

# Workers Power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

**INSIDE:** POLAND  
THE LAW  
FORD'S  
PARLIAMENT

## Labour movement must Support Polish workers' resistance

**THE BRUTAL CRUSHING** by Jaruzelski of the Polish workers' unions - with hundreds killed and injured, thousands arrested and sent to concentration camps - must call forth the maximum immediate solidarity from workers in all countries.

We must express through our unions and political parties our class solidarity with Solidarnosc. Thatcher and Reagan's crocodile tears are no use to the Polish workers.

Reagan's hands are red with the

blood of El Salvador's workers and peasants. Thatcher is the murderer of 10 Irish hunger strikers - her government is presiding over repression in Northern Ireland very similar to Jaruzelski's.

Representatives of the Tories should not be allowed to share any platforms with the representatives of the labour movement. These backers of the Turkish military dictatorship, of Pinochet and Duarte are not interested in democratic rights or free trade unions. They are concern-

ed only to restore capitalist exploitation in Poland. All-party rallies like that at the Albert Hall on January 4th should be boycotted.

Instead we need a massive independent mobilization of the Labour movement in solidarity with the Polish workers. The silence of many union leaders - in fact the right-wingers have made the running - indicates the deep sympathy many top officials, particularly those in, or close to the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain,

have with the bureaucrats in Poland and the USSR.

Against them we should fight in every section of the workers movement for meetings in the workplaces, for union branch meetings to pledge support for the Polish workers. The TUC should be forced to call a mass demonstration in support of the Polish unions.

We must fight for trade union action to black all Polish imports until trade union rights are restored and all Solidarnosc leaders and activ-

ists released. On the other hand, Government or trade union bans on exports - whether of food or technology injure the Polish workers and aid Reagan and Thatcher's war drive.

We should raise financial support for the Polish union's struggle. In short we must create a Labour Movement Campaign to support the Polish workers' resistance to the Stalinist military dictators whose actions are a cruel mockery of every principle of revolutionary communism. ■



Shipyard workers in The Lenin shipyards, Gdansk

## FOOT STAMPS ON LEFT

**THE REALISATION OF** just how fragile the gains of the Labour Left actually are must have come as a nasty shock to many socialists in the Labour Party. In one short month Foot has managed to launch an offensive which threatens to render null and void conference decisions on reselection of MPs, to open up a witch-hunt on the left of the Party and slam the door on the entry of self-proclaimed marxists into the Party. To those used to being fed on the "momentous victories - biggest advances ever" diet of much of the left press, this must truly have been a bewildering experience.

As we said after the Sept. 81 Brighton Conference "the conference itself was a decisive victory for the anti-reform, anti-Benn forces" (W.P.No.26, Oct.81). The new coalition which emerged from Brighton of Right and Centre-Right trade union block votes ensured that the lefts hold on the N.E.C. was broken, and that the manifesto remained securely in the hands of Foot and the PLP. These were the weapons handed by the Right to Foot who was determined he should use them to the full to discipline the left. Only in this way could the right hope to remove the obstacle to "their" party becoming once again the trusted alternative party of the bourgeoisie and thus avoid the uncertain path of the SDP. As Callaghan put it, courtesy of a double page spread in the Daily Mirror (Dec.10)

"My aim is to ensure that Labour triumphs again. But not the Labour Party as it has come to look in the last few months."

Foot is a willing tool in this strategy. Terrified by the rise of the Social Democrats, in particular Shirley Williams' victory at Crosby, Foot has launched a carefully conceived purge. He aims to signal to the Bennites that they have gone too far in mobilising the base of the party against the leadership, often in alliance with "Trotskyists". At the same time Foot hopes that this will be enough to placate the right. It is Benn's unforgivable sin, in the eyes of the Labour Party, and Trade Union leadership, to have taken his disagreements outside the gentlemanly framework of the PLP and TU leadership and to have appealed instead to the rank and file of the party and even, to a lesser extent, the trade unions. In this Benn had to rely on the willing footsoldiers of the centrist left - who with their members, commitment and newspapers - Militant, Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser - provided an important spine to Benn's campaign.

This is the significance of Foot's blocking of Tatchell's nomination. The nomination of Tatchell undoubtedly enraged the Right, not because of his politics - which are closer to Peter Hain than Ted Grant, but because he represented the breaking of the stranglehold of the Right wing over a key constituency. Bob Mellish, doyen of the Right, and his cronies on the local council had lost a long running battle with the "new left". While this contributed to the pressure on Foot from

the Right to "take a stand", or face more defections to the SDP, for Foot the key thing was the possibility of driving a wedge between Benn and his supporters. This is why Foot made the issue one of defending Parliamentary Democracy, an issue so close to Benn's heart as well, and linked it to the question of a purge on Militant.

Foot and the ambitious unprincipled Neil Kinnock are willing to ally themselves with the right to force Benn to break with the most active and militant sections of his supporters thus weakening the left still further. At the same time the NEC's rejection of Tatchell serves notice on the constituencies that the NEC and not the rank and file will decide on who will stand as MP whatever conference decisions say. Foot only needs now to consolidate this position by lining up the trade union block votes and thus ensure a united right/centre-left front at the next conference. This undoubtedly will be the major purpose of the conference organised by the "Trade Unions for a Labour Victory" of trade union leaders and leading NEC members.

Benn's response to the coming purge has been predictable. While declaring his willingness to "fight like a tiger to prevent expulsions and proscriptions" the animal in question appears a particularly toothless specimen. Despite Socialist Challenge's belief that Benn has made "...a declaration to take on the party leadership and to fight openly against the witch-hunts in the party" (S.C. 17.12.81)

Benn in fact has virtually absolved Foot from responsibility for the purge, arguing in his Rotherhithe speech the day before the NEC, that Foot did not personally want it but was forced to do it by the right! Of course to do otherwise would mean challenging Foot for the leadership, which is something that, despite Socialist Challenge's pretences, Benn will not do.

Even the proposed picket of the NEC, called by Bermondsey Labour Party, and which was gathering wide support, was called off because of the Bennites' fear of "alienating" potential supporters on the NEC.

Benn's closest supporters in the party, far from mobilising a common front to fight in defence of "Militant" and against the right-wing offensive, have been taking their distance from the "hard left". Not only did the most recent meeting of the LCC spurn yet again the idea of a unified "Bennite" organisation in the face of the right wing onslaught, but concentrated on calling for an "open register" of all left organisations within the Labour Party - a decision which the Guardian comments was "indicative of the belief within the committee that while it has nothing to hide, other groups may be less ready to open their affairs to public scrutiny" (Guardian, Dec.23.81).

Foot appears to be succeeding in his intention of isolating the hard left, but in opening the floodgates of the witch-hunt Foot himself must be able to lean on the "democratic" left in

order not to be swept away. The right has already declared its intentions - Callaghan demands the expulsion of the Militant tendency and the disaffiliation of the Young Socialists, as well as rolling back the election system for the leader and deputy leader. Hattersley of the Labour Solidarity Campaign adds the CLPD and London Labour Briefing as subjects for investigation.

In this situation where the Right is on the offensive and Foot is in collusion with them, it is disastrous for the supporters of Benn and democratic reforms in the Labour Party to back pedal or try and keep their alliance with Foot. Every attempt to isolate the Left within the Party must be challenged. Bermondsey and every other constituency where the NEC vetoes democratically elected candidates, must refuse to back down. If genuine candidates of local labour parties have to be stood against NEC imposed ones then the responsibility for splitting the Labour votes lies with the Right labour bureaucrats, not with the Left. Every attempt must be made to link up individuals, wards, and constituencies in a national body committed to fighting every purge and expulsion. Most importantly - this means fighting in the unions to take the bloc votes out of the hands of the bureaucrats and under the control of the rank and file. Only this can guarantee the defeat of Foot's plans within the party.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►



# THE MOTHER OF

MICHAEL FOOT AND the bulk of the Shadow Cabinet chose wisely when they decided to fight the Labour left over the issue of Parliamentary democracy. It is common knowledge that Foot is personally enchanted by the world of Black Rod, the Serjeant-at-arms, the Chiltern Hundreds and all the rest of the pomp and paraphernalia of Parliament.

However, these sentiments alone do not account for the determined stand that he has taken. In raising the question of loyalty to Parliamentary democracy as the decisive criterion for membership of the Labour Party, Foot hopes to drive out the "Marxists" (such as "Militant" and "Socialist Organiser") and isolate the genuine left reformist parliamentarians (such as Benn, Maynard, Race and Co) from the base in the constituencies that they were able to use so effectively in the struggle for constitutional reforms of the party over the last two years.

Foot is really saying to all the left, either accept the leading role of Parliament or get out of the party. Revolutionaries are duty-bound to give their own clear and honest answer on this question and demand the right to be in the party on the basis of that answer.

Parliament is both a creation of the bourgeoisie and an integral part of their state apparatus. Belief in its powers as an institution for social change is still strong inside the working class. This is not because the working class created parliamentary democracy. Nor is it primarily because it knows that it was its struggles that won universal suffrage. The real reason why illusions in Parliament abound is because Labourite reformists like Benn and Foot have spent years teaching workers that Parliament is all-powerful and that the last thing workers should do is take power into their own hands directly, through their own rank and file organisations.

As James Maxton, the left MP of the 1920's said: "To workers who are suffering terribly under the capitalist system all I could say was 'Wait until Labour gets political power'". Three Labour parliamentary majorities (and several governments) later the workers are still waiting. And each time Labour's feeble attempts at change are thwarted by the sabotage of the banks, the civil service, the judges, the security services etc, the working class, who have been told again and again to steer clear of extra-parliamentary activity suffer a set-back far more serious than an electoral defeat.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

## Foot stamps on Left

The Left must recognise however that the growing strength of the Right in the Labour Party reflects, and feeds on, the reverses being suffered by the working class at the hands of the Thatcher Government. The most recent strike figures for 1980, with 1976 the lowest for 14 years, reflect these reverses. The permanence of any gains of the left within the Labour Party depend above all on the ability to throwback Thatcher's attacks on the working class. Foot is able to score a point when he attacks the Bennite Left for failing to fight the Tories and concentrating on "internal squabbles", not because Foot and the Right will fight the Tories ("fighting" for them means parliamentary windbaggery), but because the Bennite Left itself is incapable of leading an effective fight against the Tories.

Livingstone and the Left Labour GLC's failure to mobilise any industrial action, demonstrations etc in defence of the cheap fares policy on London Transport is just the latest example of the crippling nature of the Left reformist perspective. A London Transport strike, directly after Denning's decision, worked and prepared for within the TGWU and the NUR, backed up by mass demonstrations and leafletting led by the London Labour Parties, would have had the Law Lords losing their wigs in their rush to reverse their ruling. But this is not Livingstone's perspective, neither is it Benn's. Livingstone prefers to try and make *electoral* capital out of the defeat, foolishly believing it will help Labour in the borough elections (of course every defeat helps the Tories and Social Democrats, not Labour).

Benn and his supporters similarly are willing to declare their support for strikes, pickets etc (providing of course these are within the law), but they always see it as an auxiliary to the "real" task of returning a Left Labour Government. It is this difference in perspective which is the real dividing line between revolutionaries and even the most left reformists. It is why revolutionaries base themselves on extra-parliamentary action as the only way of throwing back the Tory attacks and strengthening the working class and its organisations. However the so-called "hard left" (the Socialist Organiser, Socialist Challenge, Militant etc) far from concentrating on this task, are in fact pulled behind the Bennite perspective by their belief that the central focus for revolutionaries is the Labour Party and the struggle within it.

For instance, the most recent convert, IMG, can declare "But it was always inevitable that in a country with a single mass party of the working class, the focus for left politics would return to the development of left tendencies in that party" (International, Sept. 81).

