

# workers power

Monthly Paper of the Workers Power Group No 95 ISSN 0263-1121 30p/10p strikers

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# Battle Stations!

THIS YEAR Ascot saw even more conspicuous consumption of champagne by the filthy rich than usual. They had something to celebrate. In Thatcher's third term they expect another five year opportunity to keep their snouts in the trough.

The object of their toasts was not to be seen. Margaret Thatcher was too busy with the serious business of drawing up another declaration of war on the working class. It was to be put into the mouth of the Royal ventriloquists dummy at the opening of the new parliament.

Having ruthlessly chosen her new team she has prepared the first phase of the onslaught. Her prime determination is to punish the large industrial cities for voting Labour and for the years of guerilla warfare the left Labour councils have waged to partly defend jobs, services and housing against the Tories.

Her plans for inner-city development are aimed at taking control of planning away from the democratically elected councils on the model of the corporations of businessmen that are turning the dock areas of London, Liverpool and Cardiff into office blocks and pent-house suites grouped around marinas.

## REGRESSIVE

The more the Tories can strip the councils of any vestige of power and authority over the big business that operates in their areas the nearer to fulfillment will be Thatcher's promise to 'do something for our people in the inner cities'.

Central to this project is the replacement of rates, which do increase in some proportion to the size and profitability of property, with a poll tax. It will be sharply regressive, making the working class shoulder the burden of declining services.

Closely allied to this process of taking the cities out of the hands of the 'enemy within' is her proposed assault on public authority housing. The Tories scent that if tenants feel that their housing conditions are deteriorating and that they have no control over it then all but the lowest

paid or the unemployed will opt for homeownership or the private sector.

A similar process is underway in education. The national curriculum will aim to tame left-wing teachers. The provision for opting-out of local education authorities will allow the middle-class, with skilled workers in tow, to re-create grammar schools for their kids whilst leaving the rest to what will become poor law schools.

To aid in breaking resistance a new wave of anti-union laws is planned to protect scabs and scabbing.

Faced with this onslaught Neil Kinnock's insistence that the labour movement fix its sights firmly on the next election is, at best, the most unrealistic fantasy for working class people. At worst it is a scarcely veiled threat to the left in the inner cities that in the battles to come they can expect Neil to support them in the same way he supported the miners in their hour of need!

## ORGANISE

The whole labour movement, starting in the workplaces, in the union branches and in the wards and constituencies needs to begin ringing the alarm bells. They must reach out to the hitherto uninvolved masses of union members and Labour voters. Empty resolutions are not enough. It will not be sufficient to 'educate' through public sector unions' glossy posters or leaflets. We have to also agitate and organise.

The right-wing leaders of the labour movement will blather about how we must not challenge the democratic mandate of Thatcher's 100 seat



Agitate and organise to smash the Tory offensive

majority. While memories of the election are fresh we must say to working people — to hell with her minority mandate courtesy of the millionaire press. Jobs, houses, the health service, education and the democracy of the working class cities and regions must be defended.

We must use and develop our own class democracy to fight back with. We must use the trades councils, the GMCs and the union conferences to call for councils of war in every town and city to prepare to resist the on-

slaught. Arthur Scargill is right to call for industrial action to resist the Tories and to remind workers that in the 1970s a Tory offensive was broken and routed by these means.

He doesn't go far enough however. As the magnificent, heroic strike of 1984/5 showed, 1970s style militancy is not enough. Militancy in the 1980s must be consciously political. It must be class wide and co-ordinated. Last but not least it requires a new kind of leadership.

It will need a lot more than militant

officials in the unions like Scargill or fiery left tribunes in parliament like Skinner. It will need a new revolutionary communist party. The coming struggles will test and temper the militants capable of creating it. For now — throughout the labour movement — the cry must be for:

- Fighting Unity to Smash the Tory Offensive!
- Brothers, Sisters, Comrades — Battle Stations!

Election round up: pages 2,3 & 5

# WHY LABOUR LOST

**THE RETURN of Margaret Thatcher with a 102 seat majority is a serious defeat for the working class. It will have a disorientating and demoralising effect throughout the labour movement. In millions of working class homes people will be asking 'how did she do it?', 'why didn't more people vote Labour?', 'can we ever win?'**

Faced with this confusion and despondency the self-congratulation of the Kinnock team on their election campaign is a disgusting spectacle. The hype merchants of the media are heaping praise on them for their slick, presidential campaign. If 1983 was the

'marketing of Maggie' then 1987 was the selling of Neil and Glenys.

There was only one problem. The product didn't sell. This time there was no Falklands factor to help Thatcher and no Foot factor to harm Labour.

Labour gained only 21 seats and increased its vote by only 3.3%. At a time when there were still officially over three million unemployed this is a terrible indictment of the 'political wing of the labour movement'.

The freshly hyped 'leader' has announced that elections aren't won in four weeks but in four years. The next campaign starts now. His recipe for victory is four years of

wandering along the cliffs vapourising about human value! It is four years of marketing the Kinnock commodity! He wants it to be four years in which the rank and file of the labour movement shut up, sit still and listen to *Yesterday in Parliament*. In truth, four more years of this and the working class will have lost just about everything it has gained in the last fifty years.

Kinnock is not the brand name of the future. It is not the big winner of 1991/92. Already it is well past its sell by date. Kinnock's strategy is not only inadequate as an electoral strategy. It was one that Thatcher and the Tories beat easily in the polling booth. It has also been a prime cause of the defeat in the longer term. Elections are won or lost over four or five years. But not in the way Kinnock means it. Elections register, in an inadequate and indirect way, the relationship of class forces on the battlefield of the class struggle. In the class battles waged since 1983 the balance sheet has been decisively in Thatcher's favour.

We pay a price for this. Thatcher picked off first the miners, then the inner city Labour councils, then the printers. Most workers directly in the firing line thought it didn't affect them. But the election is the time when the sums are added up and the cost charged to the working class as a whole.

In an important sense the 1987 election defeat is a punishment visited by history on the whole labour movement for letting the miners and the printers go down to defeat in isolation.

The direct, conscious and personal responsibility for these betrayals lies squarely with the labour and trade union leaders. When the miners stood alone the need to 'win power for our people' (by which was meant winning the next election) was given by Kinnock and Willis as the excuse for condemning violence and denouncing the 'fantasy' of general strikes. Now the whole working class will reap the bitter 'reward' for letting section after embattled section fight alone. Kinnock ran up and down every

flight of steps he could to prove he was young and vigorous. He denounced Militant, Scargillism and the Black Sections wherever he could to prove he was a strongman. Yet Thatcher still scored every time as the strongest! She really was the conqueror, not only of Galteri (the enemy without), but also of Arthur Scargill and Liverpool City Council — the enemy within. Kinnock had only tripped them up or held their arms at the decisive moment.

