



## THATCHER FACES BIGGEST CRISIS

By David Lewis

AT NO TIME since Margaret Thatcher took office in 1979 has the role of the trade union leaders in propping up the capitalist system been so extensively exercised as it was in the wave of strikes which ended in August.

With the economy heading into recession, the privatisation programme in difficulties and the introduction of the poll tax proving a major problem, the Thatcher government has never been in such dire need of their services.

The Tory crisis was encapsulated in the Cabinet reshuffle of July 24: not only did the reassignment of 13 out of the 21 posts recall the sweeping changes carried out by Harold Macmillan not long before the Tories lost the 1964 general election, but the fact that such drastic changes were considered necessary in itself led to a further ebb of support for the government. It was followed by reports that a section of the Tory party was planning to ditch Thatcher in favour of Sir Geoffrey Howe, her most prominent victim.

At one level, the reshuffle and its aftermath reflects the continuing divisions within the Tory party. The wing led by Thatcher seeks to solve the intractable problems of the British economy by subordinating it to the global requirements of finance capital. The wing of which Howe is a leading member speaks for the section of the British ruling class which has a larger stake in domestic manufacturing industry, and which sees its future as linked more closely with Europe than with the United

States. At another level, it reflects the failure of the Tories to break the resistance of the working class, despite successive rounds of anti-union legislation, and their inability to hold onto the support of sections of the middle class. Most fundamentally, the Tory crisis expresses the sharp differences within the party over how to resolve the economic crisis.

The decrepit state of the British economy was underlined by the July trade figures. At £2.06 billion, the overall deficit was over £500 million more than in June. Piling on the agony, the Confederation of British Industry's monthly industrial survey at the end of August predicted little change in inflation. This is in spite of high interest rates which have sent company bankruptcies up by 18 per cent this year and are throttling what little industrial growth there is. The CBI expects growth in output to drop from 4.4 per cent last year to 2.5 per cent this year. It also anticipates that investment growth will increase by only 1 per cent next year. But



Howe, Thatcher and Lawson... tough at the top

even this is too optimistic for some - three City forecasts, including that of the Midland Bank, predict a decline in investment of 2 per cent.

The conjunction of economic reversals, in the face of which they are clearly impotent, and a political crisis, to a significant extent of their own making, has made the Tories particularly vulnerable. The attack on the unions, council housing and the NHS; the poll tax; the proposed privatisation of

'sensitive' industries like water; the refusal to take urgent steps to modernise and extend public transport; and the obvious hypocrisy of Tory 'concern' for environmental pollution and safety questions have weakened the government and given an added political dimension to the wages struggles of the last months.

But at the very point when the Tories could have been driven out of office, they were given a temporary re-

prieve by the trade union leaders who stubbornly resisted the striving for unity expressed by hundreds of thousands of workers, dragged out each dispute by recourse to the courts and postal ballots and refused all calls to step up the industrial action beyond token one-day stoppages. They consciously engineered the acceptance of wage increases around the 8.8 per cent mark - just enough to retain some credibility for themselves - but

refused to take a stand on the more important questions of privatisation and the ending of national pay bargaining. And when these same tactics were applied by Ron Todd and the T&GWU leaders to the dispute over the ending of the National Dock Labour Scheme, the result was not even the modest advance of an 8.8 per cent pay rise, but thousands of dockers made redundant and the return of casual contract labour in the former registered ports.

While some of these bureaucrats may imagine that the fight is over, for the working class it has only just begun. With every economic indicator pointing to recession and continuing inflation, the coming weeks and months will bring a fresh round of attacks on living standards and a new wave of struggles. The working class must draw urgent lessons from the paralysis of its leaders during this summer's disputes. The political crisis of the Tories and the treachery of the bureaucracy must provide the impetus for a campaign to build a revolutionary socialist leadership in the trade unions.

## Contras cleared for return to Nicaragua

THE CONFERENCE held in August at Tela in Honduras between the presidents of Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua marks the lowest point in the political evolution of the Sandinista government since it came to power with the overthrow of General Somoza in 1979.

Nicaragua's president, Daniel Ortega, is claiming the conference outcome - the demobilisation of the Contra forces in Honduras in December - as a victory over US imperialism. Far from being a victory, the Tela accord will go down in history as a milestone in the capitulation to US imperialism by the Sandinistas.

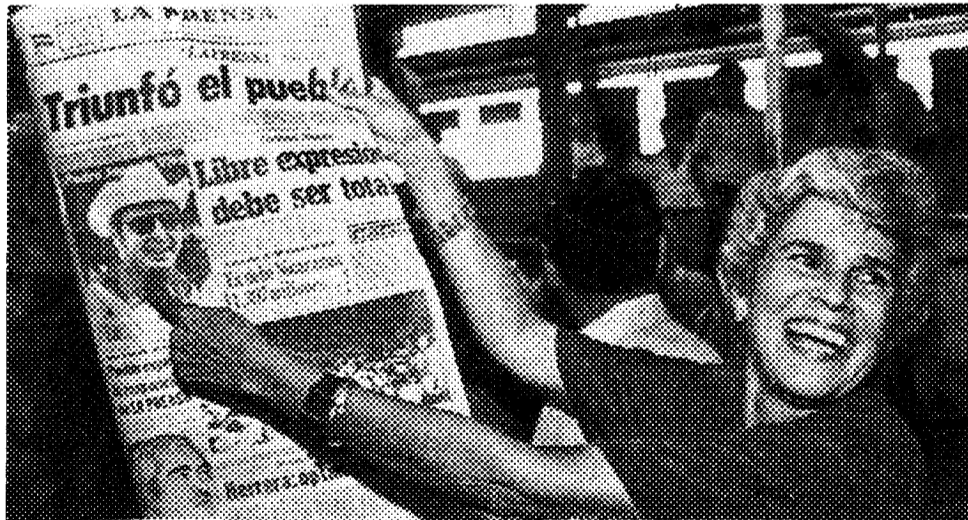
For his part, US President George Bush is only too glad to see the Contras disband. The aftermath of Lt Col Oliver North's trial in May is still destroying the political careers of those aides closest to Ronald Reagan, and Bush's part in the Iran/Contra arms-for-funds debacle may yet be exposed. No sooner were the results of the Tela accord announced than 100 US visas were placed at the disposal of high-ranking Contra officers, effectively beheading the 12,000-strong mercenary army.

However, this attitude by the US government has largely been determined by the willingness of the Sandinistas to make so-called 'democratic reforms'. The concessions Ortega has made include permission for no less than 20 anti-government right-wing parties to field

By Eugene Ludlow

candidates in the February elections. In addition, virulently anti-Sandinista US stooges such as Alfredo Cesar, the ex-president of Nicaragua's Central Bank thrown out of the country in 1982, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the owner of the pro-Washington Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa*, are being allowed to return and stand for presidential election. Dozens of former members of the National Guard and Contras are being released almost weekly; and a cordial invitation has been extended to the Contras that, once they have laid down their arms, they are free to re-settle in the country they have been terrorising for the past eight years at the cost of 50,000 lives! Finally, Ortega has put his country's name to a joint statement 'vehemently' condemning armed resistance against the death-squad governments of El Salvador and Guatemala.

After the Sandinistas won the election of 1984, the United States, under Ronald Reagan, imposed a devastating economic blockade - the most stringent form of sanc-



Running for president: right-wing newspaper owner Violeta Barrios de Chamorro

tion permissible under US law short of military invasion. Similar, but less draconian, measures were taken by other imperialist countries which brought political pressure to bear on Nicaragua by reducing humanitarian aid. The most pernicious role, however, was played by Nicaragua's main source of economic and military support, the Soviet Union. The Stalinists have used Nicaragua as another bargaining

counter in their attempts to curry favour with imperialism, withdrawing an estimated \$500 million annual aid overnight and pressing the Sandinistas to make an accommodation with the Contra forces.

The result has been to completely undermine all attempts by the Sandinistas to revive the shattered economy; food and basic commodities are in short supply, there is raging inflation and

widespread poverty and disease. Under such conditions, only a leadership based firmly on the working class and the poorest peasants, committed to the building of a socialist Nicaragua, could rally the masses and defeat the plans of imperialism. The petty-bourgeois Sandinistas, by compromising with the internal and external opposition, have ensured the return of big business interests to Nicaragua.

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## EDITORIAL

## The price of misleadership

THERE COULD be no clearer example of the economic strategy of the Thatcher government than that provided by the run-down of the coalmining industry over the last four-and-a-half years.

Since the end of the 1984-85 miners' strike, British Coal has systematically closed every pit which doesn't meet the test of 'market conditions', while at the same time pushing for the acceptance of flexible working and the reduction of safety standards. But if British Coal managers have carried out the dirty work on the ground, they have been doing so as the standard-bearers of Thatcherite policy.

Having declared their aim of privatising coal, the Tories are now embarked on the necessarily lengthy process of turning the industry into an attractive prospect for the financial sector to invest in. Inflicting a substantial defeat on the NUM was the essential pre-condition for this – the thousands of jobs that have been lost since 1985 are testimony that, from the Tory point of view, the year-long strike was a success.

However, Thatcher has more in mind for the coal industry than just handing over to her private sector cronies an efficient means of lining their pockets. Her aim is to make it conform not only to modern methods of coal production but also to the prevailing conditions in the world market. Thus there is no contradiction between the fact that British Coal is dependent on the electricity generating industry – which buys 80 per cent of its total output – and the Tories' encouragement of a massive increase in coal imports for power generation.

The Scottish coalfield is already reduced to one pit whose sole customer is the South of Scotland Electricity Board. National Power, the company which will generate two-thirds of Britain's electricity after privatisation, is considering developing two new pits capable of importing ten million tonnes of coal per year. Together with Power-Gen, the other private generating company, it has longer-term plans to import up to 30 million tonnes per year (about a third of British Coal's total production). Inside the Tory Cabinet, Thatcher has won the battle over whether or not the private generators will be forced to cut back on their import plans. The coal industry is being groomed not for stardom, but to be a successful supporting act.

