances; first with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (while slaughtering communists); then with the ICP. This time the alliance served as support and cover for the massacre of Kurdish forces. Rising to yet new heights of treachery the ICP maintained the alliance with the Ba'athists while calling for a 'peaceful' and 'democratic' settlement to the question of Kurdish autonomy.

The massive boost in oil revenues after 1973 created conditions for the Ba'athist dictatorship to strengthen itself. But it was not until 1979, when the Ba'athists had already shut down the ICP's offices, banned the ICP's publications and driven its members out of office for 'disloyalty', that the ICP broke off its alliance with the dictatorship.

There are powerful lessons in this book for the working class in the experience of 'Saddam's Iraq' and the invasion of Iran. In as much as this work establishes the unfolding landmarks of the class struggle in Iraq, revealing in them a developing process (and not the inevitability of reaction in an ex-colonial territory) the authors have collectively performed a valuable service.

But out of 60 years of struggle — years marked by revolutions and counter-revolutions, which all left their martyrs at the crossroads — isn't the reader entitled to something by way of a conclusion? The authors, who have surmounted great difficulties in gathering and sifting the information for their work, have not, for their own unstated reasons, provided one.

When the authors state repeatedly that the Saddam dictatorship is fascist, that the ideology of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party in Iraq is National Socialist and derived from Hitlerism, they are wrong.

The Ba'ath Party's dictatorship is essentially Bonapartist in character, balancing between the different social forces in the country and resting increasingly upon armed repression.

But the brutality meted out to workers, women and students has not succeeded in stemming the crisis for the Ba'athists. The leadership has been seriously undermined by the Gulf War and the fall in world oil prices. It will be the large urban working class in Iraq that has the last say in the fate of the Saddam Hussain regime.

Hollywood's Vietnam War

'Platoon' (USA 1986); written and directed by Oliver Stone; starring Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe and Charlie Sheen

By Philip Marchant

OLIVER STONE'S Oscar-winning blockbuster has been widely hailed in the United States as a triumph — the first honest account of the Vietnam war. In fact, though he has assembled a number of truthful observations based on his own experiences as a volunteer in 1967, all Stone has brought forth is a routine tour of duty round the usual Hollywood clichés.

Why, then, has 'Platoon' impressed itself so deeply on audiences, critics and the US film establishment (it took the Best Film award at this year's Academy Awards at the expense of the far superior 'Mona Lisa') and prompted seven pages of respectful reports, interviews and analysis in the January 26 issue of 'Time' magazine?

Why has a project which arrived on the screen years after the screenplay was first written because no producer would touch the subject, and which was denied finance in the US (the British production company Hemdale eventually put up the money), ended up being showered with praise?

The answer is that though this is a highly efficient combat movie with a very palpable sense of the physical discomfort of jungle warfare, it is far from being the 'truth' of Vietnam. Worse, it actually serves to

obscure rather than illuminate the nature of the war.

'Platoon' doesn't attempt, like other films on the same subject, to understand 'what went wrong'. Instead, it sets out to assuage the collective 'guilt' of two distinct groups in US society — the soldiers who participated in the war and the middle class who mostly didn't. It smacks more of a tool for group therapy than either diligent investigation or down-the-line entertainment.

It is very explicitly a hymn to the ordinary 'grunt', or infantryman, warts and all: the kind of black and poor white workers for whom there was no escape from the draft. But this laudable basis is never developed beyond the crude assertion made to the newly-arrived Chris (Charlie Sheen) as he is initiated in the delicate skill of emptying latrine bins: 'The poor is always fucked over by the rich.' Well, fair enough, but you require a little more than that by way of an analysis to understand the Vietnam war.

'Platoon' is in many ways a classically-constructed combat movie. Stripped of excess baggage, like the inexperienced Chris by the sympathetic Sergeant Elias (Willem Dafoe) on his first day in the bush, it concentrates on four patrols by Bravo Company near the Cambodian border in 1967.