The truth is that twice or three times during the 1984 miners strike Thatcher and McGregor tottered on the very edge of defeat. And each time the union leaders and Neil Kinnock rushed to the defence of 'democracy'. A parliamentary cretin to beat them all, he denounced 'Scargillism' and echoed Thatcher's propaganda. He railed against picket line violence and thereby helped to damp down any practical solidarity action. Divided we fell! Thatcher was adding ever more laurels to the class-war banner of Conservatism. ■

## REFORMISM AT AN IMPASSE

**IN THE wake of Labour's defeat the academic experts are wheeling out their 'goodbye to the working class' theories again.**

Our answer to all this garbage has to be clear. The responsibility for defeat does not lie with the working class. It is not due to its supposedly its declining numbers, its 'old fashioned' and 'unpopular' ways such as trade union militancy, or to some newly acquired quality of selfishness.

The Labour Party's electoral decline is a result of the historic incapacity of reformism to either respond effectively to any prolonged period of capitalist crisis or lead the working class in the class struggle. Once again Labour came forward with a programme of feeble and pathetic reforms and of class collaboration. The Tories had the Thatcher revolution.

In a time of crisis radical and 'revolutionary' solutions, even ones that are in reality reactionary, look more realistic than compromising half-hearted ones. Once again class war Conservatism beat one-nation Labourism hands down. Reformist 'democratic socialism' is in a total impasse. Kinnock's only idea is to soften, fudge and ditch pro-working class positions and policies even more. He will demand ever baser surrenders 'for the sake of the next election'.

Workers have to break clearly and finally from this defeat-breeding strategy. We have to weld to-

gether every unit of the labour movement into a fighting unity. Leaders who will not fight, who help the enemy, should be driven out with no ceremony. After the 1979 defeat the 'Bennite' movement stopped well short of doing this for fear of electoral defeat. Their much vaunted victory proved short lived.

We need to set ourselves a different objective. We need a labour movement that can fight, not only and not mainly at elections. They will never be the door to real power for our class. We need a fighting centralised political organisation with a clear strategy and militant tactics. This is the only answer to the thrice proven bankruptcy of reformism.

The coming months pose in the sharpest fashion the need for a united front of resistance to Thatcher's third regime. Just as the decisive battles of her two previous terms came within a year or so of her election triumph so the critical opportunities to unseat her will not come in 1991 but in 1987 and 1988.

The militants thrown into, the front rank of these battles — against privatisation, for decent wages and against the all out attack on local democracy — must come together as a political force. They must — inside the Labour Party and in the unions form the nucleus of a revolutionary communist party that can put back on the agenda for millions the only 'realistic alternative' to Thatcher — **workers' power.** ■



**THE BOSSES' agenda for the election was not only to secure another term for Thatcher. They wanted to push Labour into third place behind the Alliance. This would push Labour's parliamentarians into doing deals with Owen and Steel.**

Labour leaders have taken comfort from the fact that the Alliance take off never happened. The Gang of Four is now a gang of one. And Owen's media fans are one by one writing him off as a mould-breaker.

The Liberals are taking advantage of the SDP's failure and embarrassment. While they are clamouring for a merger the SDP leaders are reluctant to bow out

## NO PACT WITH LIBERALS

quite so quickly.

The exit of Dr Owen and the junior Tories of the SDP will be welcomed in the labour movement. They have failed to break the Labour Party to the bosses orders. But there is now a real danger that this will clear the decks for a deal between Labour and the Liberals.

The Labour Party, including Tony Benn, has always aimed its

fire at the SDP of the two Alliance parties. The right thought Owen and co deserted them. The left have often talked up the Liberal's radical credentials. After the election *Tribune* was quick to announce:

*'Once the SDP has disappeared, the Liberal leadership will lose one of its points of pressure against its own rank and file. On disarmament, foreign affairs,*

*democracy and open government, many Liberals have much in common with labour.'*

They see the way clear for a rapprochement with the Liberals.

If Labour's poll ratings do not improve there will be mounting pressure for at least an electoral understanding with the Liberals. Labour would give the Liberals a clear run in their 'unwinnables' in

the South and be unopposed in the North.

This policy would be a disaster for the working class as it would effectively politically surrender the working class of the South (its majority) to Liberalism and return the working class to the status of an electoral appendage of the liberal bourgeoisie. It would throw history into reverse, back beyond 1906 when Labour broke from Liberalism. It would rescue liberalism from the rubbish bin of history, where it was decisively put, when workers formed their own political party. ■

by Dave Hughes

NEIL KINNOCK has lost no time since the election defeat in gearing up to attack the Labour left.

The major components of this attack were in place well before the election. The Sawyer Plan which effectively destroys democracy in the LPYS was passed at last years party conference. The move to replace delegate based decision making with 'one member one vote' in local Labour Parties was floated as early as April. But the left dutifully sat on their hands, imploring Kinnock to concentrate on the election but doing nothing to organise resistance to the plans.

Now they are paying the price. Not only will the Sawyer Plan and 'one member one vote' be introduced full steam ahead, but the party bureaucracy at local level is to be beefed up. And there are rumours that the NEC will be restructured to permanently exclude the parliamentary left.

The left's response? With Kinnock's perspective shot to ribbons in front of thousands of party activists and with an influx of new MPs taking the Campaign Group to over 40 they have still refused to take the offensive.

When asked about the incoming batch of left MPs, Lord Hailsham replied with a nod and a wink: 'A few years in the commons will mellow them.'

The only error the old gentleman made was in the timescale envisaged. As the new arrivals trooped into the parliamentary swearing-in session TV reporters hovered, their minds filled with horror stories

# KINNOCK'S TAME LEFT

from the Sun and the Express.

What did Bernie Grant think of Kinnock's campaign: 'It was a good campaign.'

Would Ken Livingstone be launching a leadership battle against Neil: 'Of course not, I've got a lot of paperwork to do and I need time to settle in.'

And Dennis Skinner, would he be fighting 'one member one vote': 'There's been too much in-fighting over the last four years', replied the Bolsover tribune.

## UNRULY

As the heroes and heroines of the left filed past it became clear that the only really unruly newcomer to the Labour benches was likely to be David Blunkett's dog.

It is not, of course, any special spinelessness of the newcomers that is to blame, nor is it some special magic possessed by the 'mother of Parliaments'. The parliamentary current they are joining long ago surrendered to Kinnock. They have

been in unbroken retreat ever since the 1982 Bishops Stortford agreement. Since Heffer's challenge for leadership in 1983 not one of them has had the guts even to talk about standing against Kinnock for leader.

Their much vaunted intransigence against a joint slate with the Tribunites is a sham. The fact is that, unwilling to oust Kinnock, they have little desire to replace John Smith and Gerald Kaufman as stars in the Kinnock roadshow.

At root, the left MPs have no alternative strategy to Kinnock. They have alternative policies by the bundle, and finely crafted Parliamentary Bills on a dozen worthy causes. But these are useless without Labour in power. And it is the fear of permanent opposition which will compel them again to seek 'unity' on Kinnock's terms.