The latest blow came on August 25 with the closure of five pits – in South Wales, Kent and Nottinghamshire – and the loss of a further 3,300 jobs. Neither the national nor any of the local NUM leaders proposed anything resembling a serious fight. At Betteshanger, the last pit in the Kent coalfield, the Labour Party and Stalinist area leadership, flying in the face of NUM national policy, offered management weekend working.

Fortunately for the rest of the membership nationally, for whom such a move would have spelt increased pressure to accept flexible working, only nine of Betteshanger's 600 miners turned up and the scheme was dropped. The latest stunt organised by the Kent NUM executive is to ask British Coal to let them run the pit as a workers' co-operative!

Miners – and the rest of the working class – must draw a political balance sheet of the 1984-85 strike and its aftermath. A revolutionary socialist leadership must be built which matches the audacity, the militancy and the capacity for self-sacrifice of the rank-and-file miners.

## Whose victory?

THE DECISION by leaders of NALGO's 500,000 local government workers to accept an 8.8 per cent pay rise for their members is being trumpeted by reformists and Stalinists as a 'victory'. In fact the settlement, like that 'won' by leaders of railworkers, BBC workers and others, constitutes a major act of betrayal.

In June NALGO's leaders rejected the decision of the union's annual conference for indefinite action, thereby weakening the first-ever national strike before it had even begun. At the same time, the employers re-stated their intention of abolishing national pay bargaining – a move designed to drive down wages and undermine conditions, particularly in areas of high unemployment.

To counter the employers' attack and the 'unofficial' government-imposed pay ceiling of 7 per cent, the NALGO leaders called six days of strikes in July. Jim White, NEC member and Kinnockite, assessed the response as 'magnificent... most council services were completely shut down throughout the country'. District officers reported thousands of workers taking out union membership and joining the strikes.

Given this unprecedented willingness to take on the employers, the NALGO leaders were obliged to seek a tactic which gave the appearance of militancy, but which would absolve them of the responsibility of leading the struggle. Following the last day of action on July 20, further calls for an all-out strike were rejected and action suspended for one month while branches were instructed to ballot 5 per cent of their members for indefinite action. Thus NALGO's leaders split their members at a crucial stage in the campaign.

They did so knowing that manual workers organised by NUPE were forcing their own leaders to hold a ballot for strike action alongside NALGO. The prospect of united action by local authority workers, testing their strength against employers and government, was too much for the NALGO and NUPE leaderships. The strike had to be suppressed.

The employers, faced with the growing combativity of the workforce, were ready to oblige NALGO's negotiators with a face-saving formula, an offer of 8.8 per cent against a 12 per cent claim and the postponement of plans to scrap the national negotiating machinery. It was a small price to pay for lifting the threat of prolonged strike action and ending disruption to the poll tax and the programme of job cuts.

This is the reality behind the 'crushing victory' announced by Jim White in *NALGO News* on August 11, alongside an announcement that there would be no further action in advance of a national delegate meeting. To complete the picture, the Stalinists of the Communist Party of Britain were on hand to promote this idea in the working class. They gave White's lie the personal touch on August 12 in a *Morning Star* front-page headline which said 'We've won' and 'NALGO celebrates pay victory'. Only the social-democrats and Stalinists have temporary cause for celebration.

## Profiting from homelessness

Daniel Evans looks at the impact of Tory Housing legislation

THERE ARE up to 75,000 homeless people living in squats, hotels and hostels in London, according to a recent report compiled by the Department of Psychology at the University of Surrey. But the report concludes that there are 'probably at least as many hidden homeless' as there are overtly homeless'; the real total could be more than 130,000.

These numbers, however, are likely to be dwarfed as recent and forthcoming Tory legislation takes effect. An investigation by four London housing associations shows that their tenants' rent arrears rose by 20 per cent between April and July 1988. Most of the blame for this is placed on the government's Social Security Act 1988, which became law in April that year and ruled that all households receiving benefits would have to find 20 per cent of their rates and all of their water rates out of their weekly allowances.

On top of this, the 1988 Housing Act will eventually, as the new system of housing association funding takes effect, force considerable rent rises in that sector. The burden will also be made worse with the introduction of the poll tax and the privatisation of water.

The government is to push the Local Government and Housing Bill through parliament this November as a quick follow-up to the 1988 Housing Act. The main provision of the new law will be 'to make council rents in different parts of the country reflect supply and demand for housing'. Instead of rents based on 'historic costs', as they have been for the past 70 years – i.e., the original building cost and upkeep – the capital value of a council's housing stock will be the new criteria for rent setting. This capital value will be determined by 'right-to-buy' sales: the best properties that can be sold will determine the value – and therefore the rents – of the worst properties.

Since 1979, government investment in public housing has fallen from £5.78 billion to £2.8 billion, a fall in real terms of 75 per cent. In the



Thousands more working class families have been made homeless under the Tories

same period, over a million council houses have been sold. The 1988 Housing Act is intended to put the final nail in the coffin of council housing – the Tories have opened up a new area for their speculator friends in the City and private landlords to make even greater fortunes.

Repossessions due to mortgage defaults rocketed from 2,530 in 1979 to almost 23,000 in 1987. In 1988, the figure dipped slightly but by the beginning of next year, following the four per cent rise in interest rates since last summer, these figures will be outdone with a vengeance.

Most of the impact of the interest rate rises will only have been reflected in mortgages last April, and it usually takes around 12 months of defaulting before repossession proceedings commence. Particularly hard hit will be the young first-time buyers, couples and groups of friends who rushed to beat last year's August 1 deadline for multiple-mortgage interest tax relief. They will be paying an average £150 per month ex-

tra in London.

In a report published in August by the government-sponsored Building Societies Commission, it was pointed out that a typical mortgage has increased by 35 per cent in six months. Households with arrears of two months or more have risen to 380,000, while those with arrears of six months have risen by one-fifth. Tory Chancellor Nigel Lawson was forced to declare his 'sympathy' for home owners with mortgages the day after July's trade figures were announced. At £2.06 billion, they were the second highest in Britain's history and will bring renewed pressure for a further increase in interest rates.

The Labour Party's recent policy review is little more than the tacit acceptance of the death of council housing, at least on the scale of the last few decades. The party's housing spokesman, Clive Soley, is quite blunt on the question: 'Obviously there are going to be limits to the amount of money that can go into that [building, maintenance, renovation]. It will depend on the economy when we take over. Labour's housing policy, therefore, will be dictated not by the needs of the working class but by the profit margins of the City speculators and their willingness or otherwise to hand over a few quid for the purpose. Labour's opposition to Tory housing policy never gets beyond the level of rhetoric and hot air expelled in the House of Commons.'

Capitalism is showing itself less and less capable of developing the living standards of the working class, even in the haphazard fashion known in the past. In fact, it is now forced to dismantle previous gains. The solution to the housing question is a revolutionary one involving the expropriation of capitalist property. Workers must demand that the Labour Party and TUC organise a fighting campaign against Tory housing policy and that a future Labour government repeals all Tory legislation and institutes a massive programme of council house building.

● Changes in the way benefits are paid since April 10 this year have meant that families living in hotel accommodation no longer receive a £2.10 per person per day 'top up' as compensation for the lack of cooking facilities. In addition, charges which used to be included in the rent will now have to be met out of benefits. They include fuel, cleaning, breakfast and 20 per cent of the rates bill. It is estimated that these extra costs will come to between £10 and £22 a week. In families consisting of a couple and two children, their remaining weekly cash will allow only £1.22 per person each day for both lunch and supper. In families with five children, that figure will be £1.18.

## Reinstate Brent DLO!

THE FIGHT continues for the jobs of 107 building workers sacked by Brent Council when it closed down the Capital Building Works DLO on July 10 as part of its savage programme of cutbacks.

The Labour-led council in the north-west London borough committed itself last year to carrying out millions of pounds worth of cuts in council services rather than come into conflict with the District Auditor and the Tory government. The closure of the direct labour building organisation was recommended by senior council officers on the grounds that the use of private sub-contracted labour was more

cost-effective. In fact, the move goes hand-in-hand with the destruction of services to council tenants posed by the scaling down of new building projects. It is additionally directed at deunionising the workforce to rid the right-wing council of some of the most persistent critics of its pro-Tory policies.

The sacked DLO workers, members of UCATT and the T&GWU, are campaigning for reinstatement and against the cutback or privatisation of any council services. They are also demanding a labour movement inquiry into the council's dealings with sub-contractors over the last five years, as well as the opening

of the DLO's account books for the same period, in order to prove their case for the retention of a direct building department.

They have appealed to tenants' associations and to other sections of the Brent Council workforce to support them, pointing out that the refuse service, the building maintenance department and the transport workshops are next in line for privatisation.

● Donations and messages of support to: The Campaign for the Reinstatement of the Sacked DLO, 96 Melrose Avenue, London NW2 4JT. Cheques payable to 'DLO Campaign'.

# Solidarity leaders prepare attacks on working class

THE RIGHT-WING leaders of Poland's Solidarity movement can scarcely believe the speed with which their political fortunes have changed. It was only in April that the organisation emerged from illegality to be recognised as an official opposition. Yet by August the Solidarity leadership found itself in a position to form a government, thus ending over four decades of rule by the Stalinists of the Polish United Workers Party. The pace of this political transformation has been forced by the escalating crisis of the Polish economy, which bureaucratic mismanagement has brought to the brink of collapse.

The wave of strikes and occupations in 1988 had shown the Stalinist regime headed by General Jaruzelski that its proposed solution to the economic crisis, which required drastic reductions in workers' living standards, could not be imposed successfully without the co-operation of Solidarity's leadership. For their part, the Solidarity right wing around Lech Walesa had, by its efforts to contain the strikes, established the necessary credentials for participation in such a pact. The

resulting round-table talks earlier this year ended with Walesa and his colleagues agreeing to the government's austerity programme, in exchange for legalisation and the right to contest 35 per cent of the seats in the Sejm, the Polish parliament.

