

workers power

20p/10p strikers

Fortnightly paper of the Workers' Power group

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REAGAN OUT!

NO COMPROMISE!

MAKE THATCHER SURRENDER

RONALD REAGAN WILL doubtless be the star when leaders of seven imperialist powers gather for their annual economic summit in London. Protected from his popularity by armed British police and armed US security personnel Reagan will be attempting to appear as the strong, decisive world leader, fit to stay in the White House for another term of office.

Visiting Ireland, home of the ancestors of 40 million US voters, he has met with a cool reception. With a whistle-stop tour of Normandy to commemorate D-Day, Reagan hopes to bolster his image as defender of democracy and human rights against the creeping "spread of communism" throughout the world. But in election year, the rhetoric has altered.

No longer referring to the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil in the modern world" - he has appeared conciliatory to the USSR. Just last week he said: "We recognise that there is no more important consideration than the development of a better working relationship with the Soviet Union, one marked by greater co-operation, leading to stable secure and peaceful relations."

Reagan is well able to be a bit more generous - he has recently armed the US to the teeth with weapons directed at the Soviet Union - Cruise and Pershing II in Europe, plus plans for the B1 Bomber, MX Missile and Trident Submarine.

Calling for the USSR to negotiate is an attempt to prevent them from deploying their new medium range missiles in response to Cruise and Pershing, but also contains within it the thinly veiled threat that the Soviet Union had better be careful to whom they give military aid. As Reagan clarified himself, there is now "less danger that the Soviet leader-

ship will underestimate our strength or question our resolve."

Reagan has spearheaded imperialism's drive to regain ground after defeats suffered in the 1970s under Carter and Ford over Vietnam, Angola, Iran and Afghanistan. Reagan's period in office has been one of dramatic re-armament, US missiles in Europe, troops in Central America pursuing a strategy of support for reactionary client states in El Salvador and Honduras and openly undermining the anti-imperialist revolution in Nicaragua. He has overseen the invasion of Grenada to "restore democracy" and has troops placed to intervene in the Gulf to secure US oil supplies.

These military exploits of the Reagan administration are part of a desperate attempt to suppress any opposition to the domination of world politics by US imperialism. They are an insurance policy against anti-imperialist and workers' revolutions which threaten to smash their client states and capitalist system. Reagan and his imperialist allies at the London summit will vainly be looking for solutions to the economic crisis which still haunts their "boom" as US interest rates continue to rise and semi-colonial debts are unable to be paid.

Working class militants who recognise the barbaric role of imperialism through economic and military repression should demonstrate against Reagan, against the nuclear missiles in Europe, the US troops in Central America and the Middle East, against the British troops in Ireland and the Malvinas, and give support to all those fighting imperialism as it struggles to prolong its brutal existence. ■

TORY MINISTERS AND Fleet Street editors are getting the jitters that the NCB is about to hand a victory to Arthur Scargill and the militant miners. Some miners' leaders are talking that way too.

Peter Heathfield has said that he is "optimistic" about the prospects for reaching a settlement. Dennis Skinner is already talking of "possibly the greatest industrial success in post-war Britain" claiming to have "inside information that the miners are on the verge of an historic victory."

It has not been as easy to crack the miners strike as the Tories had hoped. The "return to work" movements that they hoped to engineer in the solid striking areas have failed to come off. Even with Nottingham producing coal and a massive police operation the strike has seriously dented the Tory Government's economic plans.

In April industrial output dropped by 1.4%. This is a big blow to the Tories who were hoping for a 3% growth "boom" this year. In May the *Financial Times* stock exchange index fell by 100 points. On 24th May it had its biggest fall for 10 years. The ten year old record was set when Edward Heath lost his "who rules" election against the NUM back in 1974!

No wonder the stock exchange is getting anxious. There are rumours of imminent collapse of one of America's big banks. Bolivia has just defaulted on its debt repayments. High interest rates in America threaten to slow down the US economy and upset the prospects of a US boom giving the British economy a tow.

The Gulf War is pushing up world oil prices just at a time when the Tories were hoping to bust the miners' strike through massive oil imports! Contingency plans for winning the battle against the NUM involved a go-ahead to the CEEB to switch to oil and import the necessary oil supplies. The Tories now find themselves with a record trade deficit!



Thatcher's cavalry charge; but miners can still throw the whole ruling-class into retreat!

The mounting costs of the dispute have increased pressure within the bosses' camp to attempt to reach a negotiated settlement. But, as Orgreave shows, it has also increased the pressure to up the stakes against the NUM. Thatcher and her chief advisors set up this fight to break the NUM. A major compromise with the NUM would be a serious setback for them.

Protecting the scabs has cost the Tories well over £50 million. It has given the police valuable training and allowed them to refine and perfect techniques of struggle against the working class. However some police chiefs are

increasingly worried that this will serve, as it has for many miners, to blow the police's image as an "impartial" and "unpolitical" force.

That is why they are clamouring for MacGregor to use his injunction against the NUM under the anti-union laws. Here again the Tories have problems. They held off from using their laws at the beginning of the dispute for fear of the consequences in the non-striking coalfields. They still don't dare try to seize the NUM's funds. They know that it would be a signal for massive solidarity action from organised workers everywhere.

There is mounting pressure on the NUM executive to reach a settlement too. The dead weight of the TUC and the Labour Party leadership is bearing down on the miners' leaders. Stan Orme-Labour's Energy Spokesman - has been attempting to coax the NUM into a national conference to discuss and devise a National Coal Plan with representatives of the CBI, the TUC, the NCB and the Government. The TUC has offered its services to "conciliate" between the sides. Both the TUC and the Labour Party have made it clear that they want the strike called off as soon as possible.

This pressure is leaving its mark. An unnamed executive member told the staunchly Tory *Daily Telegraph* of the mood on the NEC: "There does seem to be a gradual turn-round. I have noticed that some of those who have been talking about going for broke have stopped doing so."

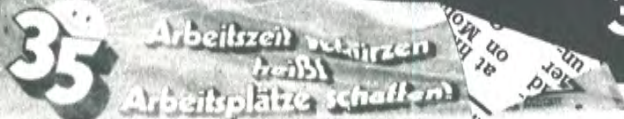
Orgreave has seen Taylor and the Yorks NUM trying to take the steam out of the struggle to stop steel production by diverting pickets down to Nottingham. Heathfield has been quoted in the media as stipulating that the NCB

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KINNOCK - JUDAS

FOR OVER ONE week a crack force of 8,000 police have been battering and bludgeoning unarmed pickets at Orgreave. Squadrons of helmeted, mounted police have charged at full gallop through the picket lines. They have used their long truncheons sabre-style against undefended miners. As Arthur Scargill has said "scenes of an almost unbelievable brutality" have taken place.

What has Neil Kinnock to say about all this? What have we heard from the leader of the party that miners have funded with millions of pounds through the political levy?

He condemns...the Miners for violence! This wretched betrayal is of a piece with the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party's showing throughout the dispute. A few stand out as exceptions. Dennis Skinner has spoken out repeatedly for the miners in the Commons. He has been on the picket lines and spoken at rallies. He has given up the great bulk of his salary to the Miners Strike Fund.

His example is so shining precisely because of the black record of most of the PLP. Tony Benn has spoken in support of the miners but he has not rushed to defend the Orgreave pickets - or, as far as the present time of writing, condemned Kinnock's statement.

Kinnock's "support" for the miners was always half-hearted. *Labour Weekly* reported that when a motion for a levy of all MPs for the miners was under discussion Kinnock "moved, but later withdrew, a motion deleting the £5 figure and calling on all Labour MPs to contribute the maximum amount as the Shadow Cabinet was anxious that a levy might imply some element of compulsion." Doubtless there were many in this august body who didn't want to be compelled to support the miners.

Don Concannon was certainly one of them. But he does not stand alone. While Peter Shore has been denouncing the miners for intransigence, Kinnock and Stan Orme have offered the services of the Labour Party as a mediator between the NUM and the Tories. The role of mediator is, of course, that of a neutral bystander.

Throughout this dispute the entire shadow cabinet have been pressing the NUM to hold a national ballot. From day one of the dispute Kinnock was giving "unattributable" briefings to the press to that effect.

Kinnock's latest statement must take the prize for Scab of the Year right out of Lionel Murray's hands. Within minutes of watching early evening TV reportage of Orgreave he announced: "There is no

place in any industrial dispute in Britain for missiles battering rams or any other implement or act of violence. The miners like all other British trades unionists, understand that their real strength comes from peaceful organisation, peaceful protest and peaceful picketing."

