

Workers News



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BRING DOWN THE TORIES!

Force Labour/TUC to act!

EVERY class-conscious worker and youth must draw the lessons of the failure of the Labour Party and TUC leaders to take advantage of the crisis within the ranks of the Tory party.

The Thatcher government is at its lowest political ebb in a decade and the Labour Party is enjoying a substantial lead in the capitalist opinion polls, a lead it has done nothing to deserve. A number of leading manufacturers and their supporters in the Tory party have registered their concern that Thatcher's economic policies are impeding the performance of British companies. The growing chorus of disapproval over her economic priorities – notably in relation to the European Community – has led to a serious questioning of Thatcher's autocratic style within the cabinet. For the first time since she took over from Edward Heath in 1975, her leadership of the Tory party has been challenged.

Rank-and-file workers have moved with growing confidence against Tory attempts to reduce inflation by holding down wages. The

By Philip Marchant

strike-wave during the spring and summer built on the strikes of 1988 and broke through the unofficial 7 per cent wage policy. Yet, at the very moment when Thatcher was coming under simultaneous attack from industrialists, the city, middle class professionals and workers determined to defend their living standards, the Labour and TUC leaders were working overtime to prevent the strikes from growing into a mass political movement to oust the Tories.

Labour's current popularity does not stem from a widespread enthusiasm for the 'one nation' outlook being promoted by Kinnock, Hattersley and Co, nor from its class-collaborationist policy review. It is a reflection of the deep hatred felt for the Tories by the working class, and the growing disenchantment of sections of the middle class who now consider that Thatcher has gone 'too far'.

The Labour and TUC leaders are acting as a powerful brake on all the struggles of the working class, isolating individual disputes and dissipating the energy and

initiatives of the rank and file. While employers found it necessary to increase the amount of money on offer during the spate of disputes earlier in the year, they were allowed to claw it back through productivity agreements, flexible working and the introduction of new technology. Only a token protest was offered at plans to end nationally-negotiated agreements on pay and conditions, which are now well under way. Several thousand dock



workers' jobs were sacrificed rather than see union assets sequestered. Labour local authorities have collaborated

wholeheartedly in implementing the Tory poll tax – in Scotland, warrant sales of 'non-payers' belongings are under way; in England and Wales, hundreds have already been fined for refusing to register. Despite laying heavy emphasis on the fact that the Tories exploit the dedication of NHS staff, right-wing 'public opinion' is being placated by making ambulance crews work emergency cover for nothing.

What is urgently needed is a programme of action to defend the interests of the working class and seize the initiative from the Tories. To meet the new round of management attacks and the headlong retreat of the Labour and TUC leaders, every group of workers in dispute must seek – through shop stewards' committees or rank-and-file strike committees – to step up the action. Engineers and ambulance workers must campaign for all-out national strikes. Links must be forged with car workers, health service workers, local government workers and all other sections of the working class under attack.

In contrast to the limited

economic objectives of the trade union leaders, the struggle must be given a political character. It must be recognised that living standards cannot be defended short of removing the Tory government and fighting for socialist policies. Demands for wage increases must be linked to the defence of jobs and vital services in the public sector, and the call must be raised for the nationalisation of all basic industry and the banks without compensation and under workers' control.



Norman Willis

Central to this campaign must be the demand that the Labour and trade union lead-

ers mobilise the entire working class to drive the Tories out of office, and that the Labour Party takes the power. Workers must insist that such a government is pledged to repeal the anti-union laws, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Education Reform Act, the poll tax and all other anti-working class legislation, and to take back into public ownership all companies privatised by the Tories.

Resistance from the Labour and TUC bureaucracy and the Stalinists must be met by a struggle to advance new leaders who are committed to the defence of the working class. Those who are not yet clear on the necessity for socialist policies will have the opportunity to assess who best defends their interests in practice.

Trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, strike committees and poll tax unions must seek every opportunity to link up their struggles. They must become the basis for Councils of Action in every area which will draw in the broadest layers of workers, students, women at home and the unemployed in a united struggle to defeat the Tories.

Jordan undermines 35-hour week fight

ON NOVEMBER 16, the Engineering Employers' Federation, which represents 5,000 companies, withdrew from national bargaining on working hours, wages and conditions in the industry.

The decision must be seen by engineering workers as proof of the need to turn the present selective action in pursuit of a 35-hour week into an all-out national strike. But for this to take place, a determined struggle must be waged against the right-wing leadership of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and, in particular, that of the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

The employers' decision was, in effect, recommended to them by Bill Jordan, president of the AEU, at the start of the strikes in 'key' engineering firms at the end of October. The day before 7,000 workers at two British Aerospace plants and one

By David Lewis

Rolls Royce factory came out in support of the national claim for a 35-hour week, Jordan called upon engineering companies to open local negotiations on a 37-hour week!

In fact he had been promoting such a sell-out of the claim ever since the talks with the EEF broke down in April. When, two weeks into the action, workers at the Rolls Royce subsidiary NEI-Parsons of Tyneside voted to accept a cut in the working week to 37 hours (by 1992!), Jordan hailed it as a 'model' settlement, despite the fact that it also requires semi-skilled and skilled workers to do each others' jobs and to operate more than one machine. That kind of arrangement duplicated on a national scale would lead to a further massive loss of jobs in an industry which has seen

one million go since 1979. Jordan's enthusiasm for it, however, is in line with his endorsement, two years ago, of an offer by the employers to reduce working hours in return for flexible working, which was rejected at the time by both the CSEU and the AEU national committee.

With the departure of Eric Hammond and the EETPU from the TUC, the right-wing AEU leadership of Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird, with the tacit support of the 'lefts' led by the Stalinist Jimmy Airlie, are the standard-bearers of class-collaboration in the TUC and the CSEU. In single union deals, no-strike agreements and speed-up deals, they lead the way. The attempt by Jordan and Laird to force the AEU into a merger with the EETPU

shows how far they would like to go.

But Jordan isn't getting an easy ride. The AEU national committee was obliged to block the merger with the electricians because of widespread disgust at the idea among rank-and-file engineering workers. Jordan was opposed to any form of strike action for the 35-hour week, and the eventual formula agreed was designed to keep the dispute under bureaucratic control. The outcome is as he intended – isolated groups of workers in separate companies are being forced to accept deals which make major concessions on productivity.

The influence of this rotten leadership must be broken. Joint shop stewards' committees must fight for an emergency conference of engineering unions to transform the present action into a national strike of all engineering workers.



Engineering workers picket the British Aerospace factory at Kingston-upon-Thames on November 16, the first day of their strike for a shorter working week
PHOTO: SUZY ALLEN

EDITORIAL

Behind the Tory crisis

THE CRISIS which is shaking the Conservative Party to its foundations is proof that, despite ten years in Downing Street, Margaret Thatcher has been unable to destroy trade unionism.

Thatcher's aim when she formed her first government after the 1979 election was to remove all barriers to the creation of profit. Essentially, this meant accomplishing two main tasks: rolling back the reforms that had been achieved in the post-war period in the fields of education, housing, health care and other social services, and in the state-ownership of basic industries and utilities; and ending the most important of all the democratic rights won by the working class over 150 years of struggle – the right to organise its collective strength in pursuit of better wages and conditions and in defence of jobs.

These policies did not emerge because of the rise to prominence of a particularly greedy and vicious section of the ruling class. They were and are an attempt to meet the requirements of British capitalism in the period when its own historic decline is aggravated by the deepening world crisis.

The attraction of Thatcher to the major industrialists and the City was that she recognised that the key to survival lay in reducing the working class to the status of sweated labour, stripped of all democratic rights, to be exploited to the full, then casually discarded into a society shorn of all welfare provisions. However, her electioneering was necessarily directed towards small capitalists, middle class professionals, the self-employed and backward workers in order to establish a secure base from which to launch the assault.

Ten years on – with four rounds of anti-union legislation in place, the privatisation of major utilities already accomplished, the replacement of the rating system by a poll tax which penalises the low-paid, a reform of education which paves the way for the return of old-style methods of selection and advanced plans to introduce a private 'internal market' into the NHS – and the Tories are experiencing their worst crisis since Profumo was caught with his trousers round his ankles. What went wrong?

The root of the problem for the Tories lies in the decrepit state of British capitalism. It cannot match its more aggressive competitors. Thatcher's 'successes' have been possible because of the speculative boom since 1983 which temporarily cushioned the British economy and kept her supporters busy extending their share portfolios.

But the boom was based on a massive rise in the volume of national, corporate and private credit (or, looked at another way, debt). Two particular instruments have emerged in this period which have assisted this process: so-called 'leveraged' takeovers, in which almost all the finance necessary to buy a company can be borrowed; and junk bonds – often used to raise the money for leveraged takeovers – which yield a higher interest rate than ordinary bonds, but carry a higher risk of default because they bear no relation to the actual assets of the borrower. In the United States there are junk bonds worth \$190 billion (£123 billion) in circulation. The expansion of credit facilities has meant that capital lying idle has been put to use, but the profits made have a future claim on the surplus value created by the working class.

In other words, the need to step up the rate of exploitation, which the British capitalists foresaw in the 1970s, has been made an even more urgent question for them today. The attacks they have made – though far-reaching – have not succeeded in destroying the combativity of the working class, despite the treachery of the Labour Party and trade union leaders.

The British economy is slowing down and heading for recession. The latest report from the employers' organisation, the Confederation of British Industry, says that manufacturing orders are at their lowest level for three years and that next year's growth will be 1.4 per cent. When North Sea oil is excluded, the forecast drops to 0.9 per cent. The new Chancellor, John Major, in his Autumn Statement, estimated the non-oil growth for next year as low as 0.75 per cent. The scale of this can be partly seen by comparing it with this year's growth of 3 per cent.

With unemployment set to rise, a record trade deficit, high inflation, the pound under continuous pressure and a punishing level of interest rates, Thatcher now faces a mutiny in the Tory party. The tensions in the leadership have been simmering for several years, and are a reflection of the conflict of interests between different sections of the British capitalist class. The intensification of the economic crisis, which is now giving rise to the beginnings of an international trade war, and the failure to defeat the working class has brought these differences to a head.

Those industrialists with a vested interest in maintaining a British-owned industrial base are generally in favour of a closer relationship with Europe, in the hope that monetary union will stabilise exchange rates. Thatcher and her supporters favour the scorched-earth policy, seeing this as ultimately the only way to make the British economy competitive. Meanwhile, the smaller capitalists and the middle class, whose support Thatcher held through three general elections, are being hit hard by interest rates and inflation, and are turning against her.

Through all this, the role of the Labour Party leaders has been confined to defending the Tory 'wets' against Thatcher, and the trade union leaders have checked every struggle that might rock the government further. Yet, for all their differences, the Tories are united in one thing: that the working class has to bear the cost of the economic crisis.

The message for the working class is clear: Don't wait for an election! Take full advantage of Thatcher's crisis! Mobilise to defeat the Tories now!

Euros abandon Lenin for old times' sake

THE STENCH of advanced political degeneration was in the air at the 41st Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain, held in London on November 25-28.

The membership has slumped to 7,500 from a post-war peak of 50,000. Delegates were deeply divided over the new policy document, 'Manifesto for New Times', which was adopted on a vote of 112 for and 86 against. The congress will reconvene in six months when proposals to change the name, constitution, rules and structure of the party will be debated.

The leadership has also indicated that it wants to abandon the weekly paper *Seven Days* and expunge every reference to communism, Stalin and class-based politics from the organisa-

tion, which will become a self-styled 'think-tank' committed solely to defeating the Thatcher government. It is also clear that elements within the CPGB feel that even this is not going far enough. The effective liquidation of the Labour Party is their goal too, and its replacement by a broad coalition of anti-Tory parties.

Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today*, summed up the liquidators' case: 'Let us consider all the options, including mergers, a name change, abandoning democratic centralism, modernisation, having different forms of membership, thinking in terms of looser association, rather than a party.'

The mass movement against the Stalinist bureaucracies in Eastern Europe has clearly been the signal for Jacques and the CPGB

majority leadership to question whether they're even socialists, never mind Marxists. 'We are required to rethink what we mean by capitalism and socialism, what we mean by capitalist and socialist countries. The Berlin Wall must come down in our minds,' Jacques told the delegates. He also hinted that the CPGB was moving on parallel lines to the Italian CP which is applying to join the reformist Second International in 1990.

Speakers in the debate repudiated Lenin's contribution to Marxism. The theory of the state, the nature of the imperialist epoch and the necessity for a revolutionary party based on a Marxist scientific outlook all came under attack.

Gordon McLennan, the retiring CPGB general secretary, has been in the

forefront of the attempt to equate Leninism with Stalinism. He told *The Independent* on November 25 that Lenin, as well as Stalin, had done great damage to the development of Marxism. Looking forward to the end of the one-party state in East Germany, he said: 'If socialism cannot be won at the ballot box, I wonder whether it is worth having.'

Dedicated anti-Trotskyist Monty Johnstone spoke for those who still retain the perspective that working class organisations are the best place for practising old-style treachery in these 'new times': 'The development and strengthening of united work with other sections of the labour and democratic movement . . . is crucial . . . The possibility of future affiliation to the Labour Party retains its validity.'

Withdraw emergency ambulance cover!

By Jon Bearman

THE IRON determination of ambulance crews to fight for a pay increase and improvements in conditions is posing a serious problem for the Tory government. It has gained them the overwhelming support of the working class and wide support even among the middle class and Tory voters.

The Labour and trade union leaders, however, in line with their own view that secondary action is illegal, have not lifted a finger to extend the action to other sections of the working class. Nor have they even attempted to unite ambulance crews with other health workers and do battle against the Tory preparations for the back-door privatisation of the NHS.

The leaders of NUPE and the T&GWU, the unions which organise ambulance staff, have not called a single national demonstration. Instead, they have managed the dispute as a publicity campaign, with press conferences every day announcing statistics about people dying as a result of management action and so forth. Ambu-



Ambulance workers assemble for a demonstration in London on November 18

lance crews have been encouraged to carry out an emergency-only service while suspended and receiving no pay – in order to win a propaganda battle with management! On this basis, even Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis (remember him, the general secretary of the TUC?) can give their 'support' to the ambulance workers.

Not only have national union leaders done everything possible to stifle the militancy of their members, but the chief union negotiator, NUPE's Roger Poole, has offered to sell their right to strike in return for wage parity with higher-paid manual workers. Poole has also put forward the anti-union and very unpopular idea of mass resignations in place of industrial action – a tactic that had to be quickly dropped.

While the Thatcher government went from one crisis to another, Poole offered, in his own words, 'very, very

substantial concessions'. Although the union negotiators still demanded an improvement on the 6.5 per cent pay offer, they dropped demands for a shorter working week, and rises in pay and more holidays linked to long service. Ever 'reasonable', they offered to accept binding arbitration from the government-sponsored conciliation service, ACAS. The concessions came at a time when attempts to use troops and mass suspensions against the action had clearly backfired, and when a hardening of the dispute could have been used to maximum advantage.

The crews have shown their willingness to step up the action by enforcing a nationwide ban on non-emergency calls, on top of the original overtime ban. They have been given support by ambulance controllers in London who first defied management instructions by passing emergency calls on to the suspended

crews and later, despite Roger Poole's urgent requests not to, went out on strike. Nationally, ambulance stations have been occupied to prevent the army from removing equipment essential to their work. In Glasgow, crews withdrew emergency cover and staged an all-out strike on December 1-2.