From the beginning of these talks, Jaruzelski pressed the Solidarity leaders to enter the government as part of a 'grand coalition', controlled by the PUWP, which under cover of uniting the nation could carry out economic attacks on the working class. But this strategy came completely unstuck with the PUWP's humiliation in the June elections, which glaringly revealed the minimal popular support the party could command. Despite Walesa urging a vote for those Stalinists sympathetic to 'reform', PUWP candidates of all stripes were overwhelmingly rejected by the electorate. No Stalinist-dominated administration, it was clear, could possibly pass itself off as a government of 'national unity'.

It is a measure of the arrogance of Poland's Stalinist rulers, who over the decades had come to regard themselves as possessing an

**The newly-installed Solidarity-led government in Poland is committed to tackling the country's economic chaos by closing factories and raising prices. Bob Pitt analyses recent developments and outlines the tasks facing the Polish working class.**

automatic right to political power, that at first they refused to face up to the consequences of their defeat. But their decision to appoint as Prime Minister General Czeslaw Kiszczak, who as Minister of the Interior had been responsible for imposing martial law in 1981, proved unworkable. Even the most conciliatory Solidarity parliamentarians balked at serving under the head of the secret police! A subsequent attempt to replace Kiszczak with Roman Malinowski, the leader of the United Peasants Party and a long-time Stalinist stooge, also foundered. The deadlock was finally broken when the UPP and the Democratic Party, who had hitherto acted as the PUWP's puppets in the Sejm, defected to the opposition, destroying the parliamentary majority which the Stalinists had rigged for themselves. On August 19, the appointment of

Solidarity journalist Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister was announced, and he began protracted negotiations to form a Cabinet.

Although initially Walesa wanted to exclude the PUWP from the government, warning noises from Moscow forced a rethink, and the Stalinists were offered at least two Cabinet posts. This, together with the ultimate control over foreign and defence policy which Jaruzelski enjoys as president and pledges from Solidarity leaders that Poland would remain within the Warsaw Pact, proved sufficient to reassure the Soviet bureaucracy that its security interests would not be threatened. Indeed, while the Polish Stalinists themselves were demanding additional places in Mazowiecki's Cabinet, Gorbachev told PUWP secretary Mieczyslaw Rakowski that the party should be content to occupy

a back seat in the government.

Whatever their other differences, the PUWP and Solidarity leaders are agreed that the working class must pay for the crisis of the bureaucratically misplanned economy. Price controls are to be abolished, leading to soaring inflation, while 'uneconomic' state-owned factories unable to show a profit will be allowed to go to the wall, resulting in mass redundancies. In addition to increased reliance on the market, opportunities will be opened up for the expansion of private capital, both domestic and foreign.

However, whilst the Stalinists have already proved their willingness to acknowledge the virtues of market forces and private enterprise, it would be simplistic to portray the PUWP and Solidarity right wing as happily co-operating in a joint restorationist project. Whereas Walesa has openly declared that the government's task is to take Poland down 'the road from socialism to capitalism', the Stalinists are necessarily restrained from participating wholeheartedly in the dismantling of the nationalised property relations on which their own power and privileges in large part rest. Obstruction from the *nomenklatura* – the hundreds of thousands of bureaucrats in the state apparatus who owe their jobs to PUWP patronage – is inevitable, while there are clearly elements within the PUWP, and in particular among the army, who want an end to 'democratic' compromises and a return to traditional Stalinist methods of political repression.

Even judging by reports in the capitalist press, it is plain that the Mazowiecki government has aroused little enthusiasm among the Polish workers, on whose shoulders the Solidarity leaders have raised themselves to political office. As the proposed economic medicine has its devastating impact on the working class, clashes between Solidarity's right-wing parliamentarians and the militant trade unionists who form the rank and file of the organisation will undoubtedly intensify. It is significant that, within days of Mazowiecki's elevation to power,

Walesa was angrily denouncing a strike by railway workers at Lodz as the action of 'provocateurs'.

The fate of the Polish working class cannot be turned over to the pro-capitalist Walesa leadership. Rank-and-file Solidarity members must fight for an emergency conference of the organisation, composed of democratically-elected delegates, whose task will be to repudiate Walesa's political line and reclaim Solidarity for the workers. Walesa and his fellow right-wingers must be driven out and replaced with a new leadership, committed to a programme of political revolution. Collaboration with the Stalinist bureaucracy must be rejected, and resistance organised against the government's austerity measures. In response to rising prices it is necessary to demand wage increases automatically linked to inflation. Redundancies should be opposed with the call for work-sharing with no loss of pay, and the occupation of workplaces faced with closure.

The factory and strike committees arising from this struggle must be broadened out into workers' councils, co-ordinated at national level. Such a system of soviets, by drawing in representatives of the rural poor, can form the basis of a workers' and farmers' government, democratically accountable to the masses. In the course of rebuilding the shattered Polish economy, reliance on the market and compromises with private enterprise must be subordinated to the goal of creating a genuinely socialist society which itself will be dependent on the extension of the political revolution throughout the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states.

For such a prospect to emerge, the best militants among the Solidarity rank and file must be won to Trotskyism. Only through the construction of a revolutionary communist party in Poland during the coming period can the political revolution against Stalinism be carried out, and the petty-bourgeois restorationists defeated. This would be a major step forward in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International.

## Beirut masses sacrificed in Lebanese faction struggle

By Ian Harrison

THE LATEST phase in Lebanon's civil war entered its sixth month in September with intensive shelling over an area of 200 square miles around the capital Beirut.

The shelling in Beirut itself reached such extremes in August that explosions were reported at the rate of one per second. Ninety per cent of the civilian population of 1.5 million has now fled to the countryside. Casualty figures since March are given as 819 killed and 2,409 wounded.

The main axis of the fighting is between the Christian Lebanese forces under General Michel Aoun and the pro-Syrian Muslim militias backed by 40,000 Syrian soldiers. In March, General Aoun's forces broke out of the Christian strongholds to the north and east of the city in a bid to dislodge pro-Syrian forces to the south and west. They have been equipped with new weaponry by Iraq's President, Saddam Hussein. Iraqi military advisers are reported as active with Aoun's army, and rumours indicate that Iraq is preparing to send volunteers. While Iraq has no territorial claim to Lebanon, Hussein is determined to thwart Syrian President Assad's long-term plan to annex Lebanon, or its northern territories, to Syria.

The 14-year war to dominate Lebanon has seen numerous changes in the line-up of contending forces as well as invasions by Syrian and Zionist forces. In practice, it has led to the cantonisation of Lebanon. Aoun's last attempt to impose leadership by the Christian minority of



The civil war in the Lebanon is leading to the country's effective dismemberment – to the advantage of imperialism and Zionism

one million – 20 per cent of the population – on the rest of the country ended in failure in 1983 when US and French forces (part of the UN presence in the Lebanon) were defeated by a combination of pro-Syrian and Iranian militias.

On August 3, the US dispatched a war fleet to the eastern Mediterranean, ostensibly to retaliate against the pro-Iranian Hizbollah which was threatening to execute American hostages. The French government followed suit, sending a naval taskforce to Lebanese waters on August 14 as Druze militiamen, supported by Syrian soldiers, counter-attacked the Christian stronghold of Souk el-Garb. The

counter-attack failed, but not without heavy casualties on both sides in hand-to-hand fighting. This prompted the remark from Aoun: 'I want to congratulate the Lebanese, then to congratulate myself since I take responsibility ... in the name of the people.' While Aoun has some support from Lebanon's Muslim population, mainly amongst the wealthier Sunnis, he does not speak for the majority, nor, indeed, for all of the Christian factions.

A measure of the complex manoeuvring in Lebanese politics can be seen in the support for Syria's dictator Assad by the Christian Maronite faction of Suleiman Franjeh. A further twist

emerged in August with the reported support of PLO leader Yassir Arafat for General Aoun. (In 1975, at the start of the civil war, the Christian Maronites invited the Syrian army into Beirut to crush factions of the PLO loyal to Arafat.)

The Lebanon has become a battleground in which every faction of the historically weak Arab bourgeoisie in the region – Christian and Muslim – is seeking to extend its own sphere of influence rather than wage a united struggle against imperialism and Zionism. The road forward lies in the construction of a party based exclusively on the class interests of the Lebanese workers and rural poor.

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This document was written by a former member of the Irish section of the ICFI in 1973, and is one of the few accounts of the role of the Socialist Labour League (forerunner of the WRP) in the struggles which emerged in Ireland after 1968. Workers News does not agree with the favourable references to the Lambertist tendency (the OCRFI). However, the author

## IRELAND

IRELAND poses special problems to the SLL leadership. Here a colonial question exists on their own doorstep. Since for them the first and decisive leap forward will take place in Britain and since indubitably the means of class warfare against the British workers' struggles by the British bourgeoisie are being forged in the North of Ireland, they impermissibly draw the conclusion that the Irish working class's role is to function as a simple auxiliary to the (legitimate) independent class movement of the British workers against their oppressors. Behind an abstractly correct internationalism ('Unity of Irish and British Workers') stands a denial of any independent role to the Irish working class whose partition by British imperialism in the twenties so strengthened British imperialism against its own workers. History cannot be cheated. The Irish working class must achieve its unity in this period of the total breakup of the old settlement ushered in since 1969, and strike a blow against British imperialism and its native client-regime that will complement that of the English workers. There is a common enemy and the revolutionary vanguard must coordinate both struggles as closely as possible. But the historic tasks are *not identical*.