What are miners to do when they get ridden down by the Tsarina Thatcher's cossack's? When they are hit by four foot long weighted clubs, when dogs are unleashed on miners' wives and when their leaders are frog-marched off for stopping on a public foot-path?

Having seen Kinnock's performance many miners must be asking themselves what they could expect from a Labour Government headed by a man like this. Others must be asking how the Labour Party ended up with him as its leader.

Kinnock is a true and worthy successor to Lord Harold Wilson of Rievaulx. Wilson performed the same trick as Kinnock in the 1950's and 1960's. He too was an unprincipled hanger-on of the Left while its bandwagon was rolling forward - only to jump off at the spot nearest the road to Number 10. Kinnock was a critic of Labour's record in the last years of the Callaghan Government. He continued to play the critic in the early Thatcher years. But he saw his chance in the stalemate between the Bennite movement and the Right wing whose strength lay in the serried ranks of lawyer MPs. Seeing a road to power opening up before him he slipped into the role of understudy for the hapless Michael Foot.

As the Witchhunter's Apprentice, he earned his spurs by 'standing up to' the Bennite Left. This needed little courage. So short is the memory of the Labour Left, and so total is their own commitment to, and obsession with, the road to Number 10 that they have all accepted him as the man to work the 'electoral magic'.

Since the General Election, Tony Benn, the lion of the Left, will not hear, let alone speak, a word against Neil Kinnock. When asked, in an interview in 'Labour Herald' (April 20th) to criticise the Parliamentary leadership's woeful performance in defending the miners he snapped back, 'I am concerned to do the job I was elected to do and not to criticise others. If solidarity is the order of the day, it means solidarity with the party as a whole and its elected leadership.'



Kinnock and the Orgreave pickets...poles apart!

But, when the leadership is so obviously not in solidarity with the miners, solidarity with Kinnock, with Shore, with Orme, with Kaufman, is a bloc against the miners. Moreover, since it is these men who control the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet, it is they who can turn their words into deeds. So, whilst Benn sides with the NUM left in words, he will not side with them by trying to stop Kinnock and Co's ceaseless plotting to bring the NUM to a 'reasonable compromise' - i.e. to surrender.

The reasons for this do not lie in Benn's character as such. Personally he has shown far more consistency and courage in his own convictions than Neil Kinnock. That is why he is so popular with the rank and file of the Labour Movement. But blind trust in 'saviours from on high' is a very bad policy. Leaders must be judged first and foremost on what they do now - and not on their platform rhetoric.

Benn does not see and, indeed, never has seen, the direct mass struggle of workers as the basic class struggle. Indeed, he does not even believe in using the industrial strength of the working class for political ends.

Even in the immediate aftermath of the great victories of the Left in 1980, at Labour's Blackpool Conference, he warned, 'To come back to the question about how you get rid of the Thatcher Government, after twenty years of silence you can't cut it short by industrial muscle.'

The steelworkers failed to cut it short and four million on the dole was the result. 1980 was a year of victory for the Labour Left but a year of massive defeat for the working class. Unless Thatcher is stopped at the ballot box Benn is prepared, in the last analysis, to let her go on marauding through the jobs and basic human necessities of working people. Whilst millions of workers share his prejudices about 'democracy' and his superstitious reverence for a black tin box, they are unlikely to go on seeing their lives wrecked and their kids rotting in enforced idleness in tribute to parliamentarism. It is precisely this that Benn and all the professional parliamentarians are frightened of.

They are frightened that workers will wake up from the dreams of Parliamentary Socialism and the bosses' ballot democracy. Benn was frightened of this in the past, 'If the per-

ORGREAVE: S. YORKS MUST STRIKE!

THE BATTLE BETWEEN the police and pickets at Orgreave is one the miners must win. The state has massed a huge army of police from 13 regional forces. This force is heavily armed, backed up by police dogs, mounted police and a special truncheon-wielding riot squad.

They are at Orgreave on Thatcher's orders to keep coke moving. By doing this through smashing up pickets they want to demoralise miners. They are saying to miners, there will be no more Saltley Gates.

Arthur Scargill, arrested for "obstruction" has called for thousands of miners to join the picket. He has, quite rightly, laid the blame for the violence at Orgreave where it belongs - at the door of the police and the Tories. His resilience and courage, along with that of the rank and file miners, is to be commended.

This courage is vital, but on its own it cannot win. That is why Arthur Scargill is wrong when he says: "We did it at Grunwicks and we can do it here." The truth is the mass pickets failed to stop the scabs at Grunwick in 1977 and that strike was lost. If Orgreave is to become a Saltley Gate-style victory, then new tactics are urgently needed.

The first problem is to get a mass picket the size of Saltley. But what really happened there 12 years ago? It is a shame that organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party are concealing what really swung the balance at Saltley. They re-tell the event as though it was simply a question of numbers "...the real way forward is through the mass action that we saw at Saltley in 1972, where a mass of workers broke the police lines and brought victory to the miners" (SW 2.6.84)

It was not simply numbers at Saltley that was decisive. It was the fact that 40,000 Birmingham workers took strike action - after seeing the Yorkshire pickets at Saltley bloodied for 10 days running by the police - that enabled the mass picket on February 10th to close the gates at Saltley. It was that strike action that enabled a small token picket to keep the gates closed the following day.

The lesson is clear. If we are to tip the balance against the police at Orgreave the primary task is to get the Sheffield labour movement to strike immediately. This can swell picket numbers and begin to hit hard at other sections of the bosses causing panic and splits in their ranks. How can such action be started?

To win a general strike in Sheffield miners must go straight to the rank and file. Every factory in Sheffield should be visited by miners explaining the police outrages against them, dis-



New Police battle tactics in operation at Orgreave.: snatch squads at the front, reserves at the back, cavalry on the right and riot squads to the left. We need more than courageous individuals, we need disciplined picket defence squads and mass picket line support.

tributing leaflets and explaining the miners' case.

Factory gate meetings should be appealed to for immediate strike action, and won to this action. A local general strike of this nature would be an enormous lever for forcing the TUC to call a national General Strike.

The other key to victory at Orgreave is organisation on the picket line itself. As Shaun says in our interview this is badly needed in the face of a highly organised police force. Again the SWP get it all wrong simply appealing for bigger numbers of pickets. Bigger pickets are no match for police wedges, cavalry units, snatch-squads, trun-

cheon charges etc. One "big push" is no good against all this. We need our own military answer to the police.

Instead of disorganised charges at impenetrable police lines we need our own wedges of the toughest, best trained, probably Voenger pickets who know their job is not just to push but to carve a way through the police lines. Backed up by the mass of pickets these squads can break the police lines and defend pickets against police snatch squads.

None of this is "fantastic" or "impossible". The fact that pickets have used telegraph poles

against the police shows that the will to fight is there. Revolutionaries need to argue for the organisation of that will into a fighting force - specially trained workers' defence squads. Only this can turn the tide on the police. The method of push and shove - like the broadsword and bow and arrow - belongs to another age. Against guns the sword is useless. Against militarised riot police so is the mass push and shove. With new methods of defence and attack backed up by general strike action, we can win at Orgreave, in Nottingham and everywhere else in this strike. ■

by Mark Hoskisson

MINERS ON THE STRIKE

Organising at Orgreave

Workers Power talked to Shaun Evans, Manvers Pit, after a WP meeting at Treeton Miners' Welfare.

WP: You've been at the mass picket at Orgreave. What do you think it needs there now to make sure that the coke supplies are stopped?

Shaun: Basically better organisation. There are a lot of people going there to see what's going on but the dedicated pickets are the ones who really believe in the cause. We need to sort out the ones who are serious and the ones who are not, the serious ones need getting together and using as spearheads, hopefully the other pickets will rally behind them and assist once they realise that they do stand a chance of winning.

WP: Since the start of the strike Workers Power have argued that pickets need to be trained and organised with the best at the front, have leaders in amongst them, have a practice session - military training if you like. Is that the kind of thing that you're talking about?

Shaun: To an extent yes - I don't know how far you'd say to go. Basically that's what it needs - such as Orgreave, the further you take it the better.



One down.....plenty more to go!

WP: What do you think of going direct to engineering factories in Sheffield to appeal for strike action and support at the Orgreave picket?