One only has to contrast the activities and preoccupations

of the left during the last period of Tory Govt. to realise the dramatic change. Ninety per cent of the energies and political propaganda of today's "hard left" are now directed to strengthening the Left in the Labour Party. Even where the remnants of the recognition of the importance of the industrial struggle filters through it is in terms of trying to make the Bennites realise its importance, calling on the Labour Left to "turn outwards" to support the industrial struggle; something they are only willing to do as long as it does not damage their electoral chances.

The real tasks of the moment are two-fold. To focus where the real battle against the Tories can take place... within the factories and workplaces, the only base on which can be built a fighting movement to break the Tory offensive now and sweep Thatcher from office. To win the best militants in the Labour Party to such a perspective by exposing the windbaggery of Foot and the crippling weaknesses of Benn, Livingstone, Knight etc. That does mean fighting alongside those militants in the Labour Party on every battle for democracy against the leadership and its witch hunts. But it also means winning them to the recognition that the Labour Party, even a Bennite one, offers only a blind alley in the fight for working class power.

## REAL POWER LIES WITH THE EXECUTIVE

Not content with the power to fix parliament, the bourgeoisie has also spent years perfecting a state machine around and outside parliament that can control and shape the policies of governments. Real power lies with the executive authority of the state; not the legislators (who can only pass laws, not implement them).

The Cabinet, the military chiefs of staff, the Police chiefs, the top civil servants, the judiciary - representing as they do the interests of the industrialists and bankers, are the real centres of power in capitalist Britain, as elsewhere. The majority of the personnel



Grizzled old Parliamentarian Michael Foot. Prepared to pay lip service to the decidedly non-Parliamentary struggle of the FDR in El Salvador by wearing a badge, but he balks at the prospect of working class action in Britain.

in this state edifice - some like Sir William Armstrong, a head of the civil service, regarded as the most powerful man in Britain - have never been subject to an election in their life. Even the Cabinet, which is partially elected (although it is not constitutionally bound to be), is a highly secretive body. Details of its proceedings are not released to Parliament, let alone the electorate which it is supposed to be a servant of, until 30 years after its meetings have taken place. It is within the inner councils of all of these bodies that the crucial matters of state are decided and acted upon, not in Parliament. And should any of these fail, the ruling class has a ready-made Constitutional infrastructure via which it can dispose of Parliament legally - the Monarchy, the House of Lords, and the Privy Council.

Most important, of course, is the fact that once elected a Parliament is there for at least five years unless the Prime Minister decides otherwise. During that five years the government can break any number of promises it was elected upon with absolute impunity from the electorate, safe in the knowledge that even if it loses the next election, the bulk of its members will be returned and five years on it will get another chance to govern, once again without having to account for itself to the electors. Little wonder that cynicism is the stock in trade of the majority of MPs, and increasingly, of voters.

## PARLIAMENT HAS NO ARMY

The monarchy's real power should never be forgotten. It is head of the armed forces, it controls them directly. Parliament has no army - something the Bennites would do well to remember should they ever find themselves with a parliamentary majority. The House of Lords can pass legislation, can thwart the passage of bills from the Commons, and alongside the monarch can precipitate a constitutional crisis by refusing assent to Commons-approved bills.

Crowning all these bodies is the power behind the throne, the Privy Council. In times of crisis this is the ruling class's executive body par excellence. It comprises of the Cabinet, the security-vetted Labour big-wigs, various Lords and judges, the Chiefs of Staff and the monarch. It can declare war, peace, a state of emergency and the dissolution of Parliament. It can do all of these things "legally", without any recourse to Parliament at all, through Orders in Council. Taken together with the various Acts that Parliament has passed subverting its own "democracy" such as the Emergency Powers Act, the Suppression of Terrorism Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Public Order Act etc etc, which all give the Executive powers to break strikes, suspend all civil liberties, use troops to maintain law and order, without any parliamentary checks at all, the extra-parliamentary powers of the ruling class are formidable indeed. Moreover, this does not take into account the economic pressure that the big corporations and banks can and do bring into play regularly to check the activities of parliamentary governments.

The decision to build the A bomb was taken in secret by Atlee and the military top brass. A clique within the last Callaghan Cabinet took a decision to modernise Polaris behind the backs of Parliament and members of their own Cabinet. A phone tapping system to trace 999 calls and costing millions was ordered by the present Home Secretary without Parliament knowing anything about it until it was revealed in the press. The last Labour Government's decision to impose an incomes policy was taken not as a result of a Commons debate but because top Treasury civil servants and the Bank of England engineered a slide of the pound in 1975. Likewise the round of public expenditure cuts ordered by Healy in 1976 was dictated to him not by the Commons' Finance Committee but by the unelected International Monetary Fund who had been advised by Treasury civil servants! All decisions concerning the police are outside the scope of Parliament. The 1964 Police Act confirmed to this day the sentiment of the Royal Commission on Police that: "We entirely accept that it is in the public interest that a Chief Constable in dealing with these quasi-judicial matters should be free from the conventional processes of democratic control and influence." (Quoted in State Research April/May 81). More recently the Tories introduced the 6% pay limit in the public sector without any consultation with Parliament.

## PARLIAMENT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A RUBBER STAMP

Impotent in the realm of real deeds the parliamentarian will no doubt rebutt these anti-parliamentary home truths by pointing to the impact of the war of words that he or she is constantly waging against the all-powerful executive. "The cornerstone of English liberties" is presented as a beacon of real democracy - Question Time in the House, a whole 45 minutes of every day when MPs can ask Ministers questions - having given them a maximum of 21 days notice and minimum of 48 hours to prepare an answer (except for severely restricted Private Notice Questions). But even these minutes of high democracy are thwarted by restrictions. No questions may be asked about the Sovereign and the royal family, court decisions (which demonstrates just how powerful the extra-parliamentary judiciary are - viz the GLC decision), arms sales, foreign forces training in the UK, ministerial meetings of the NATO council, operational matters for the police, Cabinet committees and many more issues.

The evidence is overwhelming. Parliament is little more than a rubber stamp for executive decisions. The real business of government is kept secret from both Parliament and the mass of the people - a situation accepted by virtually all parliamentarians. Not

least by Tony Benn. He accepts the legitimacy of the wall of secrecy that is built around the administration of capitalist society. He merely objects to the wall being unnecessarily high: "Certainly there are areas of government which it is in the national interest to keep secret; for example, defence plans, security arrangements, budgetary decisions, position papers for international conferences, commercial arrangements and personal data." (Arguments for Democracy p.45). This justified and necessary secrecy deals with all the most important questions of political life. It really doesn't leave the Mother of Parliaments with very much to do.

For the professional politicians who staff Parliament there are different motives for being there. The main body of Labour MPs consists of middle class professional elements (teachers, lawyers and lecturers) and labour bureaucrats. For them parliament is an important staging post in their careers. Via the House of Commons they can ensure a safe political career, well paid with perks, travel and openings to posts within the lower echelons of the state machine.



Peter Tatchell: a Parliamentarian view of struggle

The Labour MP is typically a parliamentary careerist, a charlatan willing to sacrifice principles in order to prove reliability. Neil Kinnock is the most graphic example of this particular species at the moment, though not the only one by far. For the Tories Parliament fulfills a different role. To the 339 Tories in the Commons today, half of whom are company directors, 170 of whom sit on the boards of 475 companies, Parliament, and more especially government, is the preferred way of maintaining a direct link between the capitalist class as a whole and its state edifice.

These facts graphically illustrate the fundamental truth that Marxists have insisted on this century - the modern bourgeois parliament is a sham, and is not something that the working class can take up and use as a serious weapon against the power of capital. As the classic Bolshevik document, *The ABC of Communism* put it: "In a bourgeois republic (and we would add in a constitutional monarchy too - VWP) parliament is a talking shop; the members do nothing but discuss and make speeches. The real work is done by officials, ministers of state, etc. Parliament passes laws; it 'controls' the ministers by asking them various questions; it votes what the administration decided. In parliament is concentrated what is termed legislative authority. But the executive authority is in the hands of the Cabinet. Parliament therefore does nothing; parliament merely talks."

Parliamentary democracy is, to be sure, an advance on medieval despotism, on autocracy and so forth. The point is, however, that it is far from being the last word in democracy. In the course of the socialist revolution a new and higher form of democracy will emerge, based on the workplace organisations of workers themselves, with the right of recall, regular elections, pay at the level of an average worker's wage, maximum participation in government by the mass of the people, the breakdown of the bourgeois separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers.

Marx and Engels in their time rightly emphasised the need to complete the battle for democracy in order to clear the way for the unfettered and uncomplicated conflict of the working class and the bourgeoisie. However nowhere in Marx or Engels is parliamentary democracy advanced as the form or method of the emancipation of the working class. Even when Marx talked of the possibility of a peaceful revolution in Britain, the arming of the whole people, the direct action of the working class, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie were all features of the envisaged conquest of power by the working class. As early as 1844 Engels explained in an article on the British Constitution: "But mere democracy is unable to remedy social ills. Democratic equality is a chimera, the struggle of the poor against the rich cannot be fought out on the ground of democracy, or politics in general. Hence this stage too is only a transition, the last purely political measure that still has to be tried and from which a new element must immediately develop, a principle transcending everything political. That principle is the principle of socialism." (Marx and Engels on Britain, p.58)



# ILLUSIONS

During the late nineteenth century the stage of democracy envisaged by Engels was, on a world scale, superseded by the development of capitalism into its imperialist epoch. On this basis the Communist International at its Second Congress, under the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky, re-formulated the Marxist attitude to bourgeois parliaments: "The attitude of the Third International to parliament is determined not by new theoretical ideas, but by the change in the role of parliament itself. In the preceding historical epoch parliament was an instrument of the developing capitalist system, and as such played a role that was in a certain sense progressive. In the modern conditions of unbridled imperialism parliament has become a weapon of falsehood, deception and violence, a place of enervating chatter." (Theses of the Communist International, p.98)

It is this understanding of Parliament that guides communists in our attitude towards it. It also guides our attitude to "extra-parliamentary" action, which is currently being reviled by the right wing of the Labour Party and paid lip service to by the left reformists of the Labour Party and the Communist Party.

## EVASION BY THE "MARXISTS"

Furthermore the present debate in the Labour Party on this question has revealed that there is a gulf between our own revolutionary attitude to parliament and the evasive attitude that has been taken by the Marxist left inside the Labour Party, in particular the Socialist Organiser Alliance. Michael Foot has at least made his position clear. We too have stated our position. Socialist Organiser, however, has decided that centrist discretion is the better part of valour.

We do not believe that Parliament can be a weapon in the struggle for socialism, except as an auxiliary propaganda platform for our ideas. We do not reject participation in Parliaments as a matter of principle. But where we do participate we do so not with the objective of securing socialist advance through the debating chamber or even through the select committees. We do so to expose the real deceitful nature of parliament to the masses, and the reality of capitalist rule that exists behind the neo-gothic facade.

The Comintern's theses were clear on this: "Parliamentary activity, which consists of disseminating revolutionary ideas, unmasking class enemies from the parliamentary platform, and furthering the ideological cohesion of the masses, who, especially in backward areas, still respect parliament and harbour democratic illusions - this activity must be absolutely subordinate to the aims and tasks of the mass struggle outside parliament." (Theses of the CI - our emphasis).