The action in Glasgow, carried out in the teeth of fierce opposition from the T&GWU – the main union representing ambulance workers in Scotland – points the way forward for the dispute.

Ambulance workers all over the country must follow the Glasgow example and launch an all-out strike. They must demand that the union negotiating team and the NUPE and T&GWU leaderships fully support their action. Rank-and-file strike committees must be set up in every area to co-ordinate the running of the dispute and to forge links with other workers under attack.

FUNDS

The Beijing massacre, strikes in the Soviet Union, the rising threat of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe . . . the roller-coaster crisis of Stalinism poses in the sharpest way the need to build a new revolutionary leadership of the working class on an international scale. Only Trotskyism can resolve the crisis of leadership, overthrow Stalinism, and replace its bureaucratic perversion of 'socialism' with genuine workers' democracy.

You can help Workers News in this fight by a regular donation to its **£300 Monthly Fund** and by speeding up the **£10,000 Building Fund**, which stands at £1,773.75. Let's reach the £2,000 mark without delay. Post your donations to:

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National agreements under attack in Kent

LOCAL government employers are bringing forward plans for the destruction of national negotiating machinery in an attempt to smash trade union-organised resistance to cuts in jobs and services. Tory-controlled Kent County Council is replacing annually negotiated pay and weighting supplements with individual contracts which tie wage increases to productivity.

By Ian Harrison

Kent County Council is the largest local government employer yet to attempt to break away from national local government negotiating agreements. Following the settlement of this year's pay claim, KCC's 11,500 administrative and clerical graded staff received notification on October 5 that they would be required to sign individual contracts abandoning their collective negotiating rights if they wished to receive a pay offer of 8.9 per cent on April 1, 1990.

The increase, which is non-negotiable, is subject to cash limits and based on KCC's estimate of 'market forces'. New grading arrangements are being introduced, adding three points to the bottom of each grade below the nationally agreed minimum. KCC is relying on the majority of its employees, who are not organised by the local government union NALGO, and the 20 per cent per year turnover of staff, to impose the deal. It is known that other local government employers - including Berkshire, Bromley, Redbridge and Bexley - are ready to pursue similar plans if KCC is successful.

The move by KCC, essentially aimed at breaking the militancy of local NALGO branches, reveals how false were the claims made by NALGO's national leaders that the outcome of this year's pay campaign was a 'victory' for local government workers.

When the NALGO leaders called off industrial action, they not only abandoned their mandate to fight for a 12 per cent rise but undermined industrial action which would have become a focus for public and private sector workers anxious to smash the Tory government's pay policy. The reason for their doing so is not hard to find. Dominated by Labour Party right-wingers and Communist Party of Great Britain Stalinists, NALGO's national negotiating committee was frightened by the groundswell of support for the strike during a time of deepening crisis for the Tories. The last thing it wanted to see was the growth of a mass movement against the Tories which would place uncomfortable demands on the entire Labour and trade union leadership.

The negotiating committee also abandoned promises to deal nationally with employers who made deductions from striking workers' pay packets beyond the agreed formula. After the campaign was called off, branches were informed that they had to resolve matters with employers on a local basis.

Now that the employers have gone over to the offensive, the logic of the retreat called by NALGO's negotiators asserts itself with full force. Faced with KCC's decision to tear up the collective bargaining rights of its employees, the local Joint Shop Stewards' Committee called for a national campaign. The stewards based

their plans for action on the policy of the national local government service conditions committee which explicitly opposes 'negotiation of any dilution of national agreements'.

The first obstacle facing the stewards was a motion drawn up by local branch and full-time officers calling on members to accept KCC's plans and 'negotiate from within'. The motion, opposed by the joint stewards' committee, was moved at the branch AGM by Jim White of NALGO's National Executive Council. Attacking the stewards' calls for a national campaign backed by local strike action, White claimed that opposition to KCC's attacks was 'not sustainable'. NALGO 'cannot afford to play the ostrich and bucket of sand game, having our posterior exposed to the public gaze', he said. The branch had no right to call on NALGO to mount a national campaign because it 'only organised 33 per cent of KCC's staff... the members in local government are not going to make the grand revolution for your branch'. He went on to make plain that the national service conditions committee would have to be reconvened and forced to abandon its policy of no negotiations which undermined national conditions of service. That was 'the politics of the flat earth society'. White stated.

Faced with a joint assault on their rights from KCC and national and local officers of NALGO, the meeting voted, on the lowest-ever turnout of members, to reject the stewards' call for action and accept the illusion of 'negotiations from within'.

Similar moves to put an end to national wage negotiating are underway in the NHS, inspired by the Department of Health. The same AGM of Kent County NALGO Branch voted unanimously in support of a motion, initiated by Bloomsbury Health Branch, calling for an emergency national delegate conference to defend trade union recognition agreements within the NHS. However, the District Organisation Officer, Paul Godwin, promptly ruled the vote out of order, claiming the meeting had become inoperative.

30,000 miners' jobs to go

THE TORIES are about to launch another savage assault on miners' jobs and working conditions with the dual purpose of feather-bedding electricity privatisation and preparing the coal industry for its eventual sell-off after the next general election.

According to cabinet minutes leaked to the press at the end of October, the government is to force British Coal to cut its prices to world levels over five years, and to reduce its sales to the electricity generating industry by 15 million tonnes a year for the next three years.

This is to be achieved by



THE FUNERAL of Siho Iyigüven, the Kurdish refugee from Turkey who died after mounting a protest against Home Office attempts to deport him, took the form of a demonstration from Hackney to central London on October 28,

organised by the Kurdish Workers' Association.

The 2,500-strong march was almost entirely composed of Kurdish and Turkish workers, revealing the hollowness of the British Labour and TUC

leaders' claim to oppose the government's policy of expelling those they term 'economic' refugees. Siho Iyigüven died on October 5 after setting fire to the bedding in his cell at Harmondsworth Detention Centre. He

had been held there for four months, and had already been on hunger strike. His cell-mate, Dogan Arslan, received serious burns.

The march was prevented by police from approaching Westminster.

ABORTION/EMBRYO RESEARCH

Fight for a woman's right to choose!

By Lizzy Ali

ONCE again the right of a woman to choose whether or not she has a child is under attack. In 1988, Liberal MP David Alton's private member's bill, which set out to reduce the time limit for abortions from 28 weeks to 18 weeks, ran out of parliamentary time. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, however, is sponsored by the Tory government and is therefore assured of a hearing in the current session of parliament.

The Bill, which arises out of the 1984 Warnock Report, will either limit embryo research to 14 days or ban it altogether. The immediate threat to the 28-week limit on carrying out abortions comes from proposed amendments to the Bill when it reaches the House of Commons. Led by Tory MP Ann Winterton, the misnamed 'pro-life' group of parliamentarians (most of them known at other times

for their enthusiastic support for the return of capital punishment) are seeking, like Alton, to impose an upper limit of 18 weeks. They see their amendment as a springboard to a total ban on both embryo research and abortions. By linking the two subjects together, they hope to whip up an emotive campaign based on prejudice and ignorance.

Embryo research offers the prospect of significant medical advances both in the treatment of infertility in women and in the detection of foetal abnormalities. It is as much a woman's right to choose to become pregnant - and to expect the maximum protection for her, and her child's, future health - as it is to have an abortion. Even if MPs decide that research on live embryos is permissible up to 14 days after fertilisa-

tion and the Bill is passed unamended, the central argument of the 'pro-lifers' - that an embryo is a form of human life entitled to the same 'rights' as the mother - will have been accepted, making future attempts to limit or ban abortions more likely to succeed.

In the United States, Republican candidates backed by the 'pro-life' lobby attempted to turn November's state elections into a referendum for or against abortions, and George Bush recently used the presidential veto to prevent public funds being used to carry out abortions on rape and incest victims.

On both sides of the Atlantic, banging the moral majority drum serves the same reactionary purpose. The 'defence of family life' and the 'sanctity of human life' - those favourite values of capitalist politicians - are the cynical cover behind which fresh attacks are brought forward every day against working class families, single parents and children in the shape of unemployment, poverty, homelessness, the abolition of child care facilities and the closure of hospitals.

On one level, when Thatcher describes the family as the basis of the nation she is merely voicing the age-old recognition by the ruling class of the inseparable connection between private property and the family; at another level, of course, it is about as sincere as her determination to 'defend' the workers of South African townships against the effects of sanctions.

It is, above all, working class women who will suffer if the 'pro-lifers' get their

way, either by being forced to bring up children they cannot support or at the hands of the back-street abortionists.

The struggle against the dangerous implications of the embryo Bill and the attempt to use it as a Trojan Horse to undermine the 1967 Abortion Act cannot be left in the hands of the parliamentary opposition. The Labour leaders have no reservations about the main provisions of the Bill, and are confining themselves to making the 'pro-life' amendment procedurally impossible by introducing their own Abortion Act 1967 Amendment Bill into the House of Lords. This seeks a 24-week upper limit on abortions, and since the convention in the House of Lords is that the same issue cannot be dealt with in two Bills, the Labourites hope the 'pro-life' amendment will fail.

The 24-week limit would, according to a shadow cabinet spokesman, 'put an end to this 18-week lunacy'. But in proposing this compromise, which is accepted by the government, the medical establishment and David Steel, who framed the original legislation, the Labour leaders are lending their support to the first breach in the 1967 Act.

Working class organisations must fight alongside women's groups for the right of free abortion on demand. They must reject parliamentary pressure tactics and calls to wait for a Labour government, and build a militant campaign of mass protests and demonstrations throughout the country to defend the gains won under the 1967 Act and defeat the Tory attack on women's rights.

No to capitalist restoration! For the political revolution!

UNPRECEDENTED struggles have broken out throughout Eastern Europe. In rapid succession Communist Party leaders, and entire leaderships, have been forced to resign in the face of massive popular demonstrations. In East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, Stalinism stands thoroughly discredited. With the exception of Bulgaria, the Stalinist leaderships in these countries have relinquished the 'leading role of the Communist Party' in a desperate attempt to stave off their own political extinction. In all the deformed workers' states, particularly in Eastern Europe, workers stand at a turning point in history. Despite the Stalinists' attempts to cobble together coalition governments in order to defend their bureaucratic privileges, the future must lie down one of two roads: either the political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy, or the restoration of capitalism.

'A new era of freedom'

Throughout the capitalist West, politicians and the media have ecstatically greeted these upheavals as representing 'a new era of freedom', 'the collapse of the Soviet empire', etc. Behind the touching concern of Bush, Thatcher, Kohl and Mitterrand for 'human rights' and 'democracy' lies the instinct of a group of vultures eager to regain the workers' states of Eastern Europe for capitalist exploitation. At the same time, Western leaders are frightened that the anti-bureaucratic revolt will turn into a working class insurrection, which far from aiding them, would be a mortal blow to their attempts to restore capitalism. Thatcher has on several occasions stressed the need for 'stability' in Eastern Europe and for evolutionary rather than revolutionary change. Moreover, the imperialists are less than keen to pick up the bill for propping up the East European economies, as Lech Walesa found out during his recent international tour. Set against the scale of Poland's \$40 billion foreign debt, the Western aid on offer amounts to a drop in the ocean.

Origin of the Stalinist states

The roots of the present crisis lie in the bureaucratic overtures of capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe carried out by the Soviet bureaucracy after the Second World War. In 1944-45, as the German forces retreated, it was the Red Army that provided the 'bodies of armed men' forming the backbone of the state apparatuses constructed in what, according to the terms of a deal struck with imperialism, was the Soviet bureaucracy's sphere of influence. Initially Stalin's

policy was to establish a series of buffer states which would provide both political allies for Moscow and also the resources necessary to revive the war-shattered Soviet economy. Coalition governments were established in which the local Stalinists, while holding the forces of state repression in their own hands, co-operated with bourgeois parties in maintaining the existing property relations. Any attempts by the masses to overthrow their exploiters were suppressed. But with the onset of the Cold War, and the natural inclination of the property-owning classes in the Eastern bloc to side with the imperialist enemy, Stalin moved to expropriate them, thereby bringing the property relations in those countries into line with those of the degenerated workers' state in the Soviet Union.

This expropriation was carried out by almost entirely bureaucratic means. With the partial exception of Czechoslovakia, where armed workers loyal to the Communist Party were mobilised to assist the Stalinist seizure of power in 1948,

STATEMENT BY THE WORKERS NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

Moreover, in a system which has proved itself incapable of ensuring an adequate supply of basic consumer goods to the masses, the principle of economic planning does not necessarily appear as a gain to be defended. The temptation must arise to throw out the planned economy along with the bureaucrats responsible for its mismanagement.

The nature of the opposition

For over four decades the Stalinist apparatus of repression has crushed every oppositional movement in the working class. The result is that the leading role in the opposition movements has been taken by the middle class. In Czechoslovakia, intellectuals, students, artists, writers and accidental figures dominate the Civic Forum, which openly declares for the restoration of capitalism.

achieve through negotiation with the crumbling Stalinist government. But its programme of socialism-in-half-a-country, which offers no perspective for the revolutionary reunification of Germany, fails to address sentiments among the masses for national unity and thus encourages demands for reunification on a capitalist basis.

The example of Poland stands as a warning of the dangers of 'political freedom' being tied to a programme of capitalist restoration. The result of the workers' long and bitter struggle against Stalinism has been the formation of a 'democratic' government dominated by Catholic reactionaries, who are collaborating with the likes of the Adam Smith Institute and Thatcher's former personal adviser, Sir Alan Walters, in drawing up plans for the privatisation of the economy. And Lech Walesa, a figure who still commands considerable influence in the Polish working

groupings. Like their Soviet counterparts, East European workers are hostile to the argument that the price of 'democracy' is unemployment, wage cuts and drastic price increases.

This is not to say that the collective strength of the working class has had no impact on the present crisis. In the GDR in October, it was the threat of workers taking industrial action in support of the anti-government protests which produced a split in the Stalinist leadership, forcing the regime to abandon violent confrontation with the demonstrators in favour of a policy of conciliation, and leading directly to the sacking of Honecker. The two-hour general strike in Czechoslovakia on November 27, despite the limitations imposed on it by the Civic Forum leaders, also made a powerful contribution to undermining the position of the Stalinist governments. But the East European working class has not as yet emerged as an independent political force, able to establish its own class leadership over the anti-Stalinist

the backing of the Soviet bureaucracy at present for a Tiananmen Square solution, and unable to muster any significant popular support, the East European 'Communist' Parties have entered a process of rapid decomposition. The stagnation of the bureaucratically-planned economies further saps their confidence in the viability of the system they leech off. The bureaucracy cannot transform itself in its entirety into a capitalist class (although individual bureaucrats can hope to become politicians, state officials or even capitalists themselves in a reconstructed bourgeois society). But the bureaucracy can open the door to governments committed to the restoration of capitalism. Such a government is already in place in Poland, while Hungary looks set to follow suit after next year's general election. No section of the bureaucracy is capable of defending the nationalised property relations of the workers' states. Only the working class can accomplish this task.