Shaun: I think it's a good idea, I think that's the sort of thing you need. You actually need other rank and file members to come forward - not necessarily to get involved in front line struggles but to actually see what's going off and the way that miners are being treated on the picket lines.

WP: Do you think that should include the call for strike action from workers in other factories - to strike alongside the miners and join the pickets at Orgreave?

Shaun: If we get a few there it might start the ball rolling for - perhaps a general strike - a lot more people getting involved. We should shut the place at Sheffield and then carry on nationally to shut other places - bring things to a halt.

WP: How likely do you think it is that there will be a settlement in the near future?

Shaun: Myself I don't think there's going to be a settlement in the near future. As far as any settlement's concerned - the way it's been done whilst I've been in the pits - everything has been put to the membership - it is up to the membership to decide - albeit through secret ballots which sways it one way or another depending on the pit - but it is left to the membership and I don't think it can be fiddled to get us back to work.

WP: Would you vote for an individual secret ballot on the issue of a settlement when it's been opposed all the way through so far?

Shaun: No. I'd sooner be with the rest of our union at our branch and have a show of hands.

WP: Another issue we raised in the interview in our reply to Dave Douglass was the running of the strike. We said that there was a potential problem in that you'd only got a small number of the militants involved in the action and that for us mass meetings was the key way to get more people involved. Are you satisfied with the way the strike has been run at your own pit - or could it be improved?

Shaun: At our branch there are only a few flaws due to inexperience, basically through officers being too busy back and forwards to Barnsley trying to arrange pickets at Manvers. As far as the pickets are concerned, I don't think meetings do any good - you can discuss ideas but a lot of people get pissed off by going to a meeting and nothing actually happening. A lot of people have been picketing and have said that it's a waste of time, we're not getting anywhere it's a pointless exercise. But it's amazing how many people are turning up back at Manvers now picketing after this rumour at Orgreave. There's a lot more pickets turning up and coming out regularly since they've seen something actually happening - going into Nottinghamshire is a problem - sometimes we were seeing something happening - more times than not we were getting turned back - wasting half a day just travelling there and back without getting near the pit. At least at Orgreave they can get there and do something and let anger out - it's helping a lot as far as picketing is concerned.

WP: In the last paper we had the argument with Dave about what role the TUC should play. We say that they shouldn't be allowed to stand on the fence and take no action. They should be forced to come down on the side of the miners. Otherwise they will stab the miners in the back later on. What do you think about that and how should we approach it?

Shaun: I agree with what you say, they should be forced to do their job and actually defend the union's rights, the NUM's rights. It's a question of how to force them - how many are there on the fence and how many are there that's on the right against the miners. We have to find out where we stand in the TUC before you make the decision to ask them to join you or shut them out altogether. It's a case of finding out where you stand - if you sample them individually and found out where they stood and it was a favourable decision from most of them - fair enough - go to them and make an official plea. If it goes against then you can shut them out - we should tackle them tactfully - that's the best way of putting it.

"It's all about jobs"

Workers Power Talked to Nev Bell of the strike committee, Coventry Colliery, Keresley.

WP: There's been a lot of talk in the last few days, from Dennis Skinner for example, about how the miners have already won a great victory. What do you think constitutes a victory for the miners now?

Nev: We haven't won yet, but there's been significant moves from the Government and the Board to get talks moving. I think that MacGregor being put onto the subs bench is unprecedented, and there are definitely moves from the capitalists, from the Tory government, to get talks going, and to try and settle this dispute.

They're worried. But I don't think we've achieved a victory yet. As regards a victory - you either win or you lose. You can't compromise on pit closures. You either keep a pit open or you close it. There are 186,000 members now and that's an important victory if that membership doesn't drop. That's what it's all about - jobs.

WP: It's a blow to the miners that Jimmy Knapp and Ray Buckton have instructed their members to settle. How should miners now go about getting solidarity from the railwaymen and the steelmen in the Triple Alliance?

Nev: Well, yes, I'm disappointed in the Triple Alliance, let me say that. I'm disappointed in Bill Sirs. I'm disappointed that Knapp and Buckton have been forced to settle. There's no doubt that the

Triple Alliance is not working as it was set up to work and I'm afraid it's above my head. All I can do as a branch official is ask other branch officials in the rail unions in the Midlands not to handle coal. And they've already given us that assurance. It'll be left to leaders like Arthur Scargill and Mick McGahey, who sit with the Triple Alliance to get that implemented. I saw the Triple Alliance as a way of leading to a General Strike. But unfortunately we might have to go it alone. But even if we have to go it alone, without the Triple Alliance, I still think we can do it.

WP: So what should the TUC be doing?

Nev: Well, I think the TUC should be calling for a General Strike but as a branch official, over the years, I've never had much faith in the TUC; I've never had much faith in Len Murray, and as you know, the make-up of the TUC is such that we don't get any help - there's too many right wingers on the TUC.



Keresley miners lobby the TUC

WP: You obviously see Scargill differently. Why?

Nev: Scargill carries out the union policy from conference. In other words when the rank and file send in resolutions, they go to National conference and are voted on, and passed. Scargill endeavours to carry them out with no compromise. It's what the workers have said and that's what he'll carry out. That's why I think he's a great leader. That makes him different from the right wing on the NUM national executive. We call them backstabbers - we call them Tories. Do you want me to name names? Trevor Bell, Roy Ottey, Jack Jones of Leicester, who after 2 years standing up at national conference saying that they totally oppose pit closures have now instructed men to cross picket lines. They are disgusting people and the sooner they're got rid of the better.

WP: One of the dangers of the miners' strike is that it's become a strike of militants. There are lots of miners on strike but sitting at home not getting involved. Is this true, and, if so, what have you been doing to stop this?

Nev: I think that statement's correct. It is a strike of militants, but there's a lot of militants. The militancy in the younger people especially has come to the forefront in this dispute. And what can we do? We've had a Coventry Colliery Strike Committee Newsletter to go out once a fortnight and that goes out to the factories and also we place them in strategic places where the miners who are crossing picket lines can read them. Also *The Miner* newspaper goes out to these places and other than that, there's not a lot we can do because I believe that people who want to get involved have now after 12 weeks become involved. Those who've been willing to stop at home and say "Right, we'll wait until the conclusion of this dispute", well that's the way that they've chosen to do it. But having said that, stopping at home and doing nothing is better than crossing picket lines.

WP: People around in 72 and 74 have noticed a far greater involvement of women in this strike. You've got a delegate from wives support group on your strike committee. Do you feel this is a positive development?

Nev: Yes, most definitely - to liaise with the men's strike committee in respect of food parcels and the food centres, that's important. But also to educate them politically to tell them what's going off so that they have a comprehensive view of the whole dispute. It's important, I believe, that women should be present on picket lines if they're not too violent, because the police don't know how to handle them.

WP: How do you see the strike developing now? In the event of a sell-out, have you any means of organising to stop it?

Nev: The way I see it there can't be a sell-out because I believe we've got them where we want them. Because they've started talks; they've put MacGregor on the subs bench. I believe that our executive will go forward, specially with Arthur in the forefront.

spective of peaceful change by democratic means were to get blocked within the Labour Party it would not just be the Labour Party but Parliamentary Democracy itself that might be undermined." (Case for a Constitutional Premiership' July 1979) He is still frightened today, '... we do not want people to lose their belief that by having a parliamentary majority we can gain control over the statutes and use them to the advantage of our people.' (Labour Herald, April 20th)

Benn sometime boasts of the fact that he has got more radical as he has got older. The reason is straightforward. His basically Fabian vision of social reform based on technological innovation funded by state investment, was blocked and frustrated in the '60's and '70's. He failed to win the gods of Olympus - the Labour leaders, the union barons, the bankers and industrialists to his schemes. So, he turned to stirring up the underworld - the shop stewards, workers in struggle, the white-collar constituency activists. To the assembled, 'Olympians' seated on the benches of the House of Commons he seemed a dangerous demagogue. After all, this might get out of control. Their press slandered him as a Red, a lunatic, an enemy of parliamentary democracy. Not true! Not a word of it! The House of Commons and Her Majesty have no more loyal defender.

Millions of workers do think that Benn is a red-blooded socialist who will stick by them to the bitter end. This is what makes him so dangerous to the working class.