For us Parliamentary activity is subordinate to extra-parliamentary activity because it is through the latter that revolutionary change will be effected. On this we disagree fundamentally with Foot, Benn and Peter Tatchell. For all of them Parliament is, in the last analysis supreme. As Tatchell said: "This is precisely what 'extra-parliamentary action' is all about. It does not supplant or usurp Parliament, but complements and invigorates the Labour Opposition in the House of Commons." (Tribune 18.12.81)

Against this Parliamentary view of struggle we would insist that genuine communist MPs would have as their real aim all the time the use of Parliament as a means of aiding and publicising all aspects of the class struggle outside Parliament - strikes, occupations, confrontations with the fascists, police etc. Out of such struggles we would seek to build forms of working class self-organisation that could serve as an alternative power to Parliament and the bourgeois state. That is the real superiority of 'extra-parliamentary' action for us - it contains the potential

for developing the organs of a future working class state - councils of action, defence squads, strike committees, supply committees, tenants committees, price watch committees etc etc. Such a power growing out of such extra-parliamentary action is not a complement to the debates between the competing parliamentary gangs. It is a replacement of them and their system - a different form of democracy altogether. It is a working class democracy. One that will have as its aim the destruction of the bourgeoisie's repressive and parasitic state edifice and ultimately, once the bourgeoisie has been destroyed as a class, the dissolution of all states, all forms of democracy (which implies the existence of a state) and all forms of exploitation and oppression: "Parliamentarianism is a definite form of the state. Therefore it cannot possibly be a form of Communist society, which knows neither classes, nor the class struggle, nor any kind of state power.....Bourgeois parliaments are one of the most important apparatuses of the bourgeois state machine and, like the bourgeois state in general, cannot be won over to the side of the proletariat. The task of the proletariat is to shatter the bourgeois state machine, destroying it and its parliamentary institutions, whether republican or constitutional monarchial." (Theses of the CI, pp.99-100)

Socialist Organiser have refused to state these elementary principles in their press, as a rebuttal to Foot's demands. In the immediate aftermath of the Tatchell affair SO stated: "Tatchell has stressed that he is for parliamentary democracy. And so are Marxists for parliamentary democracy, against all undemocratic attempts to restrict and crush it." (SO 9.12.81)

This half truth - that Marxists are prepared to defend aspects of bourgeois democracy against reactionary attacks on it - avoids, in classic centrist fashion, answering the immediate question posed by the witchunt. That is, are you for the leading role of Parliament? The answer to that is no. Revolutionaries believe that the institutions of bourgeois democracy ie. Parliament, will have to be broken up, swept aside and replaced with the far more democratic organs of proletarian democracy - Councils of Action or Soviets. No such principled statements for Martin Thomas and Socialist Organiser: "Marxists believe that the ruling class will attempt to crush parliamentary democracy by violence if Labour uses it for real anti-capitalist change, and that, in the fight against that ruling class, workers can develop their own democracy, based on delegates and the right of recall, better than present day parliamentary democracy." (ibid)

What is this alternative democracy proposed by Socialist Organiser? Again, all is vague and imprecise. Accountable delegates - to what we may ask - Parliament or a workers' council? A democracy that is better than present day parliamentary democracy? Does this mean a better parliamentary democracy in the future or an alternative to parliamentary democracy? For the centrists of SO the beauty of such imprecision is that it can be interpreted one way by their reformist friends and another way by themselves (in the privacy of their own homes of course).

## Using Cannon to dodge the issue

The presence within the Socialist Organiser Alliance of the former supporters of "Socialist Press", a paper well known for its statements on the need to overthrow Parliament with the power of councils of action, has prompted the editors of Socialist Organiser to give their cowardly stand an air of Trotskyist orthodoxy.

To do this they decided, not to reprint the Comintern's Theses on Parliament - in part written by Trotsky - but James P. Cannon's "Socialism on Trial" - a transcript of the trial of Cannon and other leading members of the American Socialist Workers Party for their activities, published by the SWP as a major propaganda document on the eve of America's entry into the second world war. In fact Cannon's document exhibits the first features of the centrist degeneration of the post-Trotsky Fourth International - features that the present day Socialist Organiser have aped and indeed refined.

In the court room Cannon was clear that he was making a propaganda statement about communist politics. His key task, therefore, was to advocate in the clearest possible terms the key tenets of the communist programme. Instead he chose to water them down, using the backwardness of the American workers as an excuse. The Socialist Organiser editors disagree with us on this. They only print an extract from the pamphlet, but do say that the whole thing is "a classic explanation of the true relation of Marxism and democracy".

Cannon's fault was that instead of militantly exposing the fraud of bourgeois democracy and defending the alternative - workers democracy - he in fact tried to smooth over the contradiction between the two. In so doing he inevitably made concessions to bourgeois democracy. In the piece reprinted by SO he replies to a question concerning the freedom of press and assembly after the revolution: "I think in the United States you can say with absolute certainty that the freedoms of speech, press, assemblage, religion, will be written in the program of the victorious revolution". (Socialism on Trial p 36).



Workers turning their backs on Parliament? Ford strikers lobby their MPs during the 1978 strike. For us, extra-Parliamentary action "contains the potential for developing the organs of a future working class state". Yet despite this potential, these workers still felt it important to go to Westminster, although they got precious little from it. Given the illusions current in the working class about Parliament, it is all the more important for revolutionaries to be clear about their attitude towards it.

This is thoroughly unMarxist. It confuses bourgeois notions of absolute freedom with the Marxist understanding that teaches that freedoms for one class can mean limitations on other classes in society. Revolutionaries cannot say in advance that we will grant the bourgeoisie freedom of press and assembly after the victorious revolution. We know that they will use it to plot against the workers' state. It is likely therefore that we will rob them of the means of doing so. This does not mean a workers state is not democratic. For the ruling class, ie the working class, the great majority, the workers' state will be a thousand times more democratic and free than capitalism ever was. But this will not necessarily be the case for the remnants of the bourgeoisie, just as it was not the case for remnants of feudalism during the terror in the French bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth century.

Cannon goes on from this to even more serious errors. He refuses to openly challenge the fakery of bourgeois democracy and the illusions that prevail about the "democratic" process: "When we say it is an illusion to expect that we can effect the social transformation by parliamentary means, that doesn't mean that we don't want to do it, or that we wouldn't gladly accept such a method" (ibid p 92).

Earlier in the pamphlet and not quoted in Socialist Organiser, Cannon had expanded on this theme: "If the democratic processes are maintained here, if they are not disrupted by fascist methods by the government, and the majority of the people supporting the ideas of socialism can secure a victory by the democratic processes, I don't see any reason why they cannot proceed by the democratic method of amending the Constitution to fit the new regime." ibid.p 70.

## CANNON FLIES IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST STRATEGY

These statements accept that the form of democracy created by the bourgeoisie and used daily by it in its war on the working class can, if the capitalists will be so kind as not to interfere, legislate socialism into existence. This flies in the face of communist strategy. The 'democratic' process of parliament will always exclude millions from the business of politics. Socialism can only be created by the working class. If the working class is excluded from the business of building socialism, as it would be under any and every parliamentary regime, notwithstanding Cannon's proposed drastic amendments to the USA's bourgeois constitution, then the social transformation and the conquest of political power by the working class cannot come about. Cannon's refusal to see this and his willingness to brook the possibility of a Parliamentary 'revolution', reveals that he is smitten with the bourgeois democratic illusions of the workers he is supposed to be converting to revolution.

Inevitably these concessions concerning the possibility of using parliament as a vehicle for socialism have an immediate practical significance. Cannon again in a piece from the "classic explanation" of marxism and democracy not quoted, explicitly subordinates mass action around an immediate aim to the "democratic process": "Question: how does the party propose to realise the demands for compulsory training under trade union control?"

Answer: Our programme is a legislative programme. Everything that we propose would have to be incorporated into law. If we had a delegation in Congress they would introduce a bill, or a series of bills, providing for the incorporation in the law of the country of these proposals, these military proposals of ours." (ibid. p.58)

## MASS ACTION NEEDED TO REALISE PROGRAMME

There is no mention of the part mass action will play in the realisation of this programme to achieve compulsory military training under trade union control. In place of strikes, demonstrations, non-operation with the authorities and other forms of action, Cannon poses the realisation of the programme exclusively in bourgeois democratic terms. In formulating the question in this way, Cannon also grants communist MPs the role of legislators rather than leaders of the class struggle and merciless expositors of parliament. Compare his position with that of the Comintern: "The Party and its Central Committee must see that legislative proposals are regularly introduced, not with the idea that they will be accepted by the bourgeois majority, but for the purpose of propaganda, agitation and organisation....Communist members of Parliament must bear in mind that they are not 'legislators' seeking agreement with other legislators, but Party agitators sent into the enemy's camp to carry out Party decisions." (Theses of the CI, pp.104-5)

By their acceptance of Cannon's positions on democracy the Socialist Organiser are in reality doing things. In the first place they are identifying their tendency with the centrist tradition of the post Trotsky International - which Cannon's document was an early, though not definitive example of. Secondly they are showing the white flag to Michael Foot and more especially Tony Benn. Look, they can say, here is the Marxist position on democracy and it isn't that different from your own. Cannon was at least compromised by the threat of a prison sentence and the onset of an imperialist Socialist Organiser's capitulation to bourgeois democracy, which is what a refusal to expose it is, has been provoked merely by the threat of being expelled from the Labour Party. Their crime is the same as Cannon's but their cowardice is considerably greater. ■



JAMES P. CANNON (1890-1974). Cannon was a colleague of Trotsky's in the 1930s, and one of the founders of American Trotskyism. However, his speeches in the courtroom of 1941, collected in "Socialism on Trial", have little in common with the legacy of Trotsky and the Communist International, when it comes to the question of parliamentary democracy.



These Theses on the Polish Military Coup d'Etat were passed by the Political Committee of Workers Power on the 3rd January 1982

# The 18th Brumaire

## REVOLUTION AND COUNTER

1 The bureaucratic caste that usurps political power in the workers states and parasitically lives off the planned property relations cannot coexist with independent organisations of the working class. Neither can it tolerate the erosion of its privileges, its political power or the destabilisation of the repressive internal security apparatus upon which its power ultimately depends. For these reasons it was inevitable that the Stalinists would launch a bid to recoup the gains made by the Polish workers since August 1980. This is the objective of the military coup. It could only have been prevented or resisted, by the working class taking political power directly into the hands of their own workers councils and workers militia. A failure to take political power—to make a political revolution—paved the way for the Stalinists bloody counter attack.

2 But bureaucratic privilege, the inability of the bureaucracy to rationally plan and effectively organise the economy coupled with the political oppression of the working class all mean that periodically open conflict erupts between the working class and their bureaucratic overlords in the workers states. The specific political revolutionary situation that Poland has experienced since August 1980 had its roots in the following factors.

(a) **The crisis of the bureaucratically planned economy.** The Gierk regime after 1970 hoped to finance a new round of industrialisation by massive borrowing from Western banks and governments which was to be repaid by the exports of Polish manufactured goods to the West. By late 1981 Poland, in relation to the size of its population, was the second most indebted country in the world. But the bureaucracy proved incapable of raising the productivity of the working class that it denied elementary rights of organisation and self-expression to. (Between 1976 and 1979 labour productivity grew by only 3.8%). Recession in the Western capitalist economies definitively removed the hoped for markets of the Polish bureaucracy and further undermined their entire economic strategy.

(b) **The militant tradition of the Polish working class** In 1970 and 1976 had forced the bureaucracy to carry an enormous subsidy on prices of essential foodstuffs. Bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption ensured continued scarcities of essential goods. In the face of mounting foreign debts the Gierk regime sought to push down the living standards of the working class through the price rises of the summer of 1980.