The military leaders and their



Sergeant Barnes (Tom Berenger) threatens the village chief's daughter (Li Thi Van) during a search-and-destroy operation.

political masters in Washington and Langley, Virginia, are completely absent and officers in the field only barely sketched in. All the focus is on the men and their sergeants who fall into two categories: hard-drinking, lumpen thugs who push the logic of their position to its violent, military conclusion, epitomised by professional soldier Sergeant Barnes (Tom Berenger) and the psychotic youth Bunny (Kevin Dillon); and dope-smoking dissenters who represent all that is decently sceptical in humanity.

The problem that Stone encounters is that, having elected to leave out the politicians and military chiefs, he finds it impossible to forge an identity between the lumpen element in the platoon and the global strategy of US imperialism. What we're left with is a film about the effect of war in general on good men and bad. This becomes particularly distasteful in the scene of the brutal torture and murder

of innocent Vietnamese villagers which is much admired by commentators as apparently exposing US atrocities.

If it does, it's only as an afterthought. The main function of the scene is to polarise the platoon around Barnes, who instigates the butchery, and Elias, who intervenes to stop it. It also allows Chris and Elias to recognise each other as kindred liberal spirits. The villagers, the Viet Cong, the North Vietnamese Army and the war itself remain a back-drop in front of which the great American psychological drama is played out.

Starting as it does from such a limited premise, it's not surprising that 'Platoon' gets progressively more introverted and confused about what it's trying to say. Its narrow theoretical ambitions constrain it to arrive, ultimately, at a fatalism that scarcely disguises its debt to original sin. As Chris is evacuated by helicopter from

the film's final, terrible slaughter, he rises as if from the dead out of the battle-blitzed landscape. Below him the bodies of NVA soldiers are being unceremoniously bulldozed into a bomb crater. His pensive voice-over on the sound-track attempts the summing-up: 'I think now... we did not fight the enemy, but ourselves — the enemy within us.'

This is a film about morality in which the 'divided human spirit' has been expressed concretely as the conflict between two groups — men with moral integrity and men without it. But its thesis is that all men contain the possibility of both within them. Chris, representing Oliver Stone, representing Everyman, is both excited and repulsed by the viscerating horror of war. In the end he sinks to the level of Sergeant Barnes but is at the same time redeemed. If you like religious allegories, this could be your cup of tea.

TORY CONTROL IN THE CLASSROOM

By Lizzy Ali

Baker's plan gears education to industry

TORY proposals to introduce the same curriculum in schools throughout the country after the next election are aimed at abolishing all progressive methods of education and bringing school youth further under the control of central government.

At present what pupils study is largely determined by local authorities, school governors and teachers. But a national curriculum would mean that the government decides what subjects are taught.

Kenneth Baker, the Tory Education Secretary, outlined in a series of speeches what the measures would mean:

- A uniform national set of directives governing what each pupil must study at a given age;
- A return to 'old fashioned' teaching methods, with a strong dose of English and Maths;
- Regular tests, similar to the old 11-plus, at the ages of seven, eleven and fourteen. These might even be as frequent as once a year;
- Pupils who fail any of the tests could be forced to re-sit the same school year again.

Behind these proposals, the Tories are moving to tie education at every level to industry. Already many universities are involved in Tory plans for an industry-education partnership. Hundreds of Further Education

colleges are being overrun by Manpower Services Commission (MSC) cheap labour schemes.

The aim of the national curriculum is to take education back even beyond the days of the 11-plus. Under that system, three-quarters of school youth were slung on the scrap-heap at the age of 11. With Baker's proposals there would be at least three ages at which pupils who the Tories regard as 'less able' would be weeded out.

At an early age working-class children will be singled out for a largely 'practical' education. This ties in with the Tory Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative which aims

to teach purely practical subjects to children who, it has been decided, are less academically 'gifted'.