At the critical moment - which has not yet come - he will throw all his weight and all his prestige into the scales against any direct action mass struggle which might overthrow Thatcher and destroy the machine through which her class rules. He will do so because Parliament is part of the machine through which the bosses rule and the Labour Party is inseparably tied up with that 'palace of dreams'. Benn likes to liken the Labour Party to a 'Broad Church'. He is right. Just as the Church fixes peoples' heads with dreams of 'pie in the sky when you die' to offset hunger pangs in the here and now, so the Labour Party promises wonders 'in the sweet by and by' of the next Labour Government.

Benn's text for today - and everyday - is, 'So the next Labour Government will be a very different one from the last time.' In fact, the miners and the whole working class need a completely different perspective. They need to use their 'industrial muscle' to ever greater effect. This means turning our trade union muscle into a force that can deliver mighty political blows

The miners, and the working class, need a party that will stand shoulder to shoulder with the militants at Orgreave and in every other struggle with the bosses and their police. They need a party that can recruit into its ranks the best fighters.

Such a party would not have a monthly meeting which gathered to pass impotent resolutions. It could not be, primarily, a machine for electioneering and for running councils within Government guidelines - or a government operating within the limits set by what the judges and the generals will allow. It would not regard a thirteen week miners' strike as an auxiliary 'protest' to help the Labour Party to power a few years time. It would see it as the central axis for moving the whole working class to crush the Tory midgets.

Once the working class realises the power that it has no riot squads or police horses can stop it. Ten years of increasingly vicious class struggle place this task before the Labour Movement with renewed urgency. Politics is too serious to leave to the politicians - to the likes of Kinnock and Benn. The miners have had to learn this the hard way after their victories of 1972 and 1974. In the early 1920's the Miners helped to build a then revolutionary communist party. They must do so again! ■

by Dave Stocking

OUT NOW!

PERMANENT REVOLUTION



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E.E.C. An arena for European class struggle

DURING 1984 THE British miners are neither the first nor latest workers in struggle in Europe who have gone into battle against the attacks of a ruling class determined to make them pay the full cost of the crisis.

In March over one million demonstrated in Rome in defence of the sliding scale, which keeps wages pegged to something near the inflation rate. In Spain, the recent steel strike was the biggest since Franco's death. Belgium has witnessed two one day General Strikes against the austerity plans of the Martens government. Mitterrand's attempt to do a MacGregor on France's steel industry was greeted by an April General Strike in Lorraine. And, of course, there is the presently solid 35-hour week strike in the German Federal Republic.

The struggles are similar because the capitalist crisis and offensive is international. But there is also a serious weakness underlying the present resurgence of militancy: its national isolation. This is a real problem as the NUM are finding out in their battle to stop coal imports.

The trans-European links between the trade unions are almost exclusively in the hands of the top officials - a stratum imbued to the marrow of their bones with routinism and worship of procedure, with national chauvinism and with class collaboration. Militant rank and file workers have few if any links with their class brothers and sisters facing the same attacks on jobs, social welfare gains and wages. Basically, this means we are fighting with one hand tied behind our backs because the bosses are organised on a European scale. That, in effect, is what the EEC is all about.

This month a potential 210 million people will vote to elect 434 members from the 10 EEC countries to the European Parliament. In Britain probably only about 30-40% of the electorate will turn out to return 81 MPs.

It would be nice to believe this was a reflection of the British working class's perception of the boss-class nature of the European Parliament. In fact it is more a reflection of the insular consciousness of our Labour Movement. This insularity has been bolstered by nearly fifteen years of chauvinistic Little England campaigning by the Labour Party and the TUC to "Say No to Europe". They have stigmatised the "Europe of the Monopolies" as though Britain were a very Eden of socialism or was poised to make the leap into it and was held back only by the Treaty of Rome. What is the truth of all this?

ORIGINS OF THE EEC.

The origins of the EEC go right back to the late 1940s. Then the leaders of France, West Germany and Italy pushed for the rebuilding of a political and economic bloc against the Soviet Union to complement NATO - the military alliance involving the USA. The US was very much behind the reconstruction of Europe after the war. They supported the Paris Treaty of 1951 which grouped the original six (Benelux, West Germany, France, Italy) into a Coal and Steel Community. Six years later (The Rome Treaty) the EEC proper was launched, committed to abolishing all customs barriers to internal trade and promoting greater political union. The first direct elections to the European Parliament were in 1979. The present ones are the second.

Yet despite direct elections this Parliament has little power. It is completely powerless where the vital interests of the major European bourgeoisies are concerned. The lack of sovereign power for the Parliament to order each member what to do, the need of the real decision-making body (Council of Ministers) to reach unanimous decisions and the stormy record of the economic "co-operation" within the EEC all reflect the fundamental lack of unity in the EEC.

The reason behind this is that the financiers and industrialists of the major states remain based in their own countries and as a result they need to move their own government and state to defend their interests against "their own" working class and also against their competitors in other states.

A genuine Europe-wide homogeneous capitalist class has failed to emerge as a dominating force. Of course, there have been international mergers such as Dunlop-Pirelli, Fiat-Citroen, Philips-Grundig but they do not exert much weight as compared to the one nation based monopoly with tentacles that stretch out into the whole world market.

The nearest steps towards capitalist unity came in the boom years of the 50s and 60s and early 70s. A "common market" was only achieved in 1968 and by then the boom was faltering. In the seventies with crisis following crisis and the shrinkage of international trade, competition between member states has increased. Economic antagonisms have intensified. The EEC itself estimates that the cost of frontier checks adds 5-10% to the cost of internal trade. The telecommunication industry is greatly obstructed by protectionism and the service industries like insurance (from which all EEC states earn more than manufacturing) are all protected.

Despite the conflicts between member states, however, there are three reasons why the bosses of Europe will do their level best to see that the EEC

does not fall apart. First, there is the need for European imperialism to be as united as possible if it is to fulfill its role as junior partner to the USA in its attempts to put pressure on, to undermine and to break open the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to capitalist exploitation once more. The deployment of Cruise is an indication both of their will to continue this role but also of growing divergencies of interest with their great Transatlantic protector.

Secondly, the European bosses need to maintain a common front against the economic might of the USA and Japan. The EEC is the biggest single trading bloc. Despite this the constricting character of national state boundaries on the development of the productive forces has been demonstrated by the fact that no major sector of industry has been able to concentrate and centralise to the degree needed to compete with the USA or Japan. For example in the growing information technology race the EEC has only 11% of the world market compared to 66% for the USA and 22% for Japan. Sticking together is still their best bet for meeting the challenge.

Thirdly the EEC is a huge conglomerate of imperialist powers that help one another exploit vast areas of the globe. Each power has important spheres of influence where their bankers and industrialists super-exploit the peasants, miners and factory workers of Latin America, Africa, the Middle and Far East. As well the EEC is a union of the banks and monopolies against European workers. By co-ordinating their austerity programme they can off-load the consequences of the recession onto the backs of the respective working classes.

BOSSSES MARKET

Take the example of the steel and coal industries. There is a coal and Steel Fund but it does not go to helping expand production. Most money goes to sweeten the pill of pit closures and steel mill run-downs. The EEC bosses agree on quota cuts for each state, as in the steel industry for the last five years and carry through a united front to enforce it. Ten years ago EEC steel output was 158 million tonnes. Despite the desperate need now for homes and hospitals, and hence steel, production now is 109 million tonnes. Between 1974 and 1981 over 250,000 workers were sacked in coal and steel.

The EEC is not just a cartel of industrialists. Nor does the EEC protect only the financiers and their vast tribute from the Third World countries they have tied in debt bondage. The Common Agricultural Policy started in 1962 assures the incomes of the large landowners and the capitalists of the food processing industry. Its formal aim is to guarantee the livelihood of Europe's 8 million farmers. There is indeed some financial support to keep the small impoverished farmers in existence (and hence attract their votes to the conservative parties throughout the EEC). But most of the CAP money-£11 billion a year or two thirds of all EEC spending - goes on bolstering the superprofits of the big agricultural bosses.

Unlike coal and steel these parasites are encouraged to produce more and more, irrespective of demand, by the system of guaranteed subsidies (ie. profits), sucked from the taxation of the population. All this drives up land prices and makes food for the working class family more expensive than need be. The huge surpluses, the famous lakes and mountains are either stockpiled or destroyed - an obscenity in a world where two thirds of the population do not have enough to eat.

The Communist Party, the Labour Left and even "Trotskyists" or "revolutionaries" like the Socialist League, the Workers Revolutionary Party or the Socialist Workers' Party argue that because the EEC is capitalist it is obligatory to campaign for withdrawal from the EEC. This is a position we utterly reject. Certainly the EEC is a cartel of imperialist robbers. Certainly the bosses want to stay in the EEC.