## Permanent Revolution

In Ireland what is posed is a very complex process of Permanent Revolution: in Britain the straight social revolution, which is however completely bound up with the Irish revolution and vice versa. The SLL's Luxemburgist position, deeply rooted in the British left and noted by Marx and Lenin long ago in relation to socialists in an imperialist country, has led them from the beginning not only to deny the existence of a national question in Ireland but in practice to accept partition. This is why from the early to the late sixties we had Belfast and Derry - and in 1969 even Dublin - branches of the SLL! This represented implicit acceptance of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland carried through by imperialist violence and pogroms in 1920 to divide the Irish workers. This was also why the SLL never took seriously the question of building an Irish section of the IC.

## THE IWG AND THE SLL

In the mid-sixties a centrist grouping emerged among Irish political militants in Britain called the Irish Workers Group. This had a vaguely Trotskyist programme and united the most diverse tendencies, from outright opportunists like Gery Lawless to a number of genuine subjectively revolutionary elements. Both the People's Democracy and the Saor Eire grouping later came out of the group. The IWG was important insofar as it was the first organisation to emerge in Ireland outside the old Stalinist and Republican stronghold since the war. In the very late fifties and early sixties a number of militants like the Bolton brothers and Lawless had worked in close liaison with the SLL for a time. Lawless soon went with the SWP line and adopted Pabloite politics, and the SLL severed all connections with him.

## No independent section

Neither then nor subsequently has Lawless ever had the

slightest intention of building a revolutionary party in Ireland, but he was able then and later in the 1967 IWG faction fight to point out factually Healy's consistent refusal to set up an independent section in that country. This was one of the weapons he used against the 'Trotskyist Tendency' which opposed him in the faction fight from the standpoint of the need to build a Bolshevik-type party. Despite this, and despite the fact that their fight took place in abstraction from the international struggle between the USFI and IC, the Trotskyist Tendency submitted the documents of the fight in the group to the SLL. The SLL refused to intervene or even approach the struggle going on. In doing this it showed its sectarian abstentionist and anti-internationalist outlook on vital problems of concern to the world movement and greatly weakened the raw political forces looking objectively for a road to the IC.

## Abstentionism

Healy, Slaughter and Co may object that the Trotskyist Tendency included Sean Matgamna expelled by them in 1963 and in recent years an extreme Pabloite. Such an objection would be infantile. In fact, the refusal to intervene strengthened Matgamna's hand against them within the new grouping that emerged as the LWR, even though he operated in England as a leader of the 'Workers Fight' group.

## THE LWR AND THE SLL

In 1969 the LWR (League for a Workers' Republic) wrote to the IC asking for a discussion, which resulted in Cliff Slaughter's visit to Ireland in October of that year. To this meeting were invited the SLL's branches in Ireland and the LWR, who had by this time built a strong youth movement in Dublin as well as a basis of support around certain layers in the Irish Labour Party. At this meeting the LWR put forward a position of substantial agreement with the IC except on the questions of Cuba, China and Ireland. On Ireland, the LWR advocated the policy of secession of Catholic areas from the six counties (this was the aftermath of the August pogroms) and saw the crisis as one of social disruption flowing from British imperialism's democratic restructuring of the Northern State. Both of these positions were based on an abstraction of the Irish crisis from that of the developing world crisis and expressed the pressures resulting from the national isolation of the LWR. They were correctly attacked by Slaughter and his allies.

## SLL's partitionism

However, certain facts about the positions of the SLL and its Irish followers should be stressed. Firstly they held a position of calling for a Workers' and Small Farmers' Government at Stormont! *This position not only reflected the SLL partitionist mentality as well as the Walkerite adaptation to the syndicalism and backwardness of the Protestant workers by their followers; it also divided the Northern and Southern struggles that together produced a pre-revolutionary situation in the autumn of 1969.* Secondly, the SLL's Northern branches took an abstentionist attitude to the 1968-69 Civil Rights agitation. This had a material effect on the struggle unlike the secession theory whose advocates had no base in the North and whose role

effectively demolishes the carefully fostered myth that the SLL played a principled role and demonstrates the evolution of its chauvinist line, not the least towards the Irish section of the IC.

For reasons of space the introductory sections, which do not deal directly with Ireland, have been cut.

was marginal as a result. It should also be clearly said that the theoretical roots of this mistake - the search for a 'pure' class movement involving not only Catholic but Protestant workers - partly lay in the SLL's failure to grasp the inevitability of certain forms of struggle emerging from a specific historical, national background.

## No perspective

Thirdly, the failure to win sizeable forces from the 1968-69 situation was a repeat of the experience of 1964 where the youth won in the Northern Ireland Labour Party were prematurely split away simply because it had also (correctly) been done in Britain. Not only was a valuable opportunity to win a decisive voice in the workers' movement thrown away, but the youth and the bulk of the strong TU faction in the Belfast branch drifted away because of a lack of perspective by 1966.

## Slaughter's meeting

The most significant thing about Slaughter's meeting was that for the first time the SLL proposed the setting up of an Irish section of the IC. The real reason for this change of position became clear only three years later. It was not motivated by a desire to build an independent healthy movement of the FI at all. What it wanted was a factional ally, an extra vote, who could be used against the French in the internal struggle on the IC Executive at a time when the Fourth World Congress was very close and where the SLL had to answer for their failure and refusal to put into practice the decisions and perspectives of the 1966 IC Conference. Accordingly, although the SLL acceded to the LWR's request for a period of further study before agreeing to join the IC, they immediately organised a secret faction in early 1970 composed of students who split the LWR, before discussion had concluded, in May 1970. This secret faction was unknown even to the present author as far as its secret activities outside the LWR were concerned. Three weeks later the new Irish section of the IC was proclaimed. The following month was the Fourth Pre-Conference of the IC. The ground for the split with the OCI had advanced another step. Only in this context can the SLL's methods be understood.

## THE IRISH SECTION OF THE IC

The immediate task of the Irish section was for G. Healy the building of a strong youth movement. This is of course a key to the building of the Bolshevik party itself. *Healy however saw it as a substitute for the party.* This was why in early 1970 he issued an ultimatum to J.V., G.C. and F.C., the Belfast Protestant militants who led the section, that unless a big youth movement was built quickly, he, Healy, would split with them. This approach of the SLL runs like a red thread through the history of the SLL's 'Irish Section'. It recalls Trotsky's words in the 'Transitional Programme': 'In their own circles, the sectarians customarily carry on a regime of despotism.' *The building of this youth movement however was not conceived of as issuing from intervention in the real class struggle but of a high-pitched activism of an abstract nature.*

## Youth orientation

Such activism, manifested in the organisation of dances, film series, meetings and sport, drew in large forces around the Irish Young Socialists, firstly in the North in late 1970 and then in the South in early and middle 1971 from whom a nucleus of important cadres were won. But it was done at the expense (a) of the adult movement whose paper *Vanguard* was dropped and where the production of a theoretical magazine was continually put off because IYS work absorbed all its time and (b) the IYS itself where political education was confined to a few classes and a series of public lectures given by Healy in late 1970 and 1971.

## SLL chauvinism

When we say that the building of the IYS did not issue from intervention in the actual class struggle in Ireland we mean precisely that. The entire content of IYS political activity was the selling of the *Workers Press* and their own *Bulletin* which concentrated on propaganda against the *British Tory Government in England*. Indeed, the central political demand of the Irish movement to its own working class was for a



# The SLL and (1959-1973) - a

General Strike to bring down ... the Tory Government of Britain! This meant that the IYS campaigns were just part of those of the British YS and consisted of taking delegations to an endless round of rallies in England: the Anti-Tory rally of February 1971, the 1971 YS Conference, the Summer Camp (admittedly important), the ATUA rally, the Wembley Pool 1972 rally, YS Conference 1972, the Summer Camp 1972, Empire Pool 1973, etc. In retrospect, given the isolation from the class movement that these policies produced, it is to be marvelled that the IYS held together so long. The warning signs appeared continually though.

## Disillusionment

*By early 1971 the entire old leadership in Belfast had left the movement in disillusionment.* While in no way apologising for their backwardness politically, the major responsibility for their demise was Healy and Co's criminal chauvinist policies foisted on the Irish movement, who were too backward to realise their content. It was inevitable that with their base in the TU movement they would be the initial casualties. They represented with all their weaknesses the most advanced layer of the Protestant working class and were hence of critical importance. (This, however, cut no ice for the SLL leaders who have refused to recognise the division in the Irish working class and proceed as if the Protestant workers were not dominated by reactionary ideology and have to be broken from it.) Their consequences for the whole Trotskyist movement in these islands is being felt negatively today in no uncertain manner.

## Administrative methods

Before proceeding on to the internment period and its aftermath which produced the effective break-up of the IYS, a word should be said about the role of Dave Fry, the leader of the Irish section. This man was handpicked by the SLL leadership as their 'man in Ireland' and his political position is and always has been one of bureaucratic dependence. He represented no forces in the working class nor an individual who had made a qualitative political development of any sort. Indeed, he was made Secretary of the SLL's new Dublin branch (!) in late 1969 within a couple of months from the time when he actually supported the intervention of British troops in Ireland and had led a life of petty-bourgeois bohemianism as a student at Trinity College. In 1970 he took leadership of the section. These facts in themselves show the SLL's thinking in the setting up of a new section - what they wanted were political satellites in the manner of Zinoviev's 'Bolshevised' Comintern or Pablo's sections from 1946-53 where centralisation and political homogeneity are carried through by administrative methods without political clarification, such methods being epitomised in the selecting of right-hand men.

## Soul searching

Fry introduced into Ireland Healy's ultimatums and the type of internal regime that dominates the SLL where there exists constant 'struggles' against tendencies and individuals which bear no relation to the problems of intervention in the actual class struggle but centre around failures to achieve organisational targets, e.g., number of papers to be sold or finance to be raised which are never analysed soberly on the basis of the

conditional, changing relation of class forces and that between the party and the class *but are said to reflect the conflict between theory and practice.* To resolve this conflict these individuals are required to make some abstract 'change' constantly. This semimoral, idealist notion is very akin to Maoist 'self-criticism'. The best description of it however is contained in the 'Transitional Programme' where Trotsky says: 'Since sectarians, as in general every kind of blunderer and miracleman, are toppled by reality at every stage, they live in a state of perpetual exasperation complaining about the "regime" and the "methods" [NB] and ceaselessly wallowing in small intrigues.' This type of infantile practice, given theoretical gloss by the artificial so-called Marxist philosophy introduced by the SLL leaders for the first time at the 1970 IC Pre-Conference to cover up for their failure to have read the French documents that formed the basis of that Convention, was supposed to represent 'leadership' and 'political struggle' on Fry's part.