## EXERCISE

They will mutter about 'extra-parliamentary action'. But to Labour politicians of all types this is something that blows up and dies down like the wind. When it happens they can exercise their voices in front of thousands, they are as happy as cows in clover. but they have not the shadow of a perspective of how to prepare and organise mass resistance to Thatcher.

While the honourable members of the Campaign Group retire to their caucuses, build their parliamentary and constituency reputations, workers must begin organising to fight Thatcher. And not only Thatcher. Kinnock's Red Rose revolution will go on, turning the party into a Neil Kinnock adoration society, unless it is stopped. The first stage is to stop Kinnock's attacks on inner party democracy and turn the local parties outwards into the coming battles of Thatcher's third



Paul Boateng and Red Ken — unruly newcomers or tame parliamentarians?

term.

The hopes of those who wanted a 150-strong Campaign Group in a victorious PLP have been dashed. Anyone who pins their hopes on Livingstone, Skinner and Benn is deluding themselves.

Trade unionists and constituency

activists are demanding answers to the burning questions posed by the defeat: why did we lose, how can we fight back now? But the sleepwalkers of the Labour left haven't a clue how to answer.■

by Paul Mason



# WHO ARE THE TORY WORKERS?

IN THE British parliamentary system a large minority of votes — over 40% — gives you a large majority of seats in Parliament. The Tories held together this large minority remarkably well. Their vote fell by only 0.1% since 1983.

Of course Thatcher easily held the votes of the bosses and the upper middle classes. Nearly 60% voted Tory, 27% Alliance and a mere 14% Labour. Direct, naked class interest dictates the loyalty of the Tories' own class and its hangers on.

## STATISTICS

But the Tories could never win elections without support from all other classes — from the 'middle classes' and from the working class. Statistics show that this time round

52% of 'office/clerical' white collar workers voted Tory against only 22% for Labour. Amongst 'skilled manual' workers the Tories scored 43% against Labour's 34%. This was a 1% gain.

Labour failed to win back its majority amongst the old 'labour aristocracy' of skilled workers. It was amongst the semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and amongst the unemployed that Labour secured a majority of 50% and 51% respectively. Even in this bedrock of the working class the Tories maintained a 31% and 32% share of the vote, increasing that share by 2% since the last election. The Tories held and indeed strengthened, their position within the working class.

The Tories success is rooted in what plasters call 'the newly afflu-

ent working class of the south'. By this they mean craft and high tech workers, foremen and supervisors. They are the home owners, and even share buyers, that the Tories have targeted. In 1974 half these workers would have voted Labour. Today only one third would.

## TAXATION

It is this aristocracy of labour that has swung to the Tories in the condition of capitalist crisis. One of the principal reasons for this is that the maintenance into the 1970s of the reforms of the 1940s, like the Health Service, meant increasing taxation. Labour did this between 1974 and 1979 and handed the Tories a powerful weapon — tax cuts. In addition Labour promised in one form or another 'incomes policy' and this always came down to a wage freeze.

Since 1979, even if the Tories have not drastically cut taxes at least they have not increased them. Also they have let real wages rise — fastest of all for the skilled workers.

In addition they have dished out a range of perks such as council house sales at knock down prices.

Whilst they have starved the health service and education of resources they have dangled all sorts of incentives to private health and private pensions. Faced with long waiting lists and problem schools Thatcher hopes these workers will be won over to her 'property owning' democracy. So far she is doing very well. Her divide and rule policy is driving wedges deeper and deeper into the working class. Labour's 'prudent policy' of paying for patching up the welfare state out of taxation terrifies and alienates reasonably paid workers.

## INCOMES

They fear that Labour's proposed reforms were going to be carried out at their expense. And who can blame them? Hattersley proposed to reverse income tax cuts and even talked about abolishing mortgage relief. By not promising to pay for its programme from the wealth and capital of the bosses and instead targeting the incomes of skilled workers and the middle class, Labour played into the Tories hands.

This is not the only reason that

the Tories' working class vote held up. In order to rally working class voters from apathy or self defeating votes for the openly bourgeois parties Labour would have had to convince them of one thing. They would have had to show that they were going to solve the problems of unemployment, of a deteriorating health service and of bad housing.

## DISTRUST

These issues concerned a clear majority of the population. They do not trust the Tories an inch on them. In order to turn that distrust into a vote Labour would have to show that it stood for radical change and meant it. It would have had to guarantee a massive programme to employ millions in improving schools, the hospitals, the towns and the cities. Labour could not do this. It promised next to nothing in the name of being 'realistic'. This didn't make the bosses stop their attacks on Labour. And it raised little hope or expectation amongst workers. The result was that Labour's vote registered class hatred and class fear for Thatcher. But it did not register a positive hope for something decisively better.■

by Dave Stocking

# LESSONS FOR THE LEFT

Coming to terms with Labour's defeat produces problems for the British left. *Helen Ward* looks at the false conclusions drawn by three of the groups.

## SOCIALIST WORKER

**LABOUR'S DEFEAT** did not take *Socialist Worker* (SW) by surprise. What else could you expect in a downturn? Now is the time to stand on the sidelines and wait for better times.

SW has no illusions in Labour. The problem is, however, that millions of workers do. And the SWP can do nothing about it.

We have consistently argued that it was necessary to relate to what was class conscious and progressive in those illusions. It was vital to organise workers to put those hopes and illusions to the test by fighting to demand Labour act in the interest of the working class. Putting Labour to the test of office would prove the revolutionary argument all the more if workers were roused to place their demands on Labour.

The SWP placed no demands on Labour and its press only got round to clearly calling for a vote for Labour in election week. Instead they stressed building their 'fighting socialist alternative'.

This fighting alternative turns out to be:

*'networks of socialists who will then put our arguments to very large numbers of workers once the struggle shifts to a higher level.'*

And we are left in no doubt that such a shift will only occur when the downturn is over. Until then we must rest content with our socialist networks.

This is a recipe for purely passive

propagandism until the day the good old trade union economic struggle comes back. The SWP abstains from the key issues that are polarising the labour movement right now. To those workers working and fighting for Labour to speak on their behalf — the overwhelming majority of class conscious workers — SW has only one thing to say. It is 'come on out and join us'.

They believe that they will come out in reformist boils if they work in the Labour Party. They therefore have to abstain from entering the battle against the Labour leaders, alongside workers with illusions that Labour can be transformed. All they can do is tell those workers to shed their illusions.

### FIGHT

To workers who fought for guarantees from Labour that the anti-union laws would be scrapped or that Labour would stand against racism SW could only chide them for wasting their time. Revolutionaries, however, get stuck in alongside such workers in order to prove in practice that their interests will not be met by the reformists.