Yet if the essence of socialist wisdom was to say no where ever and whenever the bosses said yes we would soon end in total confusion. The arguments of the "Trotskyists" don't go much further than saying that getting out of the EEC would be a defeat for the bosses, or that the majority of workers are in favour of this. But Tony Benn would more persuasively argue, the Treaty of Rome would stand in the way of the Labour Party's "Bold Socialist Measures". The Brussels bureaucrats would rule out of order the Alternative Economic Strategy carried through "our" democratic parliament.

The first objection to this is that we have seen plenty of Labour governments but no bold socialist policies. The Alternative Economic Strategy long ago met shipwreck in the first year of the last Labour Government. The rocks it split assunder on were the City of London, the Bank of England and the International Monetary Fund - not the Brussels bureaucrats.

Of course we would be the last to deny that if a Labour Government really carried out anti-capitalist policies that decisively hit at the wealth and power of the bosses they would meet resistance from the EEC as well as the IMF. But the main resistance, the main enemy, would be at home. It



John Sturrock (Network)

French steel workers in Lorraine

would be one thing to defy Brussels over serious pro-working class measures - certainly no real British workers' state would be allowed to remain in the EEC even if it wanted to. It is quite another to say that an isolated capitalist Britain trading "on the world market" provides a better launching pad for socialism.

British withdrawal from the EEC would merely change the methods by which workers would be browbeaten into paying for the crisis. British capitalism is already chronically weak compared to West Germany, Benelux, Denmark and even France. The consequences of withdrawal would be a tariff war in which British industry would decline further. Worse, under a fake "socialist" programme of economic nationalism, workers would be asked to make enormous sacrifices for the "good of the nation" - ie. for Britain's bosses flagging profit rates.

"Left-wing" Anti-Marketees argue that Britain and its Labour Movement is somehow nearer socialism than the benighted Europeans and that anyway this socialism must be built in an isolated, independent country. This is the stale old recipe "socialism in one country" invented by the Reformist Social Democrats in the 1890s and stolen by Stalin. No wonder it is a doctrine beloved by Tony Benn and the CPGB. At best it cocoons the British workers in a smug self-satisfied isolationism. At worst it fuels a vicious chauvinism as did the Anti-Market Campaign of the early and mid seventies where Labour lefts joined hands with Enoch Powell and the most right wing Tories.

Yet as the 1984 Miners Strike shows, workers in each European country do not need import controls and collaboration with the "patriotic" smaller capitalists against the "Multinationals". They need class solidarity with miners in Lorraine, the Ruhr and Poland. When French workers "unloaded" a coal train all over the railway lines in Calais they were holding out the strong hand of this workers unity. British workers must do likewise.

However this is only the beginning. The capitalists of the EEC can never create a peaceful united Europe. The working class must co-ordinate its forces on a European scale or face defeat separately. Europe's steel workers, faced with the Davignon Plan were misled by their union leaders in fighting on a localist, nationalist separate basis. They suffered a common defeat.

What the crisis of the 1980s demands is nothing less than the transformation of the separate nationalist Labour Movements into a mighty Europe-wide working class movement. The initiative will not come from the bureaucrats or the reformist parties but from rank and file workers in struggle and from revolutionaries fighting full time to build such a move-

ment. Not that a European Labour Movement can be inward looking. Its internationalism must have as its bedrock the championing of all those oppressed and exploited by the EEC bosses in the "Third World".

Its programme must include a struggle against the vicious immigration controls or repatriation laws, for full civil rights for all immigrants or "guest workers". Its programme must involve opposition to the NATO war drive and support for national liberation struggles in the semi-colonial world and for the defence of the USSR and other degenerate workers states against imperialism.

European workers must stand united against the offensive on all the workers' gains won in the boom years and must have as their goal the taking of power out of the hands of the bosses and placing it into the hands of the workers.

Of course, no one country is obliged to wait until the workers of half the continent are ready to overthrow their bosses. Yet from the first day of working class power in a single European state the main task will be to link up with the other European working classes. Given the international economic links and division of labour, a Socialist United States of Europe is necessary to create an effective and balanced plan for conquering want and misery not only in Europe but worldwide.

Thus in the June EEC elections we raise the need for immediate practical links of solidarity. We seek in general to point the way forward to a workers' Europe. If revolutionaries were strong enough they would and should stand candidates to propagandise for this. The Labour Party is standing. We utterly repudiate its platform of trying to "out-De Gaulle" Thatcher as a defender of Britain's interests. It sits ill with the platitudes about internationalism it co-signed with the other European Socialist parties.

Whilst the European Parliament has little power it should be used as a tribune to denounce the policies of Europe's capitalists. The plans and plot to slash jobs and wreck whole industries should be exposed and calls should be made for co-ordinated resistance. The EEC member states' exploitation of Third World countries or the oppression of particular countries (like that of Britain in Northern Ireland) should be pilloried. Labour, Socialist or Communist Party MEPs should delay and obstruct every pro-capitalist measure.

On this basis in Britain we call for a vote for Labour in the June elections. But by far the most important European links will be those that bind French steelworkers, German car-workers and British miners in a common struggle. ■

by Keith Hassell

SOUTH AFRICA-

NO DOUBT WHEN P.W. Botha exchanged pleasantries with the Thatchers over the weekend of the 2/3rd June, he found husband Dennis particularly well informed on how to make money out of business with South Africa. He should be; he is director of Quinton Hazell, one of the biggest South African manufacturers of motor components. This is a company which pays its workers less than the minimum poverty line wages recommended by the EEC's voluntary "code of practice" for firms in South Africa.

The Thatchers' business links with South Africa are just one of the many links between the British ruling class and their South African counterparts. Britain remains the largest foreign investor in South Africa, closely followed by the USA, West Germany and Japan. David Pallister in the Guardian, (June 1) pointed out that Britain has over £5 billion in direct investment and another £6 billion "indirect investment" in Botha's country.

Barclay's bank is the biggest financial corporation in South Africa and along with the US owned Standard Chartered Bank controls 50% of the entire banking sector. Pallister quotes a US state department survey showing that in the five years to 1983 South African investment "out performed" that in all other countries of the world. Britain's return on investment being put at 21% higher even than the cheap labour economies of Hongkong and Singapore!

Why is South Africa so profitable to Western

imperialism? Because their profits are guaranteed by the privileged, white minority rulers in South Africa which depends on the systematic oppression and special exploitation of the majority black population. The black majority are totally excluded from political power. They have no right to vote in the elections for the South African government. Stringent laws classify the population into white, African, Colored and Indian. The white minority regime has designated certain areas Bantustans or "Homelands". These areas make up less than 20% of the total land area and are low in resources and fertility. They cannot conceivably support the African population, which is 73% of the total. In reality, almost half the African population lives outside the Bantustans, but most can only do so if they are working.

As the minister of Bantu Administration and Development stated "The basis on which the Bantu is present in the white area is to sell their labour here, and for nothing else." This reveals the whole purpose of the Homelands system: it is to provide cheap labour for the white ruling class and foreign investors and to make profits. A battery of laws surrounding employment and housing is designed to prevent Africans permanently settling with their families in towns. Special townships are set aside miles from the town centres for those who do live outside the Bantustans.

This extraordinary system means that while

GERMANY - Workers take the offensive

EUROPEAN CAPITALISM'S ONETIME haven of "social partnership" and "industrial peace" is now strikebound. West German workers are striking in their thousands to achieve a 35 hour week.

West Germany's post war "economic miracle" enabled the bosses to guarantee the great majority of workers a secure job and relatively high living standards. Trade Unions were bureaucratically remodelled by the Allied Powers (with the help of the British TUC) and carefully integrated into the "management" of the economy through joint works councils.

Labour legislation made the calling of strikes amazingly difficult. By law unions were obliged to carry out strike ballots. In most cases, a 75% majority was required before a strike could be called. The result of relative prosperity and the system of class collaboration was a docile trade union movement.

The mass strikes of 1957, the "wildcat" strikes of 1968 and the long steel strike in 1979 were notable class struggle exceptions to the "class peace" rule in post war German history. Over the last few years things have been slowly but surely changing.

World recession has knocked the stuffing out of West Germany's economic miracle. The 1981/82 crisis has more than doubled unemployment in the Federal Republic. It now stands at 2.5 million. Moreover despite the much hyped boom this year, unemployment has only fallen by 200,000 and is expected to rise again soon. Rationalisation and new technology will see to that.