Programme of action for political revolution

- Formation of workers' councils composed of democratically elected delegates from every workplace!
- Arming of the working class against the threat of police-military repression. Build workers' militias!
- Block the road to capitalist restoration!
- Defend nationalised property! Down with bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy! For a democratically controlled workers' plan to meet the economic crisis!
- Workers' control of production by elected shop floor committees!
- Build independent trade unions!
- Legalise all parties which accept workers' democracy!
- Workers' tribunals to uncover the corruption of the bureaucracy, to review all cases of imprisonment or execution for political offences and to try those responsible for abuses!
- For an end to bureaucratic privileges! No state official to earn more than the average wage of a skilled worker!
- End political censorship! For a genuinely free media under workers' control!
- For a full programme of womens' rights!
- For state aid to small farmers and workers' control of state farms!
- Full political rights for soldiers! Build soldiers' committees!
- For a government based on workers' councils!



Mass demonstration in East Germany in November

these social overturns were imposed by methods which rejected any reliance on the independent action of the working class. The post-capitalist states which took shape under Soviet domination were not, therefore, the direct outcome of a genuine proletarian revolution which subsequently degenerated, as was the case in the Soviet Union; rather, they were bureaucratically deformed in their very origins.

Trotsky wrote that the socialist revolution in the Soviet Union, despite the betrayals of Stalinism, lived on in the consciousness of the masses. Precisely because the working class played no independent role in the smashing of capitalism in Eastern Europe, its attitude to the nationalised property relations is more ambivalent.

Whilst Civic Forum conducts a dialogue with the Stalinist 'reformers', it has resisted mobilising the working class in anything but token strike action. The opposition in Hungary, which seems certain to secure a majority in the parliamentary elections next spring, has a no less right-wing political complexion. The Hungarian Democratic Forum is a populist-nationalist formation, with distinct anti-Semitic overtones, but is nonetheless attacked by its rival, the even more pro-capitalist Alliance of Free Democrats, for being soft on communism. The New Forum group, the largest within the East German opposition, is formally committed to maintaining 'socialism' within a parliamentary-democratic system, an aim it hopes to

class, has been touring the United States and Western Europe appealing to businessmen to buy up his country's state-owned industry, emphasising in his sales-pitch that the low wages earned by Polish workers will allow large profits to be made.

The response of the workers

Despite the hatred of the working class throughout Eastern Europe for the Stalinist bureaucracies, and workers' participation in the mass demonstrations in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, considerable suspicion remains in relation to the 'market reforms' proposed by many of the opposition

opposition movements.

Stalinism with a human face?

It is clear that no amount of reformist manoeuvring by 'liberal' sections of the bureaucracy can resolve the social crisis in the interests of the working class. Every experience of anti-bureaucratic struggles, from Hungary 1956 to Czechoslovakia 1968 and Poland 1970-71, underlines this essential truth. Although these Stalinist regimes have, at least temporarily, renounced their traditional methods of police-military repression, the political trajectory of pro-reform currents in the bureaucracy is overwhelmingly to the right. Without

Unstable coalition rules India after Gandhi is ousted

DESPITE carrying out widespread intimidation of voters and ballot box stuffing during the November general election, the Congress (I) party under Rajiv Gandhi failed to get an absolute majority in the Indian parliament for only the second time in over 40 years.

Congress saw its representation in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, or lower house, fall from the 415 seats it won five years ago to just 192. Its main rival, the National Front, finished with 144 seats but also did badly, especially in the south. The right-wing Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party made huge gains in the northern Hindi-speaking states at Congress's expense, increasing its number of MPs from 2 to 88. The Stalinists and various left-wing groups took 51 seats.

Gandhi's landslide win in 1984 followed the assassination of his mother, Indira, and was fought on a 'clean government' programme. But his own administration was riddled with corruption. Of over 100 scandals, the most spectacular has been that surrounding the Bofors deal of 1986, in which it is said that £50 million was paid in bribes to Congress politicians in order to win a contract for armaments worth £715 million.

Behind the political turmoil which the election result reflects lie all the unresolved problems of this vast semi-colonial country: problems which are based on its economic domination by imperialism and the resulting weak-

ness of the Indian ruling class.

While its economy is growing overall at a rate of 9 per cent a year, fuelled by foreign investment which is increasing by some £500 million a year and rising, India has an external debt of \$46.4 billion and its development is very uneven. The huge and backward agrarian sector is in crisis, made substantially worse by the drought of 1987 which cut agricultural production by up to 50 per cent in some areas.

Inflation, which has particularly affected basic commodities – with the price of sugar doubling in a year – has provoked many sections of the working class to strike for

higher pay. India's 125,000 dock workers struck in April for a 28 per cent rise in line with other public sector workers. However, while organised workers have been able to keep pace with inflation to some extent, others have not. Unemployment is rising and wages have fallen substantially in real terms in rural areas.

The national question remains outstanding in Kashmir, Assam and for the Gurkhas in Darjeeling, and inter-communal conflict has led to the states of Punjab and Karnataka coming under direct rule from Delhi.

The government which emerges from this election will inevitably be a government of crisis. The National Front, a grouping of seven



Congress (I) rally in Muzassarnagar

capitalist parties, is dominated by the Janata Dal party, led by the populist demagogue V.P. Singh who broke away from Congress last year. The National Front has no programme other than 'anti-corruption', and has been the scene of a bitter factional struggle as to who should be its parliamentary leader. It was several days after the election result before V.P. Singh was elected to the post. He was finally sworn in as prime minister on December 1 and asked to form a coalition government.

But the National Front cannot rule alone. Its main props will be the two Stalinist parties, the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India and the pro-Beijing Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Such an unstable coalition, united only in its opposition to Congress and Gandhi, will deepen the ethnic and religious divisions in India, and resolve none of the urgent questions facing the working class and poor peasants.



Rajiv Gandhi



V.P. Singh

The united front in Sri Lanka

An open letter to Mike Head of the Socialist Labour League (Australia)

Dear Comrade,
Your article 'C. Slaughter: Handmaiden of Counterrevolution', reproduced in the *International Worker*, September 30, accuses 'every remnant' of the WRP of lining up 'openly as handmaidens of the capitalist state and fascists' against the RCL. Sri Lankan section of the ICFI. This is indeed a serious charge.

As you know, I am sure, the WIL does not lay claim to any part of the 'heritage' of the SLL/WRP. No doubt, however, you include us in your sweeping denunciation.

Although your tendency has a record of ignoring our correspondence, refusing to reply to our detailed criticism of David North's book 'The Heritage We Defend' and approving physical assaults on our members, we will charitably assume that it is ignorance rather than malice which leads you to make this allegation.

In Workers News No.14, we drew attention to the murders of RCL members P.H. Gunapala and R.A. Pitawala. 'Pitawala was singled out for assassination,' we wrote, 'because he had refused to join anti-Tamil demonstrations organised by the JVP at gunpoint and had campaigned in his village for the policies of the RCL.'

In case you attempt to twist our words, we will state unequivocally: **we unconditionally defend the RCL and all other working class tendencies against murder, physical assault and arrest, whether from the JVP or the UNP regime.** We also support the call for the formation of a workers' militia and action committees. Moreover, despite our considerable political differences, we are prepared to take part with your British section, the ICP, in pickets, demonstrations, etc., in defence of the RCL and other Sri Lankan militants.

We have every reason to suspect, however, that the purpose of the ICP's campaign in Britain, and that of the SLL in Australia, is not to seek joint action with other workers' organisations, but is a pretext to slander political opponents.

First the ICP calls on the international working class and the labour and trade union movement to defend the RCL. Then it mounts

unadvertised pickets of the Sri Lankan High Commission on its own. Finally it denounces opponents for not supporting its campaign.

This does not prevent the ICP from canvassing the support of bureaucrats such as Sam McCluskie for the united front in Sri Lanka – 'support' which binds the signatories to do absolutely nothing. Meanwhile, the ICP regularly calls for the immediate expulsion of the McCluskies of this world from the labour movement. Behind this bizarre conception of the united front tactic is the view inherited from Healy that it is solely applicable to the threat of fascism.

A similar method guides your tendency's practice in relation to China. Instead of fighting for a class line within the major demonstrations, pickets, among the Chinese community, etc., the ICP mounts its own belated picket – seven-strong plus photographer – of the Chinese embassy, and writes that the Stalinists refused to accept a letter because 'they saw in it the threatened destruction of their own regime within the programme advanced by the Fourth International'. If your British section chooses to inhabit a fantasy world, that is its own business. But it is of a piece with the proposal that your own organisation should fight for the affiliation of the Australian miners to the ICFI. All of these positions have a common origin in the Third Period of the Comintern.

Finally, you are wrong to designate Cliff Slaughter as a counter-revolutionary. Like you he is a centrist, with this difference – that whereas the WRP/Workers Press oscillates between opportunism and sectarianism, you have taken your sectarianism seriously. Before you accuse others of colluding with the semi-colonial bourgeoisie, it would be better if you opened the books on your own organisation's fundraising expedition to Libya.

If, despite appearances to the contrary, you are in favour of joint actions in defence of the RCL and other militants, do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours fraternally,
Philip Marchant
Editor, Workers News

BRAZIL

PT moves right after winning workers' vote

By Eugene Ludlow

THE SUPPORT gained by the Workers Party in the preliminary round of Brazil's first presidential elections for 29 years reflects a rising tide of militancy in the country's huge working class.

The Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – the PT) came second in the November 15 ballot, earning the right to take part in the run-off on December 17 against the bourgeois National Reconstruction Party (PRN). The final result saw the PT candidate, Luis Inacio 'Lula' da Silva, ahead of Leonel Brizola of the Democratic Labour Party by about 250,000 votes and some 8.8 million votes behind the PRN's Fernando Collor de Mello. Mario Covas, the Social Democrat Party candidate, came fourth with almost eight million votes.

An admirer of Margaret Thatcher and an ex-governor of the state of Alagoas, Collor is the candidate of the big business community, and has announced his readiness

to implement a sweeping privatisation programme (except for oil and electricity) in the name of 'efficiency'. In other words, a PRN government would mean thousands of redundancies in order to boost profits and attract investment. Hatched out of the collapse of President Jose Sarney's Brazilian Democratic Movement Party after the defeats of the November 1988 municipal elections, the PRN under Collor represents a new generation within the ruling class determined to hang on to its inordinate wealth and luxurious lifestyle at the expense of the millions of workers and landless peasants, many of whom are unemployed, homeless and undernourished, with no right to health care or education.

The Workers Party was formed in 1979, and draws most of its growing 600,000 membership from among industrial workers. The majority of its leaders emerged during the strikes of the late 1970s, others had been active in the struggle for land rights for poor peasants. Its gains in last year's municipal elec-

tions – it now controls over half the main industrial centres of Brazil – marked an attempt by workers to put forward a leadership which would fight Sarney's vicious austerity measures and defend their living standards against the ravages of hyperinflation.

Prior to these elections, PT leader Erundina de Souza (now mayor of Sao Paulo) was calling publicly for 'armed struggle' to bring about the socialist revolution. She has now moderated her tone somewhat, calling for the support of the business community in resolving the city's problems and declaring that 'realistically... the conditions for socialism do not exist in Sao Paulo today'. This in a city which can overshadow, in terms of the opulence of the few, any in the US, while at the same time permitting 'clean-up' death-squads to roam the streets murdering children cast out by parents too impoverished to keep them.

Indeed, Lula himself, the 'firebrand' ex-factory worker who committed the PT to an immediate moratorium on

Brazil's \$114 billion foreign debt with the promise to 'pick a fight on an international scale with our creditors', is now wooing middle class supporters of the Social Democrat Party and what he terms 'progressive' businessmen. The PT leadership, meanwhile, describes the main task facing the working class as 'the campaign to lead Lula to presidency'.

The rightward shift of the PT is certain to gather speed as it attempts to marshal the votes cast for Brizola and Covas behind Lula. Its apparent hard line on the foreign debt is a fraud: the solution for the working class is not a moratorium – something which even reformists and bourgeois nationalists occasionally threaten – but its complete repudiation. Brazilian workers must demand that the PT carries out the mandate given to it in both the municipal and presidential elections to fight for socialist policies. The struggle against the betrayals of the PT leadership can provide the conditions for the building of a mass Trotskyist party in Brazil.

IN MARCH and April 1987, when *Workers Press* published a series of articles on the Simon Bolivar Brigade (SBB), reprinted from *Working Class Opposition* (journal of the Internationalist Workers Party, US section of the LIT), we held our peace. We supposed that the author (or authors) of these articles was suffering from memory lapses or else did not have complete information about the SBB.

But the article appearing in *Workers Press* of 11 July under the name of Leon Perez compels us to break our silence. Comrade Perez is wont to say that the truth is revolutionary; and this principle we will keep in mind as befits revolutionaries. However, truth has principles of its own: it cannot be partial, truncated, distorted.

And so we shall set out some facts and highlight some of the contradictory statements and positions put forward in the above-mentioned articles. We demand answers to the questions we raise, and too bad if it upsets the susceptibilities of certain people.

Let us begin then with cde Leon Perez's article in *WP* of 11 July. He states: 'The Trotskyists of the SBIB proposed to the working class and the oppressed people of Nicaragua to advance towards a proletarian revolution.'

But is this not a self-evident task for those claiming to be Trotskyists? We should make clear that the Liga Marxista Revolucionaria and the Grupo Revolucion Socialista (two organisations in sympathy with the USec at that time) put forward exactly the same slogan.

The SBIB proposed to expand the revolution to the rest of Central America, particularly to El Salvador and Guatemala.'

The question arises of the adventurist nature of such a demand: can a brigade, which has come from outside and uninvited (we shall return to this) advance such a slogan which cuts right across the guerrilla organisations already engaged in armed struggle against the dictatorships of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala? Who was this demand addressed to? Who was to launch this initiative? But unfortunately, it seems that cde Perez is romancing and the SBB never proposed this at all; its political concern was with Nicaragua alone and none of the documents in our possession refer to anything like this.

The SBIB proposed to expropriate imperialism and the national bourgeoisie.'

Once again, we have found nothing of the kind in our sources. Comrade Perez, substantiate your assertions.

The SBIB organised unions and working-class militants with the objective of advancing workers' democracy and the self-organisation of the working class and the peasantry.'

It is a fact that the SBB did organise some unions and assisted others which had sprung up spontaneously. The Brigade carried out a policy of dual affiliation of unions: both to the SBB and to the Sandinista Workers Centre. The FSLN 'normalised' this situation by expelling the SBB. But the Brigade's policy was limited to setting a better standard of union militancy and to taking up the spontaneous demands of the workers - as we shall show later.

Let us continue quoting Leon Perez's article, still in *WP* of 11 July.

The SBIB proposed an immediate agrarian reform and distribution of the land among the peasantry.'

This demand was indeed put forward by the Bolshevik Faction, but not, to our knowledge, by the SBB.

The SBIB proposed the right of self-determination for the ethnic and racial minorities of the Atlantic coast.'

Neither the Bolshevik Faction nor the SBB proposed such a policy. Or perhaps our documentation is at fault?

The SBIB demanded that bourgeois leaders such as Eden Pastora, Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo be sacked from the government.'