That is the way Workers Power intervenes to win workers to fight Kinnock. SW sits that fight out and dreams of the upturn. ■



## SOCIALIST ORGANISER

**THE LESSONS** that the wisecracks of *Socialist Organiser* (SO) learnt from Thatcher's victory is that elections are not won or lost in three to four weeks:

*'To win the next election Labour needs to start now and mount a campaign against the Tory government and against all the Tories stand for.'*

They had already agreed that, in order to ensure a united party, all hostilities should cease during an election campaign. Can we therefore presume that SO supporters will maintain their 'keep your heads down' posture until at least 1992?

These one-time 'revolutionaries' have shown just how rapidly centrists can swing to the right. They are now competing with *Socialist Action* to see who can reach reformism first. When Kinnock was elected leader SO were proud 'to stand against the unity tide and point to the future'. Now they are proud that in this election campaign 'Neil Kinnock spoke for millions of

working class people'. Their stand against the tide is reduced to the mild rebuke that 'Labour's campaign started too late. And it was, probably, also a campaign for too little'.

Probably? A campaign for a 2% increase in the basic tax rate, a commitment to wage restraint, to leave three million unemployed for at least another two years, to strengthen the police and armed forces — is that 'probably' too little for the working class?

Criticism of these anti-working class policies was not part of SO's election campaign. They became

more craven than *Labour Weekly* in their glowing support:

*'The Labour Party enters the 1987 election with an outstanding socialist environment policy — perhaps the best of any socialist party in the world.'*

Neither would they stand firm against the leadership in defence of Black Sections — they urged Sharon Atkin not to defy Neil Kinnock.

In their more contemplative moments they look for deeper reasons for Labour's defeat than the mere length of the campaign. They notice that at the political core of Labour's programme there is not a clash of

class interests. Musing on this we are reminded that 'this has long been a weakness'. Perhaps the author of these profound words remembers a previous existence when they considered it necessary to build a revolutionary party, since the Labour Party would never be transformed into an instrument for working class liberation. Such days are long gone. The key now is to get Labour into office at whatever cost. Campaign now for 1992!

SO's editors are pulling hard to the right. Can its supporters wake up and resist them? ■

## MILITANT

**A MAJOR** cover-up by the bosses press and the Labour leadership has hidden the key result of the general election: **Marxism has triumphed.**

The gloom of the general election result was relieved for Militant by the victory of their three MPs, Nellist, Fields and Wall, and the good showing of John Bryan in Bermondsey. All of these achieved massive swings to Labour. For Militant this counts as proof of the correctness of 'socialist policies'.

In reality it had more to do with the fact that the campaigns run by Militant involved far more direct contact with working class voters than the Walworth Road roadshows. This no doubt helped to increase the Labour vote.

And once the broad perspective of history is taken into account, for Militant, Labour's third time defeat becomes almost insignificant.

This perspective, outlined by Peter Taaffe in *Militant* No 853 reads as follows.

The collapse of the world economy is imminent. There will be a fe-

rocious out-break of class struggle, according to a 'law' that dictates:

*'if checked on the parliamentary field the British workers turn to the industrial field.'*

These inevitable events will lead to an enormous upheaval. Splits will destroy the Tory Party:

*'The position of the Tory Party in Scotland, reduced to a rump and threatening to become a sect, will become the pattern for the whole of Britain.'*

Ferocious resistance will break out meanwhile, against any attempt by the Labour right to attack the left.

The trouble is that these are not new perspectives at all. They are a re-hash of what Militant said after 1983 when it predicted that 'the recovery and renewal of the Labour Party is assured'.

What they mean is that since capitalism is doomed, if we wait long enough, and get enough Marxist MPs, always making sure no 'ultra-left' action gets us kicked out of Kinnock's party en bloc, then victory is certain.

These are not Marxist perspectives. They are simply rationales for Militant's political practice and a false promise to its troops, of victory in the end. They ignore the fact that

what is decisive to the outcome of the class struggle is conscious revolutionary intervention in it, not blind faith in ultimate and inevitable triumph.

The economic crisis may or may not split the Tory Party and the SDP. But there is one sure-fire thing it must do: split the Labour Party into pieces, propelling the working class militants who support it into the ranks of a revolutionary party. The Labour Party itself can never be transformed into such a party.

For all their dire and certain predictions about the Tories however, Militant are not prepared even to think aloud about such an outcome. They are even less prepared to do anything to make it happen.

### REFUSING

They predict 'ferocious resistance to the attacks of the right wing' But where was the ferocious resistance to the expulsion of the *Militant* Editorial Board, or the expulsion of Hatton, Mulhearn and co? Militant certainly did nothing to organise it, refusing even to argue their case at the 1986 Labour Party conference.

And where was the ferocious resistance to the Sawyer Plan which

will decimate the Militant led LPYS this year? Militant voted time and time again against a campaign of resistance to the plans at this year's LPYS conference. Leave off until the election is over, they pleaded with Sawyer.

Now they predict a 'colossal reaction of the rank and file' if the LPYS is attacked.

But they have not prepared or organised for it. No doubt when the Sawyer Plan is pushed through Militant will take comfort from another of Taaffe's predictions:

*'No amount of organisational repression will halt the advance of Marxism in Britain.'*

Because, like all Militant's perspectives, this is yet another rationale for not fighting now.

For Militant, win or lose three elections, a miners strike, a Wapping, 'Marxism will go from strength to strength'. No doubt this is why the 'socialist victories' of Nellist and co loom so large in their analysis of the election.

But the more Militant's mouldy catastrophic perspectives are contradicted by reality the only thing going from strength to strength will be their hollow rhetoric and fevered imaginations. ■

### OUT NOW

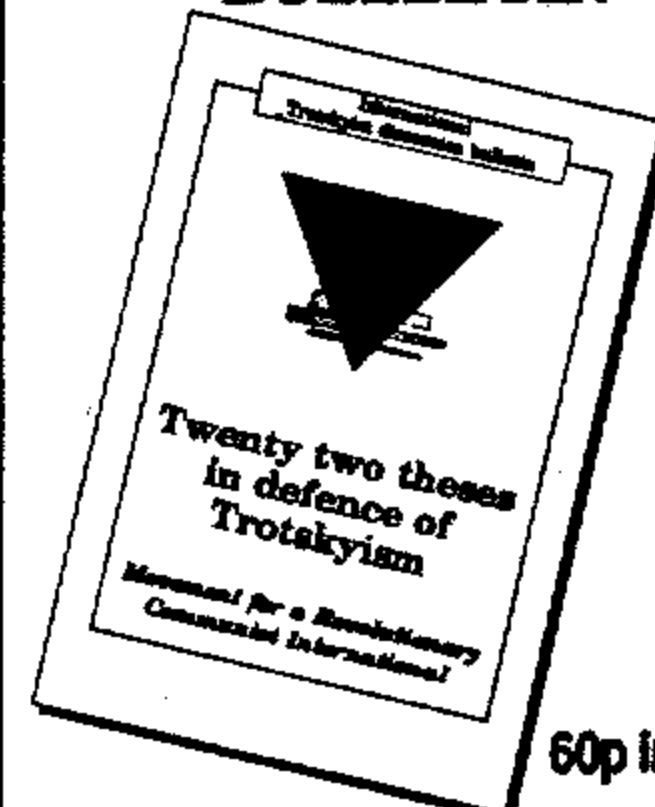
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**THE RACISM** of all the major political parties has ensured that since Saklatvala was an MP from 1922-1929 no black candidate has stood for a safe seat.