## Internment and the national question

Internment represented the turning point that began to blow apart these 'revolutionary' pretensions. Whilst the class struggle in the South was still in the midst of a temporary lull since December 1970 and while the struggle in the North against army repression had only reached a certain level it was possible to check to some extent the logical consequences of functioning politically as if one lived in Britain. Such a possibility ended abruptly on 9th August, 1971. The national question burst onto the political scene. *From then on what was posed was the*



1916 statement where he talks of the Irish workers swinging naturally to nationalism and syndicalism and pointing out its relevant nature in the new period. As was the wont these doubts and differences were suppressed in the face of the imagined infallibility of the SLL and Fry. What finally drove the nail into the IYS coffin was the Right-to-Work campaign which was a mere extension of that in Britain and which only achieved any response in the towns of Waterford and Newry, despite a huge rise in national unemployment in Ireland in the first few months of 1972. A party of 20 youth were brought over for the six-week-long marches in Britain and Fry went over too, leaving the Irish section without a national secretary and its only full-time organiser for a month and a half.

#### Not published

By this time of course the SLL had carried out a split in the IC against the OCI. A series of documents of the SLL's IC 'majority' and a couple of the French's less important statements were the sole documentation on which the SLL's client sections had to evaluate the issues. The OCI's major policy statements in *La Verite* 556 and 557 where they not only gave their position on the Bolivian, United Class Front and Philosophy issues but also the history and nature of the differences in the IC itself were never published by the SLL for obvious reasons. Naturally these sections in-

the independence of the class and win important forces. Hence the need to change the organisation to bring in these individuals. The trouble was that the *Youth Bulletin*, though technically better since it became a printed fortnightly, was trying to be all things to all men, i.e., a newsletter appealing to both adult and young workers with a title that repelled adults and did not strike the youth forcefully. These things all crystallised around my conception of orientation to the Labour militants and youth on a programme of Labour fighting for power and being forced to lead on both the national and social questions. This was only articulated in embryo form. There was undoubtedly a tendency to orientate to the Labour Party almost entirely in this campaign and not to take it into other areas of the class struggle. But there was never any question of political or organisational liquidation into the Labour Party, as the SLL leaders lyingly accused me of later. In any event they never fought to work out or discuss the tactics of this campaign with the Irish comrades at any stage.

#### Ultimatism

By late 1972 the financial and organisational problems of the movement rooted in isolation (itself the final product of the preceding two and a half years' policies) became acute and showed itself in the deterioration of the technical standard of the *Youth Bulletin* as well as

agreed to) in December, despite the fact that he subsequently stayed in the movement. Meanwhile Mike Banda and Slaughter travelled over to 'clarify' the Irish section as a whole.

#### Firmness and flexibility

Outside the Workers League – the adult section had been publicly proclaimed – and under the impetus of the industrial mobilisation in the South against the arrest of McStiofain, an important political development was made by this author with regard to the national question. This was fought for with Fry and resulted in a series of important articles on this question in the new *Workers Struggle*, itself an important achievement, which began to equip the movement to intervene in a revolutionary way around the questions of army terror, the White Paper, the local government and Assembly elections before the Northern workers and among the ranks of the Provisional IRA in Belfast. Unfortunately, at particular points the then-leadership of the Workers League was unable to combine political firmness and a necessary tactical flexibility toward (a) the Provo rank and file and (b) the Political Hostages Release Committee, adopting ultimatum stances which tended to undermine work in these fields.

#### McStiofain

While this was happening the SLL and *Workers Press* for the first half of 1973 said virtually nothing about developments in Ireland. North or South, despite the fact that in December 1972 they ran a series of articles by Ian Yeats on political leadership in Ireland, and held a public meeting in London demanding McStiofain's release (to date their only practical activity on the Irish question in Britain). This author was engaged in writing a perspective which he had insisted on, taking in the struggle in Ireland since the early sixties; its relation to the British struggle, and its political lessons. In the course of this he developed a basic critique of the SLL's position on the national question here. For tactical reasons this difference was only communicated to Fry who expressed partial agreement with it and agreed to submit it to the August IC meeting. Fry considered however that there was a danger of capitulation to the national bourgeoisie in it and pointed to a review of 'Freedom Struggle', never published, by this author, in which there had not been the usual sloganising but a posing of fundamental political questions in a concrete fashion to the Provo rank and file.

#### Expulsion

In due course the criticism of the SLL was submitted and led to my second and final expulsion by the IC for 'liquidationism into the Provisional IRA' without the criticism even discussed at the meeting. This author was prevented from defending his position at the Dublin League branch meeting that week.

#### WHITHER THE IRISH SECTION?

Looking at the press of the Irish section since August, one is shocked at the fact that 80 per cent of it consists of *Workers Press* reprints and of the rest the material on the North is simple phrasemongery that avoids the need for real struggle, while nothing is said of the struggle of the Shop Stewards' Committee against the National Wage Agreement in the South from whose activities the voice of the Workers League is noticeably absent. While isolation, much of it directly inspired from London, is intensified

there is a reliance on interminable cabaret shows for finance that now consumes all its activities. There is taking place a headlong retreat into a world of photo-montage fantasy, more and more removed from class activity. Already half the cadre nucleus in Dublin has left and groups won from the Official Sinn Fein in Derry and Dublin must soon follow for they are joining a sinking ship. Its National Secretary, though dedicated, is not the type politically who is prepared to face the consequences of revolutionary integrity, especially when this leads one to scrutinise the role of individual leaders. If the Workers League finally disintegrates, it will be a testament to the criminal chauvinistic irresponsibility of the SLL towards the Irish proletariat.

#### THE LWR AND THE OCRFI

Even after the SLL faction's split, the LWR continued to ask for a further discussion with the SLL. Their letters were never answered. This weakened them in 1971 greatly when the Pabloite IMG began to intervene in and organise around their Dublin youth section who joined in its majority with the revisionists and split from the LWR. The 'two-nations theory' of the LWR was obviously a major factor in this but the failure of the SLL once again to intervene against the USFI was also an important factor. Nonetheless, this bitter faction fight against the Pabloites, later the RMG, clarified many questions for the LWR leadership and helped them later grasp the issues involved in the IC split. They contacted the OCI in April 1972 and attended the second session of the IC Pre-Conference in the summer of 1972, later becoming a section of the OCRFI.

#### Discussion

This article does not suggest that the OCI and the LWR possess a monopoly of political wisdom (as others do) or that neither have made mistakes in the past. The national question (e.g.) comes in mind: Algeria and the OCI who have since analysed their 1958 mistake, while the LWR are struggling with their own national problem so as to rectify ideological and abstentionist errors committed in the past. The most important thing is that the national question like all questions is fully discussed with positions freely taken and fought for within the OCRFI whose fight to make the OCRFI become the leading centre for the reconstruction of the FI is the sole rallying point for Trotskyists and militants looking for a road to the FI. The pamphlet is being published as part of the political discussion and clarification leading to the Open Conference, itself crucial to the rebuilding of the FI as the centralised World Party of Socialist Revolution. It is directed in particular to members and international followers of the SLL which in its own country now talks about 'the end [!] of the role of the "lefts" in the Labour movement after the 1973 LP Conference' (*Workers Press*, 6th October, 1973); thus overthrowing all the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky on the Labour Party and moving to an openly sectarian policy epitomised in the 'Transformation' (by *de-cree*, outside the conditions of development of consciousness among the masses) of the SLL into the Revolutionary Party. The SLL's future is in the melting-pot unless its ranks examine their history honestly and change course before it's too late.

\*Dave Fry died in 1986 after a long illness, the onset of which took place shortly after this document was written.

# Irish Marxism disastrous legacy

destruction of the sectarian state of N. Ireland, which had vast consequences for the struggle throughout both islands. Through the rent/rates strike the mass struggle against Stormont exploded, linking up with the military struggle.

#### Scant coverage

None of this was grasped one iota by the SLL or its Irish followers. *Workers Press* ran a series of editorials on the North whose total number far lagged behind the coverage in the bourgeois press, which has always more keenly understood the implications of this conflict than the leaders of the SLL. These editorials made a number of formally valid points in criticism on the programme and perspectives of its Provisional IRA leadership but never adopted unequivocally a position of critical support for the IRA, which abstentionist position it retains to this day. At the same time the SLL began to praise the 'official' Republican movement to the skies to the point where in early 1972 a *Workers Press* editorial stated that the Officials only needed to read and study Lenin's 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism' to become Marxists. They were not talking of the rank and file or sections of it as the movement in Ireland, including this author, thought. They were talking of the Algerian mistake but they took up a clear Pabloite position of searching for alternative revolutionary leaderships. Healy had contacts with Sean Garland and other Sinn Fein leaders which the Irish section (except possibly Fry) knew nothing about. So while the Irish comrades sought to recruit from the Officials' ranks – in Derry and Galway notably – Healy was going over their heads. Of

course when the Officials called their cease-fire in May 1972 demonstrating their basic reformist character, the SLL quickly issued a disclaimer in a series of five consecutive editorials in late May where in a totally unprincipled manner they even talked of the Officials 'bearing the mark of Cain' and their 'betrayal of their Provisional Brothers'. I say unprincipled because the SLL's 'support' substituted journalistic jargon for real intervention and struggle, as the April 1973 OCRFI International Bureau statement correctly points out. This sloganising also undercut any gains being made by the IC statements after Direct Rule and the Provo cease-fire.