If this demand (without including Pastora however) did emanate from the Bolshevik Faction, it was certainly never the public position of the SBB. More accurately, the Bolshevik Faction proposed the constitution of an FSLN government without the bourgeoisie. Yet let us recall that, at the time the SBB was in Nicaragua, Eden Pastora himself as one of the FSLN leaders negotiated the integration of the Brigadists as individual fighters into the FSLN forces on the southern front. It was thanks to Pastora and Plutarco Hernandez, who was later expelled as an 'adventurer' by the FSLN, that the Bolshevik Faction could say that the SBB had been recognised by the FSLN.

Today cde Perez invokes a letter from the PSR (Colombia), in which this organisation refuses to permit its

internal bulletins to be used in the SBB controversy. Strange conjunction. At the time in 1979, the Bolshevik Faction and the PST(C) treated the PSR leaders as vermin ('gusanos', cowards and pro-Somocistas - *Intercontinental Press*, 10/9/79). Now, paradoxically, in his *WP* article, cde Perez does not deny at all the reports published by the PSR in their paper at the time. How about it, cde Perez, are you going to deny them?

The *Working Class Opposition* articles, reprinted by *Workers Press* in March and April of this year, need, in our opinion, considerable clarification. Indeed, we put it to you that the SBB was not present in Nicaragua in December 1978. According to our sources, the SBB was formed after the press conference held by the PST in Bogota on 13 June 1979, that is to say after the beginning of the FSLN's final offensive and the general strike. After negotiating with Pastora the individual incorporation of the Brigadists into the FSLN, these had their first engagement with the enemy on 2 July 1979. Somoza fled on 17 July.

The Brigade suffered a total of three dead and three wounded. We pay our respects to these fighters against imperialism and we shall continue to defend their honour as revolutionaries, just as we did at the time; but it would be unworthy to use them to block the drawing up of a balance sheet of the Brigade's history.

Let us return to the series 'Nicaragua and Internationalism' (*WP* 14/3/87). In this first part, we would like to draw attention to further inexactitudes, such as the statement:

'The FSLN issued a call to the solidarity movement to form international brigades to join the armed struggle against Somoza. Responding to this call, the PST of Colombia . . . formed the Simon Bolivar International Brigade . . .'

The FSLN issued no appeal for the formation of international brigades when it decided on its final offensive on 29/5/79, nor on the occasion of the general strike on 1/6/79. Its policy was from the outset determined by its political alliance with the anti-Somocista bourgeoisie. Only at the end of June, in the face of military difficulties and under pressure from foreign volunteer forces wishing to join its ranks, did the FSLN issue the appeal on 23, 25 and 26 June 1979 on Radio Sandino, of which we quote an extract:

'The manoeuvres of Yankee imperialism are aiming a blow against our people's triumph. A new intervention is being prepared against our country. Today more than ever is the militant solidarity of all honest men in the world needed to stop the jackboot of the invader from dishonouring our soil . . . The peoples of the world must rise up because an intervention in Nicaragua is an insult to liberty, a boundless affront to self-determination and independence.'

Appeal

'We appeal to all committees of solidarity with our people to reinforce their campaigns of denunciation of these interventionist manoeuvres prepared by the Yankees and their puppets . . . who see in our struggle a threat to their dictatorships. All solidarity committees with our people must put on alert the volunteers signed up in the different countries . . . These thousands of men and women must be prepared to join in the struggle . . .' ('Nicaragua: Reforma o Revolucion?', pp.188-9) (our emphasis).

Thus it was after 23 June that the FSLN issued this appeal; and it was in response to the threat of US military intervention that they took this initiative, calling on the different 'committees of solidarity with our people' to alert the volunteers and to prepare them to join in the struggle. It is apparent that the PST and the BF could not have formed the Brigade on 13 June in response to an appeal which did not go out until 23 June. In addition, the Brigade was formed before the Colombian solidarity committee was able to respond to the appeal; placed before a fait accompli, then, the committee recognised the SBB on 25 June 1979 ('Nicaragua', p.371).

Highly respected by all the combatants during the civil war, some observers give the credit for 10 per cent of all military actions against the National Guard during the period between December 1978 and July 1979 to the SBIB' (*Workers Press*, 14/3/87, column 2, paragraph 2).

'They bore the brunt of much of the fighting with the elite of National Guard forces . . .' (ibid., paragraph 3).

The Simon Bolivar Brigade

Questions for Comrades

'Many members of the Brigade were killed in these battles, many more were wounded . . .' (ibid., paragraph 4).

You can't be serious, comrade. This is pure fiction. After all, the SBB was first engaged on the southern front on 2 July and the operations ceased on 19 July. Of the 110 volunteers forming the Brigade, 40 were engaged in direct action against the enemy. By crediting the SBB with 10 per cent of the military actions, accomplished in the last two weeks, after the FSLN had been engaged in fighting against the National Guard for six months, you are posed with the following two questions:

(1) If this is true, then between December 1978 and July 1979 the FSLN did next to no fighting and the SBB did almost all the fighting, both in the firing line and behind it, with 110 volunteers, in those last two weeks. Remember that the SBB suffered three killed and three wounded. If we extrapolate the SBB's losses in relation to its 10 per cent of the military action, calculated over six months of fighting, we come to the conclusion that the FSLN's losses must be around 30 dead and the same number of wounded, which of course is anything but the case.

(2) Moreover, who are these 'some observers' mentioned by the author? How can one take them seriously when they report such tall tales, contradicted by all the facts?

To identify our sources, we have chiefly relied on the book edited by the Colombian PST 'Nicaragua: Reforma o Revolucion?' and dedicated to 'comrades Pijao, Biofilo and Roberto, internationalist militants who fell in the battle against the Somoza dictatorship and SBB volunteers, and to all those who gave their lives for a free Nicaragua'. The Colombian comrade Morales (Pijao) had formerly been a militant of the MOIR and later of Anapa Socialista; the Colombian comrade Ochoa Garcia (Biofilo) was an ex-militant of the Communist Party; and comrade Senqui (Roberto) from Nicaragua had no previous political history ('Nicaragua', pp.163-6). Of these three comrades killed in action, none was a member of the PST. The SBB was not a Trotskyist brigade and because of this was open to all volunteers no matter what party or ideology who were ready to fight in the ranks of the FSLN ('Nicaragua', p.151). We are not criticising the SBB's method of recruitment, we are simply stating the facts in order to re-establish the truth.

'After the victory over Somoza's forces the Simon Bolivar Brigade was responsible for organising more than 100 unions. It waged a resolute and uncompromising struggle against the bourgeois wing of the anti-Somoza insurrection, then led by Eden Pastora, Violeta de Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo' (still *Workers Press*, 14/3/87).

Two points on this passage: the continued exaggeration of the figures and an offence against the truth concerning the so-called uncompromising struggle against Eden Pastora.

It is true that when the Sandinistas expelled the non-Nicaraguan members of the SBB, they accused them among other things of having organised more than 70 unions in Managua. We can read the following in *El Socialista* No. 168 of 24/8/79 (reproduced in 'Nicaragua', p.419):

'Actually, the SBB claims the honour of having organised and assisted more than 70 unions (in reality nearer 80) and not only in Managua but also on the Caribbean coast - unions formed by big mass meetings, factory by factory.'

And a text of Camilo Gonzales ('Nicaragua', p.528), refers to: '... the formation of 92 unions or factory committees in order to construct the Sandinista Workers Centre'. The further we stray from the facts, the more the figures inflate themselves.

We have no need to deny that the SBB assisted or organised unions, but in our view it is incorrect to impute this movement towards organisation entirely to the SBB. This would be to deny that the popular masses and the workers had been involved in the revolution since before the fall of Somoza. They themselves spontaneously created dual power in the embryonic forms of militias, civil defence committees, production co-

THIS YEAR marks the tenth anniversary of the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. In the closing stages of the struggle, which brought the petty-bourgeois Sandinistas to power, the Simon Bolivar Brigade entered the country. This 'international brigade' was organised by Latin American supporters of Nahuel Moreno's 'Bolshevik Faction' of the so-called United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI).

When the Sandinista regime deported the SBB, the leadership of the USFI deserted its own 'comrades', having arrived at the conclusion that no 'Trotskyist' party was necessary in Nicaragua - the Sandinistas were doing the job. This support for the SBB's expulsion precipitated a split within the USFI, with Moreno posing as the 'orthodox' defender of Trotskyism and departing with the bulk of its Latin American forces. After a brief fusion with the tendency led by the French OCI, Moreno established the

operatives. They did not wait for the FSLN's entry into Managua before beginning themselves to liberate their city. And this process of self-organisation was not halted after victory, but on the contrary was reinforced. For example, 95 per cent of the defence committees were the direct product of this spontaneous process. It was in this context that the SBB operated. The Brigade did not dissolve itself after the fall of Somoza, it continued to affiliate trade unions to its military column!

This spontaneous process towards self-organisation of the masses is described in 'Nicaragua', page 307, 'Los trabajadores se organizan' (*El Socialista*, No. 165, 3/8/79); and page 321, 'Hacia la Gran Central Sandinista de los Trabajadores' (*El Socialista*, No. 166, 10/8/79), an extract of which reads thus: 'The majority of the unions and factory committees unified their demands and their methods of struggle in a near-spontaneous fashion' (p.322).

Alliance

Let us now make our second point about this passage, which concerns an offence against the truth. In fact, we allege that the SBB did not 'wage a resolute and uncompromising struggle' against Pastora, Chamorro and Robelo. How else can Leon Perez explain the significance of the SBB's interview with Robelo and Chamorro, members of the National Provisional Government (see photograph of this meeting published in *El Bogotano* of 4 July 1979)? At that time, Eden Pastora, el comandante Cero, was still part of the FSLN and neither the SBB nor the Bolshevik Faction voiced any criticism whatsoever against Pastora. The most the Bolshevik Faction said was that Chamorro's presence showed that there was an alliance with the bourgeoisie and that it was necessary to have a purely FSLN government (which logically would include Eden Pastora). Once again - what is the truth? Is cde Perez not on the way to rewriting history? Let us examine this 'uncompromising struggle' against the three members of the National Provisional Government from 20 July, when the NPG officially took over in Managua, until 20 August, when the SBB was expelled.

In June 1979, the co-ordinating committee of the Simon Bolivar International Brigade met with the General Staff of the FSLN to co-ordinate military operations on the southern front' (*WP*, 14/3/87).

Questions: Who were the leaders making up the SBB's co-ordinating committee? Were these Dario and Camilo Gonzales and also Kemel George? Why not name them? Is it because of their subsequent political trajectory? Moreover, the meeting mentioned took place on 19/6/79 and was not with the General Staff but with commander Felix of the southern front HQ and 'Commander' Plutarco Hernandez, at that time still spokesman for the FSLN. The southern front was controlled by the Terceristas, i.e. the Pastora-Ortega wing. The writer of the article quotes part of the press communique, saying the FSLN '... presented instructions for the activities of the Brigade . . .' but omits to finish the quote: '... considering that the timing of its incorporation in Nicaragua should be linked to the development of certain operations relating to the



Victorious Sandinista fighters enter Managua

military offensive. The commissariats shall remain in contact with the Southern Front and await further instructions' ('Nicaragua', p.155) (our emphasis).

The author then goes on to incorrectly quote part of a message from 'Commander' Plutarco Hernandez here is the correct quotation: 'In the same way, under my direct command members of the Brigade participated in forming combat lines which are engaged in action on the Southern Front under the command of the General Staff.' The rest of the quotation given by the author is not, in fact, part of 'Commander's' message at all. For the purposes of verification, the complete message is given in 'Nicaragua', p.159.

Immediately after that meeting, the Simon Bolivar International Brigade militarily regrouped all of its forces in co-ordination with the FSLN. In a joint effort . . .' (*WP*, 14/3/87).

Where on earth did the author get this from? We have seen that according to the letters of Eden Pastora and Hernandez of 27/6/79 ('Nicaragua', pp.159-60) it is clear that the SBB members could not go into action but had to await further instructions. This happened to be in Costa Rica at that time as were, by the way, the members of the Salvador Allende Brigade, organised by the Socialist Party (CPS) of Chile.

Regarding the human losses sustained by the SBB in the fighting, the author seems to be unaware of the fact that states that the SBB suffered heavy losses in the battle for the city of Managua. (See paragraph 4)

Simon Bolivar Brigade

Comrade L. Perez

International Workers League (LIT), with his own Argentinian group – now known as the MAS – as its major section.

The following document is by the **Leninist Trotskyist Tendency** (formerly the LOR of Belgium). It is a detailed refutation of the falsifications and mythology which the Morenoites have built up around the activities of the Simon Bolivar Brigade and answers a series of adulatory articles published in *Workers Press*. It was written in autumn 1987 as a challenge to Leon Perez, the representative of the MAS-LIT who was stationed in Britain conducting unity negotiations with the WRP/*Workers Press* group. The LIT did not reply to the document, while the WRP/*Workers Press* and its Preparatory Committee failed to circulate it, although members of the former Internationalist Faction of the WRP did. This is its first publication.



on July 19, 1979

and Pijao. They fell in an ambush of 16/7/79, while Biofilo was killed on 12/7/79 in the Masaya and Sapoa zone. The battles in these zones were in fact the only ones that SBB members participated in, and this as individuals in the FSLN ranks, not as Brigadists of the SBB. All the rest of column 5 of the article is in the realm of fiction. Apart from the SBB there were also the Chilean brigade, the 'Victoriano Lorenzo' Brigade from Panama and a Peruvian brigade formed by the PSR(ML). According to our sources, no member of the SBB took part in the battles for Leon, no more than in those for other towns such as Matagalpa, Chichigalpa etc. Out of consideration for his readers, the author should have consulted the report which the Bolshevik Faction compiled on the activities of the SBB.

Defence

The second part of the article begins by confusing the internationalists and the SBB. Most of the internationalist fighters had no link with the SBB. The author writes that SBB members encouraged the local population to organise civil defence committees; but in a text by Camilo Gonzales, one of the Brigade's leaders, we find the following: 'impulse for the organisation of SDC (Sandinista Defence Committees) in 8 areas of Managua and 6 towns in the rest of the country' ('Nicaragua', p.528). In the Bolshevik Faction's document, on page 14, under the title 'In Managua the Brigade is working for the development of the revolution', it is said that 'the Brigade

contains a large percentage of Nicaraguan comrades, and co-ordinates its main activities in the town quarters with the *responsible military authorities of the FSLN*, with the Sandinista defence committees at the centre' (our emphasis).

Regarding the work in the six towns such as Bluefields, the report of the Bolshevik Faction states (pp.14-15): 'For various reasons, including the fact that many Nicaraguans who have joined the SBB live in the inner regions with their families, the FSLN is sending Nicaraguan as well as international members of the SBB to the inner regions...'

In relation to the Sandinista Defence Committees, called 'civil defence committees' by the author (a false designation), which the SBB is supposed to have created, we should like to have tangible proofs. The 'Colina 50' part of the article and what follows are modelled on the first part: unacceptable! We recommend all those who do not rest content with sensational declarations to refer to the accounts of actual fighters in the book 'Nicaragua: Reforma o Revolucion?', pages 183, 186, 192-5, 200-6, 211-28.

The third section on the SBB's political strategy: we have already seen that, contrary to what the author claims, the SBB's orientation could not be determined by its members. In fact, the co-ordinating committee was formed before the SBB even raised any forces (cf. report of the BF, p.8).