Not until 1944 did a sizeable number of black candidates stand even in local elections. 37 stood and three black Labour and one Tory were elected.

This time round there were 37 black Prospective Parliamentary Candidates — three of whom stood in safe Labour seats (Abbott, Boateng, Grant). Three more (Vaz, Proffitt and Atkin's replacement, Muhammed Aslam) stood in key marginals.

So what has changed — has Labour become less racist? The major factor is undoubtedly the formation of black sections in 1982, coupled with the strengthening of the left in London Labour Councils. This led to the election of Bernie Grant as the first black leader of a local council in 1984, followed by Linda Bellos in Lambeth and Merle Amory in Brent.

The black press has greeted the election of four black MPs with banner headlines:

'OUR TIME HAS COME' (*Caribbean Times* 19 June)

'A NEW ERA' (*The Voice* 16 June)

'HISTORY MAKERS' (*New Life* 19 June)

But even the black press recognise that being black is not enough. What did the candidates do for the black community during the election? In the words of *The Gleaner* they:

'... won their seats by behaving like a good little girl and good

little boys, their shoes brushed, their faces washed, their clothes clean and neat. Not a loony sound did they speak during the election campaign.' (16 June)

And as *Race Today* rightly points out:

'Throughout the campaign all of them have sounded like colourless party MPs. They have been tamed, intimidated [by] Neil Kinnock and the party's campaign rules.' (June/July 1987)

The failure of the black candidates

to actively support Sharon Atkin when she was ousted gave a glimpse of how trustworthy they intended to be. Kinnock's attempt to 'surgically remove' an 'electoral liability' was successful. All of the new black MPs accepted the view that she was wrong to 'rock the boat' by telling unpalatable truths about Labour's racism. *Race Today* summed up their election by stating that:

'It threatened to be an historical event of some importance. By

**THERE HAVE** only ever been three previous black MPs in parliament. The first, Dadabhai Naoroji, was a Liberal MP for Finchley Central from 1892-95. The second was a Tory, Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhowhagree, from 1895-1906. However the third, Shapurji Saklatvala, was a communist.

Born in India, Saklatvala came to England in 1905 and in 1910 joined the Independent Labour Party. In 1921, having lost the battle to affiliate to the Communist International, he along with 200 others left to join the Communist Party of Great Britain. He won the North Battersea seat in the 1922 election. He lost the seat in 1923 before being returned again in 1924. He had the distinction of being the only communist candidate who was unopposed by a Labour candidate in all 3 elections.

He was the first person arrested during the general strike in 1926. Charged with sedition for urging soldiers not

to fire on workers, he received a two month gaol sentence. Although he lost his seat to Labour in 1929 he remained, until his death in 1936, a fervent opponent of imperialism and a class fighter.

Instead of the 'surgeries' favoured by today's MPs Saklatvala held monthly mass meetings in Battersea Town Hall where worker delegates could question him and speak. This and his communist politics made him a true tribune of the people. Vaz, Grant, Abbott and Boateng must be judged against his heroic example. ■

# TRIBUNES OF BLACK PEOPLE?

## Rémi Malfroy: 1952-1987 — Comrade, Fighter, Friend

**RÉMI MALFROY**, a member of Pouvoir Ouvrier (PO) and the MRCI, died in Paris on the 25 May. 'Don't mourn, organise' said Joe Hill. Rémi would have agreed, but it is difficult not to mourn when a comrade dies so young, with a hundred tasks unfulfilled.

Rémi was born in 1952, the son of a postman, and initially worked in the post office like his dad. When the time came for him to do his military service he signed up with the navy. It was during this period that Rémi both learned his trade (he was a chef) and made a decisive step towards revolutionary politics. In 1974 a fellow sailor was killed on board the aircraft carrier *Clemenceau*. Together with another seaman Rémi produced a leaflet demanding that the negligent officers be punished.

The pair were charged with mutiny and immediately imprisoned. Thanks to a campaign by the Lambertist youth organisation and by CP deputies they were released after 'only four months'. At a public meeting after his release Rémi said:

'I am not a pacifist. I know that to defeat the army of capital, the workers will have to be armed. The Bolsheviks did not use daisies to take the Winter Palace!'

After being a member of the OCI and of the LCR Rémi joined PO in October 1985. Rémi was a worker intellectual, the product of a family of trade union militants and of the revolutionary events of 1968. His profound grasp of revolutionary politics

and his thoroughly proletarian outlook gave him a political authority that few could contest.

He was much respected in the labour movement in Brittany where he lived. A lifelong militant in the CGT, Rémi organised several protests against the fascist *Front National*. He also organised solidarity with the Kanak people in their struggle against French imperialism and was active in the defence of state education and against public funding of private or religious schools.

Rémi was a marvellous man; his wicked humour and human tenderness struck everyone who met him and his generosity knew no bounds. He had an amazing desire to live and to fight. His death is a great blow to all of us.

The MRCI sends its most heartfelt condolences to his wife Christine, to his three daughters whom he loved so much, and to all his family. As a member of PO said in a grave-side oration:

'Rémi we salute your memory in the only way possible for us, by continuing your fight for a classless society, for world communism. Rémi salut! We will never forget you.'

their refusal to act or speak on the Atkin issue, they robbed it of all significance.'

By and large, the Labour Party continued to take the black vote for granted. The black sections and the prospective black MPs did not use the campaign to force Labour to respond to the needs of the black community nor did they wage a serious campaign against Labour's racist policies.

In particular Labour's plans to strengthen the Public Order Act and its commitment to, 'firm and fair immigration control [which] does not discriminate on the basis of race, colour or sex', were never challenged.

Labour continued to ignore the needs of the black workers, the youth, the elderly and the unemployed. Yet 1.5 million of Labour's 10.5 million votes came from black people.

Already however there are signs that Labour's grip on the Asian vote is slipping. It fell from 87% in 1979 to 67% in 1987. This was largely the result of the defection of the mosque and temple clergy to the Tories.

Labour never challenged their authority as long as they wheeled out their faithful on polling day. This makes it all the more urgent for black people to demand a clear class fight from the black MPs. Whilst Paul Boateng proclaimed:

'We went before as humble petitioners. Never again. We go now as Socialist Tribunes of all the people, black and white in Brent South'

Nothing was heard of the much vaunted 'black caucus' nor of the issue of accountability to the black sections. More important, whether there were four or 40 black Labour MPs, Thatcher is back in power. She will step up her attacks on black people.