#### 'Class struggle' in Ireland

All of this only served to accentuate the political confusion of the Irish leadership, young and totally inexperienced. After internment the failure to relate policies to the new situation resulted in a catastrophic loss of youth North and South, some of them to the Officials. The line of alliance with Gardiner Place was no accident because the perspective of a 'democratised Stormont' and that of a 'Workers' and Farmers' Government at Stormont' both share an implicit acceptance of partition. Talk of a United Socialist Ireland would scare away the Protestant worker. This was explicitly stated by Fry who at a League meeting in Dublin just after internment said he didn't give a damn about a United Ireland but was only interested in classes and class struggle.

#### 'Republicanism'

At a CC meeting the present author was violently attacked for Republicanism by Fry for drawing attention to Trotsky's

cluding the Irish adopted the SLL line which (without any opposition internally) proceeded to impose itself the more strongly.

#### Fourth Conference

In April 1972 at the Fourth IC Conference Healy launched into an attack first on the American, then on the Irish section. One of the things the Irish were criticised for was (i) a failure to produce an overall perspective and (ii) a simply sectional orientation to such as the Official Sinn Fein! The second needs no comment; it simply demonstrates the SLL leaders' self-deception and bad faith. As for the first, when it was promised in October 1972 by Fry, Healy dismissed it as of secondary importance, just as the 1970 Pre-Conference document by the French had only been a 'smokescreen'. Differences were now however beginning to openly emerge in the Irish movement.

#### Isolation

The present author became highly critical of Cde Fry's dropping of any fight to develop a historical perspective. The pressing urgency of this stemmed from the by now virtually total isolation and tiny size with a half-dozen youth in Dublin and one-man branches in both Belfast and Derry. Secondly, they emerged around the need for an adult movement and press. The first signs of the re-awakening into struggle of the Southern workers came in June 1972 on the questions of a second national wages agreement and Labour's right-wing's decision to form a coalition partnership.

#### Opportunities

BOTH of these opened up new opportunities to fight for

at the IYS Second Conference. This led to the summoning of both Cde Fry and this author to the IC October meeting. At this Healy launched into an utterly disgraceful tirade against the Irish, denouncing them for opportunism, tail-ending the middle class, reformism and . . . nationalism, because doubts had been raised about the major emphasis on *Workers Press* sales in Dublin. This author was said to have lived on the surface of politics (which was true . . . because of SLL politics) and above all we had underestimated the struggle in Britain. He then proposed as an ultimatum the suspension of the section, i.e., its expulsion, although this author took it literally to mean temporary cessation of activity in which I thought some things might be clarified. This was assented to by all present except Fry who understood what was involved. After a short break Healy relented and said that if an agreement were reached on sales of *Workers Press* and Marxist literature in Ireland, he would not support the suspension of the section. Once again in supine fashion all agreed to the pronouncement of the leader.

#### Chauvinism

I have gone into great detail on this meeting because in a nutshell it demonstrates the essential ultimatum chauvinism and idealist-sectarian methodology of the SLL leaders. Following the meeting, unable to articulate this understanding yet knowing it instinctively, this author declared to Cde Fry that he could not continue in the Irish section. This was a tactical blunder which when learned by the SLL leadership later led to his expulsion (commuted by Fry to a six-month suspension if financial and writing activities were

# In defence of the theory of permanent revolution

IN ITS ORIGINS, 'socialism in one country', which was to become the dominant outlook of the Stalinist bureaucracy, represented not so much a *theory* as a mood.

Bukharin's biographer, Stephen Cohen, has made a less than convincing case for Bukharin originating 'socialism in one country' at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922. If this was the case, it would present the strange circumstance of a major revision of Bolshevik strategy slipping past Lenin and Trotsky unnoticed. Whatever weight is retrospectively attached to Bukharin's remarks, they clearly made little impression at the time.

Instead, it is to the autumn and winter of 1924-25 to which we must look to place the victory of a nationalist over an internationalist programme. 'Socialism in one country' marked the political intersection of the growing power and privilege of the Soviet bureaucracy, which had already dealt major blows to the Left Opposition (Trotskyists), with the series of reverses to the socialist revolution in the West.

As the 'leftist' line imposed on the Fifth Comintern Congress in June-July 1924 proved no more capable of improvising revolution than the retreats of 1923, it was Joseph Stalin who produced the rationalisation for the bureaucracy's longing for domestic stability.

Stalin had hitherto played second fiddle to Zinoviev's demagoguery. His insularity, philistinism and organic caution, combined with an intuitive sense of the pulse rate of the bureaucracy, made him the natural spokesman of 'socialism in one country'. True, nowhere did Stalin attempt to develop anything resembling a *theory* of the construction of socialism in an isolated state; he merely confined himself to asserting that 'building socialism' in the Soviet Union was both desirable and necessary. It was left to Bukharin, whose positions never entirely coincided with those of Stalin, subsequently to provide a theoretical justification for the policy.

Stalin was challenging the entire history of Marxism (as Trotsky definitively proved in 'The History of the Russian Revolution', Volume 3, Appendix II). Characteristically, Stalin did not do so in open revolt against Lenin and the party tradition, but posed as Lenin's most loyal and obsequious executor, under the guise of a new cult of 'Leninism'. Just as the triumvirate had Lenin's body embalmed and placed in the Kremlin Wall, so his collected works were raised to the status of ecclesiastical law, in order to destroy their essence the better. Pre-revolutionary polemics against Trotsky were elevated to the status of sacred texts. Trotsky's writings were set to work to solve Lenin's writings for any isolated references to 'building socialism' in Russia.

Trotsky later remarked:

## PART 14

By Richard Price

'In essence the singling out of Leninism as a special kind of Marxism peculiar to the age of imperialism was necessary for the revision of Marxism, something Lenin in fact fought against throughout his life. Inasmuch as the central idea of this latest revision of Marxism was the reactionary idea of national socialism (the theory of building socialism in one country), it was necessary to demonstrate or at least proclaim that Leninism had taken a new position on this central question of Marxist theory and politics in opposition to the Marxism of the pre-imperialist era.' ('Philosophical Tendencies of Bureaucratism', in 'The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-29)', Pathfinder, p.402).

In May 1924, Stalin had published the text of a series of lectures given at Sverdlov University, 'The Foundations of Leninism' (J.V. Stalin: 'Problems of Leninism', Peking, pp.1-116). Like most of Stalin's writings it combines slovenliness and banality in approximately equal

quantities (Trotsky commented that grammar led a hand-to-mouth existence in its pages!). Even so, such research into Lenin's works as it embodied, together with many of its formulations, were directly plagiarised from a minor communist, F.A. Ksenofontov (R. Medvedev: 'Let History Judge', Spokesman, pp.509-10). Ksenofontov was destined to perish in the purges of 1937, while 'Foundations of Leninism' served as a primer for (mis)education in the world's Communist Parties for three decades, during which time millions of copies were printed.



J.V. Stalin

In the spring of 1924, the victory of the triumvirate was in danger from the secure and the death of Lenin in 1924. The power of the triumvirate was based on the personal authority of Lenin, and the death of Lenin in 1924 was a major blow to the power of the triumvirate. The power of the triumvirate was based on the personal authority of Lenin, and the death of Lenin in 1924 was a major blow to the power of the triumvirate.

But the triumph of the power of the bourgeoisie and establishment of the power of the proletariat in its wake the

proletariat of the victorious country can and must build a socialist society.' (Ibid p.37).

In January 1926, Stalin was still tying himself in knots attempting to explain the blatant contradiction. The 'defect' of the first formulation, Stalin wrote, 'is that it joins two different questions into one: it joins the question of the *possibility* of building socialism by the efforts of one country - which must be answered in the affirmative - with the question whether a country in which the dictatorship of the proletariat exists can consider itself *fully guaranteed* against intervention, and consequently against the restoration of the old order.' (Ibid p.127).

- which, of course [!], is incorrect.' (Ibid p.209).

Stalin had 'of course' explicitly denied the 'possibility' of building socialism in a single country in May 1924. By dragging in the question of intervention, he was introducing a further new element to the equation. The victory of the working class in the advanced countries - by 1926 relegated by the bureaucracy to an indefinite future - was considered primarily from the standpoint of guaranteeing the Soviet Union against intervention. Foreign Communist Parties were increasingly assigned the role of 'border guards', pressuring their own bourgeois governments against intervention.

In his chief polemic - if that does not debase the word - against permanent revolution, 'The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists' (December 1924), Stalin applied the instincts of a bar-room brawler and the scrupulousness of a card-sharp. Caricatures of Trotsky's views were set up and knocked down. Thus: 'We shall not dwell at length on Trotsky's position in 1905, when he "simply" forgot all about the peasantry as a revolutionary force and advanced the slogan of "No tsar, but a workers' government", that is, the slogan of revolution without the peasantry.' (Ibid p.124). It is as well that Stalin did not 'dwell', since any serious examination of Trotsky's 1905 writings would explode the myth of his 'simply forgetting' the peasantry. As for the slogan of 'No tsar, but a workers' government', Trotsky never once proposed it (although even if he had it would hardly have ranked as a heinous crime on the part of the 26-year-old leader of the Petrograd soviet! It will at least stand comparison to Stalin's line in March 1917 which in effect said: 'No workers' government, but critical support for the capitalist government of Prince Lvov').

Stalin's characteristic method of argument was to pose a rhetorical question and answer it with a bald unsupported assertion: 'What difference is there between this "theory of permanent revolution" and the well-known theory of Menshevism which repudiates the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat? Essentially, there is no difference.' (Ibid p.127).

In fact, it was Stalin who was, in Trotsky's words, turning Menshevik theory inside out. Whereas Menshevism had considered the socialist revolution off-limits for Russia until it had waited in its appointed place in the queue behind more advanced nations. Stalin declared that a self-sufficient 'socialism' could be built in backward Russia, independent of world conditions.