To deal with this crisis the Christian Democratic/Liberal (CDU, CSU, FDP) ruling coalition is carrying through an "austerity programme". Germany's relative economic strength meant that this programme was originally milder than Mitterrand's in France. It is however, beginning to bite into workers' living standards. The social wage has been cut to the tune of 176 billion German Marks.

As the number of jobless climbs so the reactionary government has cut the real value of unemployment benefits and narrowed down the number of people entitled to claim them (much in the way the Tories have in Britain - disqualifying school-leavers

for example.) At the same time the government are sending immigrant workers packing (immigrant workers have no political rights in Germany.) The government is also conducting a sustained propaganda campaign appealing to German women to leave work and return to their "traditional" place - the home.

In the face of this offensive certain trade union leaders have been confronted with an uncomfortable choice. Either they could simply negotiate away their members' jobs and rights, or they would have to mount some sort of resistance. In the event the union federation, the DGB, split. Certain sections - building workers and chemical workers, for example, signed agreements this year maintaining the 40 hour week until 1988 and 1987 respectively, in exchange for paltry wage increases (3.3% in the case of building workers).

However in the sections most threatened by the rise in unemployment - metal, car and related industries, the public services and the print industry - pressure for resistance began to grow. A "left-wing" within the bureaucracy of the huge metal/engineering union, IG Metall, emerged around the new Vice-President, Franz Steinkuehler. He is a bureaucratic reflection of the growing pressure for action from base. In 1984 the contract negotiated with Gesamtmetall (the bosses' organisation) after the defeated steel strike in 1979, expired.

The scene was set for the present conflict. IG Metall is in the forefront of the current campaign. The print union DRUPA, is also actively involved while the DGB has called for solidarity from all unions. So far the postal, transport, teachers, forestry, garden, finance and wood and plastic workers' unions have offered support.

The IG Metall leadership, Steinkuehler included, have conducted the campaign for the 35 hour week without loss of pay, in a prolonged bureaucratic fashion. Their overriding aim throughout has been to limit strike action, while exerting just enough pressure to get the bosses to the negotiating table. The hope of Hans Mayr, IG Metall's leader, was that everything could be settled "before the damage they (ie. the bosses - Eds.) fear can occur." Mayr's

dream foundered on the twin rocks of the ruling class' intransigence and the rank and file's determination.

Far from negotiating a shorter working week, the bosses regard the 40 hour working week as sacrosanct. The head of Gesamtmetall stressed: "Even a step by step introduction of the shorter working week would be the wrong way."

The government has obliged the employers by ensuring that workers laid off as a result of strikes will not be entitled to state benefits. They have trained their para-military troops for "civil war scenarios" (on British army bases, incidentally). In addition Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his Employment Minister Norbert Blum have spearheaded an anti-union propaganda campaign. According to Blum, DRUPA (which has 145,000 members) is a "marxist cadre organisation".

In the face of this opposition the IG Metall and the DRUPA leadership moved towards strike action. They called for a series of "warning" strikes in April and May - one day strikes in selected towns, areas or firms. At the same time sections of workers left work after seven hours - 14,000 in Hamburg in April.

These localised and sporadic actions gained no serious concessions from the employers. The bureaucrats turned to strike ballots. In the Baden-Württemberg area around Stuttgart and in the state of Hessen ballots in May recorded 80.11% and 80.77% respectively for all-out strikes. On May 14th the first 14,000 workers called out stopped work.

As we go to press a rolling strike wave has developed. The bosses have hit back with lockouts and now some 250,000 workers are on strike or laid off. Huge workers demonstrations have taken place in Bonn, Cologne and Stuttgart. Picket lines, particularly to stop scab printers producing newspapers, have been viciously assaulted by para-military police. A whole new layer of militant young workers have become activated by the strike. Car production in the renowned BMW, Mercedes, Volkswagen and other firms has all but halted in Germany.

The loss of production has led to long lay offs in Belgium. This outbreak of class struggle has terrified the conservative trade union leaders in IG Metall and the DGB. Despite being kicked in the teeth several times the chief union negotiator Ernst Eisenmann keeps pleading for talks "as long as there is even a glimmer of hope." Yet the only glimmer the bosses are offering is early retirement (at 58) on a pension worth 64% of gross wages, and a 38

hour week for shift workers only in 1988!

The 1988 offer is entirely in tune with the capitalists' plans for robotised, rationalised production. It would mean dramatically increased exploitation and permanent unsocial shifts for the workers involved. Yet Eisenmann describes offers like these as a "glimmer of hope." Against the manoeuvring of the bureaucrats militants must be won to an alternative strategy.

There should be no compromise at all on the demand for a 35 hour week without loss of pay. This can be won alongside early retirement on a pension equal to the total wage (not 36% less, as is currently proposed) and longer holidays.

The party that claims to stand for the interests of organised labour, - the SPD - must be forced to give total support to the strike and its demands. In government the SPD was against the demand for the 35 hour week. Only recently - and in some regions by very narrow votes - has the SPD changed its position and declared support for the demand.

So far this support has remained purely verbal. SPD leader Hans Jochen Vogel, has been trying not to identify himself or the parliamentary party too closely with the strikes. This equivocation must be ended. The SPD must pledge itself to immediately implement the 35 hour week should it once again achieve government office. In the meantime it should contribute its cash, resources, parliamentary platform and so on to the supporting of workers' present direct action to force the bosses and reactionary government to concede the 35 hour week with no loss of pay.

To win this demand - a demand for the entire working class and to be exacted from the entire ruling class - selective action is not enough. The danger is that workers in Hamburg will be left passive, or worse, locked out and potentially resentful, while workers in Frankfurt strike. This is a divisive method of struggling.

The immediate task is to win an all out strike in IG Metall and DRUPA. If this happened then almost 3 million workers would be on strike (IG Metall is 2.6 million strong.) Such a strike could win to its side other sections of workers, engaging them in a common struggle, a general strike, to bring the bosses and the CDU/CSU/FDP government to their knees, winning a 35 hour week and, potentially, much more.

To turn this possibility into a reality, organisations of struggle must be built up amongst those currently on strike. The dead hand of class collaboration - enshrined in the joint factory councils - must be shaken off. Shop stewards organisations must be overhauled, opened up and turned into strike committees. Mass meetings, not the democratic ballot, must become the forum for electing strike committees and taking decisions. Inside the striking unions national strike committees based on delegates from local ones must control all negotiations.

As picketing spreads, as lockouts are met with factory occupations so, in every area delegates of striking workers must form action committees drawing in the unemployed, immigrant and working class housewives' organisations. Such organisations can spread and win the strike, organise and control a general strike and totally transform the German unions from vehicles for class collaboration into militant class struggle organisations.

If the bosses are forced to concede the 35 hour week they will do everything they can to increase the rate of exploitation. Track speeds will shoot up, rationalisation will lead to new rounds of redundancies. To counter this, the 35 hour demand is a good start but not enough. Only if work speeds, conditions, hours and hiring and firing are all under the control of the workers themselves, will a shorter working week be able to combat unemployment. Such control, challenging as it does the role of the capitalist in the factory, can only be achieved as part of a struggle to challenge the capitalist political and economic power in society as a whole. The end of the "social peace" has placed the possibility of such a struggle in Germany once again on the agenda. ■

by a member of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht



Picket at Daimler-Benz Factory

BREAK ALL LINKS WITH APARTHEID

Zola Budd can be a citizen of South Africa and of Britain, black Africans are not even citizens in their own country! In one of the poorest Homelands, Ciskei, half of the one million population has been "relocated" from South Africa in the last decade and about half is unemployed. Two thirds of the income comes from migrant labourers or money earned by those working over the border each day.

At work, the best jobs are reserved for whites, both through special reservation systems agreed between employers and racist white trade unions and because the necessary education and training is denied to most Africans. In mining, the average wage for white workers is 1250 Rand per month, for Indians 620R, for Coloreds 400 R and for Africans 220R. (1981 Official Statistics from *Apartheid, the Facts*, UN, 1983). The safety record in mining is appalling. A British expert estimated the fatal accident rate as 6 times higher than in British mines. In the Gold Mines over 1,000 African miners die every year. The return on mining investment in South Africa is estimated to be 25%.