Section 4: Can the author supply some details about the decision of the FSLN General Staff to attach members of the SBB to a personal security squad of the new provisional government? What was the SBB's attitude to the proposal to integrate some of its militants into a protection unit of a government defined by the SBB as bourgeois? Where and when did the SBB call for active support of the Nicaraguan people for the revolutionary masses of El Salvador?

In the third part, the author wrote: 'Immediately after 19 July, the SBIB sent groups of its members to organise the factory workers. Their first target was the imperialist companies' (column 1, paragraph 1).

The report of the Bolshevik Faction says (pp.15-16): 'The working class was missing... For two or three days (it) was slow to appear... (which was) enough in the end to make it clear (that) it would have to act in order to get its own independent organs: the unions, the factory committees, but the unions especially... The question produced the hoped-for shock, the working class began to move and to desperately seek out those who could help it find the right way for its organisation. The SBB, conscious of what was about to happen, went to 2 or 3 factories to measure the temperature (our emphasis). At the first factory visited, that of Plywood of Nicaragua in the Somocista capital... the workers had already formed their unions, but wanted to go further... After a mass meeting, the most determined ones from the factory formed a factory committee at the SBB's local and drew up a list of demands directed at the minister of industry... The minister accepted the list and the workers of this factory offered to devote their efforts to organising the rest of the workers in the area.'

The author goes on to quote a programme which he claims is the

SBB's programme for the new workers' organisations. Could he give us more complete information: where and when was this programme proposed; could we see the documentary evidence?

Under the heading 'The Simon Bolivar Brigade smashed a counter-revolutionary coup', it says: 'At the end of August a detachment of the Simon Bolivar International Brigade was sent to the Atlantic coast to the city of Bluefields...' (column 2, last paragraph).

Further questions arise here. Who sent the SBB detachment to the Atlantic coast? How was this at the end of August? Was not the SBB expelled from Nicaragua on 17 August?

The above-quoted BF Report (pp.6, 12, 13) specifically states that *in the first weeks of July*, 70 Brigade fighters were still waiting in Costa Rica. They were joined by a group of residents of Bluefields who were anti-Somocista but not members of the FSLN, and also by a group of Nicaraguans organised by the Political Commission and P. Hernandez.

Counter-attack

So a troop of 400 persons reaches Bluefields without firing a shot. Immediately upon their arrival, the fighters put on their feet militias and Sandinista Defence Committees. It was after the victory of Managua, then, that 400 fighters went into Bluefields and began organising militias and SDCs which the workers of this town had already put on their feet: 'During the first few days, the militants did not have the time to go to the working class; yet the working class quickly came on the scene.' After the workers had organised themselves and won their first victory, the Somocistas of Cucra Hill met with the bourgeois elements in Bluefields and launched a joint campaign against the workers' organisations in being. While the Sandinista commander wavered more and more, a bourgeois 'opponentist', Moises Arana, formed a 'government' with some of his sympathisers and demanded recognition from the FSLN. The inaction of the Sandinista commander and above all his attentive attitude towards this initiative from the political enemy increased confusion among working class partisans of the revolution. The priest and the bourgeois forces prepared the counter-attack. They hired mercenaries and put them forward as 'representatives' of the FSLN. Faced with this brutal manoeuvre, the Brigadists immediately demanded the disarmament of the mercenaries. The latter refused and left town. A few days later the shoot-out took place. The unified bourgeoisie entrenched themselves in the town hall and disposed of *over 80 weapons of all kinds*. They called for mobilisation in order to force the Brigadists to leave. They were answered by a counter-demonstration. It was during this demonstration that the armed confrontation took place which lasted three days. The pro-Somocistas fired indiscriminately, including on the Sandinista commander and workers in the street. The rebellion was put down. It must be noted that in this area the only known FSLN militants belonged to the SBB. The FSLN only had three resistance fighters who had come down from the mountains after Somoza's fall and who styled themselves 'commanders'.

Afterwards, the General Staff was formed consisting of three comrades, two of them from the SBB. When things began to calm down, a large Sandinista contingent came over from Puerto Cabezas, occupied Bluefields and re-took control of the situation.

So, is the presentation in this article correct? Moreover, the author omits to state that all the description of events is based on an interview with an SBB member, comrade Pacheco ('Nicaragua', p.398). Further, there is no mention in this article of a point of information necessary to politically comprehend the events described: namely that *the SBB was presenting itself as a brigade of the FSLN* (see photograph p.395, 'Nicaragua'). The author adds developments absent from the above-mentioned interview, in the section 'describing' the 'reaction of the bourgeois government and the FSLN', where he pretends that the role of the



A women's militia in the town of Bluefields, on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast

SBB was to put forward a revolutionary direction and that the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie saw in the SBB its most dangerous enemy. At Bluefields, just like elsewhere, *the SBB did no more than use the programmatic slogans of the FSLN itself*. This point is confirmed by the documents of the Bolshevik Faction and above all by the resolution of the Colombian PST which eliminate all ambiguity on this subject. The hysterical campaign of the FSLN against the 'pseudo-revolutionaries' as CIA agents (Tomas Borge, 24/9/79) and the appeal to 'revolutionary repression' culminated in October 1979 with the arrest of 70 militants of the MAP-FO (Maoists), five militants of the LMR (a group sympathising with the USec and in their majority pro-Mandel) and Carlos Petroni, militant of the BF. These arrests took place two months after the expulsion of the Brigadists. Why are these facts not mentioned in the article? Because it was mainly against the MAP-FO, its journal *El Pueblo* and its militia MILPAS and against the Trotskyist militants of the LMR that the FSLN directed its hysterical campaign.

Finally, we come to the last part of the article (part 4). The author pretends that the FSLN expelled the SBB by using solely Panamanians, not daring to call on its own soldiers because of their respect for the SBB. In *International Correspondence*, journal of the Parity Committee for the Reorganisation (Reconstruction) of the Fourth International (of which the Bolshevik Faction was a member), No.1, January 1980, page 39, we read: '17 August 1979: expulsion of the SBB by a joint operation of the Sandinista Police and the National Guard of Panama'; on page 21 of the same journal: 'the militants of the SBB organised by the Colombian PST were expelled by the FSLN with the aid of the National Guard of Panama' (in the article 'Crisis of the United Secretariat' and signed by C. Fernandez (BF) and C. Nemo (TLT)).

When the author lists the reasons for expulsion given in *El Espectador*, he forgets to mention one of them: 'The Brigadists sometimes described the FSLN leaders as reactionaries' ('Nicaragua', p.419, from *El Socialista*, No. 168, 24/8/79).

In the same text from 'Nicaragua', 'Que paso con la SBB', where the accusations of the FSLN against the SBB can be found, we read the following (p.424):

'The revolution has destroyed the fundamental pillar of the bourgeois state: the old Somocista guard. From here, there are two ways forward: either one proceeds to the general arming of the workers, the peasants and the inhabitants of the poor areas and organises them into militias; or they are disarmed and a permanent army and police force are organised. The first course leads towards socialist revolution, the second towards the reconstruction of the bourgeois state. It is a fact that the rapid disarming of the militias and the formation of a regular army are accelerating. *The incident with the SBB is hardly unimportant in this context*' (our emphasis).

We are wholly in agreement with this last statement and we underline it. The author makes no reference to it – does he still uphold the documents of the tendency he comes from? How else can you explain all his flagrant omis-

sions in the article which is the subject of our critique?

But let us proceed. Point six of a resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Colombian PST in September 1979 and published in the *Special Bulletin* of 21/11/79 reads:

'Our political and organisational practice was characterised by a fundamental strategic error: after the overthrow of Somoza we did not adopt as the centre-piece of our politics the perspective that the FSLN would become the principal enemy of the Nicaraguan masses... We failed to recognise the bourgeois character of the government and the necessity to impel the mobilisation of the masses, to develop and to centralise the organs of dual power. We failed to insist on the decisive role of the working class and on the necessity to stimulate its organisation in unions and factory committees, we failed to call for the taking of the land and to support such actions and, above all, we failed to point out that it was necessary to resist the disarming of the masses when the FSLN embarked on this... all these aspects are the hallmark of *centrist politics* (our emphasis)... Moreover, as a logical consequence we entertained illusions regarding the possibility that the FSLN, or one of its wings, would lead the revolutionary process through to a workers' and peasants' government... They saw us as the 'best of the FSLN' etc...'

'We did not see the need to dissolve the SBB when the dictatorship fell... with this tactic we could attempt to exercise pressure on the FSLN';

'The political defeat which was inflicted on us in Nicaragua and the grave errors committed...'

Without making any judgements on the political basis of the PST (Colombia)'s resolution, we think that even so it sheds an altogether different light on the activities of the Simon Bolivar Brigade. We are entitled to ask: who tells the truth? Do we throw in the rubbish bin all the documents of tendencies which form today's LIT, documents on which we have relied to contradict the articles in *Workers Press*?

We believe that these articles attempted above all to embellish the activities of the SBB the better to impress the political tendencies presently discussing the problems of the reorganisation of the Fourth International.

To dispel any uncertainty remaining on account of the *Workers Press* article: at no time did the SBB confront the Somocista forces as a military unit, neither as an autonomous force nor in co-ordination with the FSLN. The SBB cannot therefore be credited with any military intervention. It was only as individuals, separated from the SBB, and integrated into other FSLN units, that some SBB militants had the opportunity to put themselves forward as fighters. This was the case at Bluefields and in any other area of military intervention.

As we said at the beginning, we want a clear and precise reply supported by irrefutable proofs to these questions which sprang up when reading the articles. Comrade Perez, the floor is yours.

Trotskyism and Namibia

IN THE run-up to the elections which took place in Namibia during November 7-11, Sam Nujoma and the other leaders of the national liberation movement SWAPO repeatedly emphasised the pro-capitalist content of their programme. Repudiating any intention of nationalising industry or carrying out significant agrarian reform, they proposed 'national reconciliation' with the most reactionary elements in Namibian society.

But this won them no favours from local white racists or the South African government who fought desperately to prevent SWAPO getting the two-thirds of the vote necessary under UN rules to frame a new constitution. The aim was to force SWAPO into dependence on the main opposition party, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, a white-dominated organisation which has run the country on behalf of South Africa since 1978.

That SWAPO gained no more than 57 per cent of the vote, however, was probably due less to the efforts of the right wing than to the cam-

paigned by former SWAPO fighters who had been imprisoned in the organisation's military camps in Angola and Zambia. They revealed that the SWAPO security force had arrested up to 2,000 loyal SWAPO members and tortured them to extract false confessions of spying for South Africa. Many of these detainees were murdered.

SWAPO's internal repression was attacked particularly fiercely during the election campaign by the Workers Revolutionary Party of Namibia, which is allied with the WRP/Workers Press in Britain. However, while it is certainly the duty of Namibian Trotskyists to fight for a workers' and poor peasants' enquiry into these outrages, and to demand the severest penalties against those responsible, this can only be one aspect of the struggle to win the masses to a socialist programme for the expropriation of the capitalists and landlords. By treating the question of the detainees as the central issue of the election, outweighing all others, the WRP(N) was led into the politically unprincipled deci-

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sion to join the United Democratic Front. This was an electoral bloc of eight groups, most of them with programmes no less bourgeois than Nujoma's, who were united solely by a common hatred of SWAPO which derived as much from tribal as from political differences.

Although the WRP(N) no doubt attracted genuine militants from the Parents' Committee, the organisation which has campaigned on behalf of the detainees, it offered no solution to the crucial problem of breaking the pro-SWAPO masses from the SWAPO leadership and its bourgeois nationalist politics. For a small revolutionary group to denounce the dominant tendency in the nationalist movement as 'an evil organisation', without distinguishing clearly between the leaders and the

membership, is the sectarian reverse side of the WRP's opportunist electoral alliance. Neither, in our view, constitutes an effective strategy for building a mass Trotskyist party in Namibia.

The essentially subjective and anti-Marxist character of the WRP's political method is graphically illustrated by Cliff Slaughter's reports from Namibia in *Workers Press*. Here the question of winning over the masses who support SWAPO's leadership is disposed of by the simple device of denying that SWAPO possesses a mass base! The SWAPO leaders, Slaughter claims, do not enjoy a genuine popular following because of their role in the national liberation struggle; rather, they have been 'imposed on a section of the masses by murder and torture'. And if Namibian workers wear SWAPO T-shirts or

fly SWAPO flags over their houses, apparently it is because they have been intimidated into doing so. Slaughter cites approvingly the fact that in central and southern Namibia SWAPO failed to secure a majority of the vote, even though it was the South African puppets of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance who won there. In any case, this can scarcely matter to Slaughter. For him the entire liberation movement under SWAPO has become 'a mere instrument' of the designs of imperialism and Stalinism, and a vote for SWAPO is presumably no better than a vote for the DTA.

Slaughter's policy that the British labour movement should be urged 'not to support SWAPO' was implemented at a Camden NALGO meeting in October, when a *Workers Press* supporter argued against making a financial donation to SWAPO unless its leaders could disprove the charges against them. Does the WRP seriously suppose that Trotskyists can extend their influence among anti-imperialist workers by opposing solidar-

ity action with a national liberation movement because of the political crimes of its leadership? The demand raised at this meeting for 'an international enquiry' into SWAPO's internal repression was clearly no slip of the pen, for it was repeated by a WRP member at a students' union meeting at a London college in November, where it was left to a WIL supporter to amend this to a call for an international labour movement enquiry.

The call for such an enquiry is one which must be supported by all those in the labour movement with a shred of political principle. This plainly does not include the WRP/News Line led by Sheila Torrance, which has joined the Stalinists of the *Morning Star* in rejecting an investigation into the issue as serving the interests of imperialism. It would be a betrayal of the Namibian masses if the antics of the *Workers Press* group allowed the arguments of these apologists for the torture and murder of African freedom fighters to gain any credibility in the workers' movement.

Low turn-out for MAS rally

AN AUDIENCE of barely 40 people on a cold evening at London's Conway Hall is probably not the sort of reception to which a leader of the 'world's largest Trotskyist party' is accustomed.

Luis Zamora, a leader of the Argentinian Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Towards Socialism), largest section of the International Workers League (LIT) founded by the late Nahuel Moreno, addressed a public meeting organised by British supporters on November 13. Anyone who came to hear an analysis of the acute crisis in Argentina would have been disappointed. Instead, Zamora gave the customary two-hour performance of populist rhetoric and political evasion.

Zamora was introduced as a MAS parliamentary deputy, a lawyer and a human rights activist. This last designation - a strange one for

By Richard Price

a self-proclaimed 'Trotskyist' - seemed to be the most important for the chairman, Martin Ralph, since Zamora was apparently en route to a 'human rights' conference in Sweden.