Since 1979 the Tories have constantly undermined the rights of black people. Government policies have directly attacked black people in the areas of immigration, policing, employment, education, social security, local authorities and the inner cities. They have also turned on those trying to fight racism.

Their policies have had a disproportionate impact on the situation of black workers as in the case of employment and the inner cities. In 1985 20% of black workers were unemployed compared with 10% of white workers. New attacks are planned on democratic rights, the trade unions, a new immigration bill, further attacks on the NHS and tenants' rights. All of these and more will hit black people hard. The fight against them will take place on the streets and picket lines, not in the corridors of Westminster.

MPs can play a key role as tribunes of the exploited and oppressed in parliament. But the recent record of these 'History Makers' suggests they cannot be trusted to do this. Their record on Sharon Atkin, Grant's letter of commendation for the Tottenham police, Vaz's refusal to share a platform with Sinn Féin at the Leicester May Day event... suggests they will capitulate at every crucial moment.

Black workers and the Black Section in the Labour Party must demand that they use their platform to expose the racism of the Tories. Immediately they should fight for support for black self-defence against racist attacks; an end to all immigration controls and the repeal of the Nationality Act. They should defend black sections and fight for the right of blacks to caucus in the unions. ■

by Breda Concannon

*'What are the Bolsheviks doing there fast asleep in Kzhesinskaya's Palace? Come on, let's kick out Kerensky.'*

FOUR MONTHS after the overthrow of the Tsar the workers had little to show for it. Inflation soared, while the balance of trade and the value of the ruble plummeted. Fearing the new confidence and strength of the factory workers, the bosses began to close down the factories. Metal production was cut by 40% and textiles by 20%. And all this while the employers urged their workers to ever more patriotic efforts for the war!

Food was in short supply — at the end of June Petrograd had only 15 days of flour ration left. Bread rations were cut by 15%. On 15 July butter and meat rations were cut as well. All over Russia workers and soldiers were asking: Did we get rid of the Tsar for this?

What was the response of the government? Trotsky described it as *'indecisiveness organised'*. Meanwhile the nobility rallied, even to the extent of being able to organise an All Russian Congress of Landed Proprietors in Moscow on 1 July. And the war effort was in crisis with vast numbers of soldiers disinterested in continuing to fight. Russia lost ground to Germany.

In opposition to the dithering Provisional Government stood the power of the Vyborg district of Petrograd. In this district of big factories there were hardly any Mensheviks or Socialist Revolutionaries, the workers were either Bolshevik or neutral. It was in this very same district that the barracks of the First Machine Gun Regiment were based, containing 10,000

soldiers and 1,000 machine guns. It was here that there was the greatest impatience with the situation.

On 18 June 500,000 workers marched through the streets of Petrograd. They had been summoned onto the streets to march to the first All Russian Congress of Soviets. But the Soviet leaders stood aghast as the majority of the crowd raised the Bolshevik slogans: 'All Power to the Soviets; Down with the ten capitalist ministers'.

For Lenin and the Bolsheviks after April 1917 the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' was not a call to insurrection. It was a slogan aimed at winning the mass of workers who, at the time supported the collaboration of the Soviet with the Provisional Government, to the perspective of soviet power. It was a call on the 'socialist ministers' to break their coalition with the capitalist politicians and form a workers and peasants' government.

The focal point of this tactic was the soviet itself. As it stood its leadership was committed to maintaining dual power and the war effort. It was looked to for leadership by the mass of soldiers and workers. Despite the treachery of its leaders, it represented the only real power in the land. This was why, sensing the desire for insurrection amongst the workers who marched on 18 June, the Bolsheviks began to warn against the danger of being isolated. They urged the Putilov workers, who planned to strike on 21 June to *'restrain their legitimate indignation'*.

The strike was postponed, but the next two weeks brought the masses no respite. The workers seethed for an answer. The Petrograd garrison was in continual ferment, but a danger appeared. A Petrograd insurrection might be destroyed bit by bit if it were unable to galvanise support from the provinces and the war fronts. In the situation Lenin wrote:

THE REVOLUTION of February 1917 toppled the Tsar and brought into being 'dual power'. On the one side stood the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, on the other stood the Provisional Government of the new republic. After 5 May 'socialist ministers' from the Menshevik party sat in the Provisional Government.

The Soviets, the Red Guards and the factory committees were the organs of the power that had overthrown the Tsar. But under the leadership of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries they had handed power back to the Provisional Government.

The war dragged on. The Provisional Government was as committed to it as the Tsar had been. Meanwhile the workers and peasants paid the price. In the background counter-revolution was preparing to strike.

Andy Cleminson describes how the Petrograd workers, tired of waiting, struck first in...

# THE JULY DAYS

*'We understand your bitterness, we understand the excitement of the Petersburg workers, but we say to them: Comrades an immediate attack would be inexpedient.'*

The whole Baltic fleet, based at Helsingfors, was in turmoil. There, more than anywhere else, the Bolsheviks recognised the need to hold back the surge that threatened. However, they were forced by events to prepare for an explosion, the elements of which were piling up day by day.

The stimulus for the outbreak of the July Days themselves came with the resignation of the four Cadet party ministers. The four felt that the government had not done enough to bridle the growing power of the masses and hoped by their resignation to provoke the 'compromisers' amongst the Provisional Government into a clash with the workers to alleviate their own difficult position.

In the heat of the moment, as Trotsky described:

*'The workers and soldiers considered that all other questions — that of wages, of the price of bread, and of whether it is necessary to die at the front for who knows what — depended upon*