As far as the Tories are concerned the vast majority of school youth are headed for cheap labour schemes or the dole. Apart from training them for the minimum needs of industry, Baker sees no purpose in spending money on art, drama, music and other 'luxuries' not directly useful to employers.

The Tories fear the rebelliousness of school youth, who have come out on strike in a number of schools over recent years. By holding over their heads the threat of being forced to re-sit school years they

hope to discipline school youth.

The national curriculum is also intended to control teachers, getting rid of 'liberal' teaching methods designed to cater for pupils of all abilities and social backgrounds, and ordering them what to teach. Baker spelt this out in December 1986 when he said that there was, at present, 'no real control over what children are taught' up to the age of 14.

The aim of a national curriculum is also broadly supported by the Labour Party leadership. If the Tories are re-elected, Baker intends to introduce the legislation as soon as possible.

NALGO
branch
opposes
JTS

THE public service union NALGO has made a clear call for total non-cooperation with the Tories' latest and most cynical slave-labour scheme, the JTS (Job Training Scheme).

In an area which has unemployment running in excess of 17 per cent, local South Tyneside NALGO members gave their unqualified support to the union's position at a Special Branch Meeting called to discuss this new attack on the unemployed.

Branch secretary Ian Daley explained in moving the resolution put to the meeting that this new move against unemployed 18 to 25-year-olds, on the register for six months, meant that 18-year-olds living at home would have to live on the princely sum of £23.05 per week. This meant making the unemployed work for their dole and went against the whole concept of the welfare state. He warned the members present that the massive growth of these schemes threatened not only the JTS conscripts but also all those in work as well. The 'knock-on' effect would lead to lower wages, something which the Tory abolition of the Wages Councils 'clearly indicated was their goal'.

The six hours of 'off-the-job training' which this scheme offers is an insult to the concept of career training, he continued. But most sinister was the move towards conscription.

The DHSS's new 'available for work' ruling was being used to suspend benefit for those young people refusing to co-operate. This development is, however, completely in line with Tory Employment Secretary Lord Young's recent speech in which he stated unequivocally his preference for conscription to these schemes.

The meeting responded to the 19th Tory manipulation of the registered unemployed figures by backing the call to boycott the scheme in total and taking up the struggle for real jobs and training within the ranks of all TUC-affiliated unions.

Young artists lobby MSC

By Sofia Costa

ABOUT thirty mural painters on a Community Programme lobbied a meeting of the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in London last month which was to decide their future.

The meeting was convened to consider whether the mural project should continue to be funded. The MSC had threatened to stop the funds on April 24, closing down the scheme which employs a large number of youth. The result of the meeting was to give the scheme a 13-week extension.

MSC guide lines state: 'Projects to paint murals or create new works of art are specifically excluded as there is not sufficient practical benefit to the community.'

The project has been running at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Tottenham for three years, producing murals and paintings to improve patients' waiting areas in Haringey hospitals. The workers are employed for one year on the project and are very low paid. After their year is over, many of them go straight back on the dole.

The mural painting scheme is unique, there is no other like it. Other Community Programmes involve mainly manual jobs, such as gardening and mechanics.

If the project closes, the artists will be given the option to either take up one of these other programmes or go on the dole. The mural painters are skilled at their job — many studied at college doing art courses — and were forced onto the Community Programme by the lack of real jobs in their field.

The muralists argue that their work is appreciated and very beneficial to patients and the public.

A survey was carried out by 'Promoting Health in Haringey' which asked patients, hospital staff and the public their attitudes towards the murals.

When asked whether they considered the murals to be

beneficial, 96 per cent said yes. When asked if they would like to see more murals in the hospitals, 90 per cent agreed.

The scheme is one of the few that have allowed union organisation to take place. The National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) has successfully fought to have heating installed into the workplace, life drawing to help train the workers involved, as well as many other benefits.