No socialist can doubt the seriousness of the present political situation in Argentina. However, Zamora's opening remarks that the struggles of the working class in Argentina 'are more developed than in other places' had the authentic ring of Morenoite nationalism to them. He compared the wave of strikes and demonstrations against President Menem's austerity measures to a boxing match between heavyweight champions 'fighting themselves to death'. He wasn't sure which round the contest had

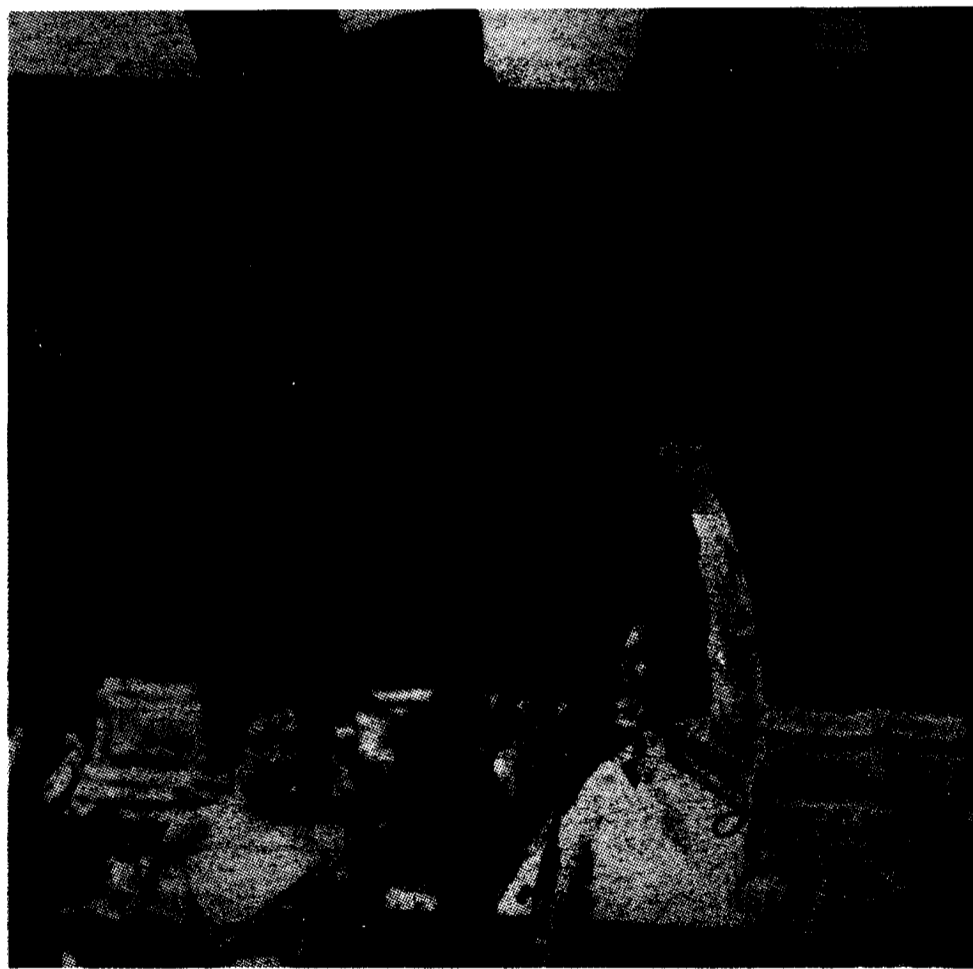
reached - 'perhaps the fourth or fifth' - but the working class could at any moment be beaten and thrown out of the ring. The situation would be resolved one way or the other on a timescale between two months and two years.

Rapidly switching metaphors, Zamora declared that 'the fragile glass of Peronism has shattered'. Workers were breaking from a Peronist consciousness, realised that they couldn't win without a political direction and were now looking to the MAS 'as a lever' to find 'a workers' solution'. Other workers (presumably those not looking to the MAS) were bitter and confused.

He then contradicted earlier statements about the decisive character of the present struggles, arguing that there were no immediate prospects of a military coup - 'the armed forces have no credibility'; 'no classes want a military government'; and 'only 20-30 per cent of the army is really right wing'.

If Zamora's assessment of the army was optimistic, the picture he painted of the police was positively rosy. For over ten minutes, he expounded on the benevolence of the police in Rosario, where workers sacked supermarkets in the summer. What Zamora failed to tell his audience was that the MAS (unlike Partido Obrero) failed to defend guerrillas arrested after the food riots which led up to the declaration of a state of siege.

He was challenged from the floor to explain the MAS refusal to defend the guerrillas who attacked the La Tablada barracks in January this year. The differences Trotskyists have with petty-bourgeois guerrilla forma-



Luis Zamora (with arm raised)

tions do not alter the principled duty to defend them against the capitalist state. For Zamora and the MAS, however, such a defence was out of the question since 'the people' had condemned the guerrillas' action, there had been no prospect of a military coup and 'Marxists cannot go against the popular will'. This capitulation to bourgeois democracy and the armed forces was underlined by a call from the MAS to the government to mount an enquiry into the La Tablada affair. (Pretty rich from a movement which pioneered the disastrous 'guerrilla warfare' turn of the United Secretariat in the 1960s.) But whereas the Morenoites find it permissible for the government to investigate the guerrillas, they reject the idea of a workers' tribunal to investigate the crimes of the military; according to Zamora,

such a project could not be mounted until the working class took power.

Zamora outlined at length the centrist programme of the MAS, but avoided answering a question pointing out its crucial omission of any mention of soviets or a workers' militia. (The MAS calls merely for 'the purging of bad elements', instruction in national defence (!) and the 'democratisation' of the army.) He went out of his way to praise the Argentinian Communist Party, which he claimed had presented 'a very good programme' at the last elections, and to defend the MAS-CP electoral front.

In recent months Cliff Slaughter's WRP/Workers Press has attempted to pose as a critic of the opportunism of the MAS. It now claims that its strenuous attempts to fuse with the MAS in 1987 in

fact represented a struggle against the MAS, and that the MAS has degenerated... since 1987! At the time, however, the WRP/Workers Press printed yards of adulatory articles on the Morenoites; justified the 'People's Front' election pact; attempted to block all criticism of the MAS inside its own organisation and in its press; covered up the history of the Simon Bolivar Brigade (see centre pages); and commissioned a book - Peter Fryer's 'Crocodiles in the Streets' - to pay homage to the LIT.

Zamora's speech only confirms that the current politics of the Morenoites are consistent with the line they have pursued for years. Members of the WRP/Workers Press and the organisations on the Preparatory Committee must demand a full accounting of the wretched MAS-WRP manoeuvres.

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IN ITS struggle for control of Southeast Asia, imperialism has found its most consistent ally in the Chinese Communist Party. Armed with the anti-Marxist perspective of 'building socialism in a single country', the Deng regime seeks to bolster its own bureaucratic privileges at the expense of the working class, peasantry and minority peoples throughout the region.

Along with the governments of the United States and Britain, the Chinese Stalinists have put pressure on the Japanese to withhold investment from Vietnam and Cambodia. And in conjunction with the reactionary prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, they have supplied vast quantities of arms to the Khmer Rouge guerrillas based in the Thai border camps, with the avowed aim of promoting civil war in Cambodia to topple the Vietnamese-backed Hun Sen regime. The aim of the Chinese leaders is to assist in creating 'stable' regimes in neighbouring states with which they can peacefully co-exist - that is, regimes in which the revolutionary aspirations of the masses have been crushed. To this end, they are prepared to see the murderous Khmer Rouge re-established in Cambodia and imperialism dominate throughout the area. Beijing seizes every opportunity to feed the imperialist propaganda machine with demands for the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and covers up the covert actions of imperialist military units.

For the moment, imperialism is content to encourage hostility between the Stalinist parties in the region in the hope that they will weaken themselves. Bush and Thatcher, together with the leaders of the capitalist ASEAN states, are biding their time. Early in October, Thatcher specifically called on Japanese capitalists to concentrate their investments in Hong Kong. When the UN debated Cambodia in November, Thatcher, stung by reaction to remarks she made previously in support of 'elements' within the Khmer Rouge, attempted to distance herself from the atrocities carried out by the Pol Pot regime against the Khmer people.

But behind her diplomatic manoeuvring lies a different reality. In 1985, a group of the British SAS regiment's most experienced soldiers - from the Training Wing - were sent to work in a camp in Thailand close to the Cambodian border. Their job, which officially ended a few months ago, was to train Khmer refugees to take part in a military assault led by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge on the Cambodian workers and peasants. Other teams of SAS instructors are continuing the same task in camps in Malaysia and the Philippines - away from the glare of publicity. In addition, a retired British chief inspector from Scotland Yard, Lewis Dunkerley, is active in the Thai border refugee camps, together with Swedish and Austrian police officers, under the United Nations Border Relief Operation. Their task is to impose a capitalist judicial system on the refugees before their return to Cambodia.

Appeals from the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese governments for aid and investment have been met by systematic demands from US and British imperialism for the abandonment of the planned eco-

nommy, food subsidies and land reform programmes. The Cambodian and Vietnamese governments have gone a long way towards meeting the demands. For Bush and Thatcher, however, these concessions are a sign of weakness, to be met with more demands aimed at undermining links between Cambodia and Vietnam and further devastating their domestic economies.

A recent survey of Cambodia published by the United Nations shows the effectiveness of the US-engineered economic blockade and the bankruptcy of the Stalinists' strategy for building 'socialism' in a country which was laid waste by American bombers. Only 64 per cent of the land under cultivation in 1960 is now in use. Vital irrigation systems, water and electricity sources remain devastated throughout the country. Oxen and buffalo stocks - required to work rice paddies and provide transport - have fallen by 50 per cent from the three million head counted in 1970, due to disease and war.

The Vietnamese economy is decades behind that of ASEAN states in the region. With unemployment estimated at 20 per cent, vast internal migrations have been organised by the CP leadership to offset the growing dangers of famine. As many as 500,000 Vietnamese citizens have moved to Cambodia, arousing resentment among the Khmer people. Relations between national minorities within Vietnam are steadily deteriorating. Policies for the unification of the north and south Vietnamese economies have failed.



A Khmer Rouge soldier on the Thailand-Cambodia border

In March, the Vietnamese army newspaper *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* reported that only 35 per cent of the half million soldiers demobilised since 1987 had found full-time employment - former soldiers in tattered uniforms are to be seen begging around tourist hotels. Unemployment is at its highest in Ho Chi Minh City where, according to Deputy Mayor Nguyen Cong Ai, 200,000 citizens are without work and a further 100,000 underemployed. The Vietnamese banking system is so inefficient that 60 per cent of all transactions take place on a cash-only basis. Priority for government loans is given to the state sector. Few if any

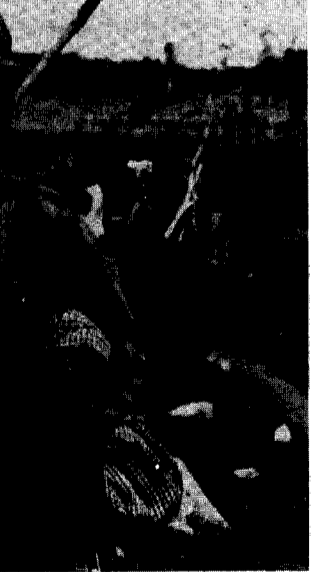
The second of two articles in which Ian Harrison examines the role played by the Stalinist leaderships in undermining the Vietnamese revolution



Cambodian soldiers: part of the small defence force which now faces the Khmer Rouge

banks have branches outside the cities, leaving rural areas and farmers without access to credit.

In common with those of neighbouring Laos and Cambodia, the Vietnamese economy has been seriously affected by the reduction of aid from the Soviet Union and Eastern European states



such as Bulgaria. In the past, these countries have absorbed tens of thousands of Vietnam's unemployed under so-called 'training' programmes. The worsening economic crisis has given rise to a factional struggle in the Vietnamese Communist Party. Nguyen Van Linh, secretary general of the VCP, has rejected reform measures put forward by Gorbachev, attacked the Polish government as 'a counter-revolutionary force' and supported the stand taken by Fidel Castro against similar reforms in Cuba. Editors of newspapers and literary magazines have been sacked for questioning the party's version of history and calling

for the establishment of a parliament with an upper and lower house. Vu Kim Hanh, the 37-year-old editor of *Tuoi Tre*, the main youth newspaper, was dismissed following a protest from the North Korean government objecting to her article on totalitarianism in North Korea. Central Committee members and provincial party secretaries have been removed in the factional struggle.

The leading party members most closely associated with Linh and opposition to Gorbachev-style reforms are Premier Do Muoi, Defence Minister Le Duc Anh and the army representatives on the Central Committee. The main opposition to Linh's leadership comes from a group of 100 party veterans known as 'The Club of Former Resistance Fighters', based mainly in the south around Ho Chi Minh City. Headed by General Tran Van Tra, Tran Bach Dang and Nguyen Ho, the Club has established branches and contacts with students, intellectuals and the army in the north. It has a clandestine publication, 'Tradition of Resistance: Voices of Resistance Fighters', which has attacked incompetence and corruption, and called for the removal of party leaders such as Premier Do Muoi.

Nguyen Ho stated in December 1988 that the American imperialists could not have achieved in Vietnam what the party leadership had done to discredit socialism. 'Vietnam hasn't advanced to socialism. Vietnam is the poorest and most backward country in the world at present,' he said. 'The difficult thing to understand is why the people who have committed these serious errors, created great disasters for the country... not only haven't been disci-

plined, punished, removed from their positions and prosecuted but have instead been selected for promotion.'

In an article in the 'Tradition of Resistance', Duong Van Dien called for a national conference to publicly 'begin a surgical operation on the body of the party' to remove the privileged elements obstructing inner-party democracy. Another article highlighted the suffering of the peasants who are 'demonstrating in many provinces' in opposition to 'the new bullies who pressure them, steal their land and beat them, and who are facing serious famine... to say nothing of people dying of starvation'.

The leaders of the Club appear to oppose calls for the legalisation of bourgeois parties, and style themselves defenders of Marxism-Leninism. They claim to have in common with external critics a concern for the accuracy of the official party history. Among other things, they cite the secrecy surrounding the removal of General Vo Nguyen Giap as Minister of Defence in 1982.

In a bid to settle accounts with their opponents inside and outside the party, Linh's faction has bowed to demands for the publication of Ho Chi Minh's last will and testament - in May 1990, the centenary of Ho's birth. The party's leaders have already admitted that Ho's request to be cremated, and not preserved in a mausoleum, was disregarded, together with his wish for a one-year moratorium on farm taxes. According to Vietnamese historians, the testament makes no reference to Marxism-Leninism as the method for guiding the development of Vietnam. The historians consider Ho was first and foremost a nationalist. When Ho died in 1969, the party leadership even suppressed the exact day of his death 'in the real interests of the nation, that is, to win final victory over US aggression and to reunify the country'.

Twenty years after Ho's death, the 'final victory' against US imperialism has manifestly not been won and cannot be won with the Stalinist outlook of 'building socialism in one country'.

The 1949 Chinese revolution, and the Vietnamese revolution which culminated

in the victory of the NLF in the south in 1975, were led by Stalinist parties opposed to any independent action by the working class. Both the Chinese and Vietnamese CPs drew their support from vast peasant armies and rejected the revolutionary role of the working class. This deep mistrust of urban workers led ultimately to the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, which emptied the cities and forced the city population into slave labour. The Chinese and Vietnamese Stalinists did everything possible to avoid taking power, until internal and external threats to their bureaucratic position forced them to do so. In neither country were soviets or workers' control of production ever established. The Trotskyists, who enjoyed considerable support in China and mass support in Vietnam, fought for these policies as part of the perspective of extending the socialist revolution internationally, and were butchered or imprisoned for decades as the price of Stalinist rule.