(c) **The crisis of Agriculture:** approximately 75% of Polish agricultural land is in the hands of the small-holding peasantry, (the average size of holdings being around 12.6 acres). The Stalinist regime tolerates this anachronistic agricultural system for fear of conflict with the peasantry and the Catholic church whose roots lie in rural village Poland. But the shortage of needed manufactured goods, and the small peasantry's control of essential food supplies provoked a 'scissors crisis' in Polish agriculture. The peasantry refused to sell their products to state agencies because the state could not provide goods required for agricultural production in exchange. Hence the tendency of the peasantry to hoard and to sell goods on the more lucrative private market. Shortages of foodstuffs in the state shops, escalating prices on the private market served to further impoverish the living standards of Poland's industrial working class.

(d) **The continued renegeing by the Stalinist bureaucracy on the deals and compromises struck with the working class after previous conflicts.** After 1956, 1970 and 1976 the bureaucracy promised the redress of grievances, and the extension of workers rights. On each occasion the Stalinists, having secured the demobilisation of the working class, ripped up the agreements and attempted to reinstitute repression. This meant that by 1980 there existed a definite layer of workers ready to fight in their own defence but deeply distrustful of the Party leaders and the hacks in the leadership of the official unions as a direct result of their own experience.

(e) **The flagrant corruption of the leading beneficiaries of the Gierk regime.** The special rations, fine houses and fat salaries of the bureaucracy stood in sharp and



Demonstrators overturn a police van (Katowice, October 1981)

visible contrast to the hardships and privations of working class life. The inability of these privileged parasites to organise production and distribution effectively, further sharpened the Polish working class hatred of inequality.

(f) **The national question in Poland.** The social and political regime that has existed in Poland since the end of the second imperialist war was imposed on Poland by the Soviet armed forces counter to the immediate rhythms of its class struggle. Since that time the army of the Soviet bureaucracy has served as the ultimate sanction against political change in Poland. Hence all struggles against the bureaucratic caste, against political oppression and inequality are necessarily interwoven with the sense of national oppression bolstered by the very existence of the Stalinist regime in Poland.

3 The crisis of the summer of 1980 was sparked initially by a struggle against food price rises but was dramatically intensified by a struggle in defence of victimised militants in Gdansk. It passed through a stage of immediate local economic demands on work conditions and wages to the formation of the national Solidarnosc and the demand for free independent Trade Unions. In the face of a mass exodus out of the Stalinist official unions, mass recruitment to Solidarnosc among rank and file party members and universal hatred and contempt for the corrupt and discredited Gierk regime, the Stalinists had no immediate alternative to the official recognition and registration of Solidarnosc.

But the concessions wrung from the regime—on pay, on union recognition, on Saturday working—and the new self confidence of the working class could only have been defended and extended by the working class finally destroying the political power, repressive apparatus and economic privileges of the bureaucracy—by POLITICAL REVOLUTION. Having taken power into the hands of its own workers councils and militia the working class would proceed to reorganise the plan from top to bottom under workers management.

The potential for such a political-revolutionary resolution to Poland's crisis was always present in the dynamic of the workers struggles from August 1980. The inter-factory strike committees could have laid the basis for soviet type organisation and at a number of stages workers were forced to form their own rudimentary workers defence squads. The working class base of Solidarnosc has consistently given voice to demands for an end to privilege, for democracy in the factories and for the extension of workers control and management in the plants and in the economy as a whole. None of these demands were realisable short of the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic rulers.



State farm workers on strike over food shortages

4 Neither could Solidarnosc hope to achieve a permanent status as a trade union representing the Polish working class in negotiations and bargaining with the bureaucracy. The limited programme of establishing a Trade Union in a bureaucratically degenerate workers state is a utopian one. Under capitalism Trade Unions represent workers against individual capitalists in a market over which neither employer nor worker has control. The very dynamics of the market economy keep alive trade unionism as a form of representation of the working class within bourgeois society. Within a healthy workers state Trade Unions would initially continue to represent the interests of sections of workers within a state that was under the direct control of the working class as a whole. They would be essential training grounds for workers to learn to control and manage the economy, 'schools for socialism', as Lenin liked to call them. But in a bureaucratically degenerate workers state such as Poland neither the market mechanisms through which workers bargain with individual employers nor the prerequisites of the functions of Trade Unions in a healthy workers state are in existence. Every major demand of the workers—on the length of the working week, the sacking of an individual manager, the allocation of goods or wages—inevitably pits the working class against the central bureaucracy which monopolises the central planning mechanism. And lasting success for the workers cannot be secured by bargaining with the central bureaucracy. The nature of its power and privileges is such that it cannot for long coexist with independent organisations of those that it oppresses. The centralisation of its power and the scale of its privileges make it too tempting an object of revolutionary overthrow unless the masses themselves are forcibly deprived of the right to organise.

5 Solidarnosc could therefore only be a force for political conflict with the bureaucracy. Either it could have laid the basis for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucracy that we have outlined above, or it could have developed a programme of collaboration with, and reform of, the Stalinist regime. Thirdly it could have moved in the direction of a counter-revolutionary overthrow of the regime which would have paved the way for the restoration of capitalism in Poland, and whatever the nationalist slogans it was fought under, this would mean the turning of Poland once again into a semi-colony of Western Imperialism.

The leadership of Solidarity, and the dominant tendencies in its conferences and national commission was overwhelmingly under the influence of tendencies supporting the latter two political programmes.

6 The main tendencies in the leadership were as follows:

(i) **The Walesa group** tied particularly closely to the Catholic hierarchy of Wyczynska and Glomp who in their turn were the active agents of, and in regular contact with, the reactionary Pope John Paul II.

On a world scale the Catholic church is inevitably committed to the maintenance of the exploitative order of capitalism and to the destruction of those 'Godless' states that have overthrown the private property that the Church sees as sacred. For that reason the Catholic hierarchy is a force ultimately fighting for capitalist restoration in the workers states.

In the immediate situation of Poland's political-revolutionary crisis it fought to use the mobilisations of the working class and its hold over large sections of the working class to strengthen its own bargaining position with the regime. Its hold over large sections of Polish workers flows from a) the rural background of a large proportion of the workforce, particularly the first generation workers of Gierk's "industrial boom". b) the Church's ability to pose as a force representing national independence in the eyes of the masses;

c) the fact that in conditions of Stalinist repression and of its oppressive and stultifying cultural life the Catholic church was able to appear as what Marx called 'the heart of the heartless world. The soul of socialist conditions.'

It sought to be a broker between the regime and the workers—before and after martial law—in order to guarantee both: the preservation and extension of capitalism and church control over 'social bodies'. The Church wants to use its bargaining strength to erode crucial rights secured for women in Poland (including abortion rights and contraception facilities). It aims to drive women back into family life as child rearers and unpaid child minders. In this way it hopes to tighten its own grip on the minds of the young by eroding the need for nursery and child care facilities in the hands of the "Godless state".

It also intends to wring from the bureaucracy concessions in the field of education, media time for religious sermonising, of family life and even food distribution. The Stalinists were prepared to concede to the Church in these spheres—including Ministerial responsibility for 'family life'—in exchange for Church calls for order and calm.

While significant sectors of the working class looked to the Catholic hierarchy for a lead, took refuge in occupation strikes, decked out their demonstrations in religious symbols, the Catholic Church was not able to force the ranks of Solidarnosc to obey its lead.

On many occasions the same workers who would abase themselves before the cassock, and cross would refuse to heed Church calls for a return to work. Similarly the Church, in Poland and Rome, has been set on doing a deal to find a Polish 'Tito'—a patriotic decentralising authoritarian leader who would make concessions to the private farmers, to small businessmen and to the Church itself. This programme, the led Glomp to ultimately plump for Jaruzelski rather than for the struggle to overthrow martial law, run objectively counter to the democratic aspirations of the base of Solidarnosc.

The Catholic hierarchy, which supported the autocratic Great Polish dictatorship of Pilsudki after the first imperialist war, has not changed its spots. Behind a Stalinist Pilsudski figure and order than the uncertainties and disorder of a political-revolutionary crisis. That is the reasoning of the Catholic hierarchy in the face of a working class striving for its own emancipation. Until the threat of a working class thus mobilised is removed, the Catholic Church is willing to temporarily hold back in its long term goal of restoring capitalism.

Walesa—until December 1981 as his project crystallised before his eyes and the eyes of millions of Solidarnosc supporters too—sought to strike a compromise deal with the authorities that would guarantee joint participation in a National Front for the Church, Solidarnosc appointees and the Stalinists. His project included the distribution of state farm land to the private peasantry, self management committees in factories and 'social Council' control of the economy by which he meant tripartite administration of the plan and the bolstering of the Church's role in all aspects of social and political life.

In order to secure that deal Walesa attempted to hold back the unofficial strikes of October and November which involved 250,000 workers. In order to prevent bureaucratic reprisals against strikers and passage of anti-strike legislation he counselled Solidarnosc itself to outlaw unofficial strikes and to build disciplinary machinery that could put such a ban into effect. (See the late October early November Solidarity Praesidium call for an end to strikes). At the meeting of Archbishop Glomp Walesa unilaterally left the meeting of the Solidarnosc National Commission to meet with Jaruzelski and Glomp to set up talks, without specifying the general principles to which the construction of national agreement in our motherland should be subjected. Not until the Stalinists brazen themselves for hard line action against Solidarnosc did Walesa break from this perspective of collaboration with the Stalinists.

(ii) **The Social Democratic KOR** grouping most represented by Kuron and Michnik. The program of this grouping—reconstituted in late November as 'clubs of the self-governing republic'—was the road of Poland on the road to its 'Finlandisation'. By this they mean the establishment, by stealth and encroachment of a Parliamentary democracy accepting the dictates of foreign policy alliance with the USSR; decisive repressive machinery and foreign policy matters remaining in the grip of the Stalinists. Kuron explicitly calls for the replacement of centralised planning with a decentralised economic order.

Kuron, and the Social Democratic and lay Catholic intelligentsia, express a classic distrust of—in real terms—the self organisation of the working class. At each key stage in the crisis after August they counselled against showdown and conflict with the Stalinists. But the credibility of the KOR grows as defenders of workers rights after 1976 and the links with the Catholic intelligentsia ensured for an influential role in the counsels of Solidarnosc. Kuron for example who played a vital role in securing the agreed compromise deal between Solidarnosc and the regime on workers management.



# f General Jaruzelski

## - REVOLUTION IN POLAND



Top Right: Jaruzelski announces his coup on Polish television. Right: Polish armoured car in Warsaw  
Above: Polish troops in control of Warsaw cross-roads

the Radom tapes was for power to be shared until 1984 elections on the basis of 30% to the Stalinists, 25% to the peasants organisations, 25% to Solidarnosc with the rest going to lay Catholic organisations and the counter-revolutionary KPN.

But for all the demagogic froth of Rulewski there is no evidence that he was urging, or that Solidarnosc was preparing an armed insurrection on the eve of Jaruzelski's coup. Jaruzelski had broken off negotiations with Glomp and Walesa. He was visibly preparing an offensive against Solidarnosc. But still "the radicals" expected a referendum to defend them and their notion of power sharing against the Stalinists. True by December, leading Militants were urging the formation of workers defence guards (Bujak and Palka, for example). This call was strengthened after riot police broke up the Warsaw fire academy student sit-in in early December. But the sporadic nature of the resistance to Martial Law underlines that there were no concrete and developed plans for Solidarnosc to organise to seize political power from the Stalinist bureaucracy on the part of Walesa's famed 'Radical' opponents in the Solidarnosc leadership. The political programme of these figures underlines that they were not qualitatively different in political character to the dominant Walesa tendency on the Praesidium.