The closing of this scheme is linked to the introduction by the Tory government of the even more sinister Job Training Scheme (JTS). This requires young adults from the ages of 18-25 literally to work for their dole.

At the lobby, organised by the union, Workers News asked Joanne White (NUPE shop steward) why the MSC are trying to close their scheme. 'The main reason for closing this scheme is that they want to divert money from the Community Programme to the JTS,' she said. 'They don't value art in society,' she added, pointing out that the MSC 'are using the JTS to take away real jobs in the public sector'.

Another NUPE shop steward



Mural painters lobbying a meeting of the MSC last month

on the lobby, John Belmont, was asked the point of JTS. 'JTS is a cynical attempt to disguise the jobless figures and I certainly think that the training schemes that are going on now are attempting some kind of job substitution, which is not the case with our project,' he explained.

The Tory-sponsored MSC serves to attack trade unions as well as not giving youth a proper training. It destroys conditions won by the working class like safety rights, and also

drives down adult wages. JTS is a step beyond the previous schemes and is being used to divide the young unemployed from the organised employed. The trade unions will not be allowed to monitor the new scheme or sit on its boards. Community Programme, to the Tories, is not as effective as JTS in attacking workers' rights and so will have to make way for it.

Paul Karby, a young artist working on murals, had a clear idea of the intentions of the MSC in closing their project: 'As

far as I can understand,' he said, 'it is not a question of money really. It is that they can't see our contributions as valuable. They want to put the money into something more tangible for them.'

The workers on this scheme, after losing their jobs, will possibly be offered other Community Programme schemes to go on to. Paul's view of this was to the point: 'They are trying to shunt us into jobs which should be done by full-time workers being paid a full-time wage.'

TUC must end support for cheap-labour schemes!

THE TUC must withdraw its support from the Manpower Services Commission schemes. That was the message spelt out clearly at the second conference convened by the 'National Joint Trade Union Committee: Withdraw from the MSC' held in London on May 2.

Maggie Arkwright, secretary of the committee, told the conference that the Tory government had transformed the MSC into a major vehicle for its anti-trade union policy.

'The MSC was established by the Heath government in 1973

under pressure from the TUC,' she said. 'It started out with a budget of £2½ million as a training scheme co-ordinator. Today the MSC has been revamped by the Tories into an organisation for developing cheap-labour schemes with a budget of £2½ billion.'

She explained that the MSC schemes play a vital role in Thatcher's strategic aim of developing a non-union, low-wage economy. Behind the scenes the Tories were shifting funds from local government and education into MSC-controlled schemes run by management agencies. She em-

phasised that the schemes are not 'better than nothing' for youth without a proper job. They conditioned youth into accepting low pay and permanent insecurity.

Dan Finn, speaking on behalf of the Unemployment Unit, said that the support given to the Manpower Services Commission by the TUC leaders was critical. Without support from the TUC many schemes would not be approved. Finn stressed that 'the Tories were continuously developing worse schemes'. The Job Training Scheme, launched in January, 'was the first of a new wave that

would force youth to work for their dole money'.

Finn went on to illustrate how the Tories were transforming high street Job Centres into cheap-labour recruiting agencies. He estimated that some six-and-a-half million youth had been through the schemes since the Tories took office in 1979. There were, he said, approximately 700,000 unemployed on the schemes at any time. 'Next year the Tories are giving the MSC a budget of £3 billion.'

Frank Fitzsimmons, chairing the conference, opened the discussion by emphasising the role of the committee. 'Our

fight,' he said, 'is to make the TUC withdraw from the MSC.' The schemes had never been improved, those that had won improvements were shut down.

The conference closed with delegates from Scotland, the North-East and the South agreeing to establish regional committees of trade unionists to take up the fight against the MSC.

Trade unionists who would like further information can contact: Maggie Arkwright, 30 Pembroke Road, London E17 9PB. Tel: 01-521 4130.