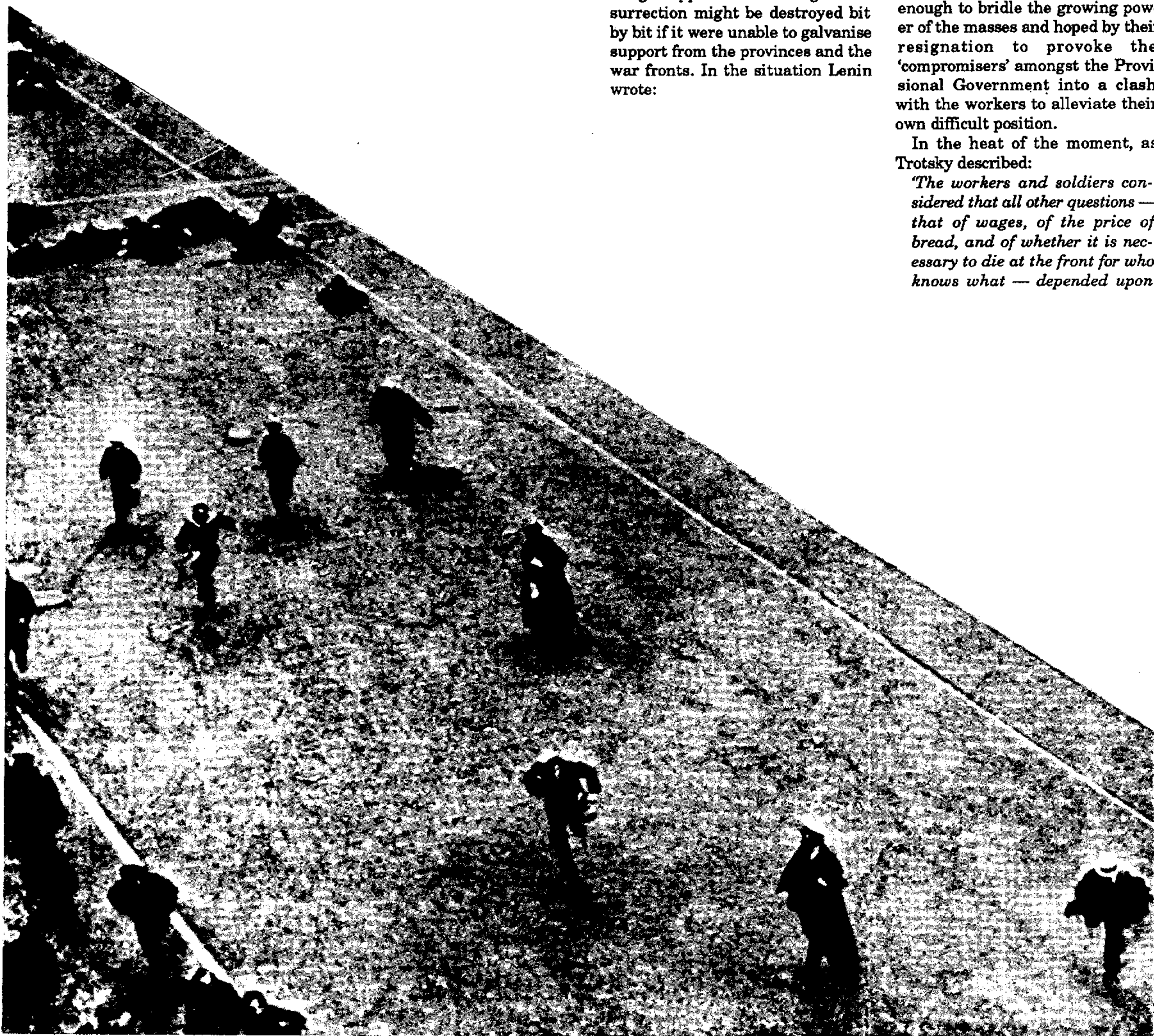
*the question who was to rule the country in the future, the bourgeoisie or their own soviet.'*

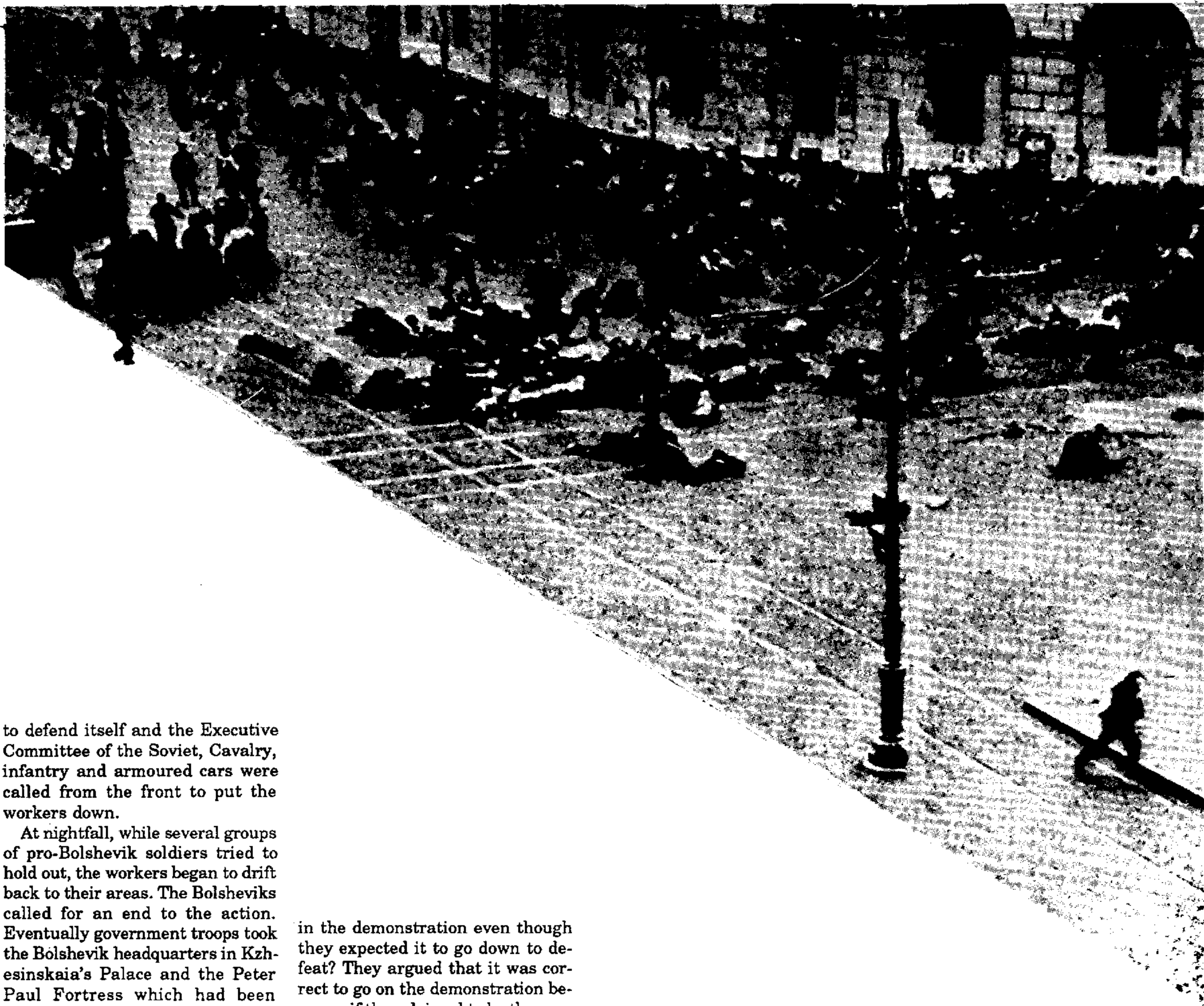
They could remember that in the past action from below had guaranteed them successes. On 3 July the First Machine Gun Regiment decided in favour of an armed demonstration. The anarchists fanned the flames. The time had come to give the 'irresolute' Bolsheviks a shove from below. The Russian and German police also tried to provoke action.