This whole regime, which is so profitable for its western backers, relies to an enormous extent on sheer naked repression. The police, army and special forces are used ruthlessly against any internal opposition whether it be black farmers resisting their deportation to desolate "Homelands" or trade unionists struggling on wages and conditions.

But despite the repression, the black population s

opposition and organisation is growing. The regime outlawed the major opposition, the African National Congress in the 60s and defeated a wave of guerilla attacks; but in the 70s workers organised and then came the uprising of the Soweto youth in 1976.

The 80s have been marked by a huge growth in black workers' trade union organisation, in particular in the 110,000 strong Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), in the South African and Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU) and the General Workers Union. The number of strikes rose sharply from 1980 onwards - for pay rises, against victimisation and most importantly, for union recognition.

Over the past few years it looked as though the capitalists El Dorado in Southern Africa was in considerable trouble. The rising labour unrest, the continual strengthening of the guerilla struggle by SWAPO in Namibia and growing boldness of the ANC in the wake of the defeat of the Portugese in Angola and Mozambique all threatened South Africa's reputation as a source of profitable and stable investment. 1983 saw a 3% decline in GNP and a falling off of foreign investment.

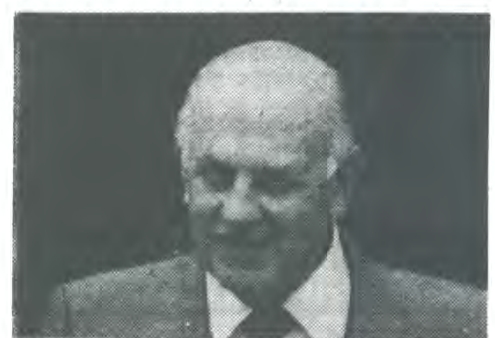
Botha's trip to Europe is designed to remedy this situation. He has picked his time well. As the main architect of the new offensive strategy against the frontline states (in his first 10 years as Minister of Defence he upped the defence budget 20 fold) he comes to visit his western backers in a triumphal

mood. Having humbled Mozambique by military and economic pressure and negotiated a sell-out of the ANC with the "marxist" Samora Machel he is well on his way to achieving the same with Angola.

Botha's aim is not just to get his Tory and Christian Socialist friends in Britain and Germany to restart arms sales, important as they are to this regime that maintains its dominance over Southern Africa above all by military strength. It is to reassure the western capitalists and their governments that South Africa remains a stable and lucrative area for investment.

In this propaganda war for the re-establishment of "normal" relations with racist South Africa, sporting and cultural links preserve the appearance of normality and respectability and cheer the white minority at home. Every visit of a singer or sportsman or woman to South Africa is a propaganda coup for the regime. Every team they send over here is even more of a triumph for them. Of course the "multi-racial" teams are a gigantic con, put together for the purpose of propaganda, while most of the sport in education and recreation remains segregated.

When many Welsh workers welcomed the South African Youth Rugby Team this year, they told themselves that sport and politics shouldn't mix. This plays right into the hands of the South African racists, who know better! The real friends of Welsh workers aren't these ambassadors for apartheid, but the African miners struggling to build their unions



P.W.Botha

and fight the system that condemns them to poverty and repression.

Such boycotts must be defended but they are only a small part of the action necessary. British workers must set out to sabotage Thatcher and her imperialist friends' aid and support to the white racist regime. The campaign must be to black all imports from, and exports to South Africa and to mobilise British trade unionists in support of black workers struggling against Botha's state. The apartheid regime will inevitably crumble at the hands of the growing South African proletariat. Let us hasten the day! ■

by Sue Thomas

Barking: Spread the Action!

With the struggle at Barking Hospital against privatisation in its 13th week, Workers Power talked to Sylvia Dietz (G and M) and Chris Cope-land (NUPE) about the progress of the dispute so far.

WP: Following the NUPE conference decision to fight privatisation, what action has been organised?

We've been promised national days of action on the 4th and 11th of June.

WP: Do you think this will be enough to win the dispute?

No. Obviously we support the days of action and urge other workers to support them, but we don't think it's enough. What we really need to win is an indefinite strike here at Barking. That way we're sure we could win in a couple of days.

WP: Do you think if the national leadership argued for and organised such a strike it would be supported?

At the beginning of the dispute porters and kitchen staff took strike action in support of our struggle. Some COHSE members have expressed support for strike action. The problem is, the national leadership has refused to offer clear decisive leadership - they've basically abdicated their responsibility. Bickerstaffe has been here once and the G and M haven't even got an official banner here. All I've got is a badge. We'd like to see a national leader down here every week, demonstrating their support for us.

WP: What other action do you think the national leadership should be taking?

Obviously they should be calling on other union members not to cross our picket lines and not to co-operate with the scabs inside the hospital. We'd like to see members who co-operate with

the scabs expelled from the union. The leadership say this would take a year, in spite of the fact that union dues are collected every week. It seems that the union bosses are more interested in collecting members dues than giving support in our fight. They're acting more like managers than union members.

WP: Why do you think the national leadership hasn't given a clear lead in this dispute?

They're scared that if other workers don't take any notice of them they'll get egg on their faces. On the other hand they're scared that if other workers do take action in support of us their union assets will be seized. They're good talkers but not so hot when it comes to action.

WP: How much financial support are you getting?

£12.50 a week strike pay and various donations. Staff at Sarah Bernards school have a levy. We'd like to see a levy of the national membership to enable us to carry on the struggle effectively but again the union leaders don't seem to have acted in this direction.

WP: This is obviously a vital dispute to win in the fight against privatisation and cuts in wages and conditions. Do you know if it's had any repercussions elsewhere?

At the Nuffield Hospital in Oxford workers regained hours that had been cut and staff who had been sacked were re-instated - the managers apparently didn't want another Barking. At Moorfields the cleaning contracts going in house in September after being previously privatised. However next year a lot more privatisations are planned and the bosses are waiting to see what happens here at Barking. If we lose, other workers will have lost, if we win, other workers will gain confidence and be prepared to fight the proposed privatisations. It's time the official leadership woke up to this fact - it's vital we win. ■

NUPE Conference: behind the rhetoric

"BROTHERS AND SISTERS, we've had a tough year!" These were the opening words of the 1984 NUPE conference from Lil Stevens, the outgoing President. She went on to list the attacks NUPE members were having to fight... privatisation, cuts in the NHS, rate-capping in local government, attacks on school meals, the anti-union laws and the 3% pay limit.

Of these, the issue that sparked off the most debate was privatisation. The domestics at Barking, out on strike for 13 weeks now against wage cuts of between 40-60%, were given a standing ovation. Ron Keating, from the platform, was unstinting in his praise of the Barking women. When it came to the vote on an emergency resolution calling for national industrial action in support of Barking, the "left-wing" NUPE executive changed its tune.

"If you can't honestly say you will get your members out, then don't vote for the resolution!" he rned.

This is the typical ruse of the "left wing" bureaucrats. Playing on the idea that the membership on't follow" its more "enlightened" leaders, it is an excuse for not conducting a vigorous campaign action among the members.

Conference replied to these cautionary words overwhelmingly supporting the emergency resolution. That was on the Sunday. By the next Wednesday, the Health Services National Committee put the ball firmly back in the court of the industrial branches. The resolution was to be sent out, either with a circular, offering NUPE's official port for any action the branches might take. Meanwhile, the national leadership is waiting to see success, or otherwise, of a London-wide action health workers commencing June 4th and all other services from June 11th before it moves further. This is despite a clear mandate from conference call and organise national industrial action.

On the miners' strike it was a similar picture. The leadership was ready to issue fiery speeches against Thatcher, the police, the anti-union laws and even against Len Murray. They were ready to donate £50,000 to the miners and support the regional days of solidarity action. But they have not

the courage to formally criticise the right wing leadership of the TUC to break with its record of "moral support" for the NUM.

They successfully persuaded the conference to reject resolutions condemning Murray and the TUC for their role in the NGA dispute. "The left always want a public disembowelling" said Bickerstaffe, "Why not just let Murray go quietly?"

They also successfully avoided discussion of any concrete strategy on this year's NHS pay claim. So far the management have successfully stalled negotiations over the 3% offer to ancillary workers. NUPE has rejected this three times but no progress is being made. It is clear that the government is trying to put off any potential confrontation with the health workers until after the miners dispute is settled. The last thing they want is another major public sector workforce at their throats. Unfortunately, to date, the health service unions have played into their hands by failing to seize the possibility opened up by the miners' strike for an NHS strike that could win.