The crisis facing China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia today is the long historical pay-off for the amputation of genuine revolutionary leadership.

The rapidly deepening economic crisis in the Stalinist states, compounded a thousand times over by their pursuing the policy of 'socialism in one country', is driving whole sections of the bureaucracy towards an even closer accommodation with imperialism and to the development of capitalist restorationist tendencies. This poses the most immediate dangers to the revolutionary conquests made by the workers and peasants of China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The refounding of Trotskyist parties in the region is an urgent necessity. Only such a movement, basing itself on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, can draw the lessons of the failure of Stalinist policy for a new generation of workers and poor peasants, and win the masses of Burma, Thailand and Malaysia to socialism in a struggle against bourgeois nationalism and its failure to complete the tasks of the democratic revolution. It must fight in the spirit of true internationalism for political revolution against the bureaucracies of the deformed workers' states and for socialist revolution in the capitalist countries.

Foremost among its slogans must be: Down with Stalinism! For political revolution, genuine workers' democracy and workers' control of production and distribution! Land to the peasants! Forward to the federation of socialist states of Southeast Asia!



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In defence of the theory of permanent revolution

PART 15

By Richard Price

THE CONSOLIDATION of the ruling bureaucratic stratum in the Soviet Union during 1924 under the banner of 'socialism in one country' marked a decisive shift from the revolutionary internationalist programme elaborated by the Comintern under Lenin and Trotsky.

Stalinism had not yet passed definitively into the camp of counter-revolution. For almost a decade it embarked on the series of zigzags, oscillating between opportunism and adventurism, which Trotsky would later term bureaucratic centrism.

The first chapter of opportunism had overseen the German debacle in October 1923. This was followed by the optimistic 'leftism' of the Fifth Comintern Congress. The second chapter was written in the blood of thousands of workers and peasants with the defeat of the Chinese revolution from 1925-27.

As we have previously argued, the origins of the Comintern's disastrous mistakes in China cannot be placed exclusively at the door of Stalinism. The 'joint manifesto' of Soviet ambassador Adolf Joffe and Sun Yat-sen in 1923, which declared socialism not on China's agenda; the decision to enter the Kuomintang at the urging of Comintern agent Maring (Henryk Sneevliet) and the ambiguous instructions given to the Chinese Communist Party simultaneously to preserve its 'independence' and not to cross swords with its bourgeois allies - these lie in the 'Zinoviev' period of the Third International.

Zinoviev himself had never properly assimilated the lessons of Lenin's 'April Theses' and the October Revolution. Where the resolutions of the Third International were necessarily conditional in their elaboration of communist tactics towards the emerging bourgeois liberation movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, Zinoviev interpreted them with his own opportunist slant. Zinoviev's improvisations were taken over by Stalin and congealed into a reborn Menshevism. From 1925 to 1927, Stalin endlessly repeated the same refrain: the Chinese revolution will be a bourgeois revolution; therefore the bourgeoisie will lead it.

A foretaste of what could be expected if the CCP was driven unprepared into a bloc with bourgeois or semi-feudal forces had already come in 1923. Maring, on his way to the First Congress of the CCP in July 1921, concluded an agreement with the warlord Wu P'ei-fu, who had seized power in Peking in 1920 and who dominated large stretches of northern China. In return for Soviet support against other warlords, Wu was to allow CCP activities in the areas he controlled. On February 3, 1923, Wu moved his troops against Communist-led strikers on the Peking-Hankow railway line, killing 60, wounding hundreds more,

and dealing the embryonic proletarian movement in northern China a serious blow.

With the collapse of revolutionary prospects in Germany, the leaders of the Comintern now looked to the Kuomintang to become a powerful counterweight to imperialist influence in the East. Among Soviet workers, exhausted by years of struggle and privation, sincere hopes were raised of the opening of a new revolutionary front in China.

As the editors of his writings on China suggest, Trotsky was not opposed in principle to the CCP's entry into the Kuomintang, under conditions in which the CCP was a small propaganda group, and the Kuomintang was a loosely-organised nationalist movement enjoying support among workers. He wrote in 1926: 'The participation of the CCP in the Kuomintang was perfectly correct in the period when the CCP was a propaganda society which was only preparing itself for future independent political activity but which, at the same time, sought to take part in the ongoing national liberation struggle' ('Leon Trotsky on China', Pathfinder, p.114).

He was opposed specifically to the opportunist character of the entry, and voted against it on the Soviet Politburo in 1923. Moreover,



Sun Yat-sen

the emergence of a rising wave of Communist-led workers' struggles from 1924 onwards demanded the political and organisational independence of the CCP, and the building of a mass revolutionary party clearly demarcated from the rightward-moving Kuomintang.

The memoirs of the Trotskyist Wang Fan-hsi, who was a student member of the CCP in the mid-1920s, offer a graphic description of the CCP's activity inside the Kuomintang:

'When we were engaged in certain types of activity we had to say that we were Kuomintang members and we were even forced to set up phoney Kuomintang meetings. I remember that shortly after I joined the Communist Party I was ordered to attend a meeting of this sort. The first item on the agenda was to bow down in front of a portrait of Sun

Yat-sen and listen in respectful silence while his political testament was read out. After that we listened to a number of reports on the situation in the south. I later learned that of the fifteen or twenty people at that meeting, only one was a real Kuomintang member, and all the rest were Communists. I could not for the life of me understand the necessity for such a charade, and I found it even more ridiculous when the real Kuomintang members we had invited failed to turn up, so that everyone at such a meeting was really a member of the Party' (Wang Fan-hsi: 'Chinese Revolutionary', Oxford, p.30).

The growing weight of the labour movement and the trade unions drove the bourgeois Kuomintang leadership to the right. Pathologically blind to the acute class contradictions within it, Stalin believed that mass strikes and peasant unrest were cementing the Kuomintang's leadership of the 'national revolution'.

The noose for the Chinese workers was prepared with Soviet prestige, military aid and advice. From the autumn of 1923, when Michael Borodin, on the instructions of the Soviet Politburo, became adviser to Sun Yat-sen, considerable efforts were made to 'Bolshevise' the Kuomintang - in other words, to give its leadership revolutionary credentials before the masses. General Galen (Vassily Blucher) became chief military adviser to the Kuomintang; and Borodin wrote the new Kuomintang programme, adopted in January 1924, in which the ideas of Sun Yat-sen were dressed up in the language of 'anti-imperialism' and 'friendship with the Soviet Union'. For the first time, a 'Marxist' drafted the programme of a bourgeois party.

In May 1924, the Whampoa Military Academy was founded with Soviet money and instructors, with Chiang Kai-shek as its first commandant (see H. Isaacs: 'The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution', Stanford, 1961, pp.63-4). A system of political commissars attached to military units was introduced, aping the Red Army.

The Chinese Communists were continually lectured by the Comintern's representatives on the importance of preserving the independence of the working class, but warned not to upset the alliance with the bourgeoisie. This 'independence' was, however, stillborn since the national (democratic) revolution was seen as an entirely distinct stage from the socialist revolution.

Within the CCP there was considerable opposition to the line of subservience meted out to it. In December 1924, Peng Shu-tse published his article 'Who is the leader of the National Revolution?', implicitly attacking the line of those like the young Mao Tse-tung, who saw the merchant class as the 'natural' leader of the Chinese masses, and Ch'en



Chiang Kai-shek as commandant of Whampoa Military Academy

Tu-hsiu, who considered the working class too small in numbers to carry out a socialist revolution.

Under the influence of such criticism, the CCP swung left and Ch'en with it. At its Fourth Congress in January 1925, it passed a set of 'Theses on the Workers' Movement' which had a strongly dissenting tone, despite clinging to a 'two stages' model: 'Worker organisations must be built on the basis of the economic class struggle and must not only be independent of the Kuomintang, but must also refuse to accept other organisations in their midst in order to avoid confusion in worker consciousness. This is important, because after the completion of the national revolution the working class still has its own goal, the proletarian revolution. For this reason, the organisations of the working class must be independent within the national movement, and they must always be ready for the second phase of the struggle, the proletarian revolution' (H. Gruber (ed): 'Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern', Anchor, 1974, p.390).

This radicalisation mirrored the spontaneous movement of the working class which reached a new peak with huge strikes in Shanghai's Japanese-owned cotton mills in May 1925 and the Hong Kong general strike, beginning in June. Strike committees immediately took on the features of embryonic soviets. These events sparked the revolution of 1925-27.

Horrified by these events and their implications for Chinese capitalists, the new

Kuomintang National Government in Canton took steps to distance themselves from the Communists. Borodin, for his part, used every means at his disposal to accelerate Chiang's rise to power in the Kuomintang: 'No matter whether Communist or Kuomintang, all must obey General Chiang' (quoted in Isaacs, p.84).

In October 1925, Ch'en Tu-hsiu proposed to the CCP Central Committee that the party prepare to break from the Kuomintang, but was overruled by the Comintern delegate. One week before Chiang's first major counter-blow against the working class the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern passed a 'Resolution on the Chinese Question' which defined the Kuomintang as 'a revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants, intellectuals and the urban democracy'. The Canton government was described as personifying 'the vanguard of the Chinese people in its struggle for independence' and as 'a model for the future revolutionary-democratic structure of the country'. The ECCI also considered that the summer's events in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Canton had forced the Kuomintang to the left:

'Some sections of the Chinese big bourgeoisie who for a time attached themselves to the Kuomintang have in the last year left it; this has resulted in the formation of a small group on the right wing of the Kuomintang, which comes out openly against a close alliance with the working masses, advocates the exclu-

sion of communists from the Kuomintang, and opposes the revolutionary policy of the Canton Government. The fact that the second Kuomintang congress in January 1926 condemned the behaviour of this right wing and emphasised the need for a fighting Kuomintang-communist alliance strengthens the revolutionary trend of Kuomintang and Canton Government activity and secures for the Kuomintang the revolutionary support of the proletariat' (J. Degras (ed): 'The Communist International Volume II', Frank Cass, pp.277-8).

Chiang Kai-shek was thus able to prepare his coup whilst basking in the praise of the Communist International, which plainly saw him as representing the 'revolutionary left' of the Kuomintang.

In the early hours of March 20, 1926, Chiang made his move. Detachments in Canton loyal to him arrested 50 Chinese Communists attached to the army, Russian military advisers were placed under house arrest and strike pickets were disarmed. A de facto military dictatorship had been established. Disarmed by Stalin, the coup found the CCP totally unprepared. As Peng Shu-tse's wife, Ch'en Pi-lan, recalled: 'The event, which came like a bolt from the blue, paralysed the whole party. Caught by surprise, every member of the CCP in the Shanghai region was anguished and bewildered' (Peng Shu-tse: 'The Chinese Communist Party in Power', Monad, p.18).

To be continued

The road to Tiananmen



One of the eight Japanese-owned Sanyo factories at Shekou in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. There were at least 21 strikes at foreign-funded companies in this SEZ during 1986-7, including one at Sanyo

THIS BOOK came into being following a request by trade unions in the Philippines to the Asia Monitor Resource Center that it investigate the substance of threats by multi-national companies that they could find cheaper and more disciplined labour in China.

Printed shortly before the re-emergence of the pro-democracy movement on an unprecedented scale in 1988, the facts, figures and quotations in this highly readable work serve as an invaluable aid to understanding the processes unfolding in the deformed workers' state of China which led to the Tiananmen Square massacre.

The first part is a short history of Chinese trade unionism both before and after the Stalinised Communist Party of China took power in 1949. It deals with the faction fights within the CCP over the preferred relationship of the trade unions to the new bureaucratic state and the sharp economic zig-zags which they accompanied. It looks briefly at the Cultural Revolution when Mao Zedong placed the economy on a virtual war footing and, as Mao died and the economy further stagnated, the ousting of the Gang of Four by Deng Xiaoping.

The second and third sections

of the book look at the nature of the reforms carried out by the bureaucracy since 1978 under the leadership of Deng. Retreating from the ludicrous position that socialism had been achieved in China, the bureaucracy sought to rescue the economy by introducing market mechanisms and rural reforms (not dealt with here), and by the encouragement of small-scale capitalist enterprises and trade. Most importantly, more sophisticated capitalist methods of coercion were introduced into industry to raise productivity.

The 'Iron Rice Pot' of guaranteed employment and social provisions had to be smashed. Foreign capital was to be invited to set up joint ventures in Special Economic Zones to earn foreign currency and attract new technology. Wages were to be linked to economic performance and wage disparities allowed to develop as a spur. The cynical Stalinist revision of Marx's characterisation of socialism as 'from

each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs', to read '... to each according to his labour', became an ever-important slogan.

Deng resurrected the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, virtually abolished by Mao, to act as the bureaucracy's policeman within the factories. The management of many state enterprises is now contracted-out to individuals and groups, and a bankruptcy law seeks to ensure that a profit is made. So-called Workers' Congresses, modelled along the lines of Japanese labour relations, ensure, along with the trade unions, that workers collaborate with the management's speed-ups and employment decisions. Contract labour is making big inroads into the right of 'a job for life', as is unemployment.

Women, naturally enough, have suffered great set-backs in the new conditions. Time off for breast-feeding, maternity leave and creches, once provided by the state,

are thought too expensive and are being undermined as women fall prey to the new 'cult of the family'.

Conditions in the pace-setting SEZs are dealt with in depth in the third part of the book. Young migrant labourers are subjected to intolerable health and safety conditions, long hours, compulsory overtime and little job security. Foreign companies ignore workers' rights without fear of expulsion and the official trade unions rubber-stamp sackings and drive disgruntled workers back to their benches when a dispute breaks out. Child labour is widespread, along with prostitution and crime.

But the bureaucracy's reforms have met with strong resistance from workers throughout the country and the book describes the growth of strikes and the possibility, as reflected through the fear-filled utterances of the leadership, of the emergence of independent trade unions. The author notes that, when students launched street de-

monstrations in 1986 in ten major cities, 'worker participation in the demonstrations received little public coverage, but there were reports that the top leadership only became really alarmed when they learned that workers were participating in the protests and organising strikes'.

Quoted in the book is a suppressed ACFTU study paper from June 1988 entitled 'Common Questions in the Minds of Workers'. Among its conclusions is the fact that 'some workers are doubtful about the chances of the Party and society improving corrupt and bureaucratic practices', and that the bureaucracy's position as 'masters of the house' is being eroded through the reforms. The author warns prophetically: '... this discontent can only be suppressed for so long before it will surface with enormous social and political repercussions.' But he can only advise that the trade unions act more like trade unions and that the party allows them to do so.

There can be no reform of the bureaucracy which, as Tiananmen Square showed once again, will stop at nothing to defend its parasitic privileges. The 'reforms' introduced by the Stalinist leaders are not of their choosing. Their bureaucratic rule has come into increasingly sharp conflict with the development of the productive forces. In an attempt

to stimulate the economy they have shelved the 'administrative' methods of the Cultural Revolution in favour of 'bourgeois norms of distribution', i.e., the market, wage differentials, etc.

'Money accounting, however, cannot fail to give a more open character to the struggle of the different strata for the distribution of the national income,' wrote Trotsky in 'The Revolution Betrayed'. 'The designation of trade union officials from above is destined to meet more and more resistance' (New Park edition, p.274).