7 Taken together as a contradictory whole, the dominant tendencies in Solidarnosc revealed the following crippling weaknesses.

a) Subordination to the Catholic hierarchy that fought to implement its own anti-working class programme throughout the crisis, on the backs of the workers movement in collaboration with the Stalinists.

b) The bankrupt policies of Polish nationalism. We do not deny that Poland is nationally oppressed. But Polish nationalism itself, since the October Revolution of 1917 in particular, as an ideology and programme binds and gags the working class from an independent struggle for its own interests. Since 1917, when Poland achieved its independence because of the revolutionary workers in Russia, anti-Russian Chauvinism in Poland has meant that Polish nationalism's content has been formed in counter position to the October Revolution itself. Hence the character of Polish nationalist ideology has to be defined as overwhelmingly reactionary because:-

1) it binds the working class to the capitalists, restorationist, clerical and even Stalinist elements in its society in the name of the unity of the Polish nation. 2) its historically stamped anti-Sovietism opens the road for restorationist illusions in Western Democracy and in the capitalist market economy among broad sections of the masses themselves.

3) it isolates the Polish workers from their natural allies — the workers of East Europe and the USSR. There can be no independence for the Polish working class without the active assistance of the workers of the other states at present in the political grip of Stalinism. Only as the spearhead of an international political revolution against Stalinism could the Polish Workers Political Revolution guarantee its own survival. But the anti-Soviet, Catholic totems of the Polish nationalists necessarily drive a wedge between the workers of Poland and the USSR — a wedge that can be exploited by the Stalinists of the Kremlin should they decide to use Warsaw Pact forces to finish the job for Jaruzelski.

c) A programme for the Polish economy that could strengthen the forces of capitalist restoration. Born of the collapse of the Polish plan and the continued existence of small peasant agriculture, the predominant tendency in the Solidarnosc leadership was towards the decentralisation of the economy, the strengthening of market mechanisms and the complete subordination of agricultural production to the law of value. While elements of this programme could have been, and still can be, carried out alongside sections of the Polish bureaucracy (who look enviously

at the market mechanisms of Hungary and Yugoslavia) they would inevitably strengthen the tendency towards, and the forces fighting for, the complete smashing of the planned property relations of Poland.

Our programme recognises that the centralised command planning of the Stalinists can never realise the potential of the socialised property forms and has, through its shortcomings, necessarily blackened the very name of planning to the workers of Poland. We fight for a plan centralised in the hands of the organs of the working class itself. But behind the Solidarnosc leaders' talk of self-management — which itself reflects the workers basic striving for control — lies a programme of "market socialism" which would firstly introduce the Catholic Church, with its own anti-working class anti-socialist priorities, into the central 'social council' of the economy. Secondly it would, through decentralisation, prevent the Polish workers, as a class, from managing their economy, strengthen the law of the market and necessarily drive down the living standards of the Polish workers. The Solidarnosc leaders, no less than the Stalinists, accept that their programme for economic 'reform' will mean unemployment for Polish workers.

d) Crippling illusions in Western Imperialism: While Poland is politically oppressed by the Kremlin bureaucracy, the 1970s saw it becoming ever more economically exploited by the Western banks and governments, albeit as a result of the policies of the Stalinists themselves. While ultimately aiming to prize Poland loose from Comecon on the road to restoring Capitalist property relations, the Imperialists therefore had no interest in a victorious political revolution of the Polish working class. A victorious working class revolution would jeopardise the debt and interest-payments upon which the imperialists exploitation of Poland rests. Polish nationalism has served to blind large sections of the Polish workers to the root of much of their present miseries in the rapacious demands of the financial institutions of imperialism.

e) A strategy for advance that left the central levers of Stalinist power intact, but hoped instead to encroach on that power through its points of least resistance. The Solidarnosc strategy for challenging managerial power in individual factories, for standing their own candidates against discredited Party candidates in local elections and, eventually, a referendum appeal for power sharing over the heads of the Stalinists, at every stage avoided a direct challenge to the armed central power of the bureaucracy. As a result, the militia, the Internal Defence Force (WOW), the riot commandos (ZOMO) police used to break the Fire Academy sit-in) and the military high command remained intact to choose their moment to strike back. Once again the Polish workers learned the bloody lesson that Stalinism can only be overthrown by a movement that prepares an organised armed insurrection against its central political apparatus in order to pass power into the hands of the workers themselves.

8 In search of an illusory national agreement with the Stalinists and the Church, the Solidarnosc leaders demobilised the workers organisations. They held off strikes and, with Glomp's blessing, appealed for calm. The Stalinists showed their gratitude with a bloody coup, with a declaration of war against the Polish workers.

But just because the programme of the Solidarnosc leadership could not lead the 10 million Polish workers who looked to them for final victory, it does not mean that we do not solidarise with Solidarnosc, as a movement of the Polish workers against their bureaucratic oppressors. The existence of a mass base, often raising demands in conflict with the aims and intentions of the Solidarnosc leaders, clearly reveals that, despite its leadership, Solidarnosc was not a counter-revolutionary organisation per se. It was, and if it survives could well continue to be, a dynamic movement, rife with contradictions, but possessing the potential of resolving them in the direction of political revolution, given the intervention within it of revolutionaries.

As is usually the case when workers enter into struggles against their capitalist exploiters or their bureaucratic oppressors, they do so without a ready-made and fully-formed

revolutionary leadership. The task of revolutionaries in Poland was to struggle within the mobilisations of the Polish masses, a) to support and extend those mobilisations against the bureaucracy to their victorious conclusions, and b) in so doing popularise the programme of Trotskyism, fight to build the nucleus of a new revolutionary communist party that could expose in practice, in the school of struggle itself, the bankruptcy of the programme and tactics of the clerics, nationalists and restorationists who took strength (as they did in Hungary in 1956) from the first shocks of the political-revolutionary crisis in Poland.

The central problem facing the workers of Poland is such a revolutionary leadership was not built. Revolutionaries were not able to re-articulate the emancipatory programme of Marxism to a working class, prepared to sacrifice and struggle. But one blinded by Stalinist oppression and clerical obscurantism to the potential of workers power of a workers managed planned economy, of socialism as the road to the equality and workers democracy millions of Polish workers fought for.

9 The August 1980 crisis paralysed the Stalinist bureaucracy. Significant sections of the party — approximately one third — actively joined Solidarnosc. The Party (PUWP) is the key mobilising agent by which the central Stalinist bureaucracy ensures that its wishes are carried out at every level of the economic and political apparatus, and in every social organisation. For that reason it must remain, essentially, the property of the central bureaucracy itself. But in order to perform its function it has to organise layers of activity outside of, and politically oppressed by the central bureaucracy. Hence any upheaval in the Stalinist states must necessarily send shockwaves throughout the party itself serving to weaken the mobilising potential of the party leadership.

Successive Stalinist regimes in Poland as elsewhere have deliberately nurtured a layer of materially privileged labour aristocrats as an element of the base of the Bonapartist bureaucracy inside their specific working class. For the Gierk regime this had been most noticeably the miners and steel workers of Silesia. The defection of this group of workers to the ranks of Solidarnosc was decisive both in undermining a vital base of support for the Stalinist regime, and forcing a compromise recognition of Solidarnosc.

This was even reflected in a movement at the base of the party for greater internal democracy, for the right to horizontal communication between party units, and for contested elections of party posts. While this movement represented a destabilisation of bureaucratic rule, it could never have become the means for replacing it. The Stalinist party, by its nature, irreformable; it can only exist as the agency of the central Stalinist bureaucracy. If it ceases to perform this function it will be purged or even replaced by an immediate instrument of bureaucratic rule.

In the face of the Gdansk strike wave the central bureaucracy itself divided over tactics for preserving their caste rule. A significant layer of that bureaucracy — security chieftains for example — were prepared to jettison the discredited Gierek leadership and negotiate a compromise recognition of Solidarnosc. Only a small minority of the central bureaucracy attempted to resist this tactical retreat by the Stalinist core of the party.

But the party itself fragmented under the impact of the developing crisis. There were significant defections from the ranks. At the last Central Committee before the coup it was reported that the PUWP, which was 3 million strong August 1980, had in "recent months", lost 244,000 members, expelled 180,000 and accepted only 30,000 new recruits. Factory branches of the PUWP joined Solidarnosc wholesale. In the face of the Polish workers movement, the Party withered as an effective instrument of bureaucratic rule.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

The Social Democratic intelligentsia in the workers states is a central conduit of bourgeois ideas and programmes into the ranks of the working class. Most vitally they foster illusions in Parliamentary Democracy (a form of government that can only take root in a stable Imperialist country capable of maintaining a relative harmony of interest between the political representatives of Labour and Capital). To workers who themselves are not consciously restorationist they offer as an alternative to their felt political oppression the chimera of Parliamentary Democracy, and the societies that can maintain it, as the means for realising political emancipation.

In the face of Stalinist totalitarian tyranny revolutionary Marxists must ceaselessly fight against the anti-working class programme and tactics of the Social Democratic intelligentsia. However in certain situations, and on specific issues, revolutionaries would find themselves (as an independent force) fighting alongside such groups as KOR to defend the rights of workers and militants to organise free of bureaucratic repression. In the wake of the 1976 riots, for example, communists would have found themselves alongside the KOR militants who were opposing the imprisonment of workers involved in the riots.



Lech Walesa

(iii) The consciously restorationist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN). The KPN explicitly aims at redrawing Poland's borders so that they correspond with those achieved after the first imperialist war. It explicitly aims at re-establishing capitalist property forms in Poland. In Poland after World War one, only 69.2% of the population were Polish (figures for 1921). The Poland of Pilsudski savagely oppressed the sizeable minority of 4.5 million Ukrainians who found themselves under Polish rule. Whatever the claims of the KPN leaders, a capitalist Poland would inevitably become a semi-colony of Western Capitalism. The effects of the crippling debts that the bureaucrats have taken on and the attacks on workers living standards to pay for them, are just a hint of the future open to Poland and the masses should the KPN leaders successfully carry through their counter-revolution and deliver up Poland to the imperialists.

Revolutionary Marxists have no solidarity with these conscious agents of counter-revolution and would give them no defence. For the Polish workers movement, in the name of democracy, to have defended the KPN leaders as "political prisoners" along with the organisers of the trade unions arrested by the Stalinists, reflects the very real presence of counter-revolutionary forces within the Solidarnosc movement.

(iv) The Solidarnosc 'radicals'. We see no evidence that those elements who opposed Walesa's collaborationist leadership — Jurczyk, Rulewski, Gwiazda — differed qualitatively from Walesa in Programme or perspective. All were committed to a programme that intended to, prize control of the economy from the Stalinists and their chain of appointed managers, to take over local government through Solidarnosc candidates in 'free elections', to guaranteeing the security interests of the Soviet bureaucracy in Poland while leaving the central repressive state apparatus intact. They differed with Walesa, and with each other, only over the pace at which to take this project. The inevitable refusal of the Stalinists to negotiate such an erosion of their power forced these elements into empty demagogic conflict with the regime. By early December [as evidenced by the Radom Tapes] Rulewski was urging that Solidarnosc itself form a Provisional Government of National Unity, given the failure of Jaruzelski, Walesa, Glomp negotiations to reach a National Agreement. Knowing the depths of popular support for Solidarnosc against the Stalinists, the National Commission in Gdansk immediately prior to Jaruzelski's coup called for a referendum to back their claim for power sharing with the Church and, and at least temporarily, with the Stalinists too. Rulewski's formula as announced in



# Poland (continued)

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

10

The hardline defenders of bureaucratic rule - Jaruzelski for example - conducted a concerted strategy of attrition against Solidarnosc and the softs and compromisers in their own ranks. They did this by allowing economic chaos and food shortages to demoralise significant sections of workers and the population at large. It was hoped also to swing layers of workers behind the administration through blaming Solidarnosc for privations and supply breakdowns.

b) They also provoked conflict with the Solidarnosc leaders so as to play on, expose and exacerbate their divisions and demagoguery. In concert with Glomp, Jaruzelski was prepared to open negotiations with Solidarnosc on power-sharing in exchange for their calling off strikes. Hard line anti-Solidarnosc bureaucratic militant Olzowski was the first to offer the carrot of a new National Front to the Walesa/Glomp axis.