N.I. Bukharin

tion, lack of faith in the strength and capacity of the Russian proletariat' (ibid p.136) - as if faith and strength could substitute for the development of the productive forces on a world scale beyond the highest points yet achieved by capitalism, and based on an international division of labour and an international plan.

In his attempt to underpin the notion of an isolated socialist state, Stalin committed a comical blunder, claiming to base his 'theory' on the discovery by Lenin of the law of uneven development during the First World War (ibid p.130). Marxists - not least Lenin - have always understood uneven development as a law of all human history. Stalin, in his ignorance, believed it to apply only to the imperialist epoch, the clear inference being that separate 'national' roads of development had now opened up. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

He also created a deliberate ambiguity in the use of the phrase 'the victory of socialism in one country', sometimes meaning the working class capturing state power in a single country (creating a workers' state) and elsewhere meaning the building of socialism in a single country. This subterfuge served not only to confuse the theoretical question at stake, but was retrospectively marshalled to accuse Trotsky - the organiser of the October insurrection - of having been an isolated socialist in Russia.

diminishing. Stalin went out of his way to stress the *identity* of interests between the working class and the peasantry, as opposed to Lenin's conception of the *smychka*: an alliance of opposites. What was actually happening at the time ran strongly against the grain of the triumvirate's illusions.

In the cities, NEPmen were growing fat on the profits of private enterprise; in the countryside, the differentiation among the peasantry was proceeding rapidly with the rise of the Kulaks. The explosive potential of this development within the workers' state was masked to an extent by the revival in the economy - in 1925, production finally regained pre-war levels. Stalin and Bukharin dismissed the evidence of growing inequalities as a mere invention of the Opposition.

For the Communist International, the new line of 'national roads to socialism' contained the seeds of its own destruction. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was no longer a subordinate part of a world party of socialist revolution. For Stalin, the Soviet Union was 'by its very existence... revolutionising the whole world' (ibid p.155). (It is instructive to note the similarity between Stalin's text and the theories of G. Healy today about the mystical powers of the property relations of the USSR in world politics.)

The relationship between the world revolution and the Soviet Union had been inverted. The Comintern was now subordinate to the

# Religious ghettos – no way out of crisis

The demand for separate religious schools is growing, particularly among Muslims, and is backed by a number of Labour MPs. Lizzy Ali discusses the attitude socialists should take towards this question.

INCREASING agitation for voluntary-aided status for Muslim schools has led to a highly confused situation. Some left Labour MPs, including Ken Livingstone, have joined Labour's Kinnockite education spokesmen Jack Straw and Derek Fatchett in endorsing the demand and, in July, a policy document was published which, if passed by conference in October, will commit a future Labour government to supporting separate Muslim schools.

But, like the Rushdie affair, the campaign for separatism has thrown together some strange 'allies'. Among the Tory supporters of voluntary-aided status is the extreme right-winger Rhodes Boyson. Other mainstream Tories remain opposed, determined to uphold the 'broadly Christian' guidelines laid down by the Education Reform Act of 1988.

It is not surprising that most Tories and outright

racists oppose any and every demand raised by the Muslim community. Does this mean that the workers' movement should therefore support the demand for separate schools? This question can only be answered from the standpoint of the need to unite the working class to fight all forms of racism, and not from the position of abstract 'multi-culturalism'.

The conditions for the rise of separatist agitation have been created by the education crisis in many inner-city areas. In Tower Hamlets, with one of the largest Asian communities in London, 280 children were denied school places in the summer term and some children have not been to school for two years. In May a quarter of the teaching staff in the borough resigned. This, together with the increasing number of racist attacks, high unemployment and the withdrawal of white children from a school in Dewsbury by their parents has created fertile

ground for the growth of fundamentalism.

Separate religious schools will not solve any of these burning issues. They will segregate children and young people in a series of religious ghettos; they will strengthen the influence of priests, mullahs and rabbis; but they will certainly not aid the struggle against racism. It should be noted that those fundamentalist leaders most prominent in demanding Salman Rushdie's execution have frequently been the least active in fighting the racists and fascists.

The workers' movement has no right to demand that the Asian community, or any other minority, abandon its culture. On the contrary, it must actively defend every minority (including its right to practice its own religion), while simultaneously striving for the maximum class unity between all workers.

The idea of separate religious schooling is a utopia born out of the deepening economic and political crisis of capitalism. Even if it was

desirable, it would be impossible to establish schools for every religious grouping in every area. The end result would be a situation in which the smallest national or religious minorities would be compelled to attend schools run by larger minorities.

The Labour leadership's conversion to separatism in the field of education is only part of its lurch to the right in all areas. Many Labour politicians who oppose the idea of Muslim schools, however, do so from the most hypocritical position, accepting the existence of Church of England and Catholic schools.

Schools based on religion are an obstacle to the fight for the equality of nationalities. They assist the richest and most reactionary layers of the minority communities to continue sitting on top of the poorest sections.

The shift in Labour thinking has nothing to do with principles and a lot to do with vote catching. It also reflects the extent to which Labour Party reformism has



Pupils from Zakaria Muslim Girls High School in Batley, Yorkshire

never broken with religion. It is as compromised in ideology as it is in practice. The Labour leaders have also taken at face value the claim of fundamentalists to represent all Muslims despite strong evidence to the contrary. Many Muslim workers remain opposed to separate schools and a recent survey of girls of Pakistani origin carried out by Manchester University showed only 26 per cent in favour of separate schooling.

This striving by girls and young women to free themselves from their traditional oppression must be fully supported. Discrimination on grounds of sex is, however, being reinforced by sections of the 'multi-culturalist' Labour left. While it is entirely correct to fight for the equality of nationalities, it is a grotesque parody for self-proclaimed 'socialists' to advance the same policy for religions.

Muslim separatism offers no way out from racism or the crisis in education. It strengthens the hands of the

Tories in dividing the working class, and can also become a ramp for schools wishing to 'opt out' of the state sector, thereby assisting the privatisation of education. Labour must be forced to reverse all cuts in education, launch a crash programme of school building and renovation, and step up teacher recruitment.

All religious and private schools must be abolished and replaced by a fully secular comprehensive system, in which schools are governed by committees of teachers, trade unionists, parents and schools students. In every school there must be teachers fluent in the languages spoken by all children attending. Racist attacks must be fought by building workers' defence squads based on the trade unions and minority communities. Full provision must be made for the cultural interests, diets and customs of all minorities. Only a united struggle by workers – black, white, Jewish and Asian – can halt the Tory attacks on schools.

## Reply to correspondence

TROTSKY ONCE challenged his opponents to 'mention a single serious critical work unanswered by us'. The record of ICFI leader and historically selected cadre-in-chief David North is the exact opposite. Workers News published an extended review of North's 'critical history' of the Fourth International, 'The Heritage We Defend', in issues 13-15. Like all infallible leaders, North doesn't feel obliged to reply to anyone who dares question his status as the World's Greatest Living Marxist. North's silence – which serves to smother any interest in the hidden history of the IC within his own movement – is in direct contrast to the wide interest which these articles have aroused.

Correspondence in recent editions of Workers News has both amplified and criticised the argument of 'The Revisionism North Defends'. Ellis Hillman (Workers News No. 17) underlines the adaptation to Chinese Stalinism by the Healy entry group in the late 1950s, and stresses that his reply to Mike Banda's 1957 article 'Three Speeches' in no way represented the position of the 'Group's' leadership. This was not intended, but if the article implied this, I am grateful to his pointing out that this was not the case.

Charlie Cook (Workers News No. 18) is kind enough to describe the review of North's book as 'the first attempt by the fragments of the WRP's 1985 collapse to come seriously to terms with its history'. He goes on to make a number of criticisms which, while welcome, are in some cases wide of the mark. He regards as 'inconsistent' blaming Cannon for scaling down the public polemic with Pablo in 1954, whilst at the same time holding him primarily responsible for organising a confused split in

1953. The original intention was to demonstrate the shallowness of Cannon's call for 'merciless polemics against the Pabloites' in March 1954, only to call off the enterprise six weeks later. In reply to Cde Cook, we would point out that Cannon withdrew public attacks on Pablo not because he was intent on reconsidering the period up to 1953, nor because of American workers' lack of 'excitement' about the struggle – the vast majority weren't 'excited' about revolutionary Marxism in general in 1954! – but because, as his correspondence at the time to Leslie Goonewardene shows, Cannon was already putting out feelers to explore unity with Pablo-Mandel, only six months after the 'irrevocable' split.

Cde Cook correctly adds that it is necessary to remember Cannon's contribution to the fight to build the Trotskyist movement in previous periods, although this lay outside the scope of the review. But in attributing to Workers News the notion of 'Orthodox Marxism', which he claims it uncritically accepts from Cannon, he is knocking at an open door. The entire thrust of 'The Revisionism North Defends' is to demonstrate the spurious nature of the 'Orthodoxy' espoused by the IC in its various phases (the term is used in inverted commas throughout).

We agree with the judgement that no-one has seriously advanced Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union since his death and nowhere more glaringly than in the field of economy. Mandel serves up vast slabs of prose which 'prove' that Soviet economy is advancing towards socialism, presided over by a bureaucracy eternally reforming itself: the North school of 'orthodoxy' pastes the odd statistic over

lengthy quotations from 'Revolution Betrayed'. Such a method – empiricism, larded with canon and precedent – derailed the Fourth International in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Without basing the analysis of the Soviet Union on Trotsky's work, no development is possible. To operate, however, as if this is sufficient 50 years later is to make a mockery of Marxism. Trotsky did not found a cult dedicated to guarding the ark of the covenant. Above all, it is necessary to re-work the post-war developments in Stalinism, which so rapidly unhinged the movement.