NUPE members should campaign now for a fight over pay and privatisation. They should urge the union leaders to break off negotiations immediately and launch a national campaign of strike action for an end to privatisation, a minimum wage in the NHS at the same level as the national average wage and in solidarity with the miners. No doubt many branch activists and militants in the union will echo the fears expressed by the union leaders: "The membership won't fight" is an objection held by many in the union rank and file, but the miners' strike is possibly the best chance we have to turn the tide against the attacks. It offers the best chance to persuade NUPE members that they could win a fight against the government. The NUPE leadership which spends vast amounts of time and money on glossy leaflets for shop stewards and branch secretaries, should now use the propaganda machine to win the members to the need for all-out strike action.

Alongside this, those in the branches who are prepared to fight for it, should organise a national rank and file network to take these arguments direct to the members. ■

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

must withdraw its closure plans for "this financial year". *The Observer* is claiming that "The Broad Left in the NUM do not want a war of attrition into the Autumn," and that it is after a quick deal. The right wing scabs on the executive will back any move to get the strike called off.

Militants must be on their guard against a surrender. They must organise now to hold their leaders to account and stop any attempt to sell the miners short.

The NCB's offers must be rejected out of hand. They may say that they will scrap the planned 4 million tonnes cut in production. That is no "victory" for the miners. The strike has cut production so severely that the 4 million tonne target does not matter to the NCB any more. Miners will have paid for this useless concession with over three months of hardship and struggle.

The NCB may offer to withdraw its closure plans. But on what terms? The NCB has said it can cut 20,000 jobs through voluntary redundancies. This would be no "victory" for miners. It would mean the destruction of 20,000 jobs in the industry. The future jobs of 20,000 young miners would be sold to the bosses. It would be a "voluntary" acceptance of what is now being fought against. Real victory must mean no jobs at all lost.

MacGregor and Curren say they can be flexible about the timing and procedures for the closure plan. This is just boss-speak for a stay of execution. When they have got the strike off their hands they'll be back wielding the axe probably on an area by area piecemeal basis.

The offers of a new plan for coal-convenient as the current one runs out this year - are also a trap. The Labour and NCB forces behind these offers are out to demobilise the strike with the

offer of commissions or congresses. This is the same dirty trick the bosses pulled on the miners in the 1920s. Commissions were agreed, a strike was demobilised and the bosses prepared for a new round of struggles while workers thought they had won a "victory". The terrible defeat of the miners in 1926 came after the commission had decided - surprise surprise - in favour of the bosses. This must not happen again. The signs that the bosses are divided are a cue to step up the struggle till total victory.

- No closures, No job losses.
- Rip up the productivity deal that has divided the union.
- For a substantial pay increase - taking substantial to mean at least the incorporation of all wages into the top level bonus currently being earned.
- For a four day week.
- No overtime working, Force the NCB and the Tories to recruit new labour in the mines.

NUR/ASLEF

'Left' leaders stab miners in the back

THE 'LEFT' LEADERS of ASLEF, NUR and the TGWU have not been short on declarations of 100% support for the miners. This is all good publicity for the likes of Buckton and Knapp. But, while it may help them to keep up their 'Left' image with their militants it has not stopped them from backing out of fighting alongside the miners.

Arthur Scargill, and other NUM leaders, spread the belief that a deal with the 'Left' in the key industrial unions (covering steel, rail, transport and shipping) was the way to win solid backing for the miners. This has been shown to be an illusion. Militants eagerly accepted it as a means of stopping the TUC getting their hands on the dispute and selling it out.

In fact, it has let both the TUC and the 'Left' leaders off the hook. It has allowed trade union leaders to sell the miners out.

The miners' strike can become the basis for a class-wide offensive to beat the Tories. The key to this happening lies in bringing in other workers alongside the miners. Of course, this means winning backing from rail, transport and power workers by winning them to support the miners. But, it also means winning other workers to fight their battles now - alongside the miners. The possibility of a rail strike side by side with the miners existed. It offered the most favourable conditions for rail-workers to fight their own bosses. It would have opened up a valuable second front against the Tories.

Faced with this prospect the very men that Scargill had told his members to trust - Knapp and Buckton in particular - ran a mile. When the British Rail Board offered a 4%, productivity-tied deal to the NUR Knapp refused to call a strike. The most he came up with was the threat of an overtime ban in the future. It rapidly became clear that the miners were proving a tough nut to crack for the Tories. The bosses were desperate to keep the rail unions out of the growing conflict. Accordingly, British Rail marginally upped their offer to a 4.9 to 5.6% deal (lower than inflation).

There was no guarantee whatsoever that the

planned 38,000 redundancies would be withdrawn. The privatisation of Sealink (and the battle by the NUS against it) is still going ahead. Yet, heaving a huge sigh of relief, Knapp accepted the Board's offer and claimed a 'victory'.

For the sake of a deal which went nowhere towards meeting the NUR's claim, Knapp deliberately took the NUR out of the battle against the Tories. Of course he covered himself with ritual declarations of 100% support for the miners. But, the fact is that by scuppering the rail strike he has stabbed the miners in the back.

He has also undermined the case for solidarity with the miners. Militants in the NUR will face enormous difficulties now in arguing the case for action with the miners when the union leaders will not even fight for their own members.

Buckton has been just as two-faced. Back in April, the Chairman of the TUC told Labour Herald, "we are now at war." (27.4.84) As usual he promised "100% support". However, instead of matching his words with action, Buckton has, along with Knapp, kept railmen out of the firing line.

He has used the NUM's refusal to allow the TUC to intervene as an excuse to avoid calling on the TUC to act. He said after the last General Council meeting, "What further support is given must depend on what the NUM desires." This was a cop-out. He knew the NUM (mistakenly) were not about to ask for anything from the TUC.

Along with Knapp, and the whole gang of 'Lefts' in the TUC, Buckton is, quite simply, all mouth.

To the 'Left' leaders we address one simple demand, "Cut all the guff about 100% and bring your members out on their own claims and around their own struggles now!" To the TUC, we say, "Your mediation is not required - but your order for a general strike is!"

The TUC must back the miners by organising an immediate general strike to win victory for the miners and to smash the Tories' anti-union laws. ■

By Mark Hoskisson

REJECT PLANT BARGAINING

BL STEWARDS ARE currently looking closely at their pay strategy. This has been made necessary by BL's demand that the pay negotiations should take place on a divisional basis. This has been aimed at parcelling out the partly state-owned company for selling off to the share-sharks.

Over the last four years the pay deal has been disastrously dominated by full-time union officials, often, in fact, by the general secretaries themselves. Understandably, the stewards and convenors have wanted to get as far as possible away from this. Many plants' joint shop steward committees have mistakenly thought plant by plant bargaining was the way forward (see Workers Power No.51). On 8th May CP member convenor for Longbridge, Jack Adams, announced to the stewards that they could not get plant bargaining agreed with management for their plant. But Unipart workers who wanted national bargaining would have to bargain on a plant by plant basis.

Jaguar workers have fallen in with management's desire for bargaining across the two plants concerned, and this closely reflects the AUEW national leadership's desire to bend over backwards to accommodate to the BL Board's policy of parcelling for privatisation.

The Longbridge stewards have voted to accept bargaining on an Austin-Rover group basis. Despite this being accompanied with a demand to "Make negotiators subject to the fullest accountability and with a minimum involvement of national officials", this is a far

from satisfactory basis on which to proceed with a pay claim. In particular it leaves Jaguar at the mercy of the share-sharks, it isolates Unipart and does nothing to draw in Landrover workers - many of whom will be wishing now that they never broke away for a separate deal.

There can be no substitute for a strategy based on rank and file control of centralised bargaining. This concentrates the power of national industrial action against the bosses. It builds confidence to fight privatisation, yet it ensures that the rank and file are fully involved in deciding what the claim should be, through pay claim committees of workers and their partners. It means involving the rank and file in deciding what form of action is needed to win the claims, what preparatory action in terms of an overtime ban and amassing strike funds. It means, above all, a national delegate strike committee to ensure that negotiations are controlled and accountable to the rank and file to make sure that the claim cannot be sold out.

This year it means bringing forward the claim to strike alongside the miners and getting away from the November 1st review date which usually triggers action at the worst possible time each year, that is, just before Christmas. Some stewards, who have given thought to this problem, have called for an 18 month settlement. But with the disastrous experience of the two year deal and the prospect of a new leap in the rate of inflation, a six month deal is something that the stewards should be putting before their members. ■

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