Having lured Solidarnosc's leadership into negotiations, Jaruzelski proceeded to play on the divisions in Solidarnosc's ranks. While guaranteeing peasant property (to a doubtless unbelieving peasantry), promising electoral reform and attaching councils of "experts" to the Cabinet, Jaruzelski was not prepared to concede on a union veto on Stalinist representatives in the new National Front or on free elections. Instead the Stalinists braced themselves to apply military force against Solidarnosc.

The late November break-up of the negotiations, the police raid of Kuron's meeting to establish his social democratic clubs, the late November Central Committee meeting at which Jaruzelski announced his intention to take out powers to ban strikes and the early December raid on the Fire-Fighters Academy; all signified a stiffening of the Stalinists' resolve to break Solidarnosc. They represented a dress rehearsal for Jaruzelski's coup of December 13th.

Jaruzelski's provocation elicited squeals of protest from Walesa - "There is no national agreement, for there is no one to agree with. The other side cheats". and at Radom - "They've been thumbing their noses at us from the very beginning", and at the last Gdansk National Commission "the policy of small steps has produced no results". It placed him under great pressure within the Solidarnosc leadership, which he tried to placate with the promises bugged by the Stalinists in their "Radom Tapes": "Confrontation is inevitable, and will take place. I wanted to arrive at it by a natural way, when all sections of society were with us. But I have been mistaken in my calculations because I thought that we would be able to wait until the Sejm and councils would collapse by themselves. It has been proved that we can have no success with this tactic".

However, Jaruzelski knew that Solidarnosc was not prepared to resist a coup, that its leaders were long on words and short on preparations, and that Glomp would be continuing - until the very eve of the coup - to keep alive the hope of arbitration in negotiations between the two sides.



Jaruzelski plots with colleague Grabski. These Stalinist butchers have the nerve to decorate their offices with pictures of Lenin.



Polish workers queue for food under martial law in Leszno.

reliable special units to attack the workers. They wanted to use the 350,000 strong army, half of which is comprised of the conscripted sons of workers and peasants, only as back up and for patrol and supervisory duties.

Only methods of struggle that enabled the workers to win over the conscripts and their arms could have smashed Jaruzelski's coup.

The Catholic hierarchy openly counselled passivity in the face of the coup. While refusing to go so far as to condone the crackdown, they offered to calm the population in exchange for the release of detainees. And the Solidarnosc leaders counselled tactics that prevented the workers making an open bid to win over sections of Jaruzelski's Army Reserve. The bloody repression of Poznan in 1956 and the Baltic coast in 1976 has understandable strengthened a tendency amongst Polish workers to keep off the streets and to use the occupation and the "go-slow" in the factory as the most effective means of resistance and defence from Stalinism's bloody militias. Yet, as a tactic this isolates the more militant workers behind their factory gates, at the mercy of the crack troops, while the mass of the workers are consigned to passive resistance.

Only by pulling the vast majority of the working class on to the streets in demonstrations - defended by a workers militia - can the workers ever prove to the conscript army that there is an alternative superior armed force with which to throw in their lot. Only mass organised defiance can break the morale of the army and therefore save the lives of the militants who otherwise are left alone to face the specialised paratroopers and commandos as they choose their time to force their way into factories, docks and mines. That is why we say that at the time of the coup, and after, the workers leaders should have fought for:

\* An indefinite general strike of the entire working class to break the military government. To conduct that strike, councils of the representatives of the workers and peasants must be formed in every locality and be coordinated national in a Central Workers Council. This was the road of struggle started along by the heroic Hungarian workers in 1956.

\* In the face of the Stalinist thug squads the workers must defend themselves and their organisations. They must build their own armed squads to protect their strikes and demonstrations, and seek to win over the conscript ranks of the army, together with their arms - For Workers Defence, For a Workers Militia. Only a government based on such workers councils and a workers militia could destroy the central Stalinist bureaucracy and ensure the political rule of the Polish workers.

\* For workers control of production. All decisions on the length of the working day, on the pace of work and on what is to be produced to be taken by factory committees and the workers councils. Revise the plan from top to bottom in the hands of the Central Workers Council! Take the planned economy under the direct control of the workers themselves. State property in Poland must be defended as the means by which the workers can organise production consciously to meet their needs - not the privileges of the bureaucrats or the rapacious demands of the Western banks.

\* Distribution and allocation of goods should be taken into the hands of the workers and peasant cooperatives. In order to overcome the anachronistic system of small peasant farming, a triumphant workers political revolution would commit itself to a programme of a) taxation on the rich peasants, b) investment in and production of, tractors, fertilisers and agricultural implements, c) credits and education to provide the material base for, and win the mass of the poorer peasants to, cooperative farming as part of the planned economy.

\* Renounce the debts to the western banks. End the economic exploitation of the Polish workers by imperialism. Only by renouncing the debts that have been piled up by the bureaucrats can the Polish workers free themselves from the domination of the banks and finance houses of Western Europe and the USA.

\* For the complete separation of the Church and State. The Stalinists have increasingly conceded control of family life, of women's rights, of education to the Catholic church. Solidarnosc leaders have fought to increase the power of the church. But that power will be used to strengthen the reactionary mission of the Catholic hierarchy to destroy the struggle of the workers for their own emancipation, to further enslave women, and bolster and extend capitalism on a world scale.

\* Take Poland out of the Warsaw Pact. The armed might of the Kremlin stands behind Jaruzelski. Since August 1980, the Kremlin has regularly reminded the Polish

masses of the armed might they have at their disposal to intimidate and, if needs be, directly smash, the workers of Poland.

The Warsaw Pact is the direct agent of the counter-revolutionary policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy. Its command structure embraces and coordinates all the national Stalinist armies in Eastern Europe. For that reason the USSR was actively involved in the preparations for the coup and plays its part in the administration of the crackdown. Polish workers should refuse to subordinate their armed forces to the Kremlin oligarchy. But they will neither realise their emancipation, nor defend themselves, under the banner of clericalism and Polish nationalism. The abolition of capitalism in the USSR, as in Poland, represents an historic gain without which the working class could not hope to plan production in its own hands and for its own purpose. That gain is at present in the hands of a bureaucracy but it nonetheless remains a gain that workers everywhere must defend against the drive of imperialism to destroy it.

An Independent Workers Council Poland should therefore guarantee that it will defend the USSR and the other workers states unconditionally against capitalist attack and restoration. In this way the Polish workers can hope to win real support amongst Soviet workers and soldiers and thus serve to initiate a struggle for political revolution throughout the states ruled by Stalinism.

In 1956 Soviet troops wavered in the face of the stark contrast between the lies of their bureaucratic oppressors and the aspirations of fraternising Hungarian workers. The only road to stopping the armies of Brezhnev, Husak and Hoeneker is to confront them with a programme of genuine proletarian internationalism - to win their troops to international political revolution. However, in the face of intransigent military oppression from Warsaw Pact forces, the Polish workers have every right to take all necessary steps to defend themselves.

\* It is a matter of life and death for the Polish workers that a Party is formed to fight for this programme - a Trotskyist revolutionary communist party. Of necessity it would struggle to build the nuclei of fraternal parties in the other degenerate workers states as a part of a rebuilt Revolutionary Communist International in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky.

12 The international organisations claiming to represent continuity with Trotsky's Fourth International have yet again demonstrated their bankruptcy when it comes to presenting a strategy for political revolution. The two largest claimants to Trotsky's mantle, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and the Fourth International (International Committee) (FIIC), offer the spectacle of opportunistic grovelling before the existing leadership and consciousness of the Polish workers. On the other hand the International Spartacist Tendency (IST) demonstrate the truth of Trotsky's dictum on sectarianism - opportunism in fear of itself. In this case, their fear of the "impurities" of the Polish workers' consciousness drives the IST into upport for Jaruzelski and the Stalinist bureaucracy.

13 The USFI has in its various statements (1/2/81; 3/4/81; 7/10/81) failed to raise the question of revolution against the bureaucracy. It has failed to pose the need for a revolutionary leadership except as an organisational grouping together of existing tendencies around a series of "minimum measures". The USFI has followed the Polish workers into the blind alley of "self-management" schemes and a Solidarnosc "alternative plan" allowing these to confuse and obscure the question of the political-military dictatorship of the bureaucracy. The logic of self-management or workers control, which ignores the question of political power and control over the state, is necessarily a concession to "market socialism", decentralisation. Syndicalism in a degenerate workers state leads to the strengthening of the operation of the law of value and to disarming the workers in the face of the Tito-ite or Kadar-ite wing of the bureaucracy. The complete absence of Trotsky's programme of soviets, of the armed overthrow of the bureaucracy, is reflected in the USFI's bizarre espousal of Solidarnosc's plan for the "free election of a second chamber of the Sejm by all the self-management bodies". This naive utopian scheme is justified in terms of the need to create "dual-power bodies". The Stalinists' first chamber would then "see its area of responsibility correspondingly reduced". This lifeless schema - a farcical parody of February 1917 emasculates the reality of soviets, presenting them as organs of dual power rather than as organs of struggle, or insurrection, of working class power.

The idea of "free elections" to the Sejm is rejected by the USFI not because of the parliamentary bourgeois democratic illusions it would foster, or because such a parliament could be a focus for restorationist forces, but because "this demand could lead to a confrontation with the bureaucracy on a terrain that is less favourable to the masses than that of self-management". The evolutionary logic of the USFI's position is more brazenly expressed by the SWP(US)'s David Frankel (Intercontinental Press 20/4/81); in quoting Joseph Hansen's definition of the political revolution as "the total series of reforms gained through militant struggle culminating in the transfer of power to the workers", Frankel suggests that this transference itself can only be discovered after the event: "It is only when the process is viewed as a whole - in its origin, its fundamental gains and final results - that it appears for what it really is, a revolution: an organic qualitative change in whatever structure is involved".

Since the qualitative leap (ie the point at which revolution has occurred) cannot be pin-pointed in advance, it cannot, (for the USFI) be programmatically prepared and argued for. Such a position, worthy of a Kautsky or an Otto Bauer, indicates the organic centrism of the USFI's leaders. It explains, but does not excuse, their failure to offer a programme for revolution.

14

The FI(IC) in contrast, seizes on the demand of Solidarnosc radicals for "free elections", and develops this in a bourgeois-democratic direction. The FI(IC) calls for "free elections" and "plurality of parties". Are these elections to be "free" to bourgeois, white-guard, restorationist forces? Is the plurality of parties to include parties openly organising for counter-revolution? For the FI(IC), "democracy" is given no class content. The class rule of the proletariat, its dictatorship, is quietly shuffled to one side. The FI(IC) may write abstractions on paper, but political life will fill their empty democratic phrases with a real bourgeois content. If the USFI has its "second chamber" of the Sejm, then the FI(IC) can go one better - a Constituent Assembly.

What is a Constituent Assembly? It is a body elected by universal suffrage which shall decide the constitutional basis of the state. It is potentially a revolutionary (bourgeois) democratic demand. Revolutionary communism makes use of this in capitalist countries where bourgeois democratic tasks (land question, national unity and independence, democratic rights) clash with the conditions of bourgeois, pre-bourgeois or imperialist rule. In such conditions revolutionary communists would pose a revolutionary answer to each of these issues, culminating in the transference of power to the proletariat. In a degenerate workers state the organ to which political power must be passed is an organ of proletarian democracy which will maintain the dictatorship over the bourgeoisie, not an instrument of bourgeois democracy whose only function would be to effect a social counterrevolution. The Polish workers need Soviets - not parliaments: For a National Congress of Soviets - not a Constituent Assembly!