'Bourgeois norms are unavoidable in an economy which lags far behind the advanced capitalist countries, but they must be kept within the limits of strict necessity. The task of the working class in China is 'the application of socialist methods for the solution of pre-socialist problems' (ibid., p.57).

You will not find a programme for political revolution against the bureaucracy in 'Smashing the Iron Rice Pot', but the information contained in it is indispensable for those fighting to elaborate one.

'Smashing the Iron Rice Pot' is available from selected bookshops or direct from: Asia Monitor Resource Center Ltd., 444 Nathan Road, 8-B Kowloon, Hong Kong. Price US\$5 plus US\$2 postage.

A passion for murder

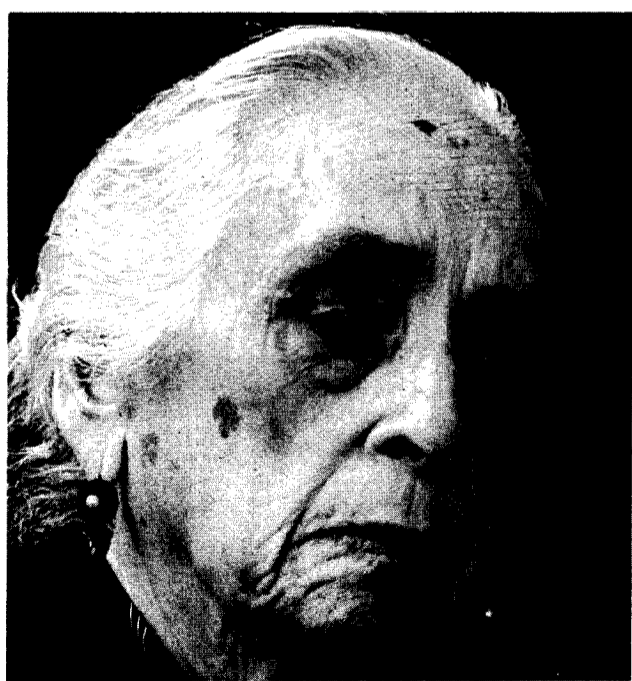
NO SOONER had the news of the death of Dolores Ibaruri (La Pasionaria) on November 12 reached Britain than old-time tankie Bill Alexander rushed to the media to pour out his adulation. She was, so it seems, an exemplary member of the Spanish Communist Party. We can only agree with him.

When the policy of the Communist International was still the lunacy of the 'Third Period' in 1933 she was defining the task of the Spanish party as winning over 'the majority of the proletariat and to prepare it for the assumption of power', and 'to create soviets'. But when Stalin was angling for an alliance with Britain three years later she was affirming that 'the revolution that is taking place is a bourgeois democratic revolution'.

As the foremost Stalinist publicist she was famous for the slogan 'They Shall Not Pass', and the characterisation of the Negrin government as the 'Government of Victory'. What is not so well known is that the slogan was borrowed from the French defence of Verdun against the Germans in the First World War, and was meant to serve the chauvinistic propaganda of the Stalinists that Franco was a tool of foreign invaders, and that they were the true patriots. The fate of the 'Government of Victory' is better known. It collapsed ignominiously before Franco in 1939 after persecuting the working class and murdering its finest militants, and Pasionaria was

Dolores Ibaruri Gomez (1895-1989):

An Obituary by Al Richardson



one of the first to flee.

It was one of the few virtues of right-wing Socialist leader Prieto that he thoroughly hated her. Her lover, Francisco Anton, was Commissar General of the Army of the Centre, and adviser to Miaja. In autumn 1937 Prieto transferred him to a regular battalion, but he never got to the front. After the end of the war, when she went to Russia, he remained in France and was unwise enough to marry and father two children, one of whom was mentally handicapped. She promptly accused him of

'political degeneration' or of being 'an element foreign to the party', and in spite of his poor health he was put to work on the production line of a motor bike factory in Warsaw. He should have counted himself fortunate. After she had ousted the party's leader, Jose Diaz, he fell out of an upstairs window in Tiflis in 1942. This faulty design of Soviet windows, and their fatal fascination for troublesome politicians, spread to Eastern Europe after 1945. Spanish Communist leaders who failed to toe the line ended up in

Franco's prisons, denounced from Moscow as police agents.

Her main function during the Spanish Civil War was to make public denunciations of those who had fallen from favour with Moscow. She was among the first to give the signal for the intrigue that ousted Largo Caballero from power. Her demand that 'Trotskyists' 'must be exterminated like beasts of prey' was the prelude to the vile tortures and murders of left Anarchists and members of the POUM. Her attempt to denounce Prieto himself was a bit premature, and came unstuck.

She remained wily to the end. The restoration of bourgeois democracy in Spain freed her from Russian tutelage, and on her return she quickly lined up with the Euro-Communist wing against the brutal and stupid Lister, who had demonstrated his loyalty to Moscow during the Civil War by using his army to smash the peasant collectives in Aragon, and continued to espouse what had by then become an unfashionable cause. Her own arrival was marked with accusatory banners held by some of the POUM survivors.

Yet this was a woman who had been sentenced to 15 years in prison after the smashing of the Asturian Commune in 1934, and who herself had gone round the jails liberating the left-wing prisoners after the electoral victory of the Popular Front in 1936. Only Stalinism can produce a degeneration as deep as this.

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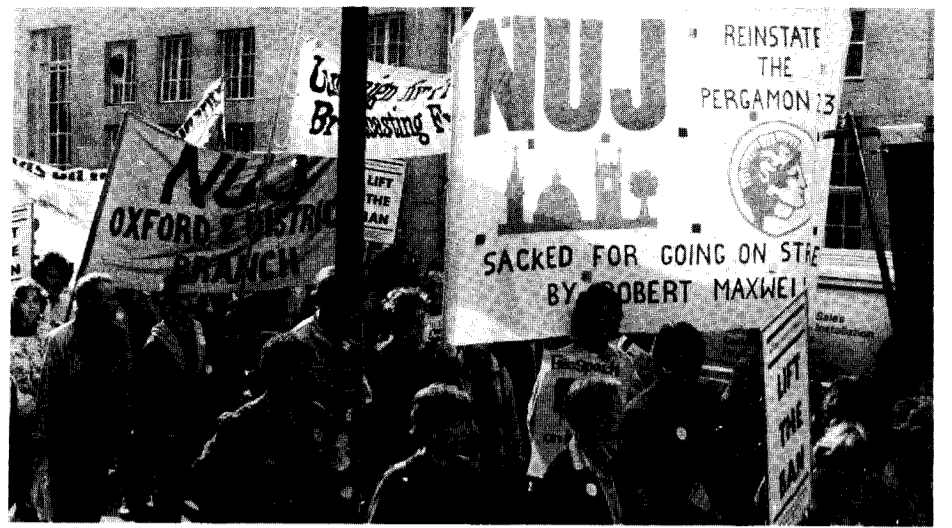
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Workers News



12

December 1989 30p



Lessons of the Guildford 4 case

ALL THE world now knows that the Guildford Four – Patrick Armstrong, Gerard Conlon, Paul Hill and Carole Richardson – are innocent. Moreover, senior figures in all parliamentary parties and church leaders today support the release of the Birmingham Six.

The same media which in 1975 screamed for the framed prisoners to be hanged has greeted their release as a vindication (albeit belated) of British justice. The left, on the other hand, with a few honourable exceptions, has seen the case only as one of British 'injustice'. Instead of campaigning for the release of all Irish republican prisoners, it has taken the line of least resistance and called merely for the campaign to release framed prisoners to be stepped up.

Such an approach is false to the core. It ignores both the circumstances under which the frame-ups took place and their purpose – to intimidate all Irish people from actively fighting British imperialism.

Support grew rapidly for the Provisional IRA during the early 1970s in response to army brutality and the introduction of internment without trial in August 1971. The strength of republicanism, based mainly in the Catholic working class ghettos of the Six Counties, was greater

Workers News looks into the political background of the frame-ups of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and the Maguire Seven, and examines the role of the Wilson Labour government in the north of Ireland

than at any time since the 1916-21 period.

The murder of 13 unarmed demonstrators in Derry on Bloody Sunday, January 30, 1972, by British paratroopers led to a major escalation of the armed struggle, while in Britain large demonstrations took place in London and other cities. On June 26, 1972, the Provisionals declared a cease-fire following high-level contact with the Heath government. While the Tories were playing on republican illusions that British imperialism would negotiate a withdrawal from the north, SAS-trained undercover squads were carrying out sectarian killings from unmarked cars using IRA weapons, as part of the psychological warfare techniques developed by Brigadier Frank Kitson.

In the Irish Republic, two car bombs exploded while the Dail was debating an amendment to the Offences Against the State Act, under which convictions against republicans could be secured on the evidence of a police superintendent. The bombs had the effect of steamroller-

ing opposition to the amendment, unleashing a wave of repression against republicans and discrediting the IRA, which denied responsibility. The events bore all the hallmarks of an SAS operation.

The Labour government of Harold Wilson, which took office in March 1974, continued Heath's policy of attempting to undermine the nationalist struggle through the 'power-sharing executive'. This policy came to an inglorious end with the Uls-

and the RUC. They were carried out on both sides of the border and ranged from the professionally disreputable to murder. These operations included: car bombings in Dublin and Monaghan in May 1974; an unknown proportion of the 293 sectarian killings between 1974-76; the murder of John Francis Green in the Irish Republic; and the massacre of the Miami Showband organised by SAS officer Robert Nairac.

The fact that senior officers, particularly in MI5 and the SAS, were also simultaneously involved in an attempt to destabilise the Wilson government in no way exonerated the Labour leadership. Wilson enthusiastically increased the role of the SAS, sending 150

single Labour MP voting against it.

In spite of all that had happened since 1972, the Provisional IRA declared a Christmas truce in 1974 which lasted until November 1975, based on the unfounded belief that the Labour leadership was preparing to withdraw from Ireland. In fact the Labour leaders were preparing further repression which culminated in the withdrawal of 'special status' for prisoners of war and the escalation of the use of torture, most notoriously at the Castlereagh Interrogation Centre.

The lessons British workers must draw from the Wilson government's policy in Ireland are clear: the fight is not for better standards of British justice, but for unconditional support for Irish self-determination.

Ordinary decent coppers using ordinary decent police methods apprehended those responsible for the Birmingham outrages

Kevin McNamara, Labour Northern Ireland spokesman, March 1983

ter Workers' Council strike, which was organised by loyalist paramilitaries and had the backing of senior army officers. After this humiliating defeat, the Labour leadership turned increasingly to the policy of 'Ulsterisation'. According to the official line, the new strategy meant 'normalising' the political situation in the north – the bans on both Sinn Fein and the UVF were lifted, and most security duties were assigned to the police rather than the army.

Behind the scenes, however, the years 1974-76 saw a massive escalation of undercover operations by the British army and the intelligence services, and the unleashing of savage repression against the Irish community in Britain. 'Ulsterisation' adopted the 'carrot and stick' approach. It attempted to strengthen the feeling within the IRA that a negotiated settlement was possible, while increasingly adopting the position that republican prisoners of war were mere 'criminals'.

In his recent book, 'War Without Honour', former MI6 officer Fred Holroyd states: 'The dirty tricks I am aware of involved all branches of the security forces with whom I worked in 1974-5; the army, the security agencies MI5 and MI6,

members of the regiment to South Armagh in January 1976.

Only against this background can the frame-ups of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and the Maguire Seven be understood. It served the purposes of the British state far better to convict patently innocent and largely non-political Irish people living in Britain than it would have done to attribute the bombings to the Balcombe Street active service unit which openly claimed responsibility for them.

As Paul Hill stated in a recent interview: 'I see it as more profound than a miscarriage of justice. Justice was aborted, it wasn't miscarried. It was aborted because we were Irish... Within one week of our arrest, the Irish community knew that we were innocent, and that was precisely the message that the state wanted to give.' In other words, the shoot-to-kill policy in the north of Ireland was paralleled by a campaign of intimidation against Irish workers living in Britain.

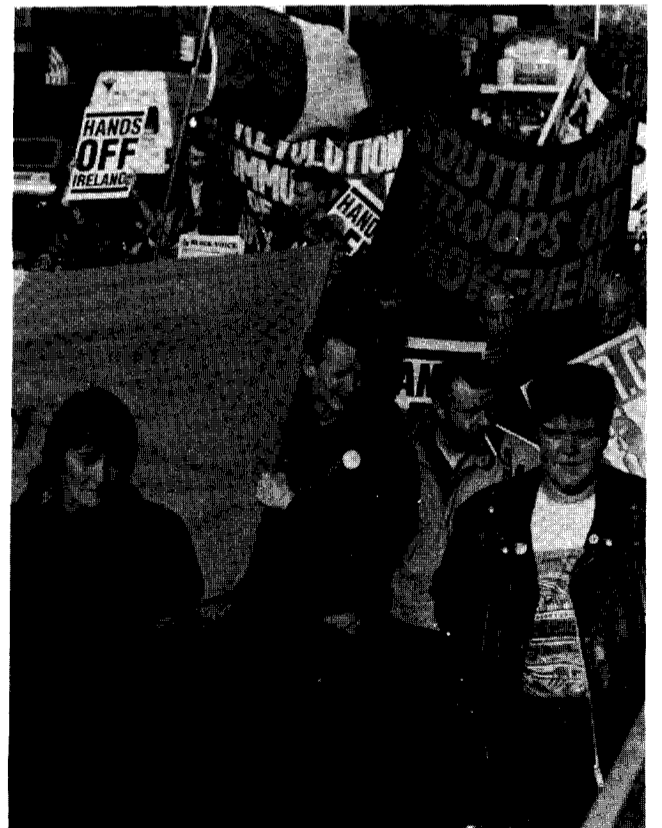
In the wave of chauvinism whipped up around the Guildford and Birmingham bombings, the Labour leaders rushed through the Prevention of Terrorism Act in November 1974 without a

HUNDREDS of journalists and other media workers joined a march through central London on October 19, organised by the NUJ, ACTI and BETA, against the government's broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein.

The leaders of the three unions attempted to divert the action into a call for the heads of the BBC, Channel 4 and ITN to take a firmer stand against the Tories. But at a rally at the Dominion Theatre after the demonstration, there was uproar when Labour Deputy Leader Roy Hattersley described the opinions of Sinn Fein as 'repulsive' and only attacked the ban because it was 'counter-productive'.

'The IRA – and the friends of the IRA – will only be defeated when they are denied the last vestige of sympathy and the last suspicion that their cause is just,' Hattersley said to continuous heckling.

A delegation of sacked Pergamon Press workers from Oxford joined the march (see picture). Twenty-three NUJ members at the Robert Maxwell-owned company were dismissed after a one-day strike on May 24 in defence of the union's right to represent a sacked member in the book publishing section.



ABOUT 300 people joined a demonstration through south London on October 28 demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the north of Ireland. The march also commemorated the death in 1920 of Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, after 74 days on hunger strike in Brixton prison.

The small attendance reflected the failure of the march organisers to turn for support to the local labour and trade union movement, despite the favourable conditions for such work in the immediate aftermath of the release of the Guildford Four.

This underlines once more the necessity of building a genuine anti-imperialist solidarity movement basing itself on the mass organisations of the working class.

Troops out now! Self-determination for the Irish people!