It may well seem contradictory or overblown to refer to Hungary as 'Healy's finest hour'. The British section of the IC made no qualitative development in its analysis of Stalinism; it did, however, in distinction to the International Secretariat, enthusiastically espouse the Hungarian workers' insurrection, and energetically take the works of Trotsky into the ranks of the British CP. (Given a comparable situation today, can anyone imagine the factional bulls-in-china-shops of the ICP delivering anything but shrill ultimatums?) At any rate, as someone drily put it, 1936 Trotsky was preferable to 1956 Mandel. But parallel developments in China revealed how skin-deep was the IC's 'intransigence' towards Stalinism. (Perhaps it is necessary to remind those like North, who regard China as a small subsidiary of the Russian question, that the fate of over a quarter of humanity is involved.)

Cde Cook also takes issue with the term 'healthy workers' state, and points out that neither Marx nor Lenin used the term. A far from ideal category, we agree. But neither Marx nor Lenin envisaged, nor could they, the full extent of degeneration the first workers' state would

undergo. Trotsky did refer to the Soviet Union as a 'sick state'. No given workers' state conforms to a set of ideal norms. It is nonetheless necessary to distinguish between a workers' state which has undergone a qualitative bureaucratic degeneration, or which has been deformed from birth, and the problems attendant upon the working class taking power under any circumstances – remnants of the old officialdom, the necessity of employing bourgeois specialists, the effects of civil war, disease, etc – otherwise the concept of Thermidor loses all significance. Didn't anarchists and Mensheviks warn from the outset that the Bolshevik experiment would come to grief? If 'healthy' approximates to 'not qualitatively bureaucratized' then it will serve; if not then a new approximation must be found.

Finally, a postscript. Keen students (if there are any) of David North's word-processor-Marxism will be interested in one of the latest historical pronouncements. Up until now, the British section of the ICFI was credited with leading the struggle for proletarian internationalism from 1953-66 and inaugurating a 'veritable renaissance of Marxism' – the last one, that is, until North himself arrived on the scene. It now appears that 'the leadership of the British section had itself not fully broken from Pabloism' (*International Worker*, August 5, 1989). Where this leaves the golden thread of IC continuity is anyone's guess. Is this a coded response to Workers News? In any event, North is sawing off the branch he is sitting on. The Editorial Board welcomes further correspondence on the history of the Fourth International.

Richard Price

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# Workers News



8 Workers News

September 1989

## Keeping up an old tradition

THE TWO London demonstrations in August against the British occupation of the Six Counties brought their usual response from the International Communist Party – boycott. In this the ICP finds common ground with the two other claimants to the title 'British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International': the Workers Revolutionary Party (*News Line*) and the Healy/Redgrave 'Marxist Party'. Boycotting all activities in support of Irish liberation follows precisely the traditions of the Socialist Labour League/WRP.

Quite how the ICP reconciles its boycott policy with the position of David North, the ICFI's international leader, that 'the cutting edge of the struggle against imperialism in Britain is the uncompromising defence of the right of the Irish people to unify their country' (*Fourth International*, Summer 1986, p.70) is something of a mystery.

Look a little harder, however, and the veneer of 'internationalism' shows a bit thin. The ICP has made the scurrilous claim that Sinn Fein and the IRA have a 'nod and wink' rela-

tionship... with the southern state and its army and police' (*International Worker*, December 12, 1987). This theme recurs: 'Sinn Fein and the IRA... look to sections of the southern bourgeoisie for support' claimed the *International Worker* of September 17, 1988.

Like the SLL and the WRP before it, the 'orthodox' cover for the ICP refusal to defend Irish self-determination in practice is the call for the building of an Irish section of the ICFI. The only connection the ICP has with internationalism is the first word of its name.

# Army info for UDA assassins

By Terry McGinity

THE CONNECTION between the British security forces and loyalist paramilitary groups has long been known and documented by the Irish republican movement. But the statement at the end of August by the Ulster Defence Association, and an interview obtained last year with a UDA prisoner in Durham jail but only recently made public, give a clearer picture of the extent of this collaboration.

On August 20, *The Observer* tentatively reported the 'revelations' of Albert 'Ginger' Baker, a former east Belfast UDA death squad member now in the 15th year of a 25-year minimum sentence. He told Labour MP Ken Livingstone that the former UDA vice-chairman, Tommy Herron (now dead), was directly controlled by a British army intelligence

officer codenamed 'Bunty'. Baker also described the intimate relationship between the UDA and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, claiming that RUC members supplied the Protestant paramilitaries with police files and photographs of republicans – along with weapons to carry out assassinations – and routinely turned a blind eye to UDA activities.

Confirmation of Baker's claims was quick to follow. On August 29, senior figures in the UDA issued a press release stating that they frequently received approaches from members of all three security forces – the RUC, the army and the UDR – offering information on IRA and INLA members and supporters. They produced security force documents

which identified Loughlin Maginn, a Catholic shot dead by UDA gunmen in Co Down the previous week, as an IRA suspect. The documents were authenticated by security sources in the north and a statement by John Cope, the Tory Minister of State for Northern Ireland, confirmed this.

The acknowledgement by the British government that the UDA is being kept continuously supplied with 'target' lists of republicans for assassination provoked a torrent of crocodile tears from Liberals, Labourites, SDLPers, and the Dublin government. Seamus Mallon, the deputy leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the MP for Newry and Armagh, said he had suspected as much for years, though he didn't explain why he hadn't raised such a storm about it before. But it was left to a Catholic priest, Father Denis Faul, to articulate what was really worrying them all. 'It is,' he said, 'devastating for the ordinary, decent RUC man who is trying to work impartially and compassionately. No one is going to trust them now.'

Just so. The main problem for the reformists and liberals is not the murder of republican fighters, nor even the death of Catholic civilians, but the fact that the security forces might lose their 'credibility', thereby strengthening support for the IRA.

A further twist to the proceedings was added on September 4, when it was revealed that the British soldier convicted of passing information to the Ulster Volunteer Force was being allowed to return to his battalion. In May, Corporal Cameron Hastie was found guilty of 'making available material that might be used by terrorists', along with Joanne Garvin, a part-time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The UDR is the locally-recruited sectarian force controlled by the British army. It was formed in April 1970, ostensibly to provide a 'neutral' militia to replace the B Specials, but of its 6,400 members, only 3 per cent are Catholics. In the last three years, 24 UDA men and women have been convicted for links with Protestant paramilitary groups.

The Minister for the Armed Forces, Archie Hamilton, described Cpl Hastie as 'a very fine soldier'. He was being returned to his unit because there had been a special request from his commanding officer.

## Youth killed by plastic bullet

SEAMUS DUFFY became the 14th person to be killed by a plastic bullet in the north of Ireland when he was hit by random fire from an RUC district mobile support group on August 9.

Eye-witnesses report that 15-year-old Duffy, the eighth youth under 16 to be killed in this way, was lifted clear of the ground by the force of the bullet, which was fired from a moving Land-Rover.

The incident took place in north Belfast at 1.00am. Duffy's friend, Damien Brown, said: 'We were walking along Dawson Street in New Lodge. There was no rioting. I heard a shot, looked back and Seamus was on the ground.'

A statement by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in north Belfast was unrepentant. 'If there is no rioting, there will be no plastic baton rounds,' it said.

## Time To Go flops

AFTER ALMOST a year on the road, Time To Go, the campaign established in late 1988 to swamp existing solidarity work with the Irish liberation struggle, has proved to be a damp squib.

The national demonstration on August 12 attracted barely 5,000 people. Despite the claims of the organisers that the campaign had a broad appeal in contrast to 'sectarian' demands for 'Troops Out Now!', the low turn-out is a serious rebuff for this unprincipled coalition of forces stretching from the SWP to the SLD.

This is a pay-off for the attempt to buy wider support by abandoning even the pretence of forthright opposition to British imperialism in Ireland in favour of the suitably vague slogans of the march – 'British Withdrawal from Ireland' and 'Time To Go'.

Masquerading as a campaign for the withdrawal of British troops, Time To Go approaches Ireland strictly from the standpoint of 'what's good for Britain'. So, instead of conducting a vigorous struggle in support of Irish self-determination and for the immediate withdrawal of troops, it speaks of a 'timetable for British withdrawal' and calls upon the British government to make a declaration of intent.

On the day, the majority of those sponsoring the campaign – trade union bureaucrats, leaders of various political parties, stars of stage and screen – were noticeable



The head of the demonstration on August 12

only by their absence. Had it not been for the leg work put in by the SWP, the march would have been an even greater flop.

In contrast, an anti-imperialist contingent organised by Workers Power, the Revolutionary Internationalist League and the Workers International League marched behind the slogans 'Troops Out Now!', 'Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole', and mobilised half the trade union banners present. A delegation from the Leninist/Hands Off Ireland supported the same slogans.

SWP members were clearly rattled by the opposition to Time To Go, and embarrassed by the recent pamphlet written by Paul Foot which calls, among other

things, for an international conference to settle the Irish question; parrots the Time To Go call for a declaration of intent by the British Tories; and even foresees a future role for Britain in Ireland after reunification.

Neither the August 12 edition of *Socialist Worker* nor a leaflet put out by the SWP raised the demand of 'Troops Out Now!'. Instead, plastered in big letters was the headline 'Get the Troops Out'. This fine-tuned distinction served a threefold purpose – to fool the uninitiated with something that sounds like 'Troops Out Now!', to head off internal opposition, and at the same time to keep faith with fellow organisers. Elsewhere in the paper the Irish resistance was denigrated as 'twenty bloody

years' and 'two wasted decades'.

In its centre pages, photo-stats of *Socialist Worker* from August and September 1969 were reproduced to suggest that it held a 'Troops Out' position at that time. Those armed with a magnifying glass, however, can see that nowhere did the demand appear.

The SWP's leaflet descended into crude syndicalism when it argued that any and every struggle against the Tories supports the struggle for Irish unity – thereby getting the SWP off the hook of having to fight British chauvinism.

The 'broad' Anti-Nazi League-style movement the SWP hoped to build by its softer line has so far failed to materialise.

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