15

The IST - in terror of contamination by cross-kissing workers (shades of the Iranian mullah-lovers!) have rushed head-long into the embrace of the Polish Stalinists. They accept, without question, Jaruzelski's claim that Solidarnosc was organising a counter-revolutionary rising. They warn the Polish workers against any resistance to martial law. These miserable pedants who can only imagine winning the working class to Trotskyism in the propagandists' schoolroom (ie in the absence of struggle), call for a return to Gierek's regime of the 1970's: "If the present crackdown restores something like the tenuous social equilibrium which existed in Poland before the Gdansk strikes last August (ie 1980 - WP) a tacit understanding that if the people left the government alone, the government would leave the people alone - conditions will be opened again for the crystallisation of a Leninist-Trotskyist party" (Workers Vanguard 18/12/81). They have blood on their hands. Safe at a distance from responsibility they content themselves with the call for the stamping out of political revolution, in order to allow for the "peace and quiet" (of a Stalinist dictatorship!) to allow them to build a "Leninist-Trotskyist" party.

16

Thus the self-proclaimed inheritors of Trotsky's banner drag it in the mud of syndicalism, reformism and stalinism. Against this monstrous defamation of Trotsky, we fight around the slogans:

**Down with Jaruzelski's military-bonapartist regime! Power to workers councils in Poland!**

**Defend the statification of the means of production, the monopoly of foreign trade and the centralised plan! Revise and democratise the plan from top to bottom in the interests of the proletariat and the working peasantry!**

**No bloc with the priesthood, the mortal enemies of democracy and socialism!**

**Defend the secular basis of the workers state - the rights of women against clerical obscurantism!**

**For a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party of the Polish workers!**

**For international solidarity with the Polish workers organisations and the worker victims of Jaruzelski's repression!**

**Black all Polish imports whilst the repression continues!**

**No unity with the imperialist or white guard false friends of the Polish workers! Defend the USSR!**

11

The coup was carried through with bloody precision. Crack troops were sent to strategic Solidarnosc strong-holds - the Lenin shipyards, Nowa Huta, the Ursus works, Katowice and key Silesian mines. Most Solidarnosc leaders and noted activists were immediately interned. While thousands of PUWP members threw in their party cards the Stalinists prepared for a ruthless purge of the party (by report members of the Politburo were even arrested).

The workers met the coup with heroic resistance even though their leaders had been rounded up. But the resistance was not sufficient to counter the tactics of Jaruzelski. The Stalinists hoped to use only



# An "impartial" weapon against the workers

THE ANTIQUATED PREJUDICES of the leaders of the British labour movement stem from the organic and gradual development of British capitalism. For the same reason that the British bourgeoisie treasures its ancient feudal flummery in all aspects of life the leaders of Britain's workers have heads well stuffed with the lumber of centuries. Religiosity, long dead amongst most workers, lives on in the mind of Tony Benn, as it did a generation before with Ramsay Macdonald. For the same reason no labour leader dares challenge the existence of the monarchy preferring instead to stigmatize the House of Lords. But the long 150 year period of the legal existence of trade unions and political parties has hallowed the Law and the source of Law, Parliament with a sanctity greater than all the other totems and shibboleths.

Since the actual practice of the Courts and Parliament is frequent savage attacks on workers and their organisations the labour and trade union leaders appeal against 'arbitrary', 'unfair' or improper laws and judgements to an ideal of Law and constitutional rule 'above' the class struggle. The law courts and the judges may be class-biased, or class prejudiced but the institutions themselves are always accorded a reverence which covers up their essential character. The latest exposure of legalist prejudices of the reformist leaders was occasioned by Lord Denning in a November Court of Appeal decision which ruled against the GLC's attempt to raise a supplementary rate to subsidise the 'Fares Fair' transport policy.

## TOP JUDGES STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE TORY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

This policy involved carrying out a Manifesto pledge to reduce London Transport fares by an average of 25% which was done in October last year. Tory controlled Bromley council sought to prevent Livingstone's Labour GLC from levying a further rate increase but the High Court found in favour of the GLC. After this decision Livingstone was moved to comment: "The judges very wisely decided that it's not the courts role to take basically political decisions about the level of fares".



Scarman: Rioters made him act the liberal. Livingstone's pleas earned a kick in the teeth.

But he was celebrating the political neutrality of the judges a little too soon. More in tune with their political paymaster the top judges, decided against the GLC, deliberately seeking to strengthen the hand of the Tory central government against the potential points of Labourite municipal resistance.

It was not hard to find legal precedent to justify their conclusion. The court mainly found comfort in a 1925 case (*Roberts v Hopwood*) in which the judges stamped down on a labour council attempt to pay its employees something approaching a living wage. This time Lord Scarman claimed that the Transport (London) Act 1969 requires London Transport to make some attempt to provide an 'economic' service and this can only mean 'along the lines of business principles', that is profitability or break-even. Their lordships did not rule against any subsidy but only that which seemed 'unreasonable'. The Tory Transport Minister, Howell's level of £75m seemed to them 'reasonable', Livingstone's £195m not so.

## WHEN RIGHT MEETS RIGHT, FORCE DECIDES

The Labourites may well protest this 'ambiguity' which has now given rise to 'chaos and confusion'. But therein lies precisely the secret and value of the judiciary to the British ruling class. To understand this secret and the lessons of the judiciary's actions is a prime task facing worker militants. Why do marxists insist that the law works systematically against workers and their organisations? Isn't it true, after all, that the police do protect the private property of workers as well as bosses? Aren't there examples of court cases which protect the individual from the state, or even punish members of the ruling class for crimes against workers? Finally, can't it be said that the bosses don't make the law at all but a democratically elected assembly of the people? Marxists argue that law, and the institutions that make and enforce it (Parliament, the police, the courts) operate systematically against workers because all law is based on the fundamentals of private property and contract. Private property existed long before capitalism. The intellectuals of the ruling class and their reformist followers in the labour movement are keen to point out that *everyone* is free to do with it what they will; use it or exchange it. A set of laws and the means for their enforcement are necessary because in a society where people's needs are great but resources are small there's a great temptation to ignore the rules of the market.

But the reality of capitalism is different. Workers only have their labour power to sell to survive. They 'freely' sell it to an employer (if they can find one) for a wage in return. When the worker has sold the labour power it belongs to the boss to do what he/she likes with it. Of course, the worker (or the trade union on his/her behalf) has the right not to sell it or to haggle over the terms of the sale; an hour off the day here, a few more pounds there. The boss will also haggle. That's why, as Marx said, when "right meets right, force decides". For example, the 10 hour day (Factory Act 1847) was forced on the bosses in the late 1840s as a result of tremendous agitation and action amongst the working class via the Chartist movement of 1844-48. In the intervening years little if any legislation, or court action, has occurred on the issues of the length of the working day or wage levels—the outcome of these have been determined by the strength of the respective organisations of the bosses and the working class.

But the picture is very different when one considers disputes over strike action and trade union organisation. The courts have never tried to impose a certain wage level on a work force but they have persistently tried to undermine action designed to win wage increases, or fight job losses. Why? Because in private law, that is the *basic diet of the courts*,—the foundation of judge-made law—anything which interferes with the right of a property owner to enjoy his/her property must be illegal and prevented. That's why there is no 'right' to strike in English law. Originally it was illegal because by striking a worker prevents the boss using his property (ie labour power) as he sees fit. And throughout the last two centuries the courts have persistently tried to re-assert that bosses right.

Throughout the years there have been a series of clashes between the courts and Parliament. In English law statutes passed by Parliament are supreme and the judges must follow them. The reformists like Livingstone and Benn take this as good coin and as proving the progressive character of Parliament. Westminster is portrayed as the saviour of the people, rescuing them



Cartoon called 'Men of Justice' by French artist Honoré Daumier 1808-1879. Caption reads 'You were hungry, but that's no excuse. I too get hungry every day, but I don't go stealing.'

from the conservatism of the judiciary. A brief look at the last 100 years of labour law seems to confirm this view. Various Acts of Parliament (eg 1859, 1871) culminating in the Tories *Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875* were designed to relieve the trade unions of liability for criminal conspiracy. But in the face of the militant rise of the New Unions, organising the unskilled masses (eg Dock Strike 1889) the judiciary took fright and took decisions which undermined or negated these statutes. This they did by turning to the charge of civil conspiracy (1901 *Quinn v Leatham*).

This forced the Liberals, when elected in 1906 and under pressure to stave off growth of the Labour Party, to pass the *Trade Disputes Act* removing the trade unions from this line of fire. By 1910 the courts were further frightened at consequences of the growth of the Labour Party and resolved (in *A.S.E. v Osborne*) to prevent trade union funds going to it. Again, the *Trade Union Act 1913* was passed by Parliament to restore the position. Trotsky understood that the clashes between the judiciary, the legislature and the government on occasions displayed not a fundamental contradiction between democratic parliaments and capitalist judges that could be relied on by the working class, but illustrated the marvelous flexibility of the institutions of the British State; Thus Chartism, New Unionism, the revolutionary syndicalism of 1910-1914, all forced the bourgeoisie to make political concessions. The executive of the modern capitalist state—its Ministers and civil servants are charged with the task of constantly preserving and extending the class rule of the bourgeoisie. This is a task that requires more than the simple re-assertion of the sanctity of private property, or the 'freedom of the individual' against the tyranny of the trade union, although at times this will be part of the tasks.

The overriding special merit of the judiciary for the bosses lies in flexibility, the swiftness of its response to a political crisis and the aura of impartiality which surrounds its actions as opposed to what can be seen as the "politically motivated" actions of the government. Legislation takes time to prepare and pass; it can also become ossified and irrelevant to changed needs. The courts must and do respond to unforeseen events. Statutes are drafted deliberately to allow a wide range of interpretations to be adopted. They are often algebraic. 'Their Lordships' are invited to fill in the arithmetical values as the situation demands. Of course, should the arithmetic be set in the statute . . . then if necessary the courts will overrule the statute. In November 1977 Lord Denning—as ever in the vanguard of his class—said (*Notham v LBC*): ". . . Whenever the strict interpretation of a statute gave rise to an absurd and unjust situation, the judges could and should use their good sense to remedy it by reading words in if necessary so as in effect to do what Parliament would have done had they the situation in mind." Whether it be by luxuriant interpretation or by appeal to 'natural justice' against the legislature, the courts can help to preserve political power.

The flexibility of the judiciary also provides the key to pacifying the present fears of *Tory Councils* who at the moment are in half rebellion against Heseltine's attempts to deprive them too of their local autonomy. As the case of *Tameside Council* proved in 1977 when Denning backed the Tory Council's rebellion against the Labour Government's comprehensive education plans, the courts would no doubt find a case from their annals should future resistance to anti-capitalist central government measures occur.

The courts were hardly used against workers class rights in the 1920s and 1930s when the organisations were already weak and on the retreat. Only in the 1960s and 1970s when the ruling class faced renewed social crisis, and trade union strength was the judiciary required to step in and join the assault. The *Trades Dispute Act 1965* and, in part, the *Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974* were both pressurised Labour responses to a judicial guerilla campaign against the unions.

The task facing the working class then is not to seek to manoeuvre between the various legal arms of the state but understand their unity of purpose and action. Yet throughout the last two centuries, ever since the bourgeoisie was forced to concede the working class right to organise in a series of Combination Acts, the working class has paid dearly for the constitutional prejudices of its leaders. Fear of breaking the law, of disobeying statutes or defying court orders has more than once totally crippled or momentarily but decisively derailed workers struggles. More common still, when workers leaders have stiffened their backbone sufficiently to fight the law or defy the courts rulings, they simultaneously confirm the sanctity of the rule of law and argue against mass, independent action to break the law. As Tony Benn put it, in a speech in support of the jailed Pentonville Dockers in 1972:

"The British people are the most law-abiding people in the world. It would be quite wrong for anyone to tell others to break the law. But we cannot forget that, in the end, each man is answerable to his own conviction as to what is right and wrong." (emphasis added).

The decision of the Law Lords against the GLC once again had the Labour parliamentarians and municipalists scurrying for the lobbies of Parliament. Labour MP Alec Lyons prattled that, "the judges were making political decisions and not judicial ones" and Norman Atkinson MP claimed the Law Lords decision to be "an extra-parliamentary political instrument." This charge will not stand. These same accusers defend the preservation of the judiciary, unaccountable as it is, appointed by the Cabinet and answerable only to it and its relation to Parliament. They complain when 'interpretation' of a statute upsets them but refuse to consider the fact that without the ambiguity inherent in the statutes, there would only be a mechanical interpretation and hence no need for the judiciary. Since they defend its existence their solution can only be 'clearer' legislation and more 'enlightened' judges—a solution which leaves their power unbroken.

## ONLY RESOLUTE STRUGGLE WILL WRING CONCESSIONS FROM THE BOURGEOISIE

The GLC decision was not the first such act nor will it stand alone for long. Early in the new year a whole series of follow-up cases inspired by the bosses: against industrial and commercial rates will be heard. Edwardes has taken action against Solihull, Birmingham and Coventry Councils for 'unfair' rate levels. Under *Section 7 of 1967 General Rates Act* "aggrieved rate payers" can ask courts to rule that rate rises should be blocked. Camden ratepayers and the Westminster Chamber of Commerce are waiting to have a go at the GLC; in South Yorkshire and West Midlands, similar moves are being prepared. The cheap fares policy has outraged the local employers and well to do petit-bourgeoisie. A successful offensive by the bosses here, aided by the courts, will cripple resistance to further cuts in services and local government jobs unless militants can shake off the constitutional servility of their present leaders.

Only resolute workers struggle will ring any concession from the bourgeoisie, and even then, as Engels once warned the German workers, "Gifts shall be accepted with the spear, point against point." Concessions are truces in the class war waged with independent and largely non-constitutional methods. Such truces must not be accepted as a strategy for as Trotsky remarked aptly:

"Legalistic reformism in its true essence signifies the subservience of slaves to the laws and institutions of slave owners. . . He always goes on his knees before the idol of the bourgeois state and agrees to proceed towards his 'idol' by no other way than through the gates built for him by the bourgeoisie. But the gate is built so that it is impossible to pass through it



# workers power

# Bosses given clear run on job cuts!

AFTER THE FIRST round of negotiations in October, Paul Roots, Ford industrial relations director, underlined the company's determination in this year's pay round. 'We will take a long stoppage to get what we want.' What he wanted was the implementation of the 'After Japan' programme. This is summed up in Management's five demands

- Optimum employee mobility and flexibility
- Cooperation in the introduction of new technology
- Avoidance of inefficient restrictions and demarcations
- Overtime flexibility, an end to 'one in, all in'
- Avoidance of lost time during working hours.

For Ford's these changes are necessary for them to wring the maximum profit out of their four year, £1,400 million investment programme. Their aim is massive redundancies at the same time as increased output. Bill Hayden, Ford Europe's vice president explained the scale in which management is thinking, "If Ford Britain operated to Japanese standards it would have 30,000 workers, not 76,000." So, they are after up to 46,000 redundancies!

With a profit record of some £900 million in the last ten years, Ford's could not effectively use the threat of impending bankruptcy as Edwardes did at BL. Instead they had to opt

for a direct and drastic increase in management's disciplinary powers. The groundwork for this had already been laid in the 'efficiency clauses' of the 1979 and 1980 agreements. That the existing arrangements were not enough had been found in May when management attempted to introduce new work methods at Halewood. The walk out by shop floor workers there convinced the bosses that they had to use the pay negotiations later in the year to inflict a decisive defeat on the rank and file workers.

The regime that Ford's want is essentially that which was in force until it was broken in 1969. At the heart of the enforcement plan is the plant wide bonus scheme in which the whole plant loses bonus if even one section does not fulfill requirements. As we go to press it is not yet clear whether they have secured what they wanted entirely without a fight or have been content to make progress towards it in preparation for another attack later. What is certain is that they have not been forced to retreat. Indeed, the deal that they have cooked up with Todd and Whyman, and which these latter two are now peddling as a victory to Ford workers, gives the management a clear run at implementing their plans — and with official trade union backing! ■

# Todd's Ford sell out

THE SELL OUT deal engineered by Ron Todd (T&G) and Jack Whyman (AUEW) at Ford's was the last step in a consistent campaign to avoid a strike that could have been a catalyst for a far reaching offensive against the bosses and the Tory Government.

Todd's claim that the 7.4% rise, the promise of a 39 hour week in June and improved pensions represents a 20% pay increase is a typically dishonest piece of bureaucratic arithmetic. The reality of the deal is a cut in real wages, sweeping attacks on working conditions in the name of efficiency and redundancies.

Todd, the man who was full of militant bluster only two days before, accepted that this was the case after Monday's meeting of the union side of the National Joint Negotiating Committee, "There is going to be a question of jobs that the company wish to erode from the labour force, but this is something we shall have to have discussions on in the future."

In other words he is prepared to sell jobs in the future in order to avoid action that could save them in the here and now.

From the very beginning of the pay claim the thought uppermost in the minds of Todd and Whyman was to prevent a repetition of the 1978 strike which broke the 5% pay norm of the Labour Government and opened up the 'Winter of Discontent'. The crucial factor then was that the union officials lost control of the claim when workers walked out on strike as Ford made their first derisory offer.

This time round, even the claim itself was formulated behind the backs of the workers. Instead of being worked out at the National Shop Stewards' Conference in Coventry, as had happened in previous years, the package of a £20 increase, 35 hour week and improvements in retirement benefits, was presented by Todd as an unnegotiable fact. The stewards could only rubber stamp the claim. The acceptance of the final offer by the union side of the NJNC on Monday, January 5th., only underlines the real passivity of the majority of the workers' leaders.

The original 4% offer from

management provided Todd et co. with the opportunity to bolster their radical image, the better to sell out later. Their call for an all-out strike from November 25th was, in reality, designed to prevent an immediate strike alongside the BL workers who struck on November 1st. That would have been a combination that could have threatened not just the plans of Edwardes and Toy but also the future of the government itself. It was a prospect that the whole TUC and the leaders of the Labour Party were united in wanting to avoid.

The strike threat was lifted as soon as the BL strikes had been sabotaged, Ford's predictable and meaningless offer of 'meaningful' negotiations was enough to bring the bureaucrats scurrying back to the negotiating table. In order to show their good faith, to the bosses, not their members, they offered to solve management's disciplinary problems by setting up a panel of trade union full timers to oversee the implementation of the efficiency clauses they had accepted in previous years. True to form, this proposal was never presented for approval by the workers who would have to work under these 'efficiency' proposals.

By accepting the need to find some way of enforcing management's demand which had been resisted by workers on the shop-floor, the union leaders gave Ford bosses a valuable propaganda weapon. The bosses continued to argue that what they wanted was a new agreement, not just the implementation of an old one. In the December 8th issue of their Employee Bulletin, they could legitimately argue, "All these requirements are already covered by existing agreements and (are) included in your conditions of employment."

Nonetheless, management did offer to increase their proposal to 7.4%, thus appearing to make a concession. In fact this improve-



1979: Workers demonstrate in support of the Ford strikers. Avoidance of a strike that could have spread to other industries was the bureaucrats main aim this year.

Photo: WORKERS POWER

ment represented no real gain for the workforce at all since it would be self financing as a result of the efficiency the union leaders had now guaranteed to enforce. This 7.4%, which remains in the final agreement is to be paid for by more work from Ford workers and a cut in jobs. Not only does it mean a cut of 5% as a gainst the rate of inflation, it is certain to make working conditions even worse than at present.

In early December, when this part of the package must have been accepted by Todd and Whyman, they could not be sure of getting it accepted. The process of delaying tactics by prolonging negotiations was continued by calling again for an all-out strike, this time from January 5th, the day after workers would return, broke, after the Christmas lay-off. The emphasis now, however, was on the starting date for the 39 hour week, no mention was made of pay or the 35 hour week.

With all the empty bluster of a fake militant, "... it will be a long hard fight. We are not talking about going back in two days" (we know now what he meant by that!) Todd prepared for yet more secret negotiations, this time courtesy of AC AS. During the long break when workers needed to know what was happening in order to prepare for the strike, they were left in confusion. Ford declared a lock out on January 4th., the qualifying day for the holiday pay they would need before the strike.

To raise the confusion and uncertainty still further, leaks were made to the Press. Whyman argued only three days before the strike that he, "did not believe there was

enough between the two sides to justify a serious dispute." He went on to call for new talks on the basis of the 7.4% supposedly rejected in early December.

To prepare the way for the 'last minute breakthrough', no doubt agreed long before, Todd insisted only hours before the climbdown that it would be a, "long and bitter" struggle — over the timing of the 39 hour week and retirement pensions, not over the full claim. In this way the two union saboteurs edged the issue away from pay, jobs and shop floor rights and onto less explosive terrain.

The results of this treacherous deal are clear. Ford will press home their advantage by implementing their After Japan programme of job cuts and speed ups. The union leaders and their allies among the full time convenors will act as their policemen in combatting shop floor resistance. It is within the battles that will be fought against these results that a new shop floor leadership must be built.

While an essential part of its job will be to defend organisations like stewards' committees, it would be a dangerous illusion to believe that all that is needed is simply a return to what existed in the early 70's. Today's conditions are different and and it was the weakness, the political weakness of those organisations that allowed the present decline in shop floor power to come about.

Ford is a big company and its workforce has a history of militancy but there can be no doubt that the problems that workforce now faces cannot be solved within Ford's. The experience of the pay claim shows not only the scale of the fight that must be waged against both bosses and bureaucrats but also many of the methods and slogans around which a new rank and file leadership can be

and must be, built.

The content of claims cannot be left to full time officials or their pet academics in Ruskin College. They must be formulated by rank and file delegates after a campaign of discussions at section and plant level. They must reflect the workers' needs and they must be protected against future inflation by a sliding scale of wages.

To oppose speed up and to neutralise the union's enforcement panel, stewards must fight for the right to veto changes in conditions or job allocation. Where redundancies or closure threaten, as in Halewood, militants must fight for control over hiring and firing and sit in strikes to prevent closure or transfer of plant.

The workers of Ford's, as in all companies, will fight with one arm behind their backs as long as they are kept in the dark about negotiations and the bosses plans. Workers' control over work speed etc. must be accompanied by the right to inspect the books of the company.

Above all Ford workers need to take a lead in uniting with other workers in their industry by building a national shop stewards committee that can genuinely coordinate claims and defend jobs.

The working conditions for Ford workers will hit a new low in the coming year as management take advantage of their victory. There can be no doubt that there will be resistance to this from the shop floor. Disputes over manning, speed and demarcation must not be allowed to remain localised or defeat will follow demoralising defeat. The bringing together of those militants who lead in such disputes and their welding together into an alternative leadership built around the methods and slogans of revolutionary communism is now a task of burning necessity in Fords as it is in all other major industrial combines. ■

## SUBSCRIBE TO workers power

NAME .....

Send £3 to the address below and receive 12 issues of the paper. Make cheques or POs payable to Workers Power and forward to:

ADDRESS .....

Workers Power,  
BCM Box 7750, London,  
WC1N 3XX.