But neither provocateurs or anarchists could have summoned the July Days if the most advanced workers had not been straining at the leash. In essence they had learned from four months of hardship that soviet power was necessary: but they had yet to learn the tactics that could, with the rest of the working class and the soldiers at the front, make it possible. The attitude of the machine gunners and the most advanced workers was summed up by soldiers of the 108th Reserve Regiment who shouted at a Bolshevik worker:

*'What are they doing there fast asleep in Kzhesinskaya's Palace? Come on, let's kick out Kerensky.'*

The most incredible scenes followed. Up went the barricades. Cars were demanded from the factories, armed with machine guns and sent out to join the demonstration. Rifles were given to those who did not have them, bombs were also handed out. Motor trucks were armed with three machine gunners — the demonstration was to take place in full military fashion! A worker from the Renaud factory





expressed the feeling at the time:

*'After dinner a number of machine gun men came running with the request that we give them some motor trucks. In spite of our group [the Bolsheviks] we had to give up the cars . . . They promptly loaded the trucks with Maxims [machine guns] and drove them down the Nevsky. At this point we could no longer restrain the workers . . . They all, just as they were, in overalls, rushed straight outdoors from the benches.'*

On the 4th the machine gunners received notice that they were being called to the front as part of a new offensive that the allies demanded. This was irrelevant to the machine gunners who decided not to go to the front against the German proletariat, but instead against their own capitalist ministers. By 7 am the city was at a standstill, a detachment of armed Red Guards coming to the demonstration with every factory that went on strike.

All the demonstrators were workers and soldiers. All their banners read 'All power to the soviets'. All were armed. Everywhere along the demonstration workers held meetings. The demands of the march reflected the rising consciousness of the Petrograd workers: 'Removal of the ten capitalist ministers', 'All power to the soviets', 'Cessation of the war offensive', 'Confiscation of the printing plants of the bourgeois press', 'All land to become state property', 'State control of production'.

Up to this point the Bolsheviks had been doing their utmost to restrain the spontaneous uprising.

As late as 3 o'clock on 4 July a conference of the Petrograd branches of the Bolsheviks sent out delegates calling for 'restraint'. But once the movement was in full swing the central committee had to reverse this course, sending Bolshevik agitators to try to channel the aimless anger of the soldiers and strikers against the Executive Committee of the Soviet in the Tauride Palace. The armed demonstrators poured down the capital's main street, the Nevsky Prospekt.

Then the government's loyal forces counter-attacked. Panic broke out. Everywhere the government started to search for arms

to defend itself and the Executive Committee of the Soviet, Cavalry, infantry and armoured cars were called from the front to put the workers down.

At nightfall, while several groups of pro-Bolshevik soldiers tried to hold out, the workers began to drift back to their areas. The Bolsheviks called for an end to the action. Eventually government troops took the Bolshevik headquarters in Kzh-esinskaia's Palace and the Peter Paul Fortress which had been overrun by insurgents. The July Days ended in defeat and setback.

The following day workers began to go back to work. Those who arrived reported that 'their hands shook with emotion' and that their 'hands would not obey them' at their lathes. The government showed no such hesitation.

The result was an enormous shift from left to right amongst the workers. In the next few days the jails were once again filled with political prisoners. On the nights of the 4th and 5th government troops ransacked the premises of the Bolshevik central committee and political committee. The printing press for which the workers had been saving for three months was destroyed and *Pravda* shut down.

In effect almost the whole of the top stratum of the party was taken out of action for the whole of July and most of August. The middle and lower cadres also suffered serious depletion. The PC report for July stated that the party had hardly been able to carry out any agitational work amongst the masses. The government began disarming the workers and military units that had taken part in the action and reintroduced the death penalty at the front for any insubordination — an act of immense symbolic meaning to the workers. What was worse than all this was the fact that the Executive Committee of the Soviet Petrograd approved every action!

Why did the Bolsheviks take part

in the demonstration even though they expected it to go down to defeat? They argued that it was correct to go on the demonstration because, if they claimed to be the party of the masses, they had to stand with them. The party had to help the masses to learn from their own actions and minimise the losses on this learning. If the Bolsheviks had not been there the leadership would have fallen into the hands of the anarchists and the losses would have been greater and more bloody.

Why then did the party argue against the seizure of power from this position? Trotsky explained with reference to October:

*'When in October the Bolsheviks did decide that their hour had struck, the most difficult days came after the seizure of power. It requires the highest tension of the forces of the working class to sustain the innumerable attacks of the enemy. In July even the Petrograd workers did not yet possess that preparedness for infinite struggle. Although able to seize power, they nevertheless offered it to the Executive Committee.'*

*The proletariat of the capital, although inclining toward the Bolsheviks in its overwhelming majority had still not broken the February umbilical chord attaching it to the Compromisers. Many still cherished the illusion that everything could be obtained by words and demonstrations — that by frightening the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries you could get them to carry out a common policy with the Bolsheviks. Even the advanced sections of the class had no clear ideas by which roads it was possible to arrive at the power.'*

If the workers were unprepared the peasants were even less so. The soldiers were also less advanced than the workers, not surprising when many were also from the peasantry. In addition Moscow was incomparably weaker than

Petrograd. It must be noted that the government tried to blame the July Days on the Bolsheviks saying that the movement had been a planned attempt at insurrection. Of course, we know that this was not true, but how much more difficult the lie would have been to lay to rest if the war effort had collapsed during the events rather than a few days later.

The Bolsheviks were correct to wait, although they never did so idly, until the leadership of the Soviet and the government fully unmasked their lack of leadership to the masses. What, then, did the Bolsheviks learn? The Cadet leader later commented:

*'As a technical trial the experience [of July] was for them [the Bolsheviks] undoubtedly of extraordinary value. It showed them with what elements they had to deal, how to organise these elements, and finally what resistance could be put up by the government, the Soviet and the military units . . . It was evident that when the time came for repeating the experiment they would carry it out more systematically and consciously.'*

And the workers? This letter from the cannon shop of the Putilov factory expresses their feelings brilliantly:

*'Look trustingly at the black smokestacks rising from the ground. There at the foot the same kind of people as you need, suffer and agonise in a bondage of perfected and fierce exploitation. There, slowly consciousness is ripening. In our hearts hate is being stored, and the tender conditions of another life, for all humanity are being lovingly written on the bloody banner.'*

They did not have long to wait.★

*'In our hearts hate is being stored, and the tender conditions of another life, for all humanity are being lovingly written on the bloody banner.'*

## GLOSSARY

**Cadets:** Constitutional Democrats, the main capitalist party  
**Kerensky:** War Minister of the Provisional Government from May, later Prime Minister  
**Socialist Revolutionaries:** Peasant party which was to split in October into supporters and enemies of Soviet power  
**Kzh-esinskaya:** Favourite ballerina of the Tsar. The Bolsheviks took her palace as party headquarters  
**Tauride Palace:** The meeting place of the Petrograd soviet  
**Putilov works:** The biggest arms factory in Russia and the world in 1917

# ITALIAN ELECTIONS

**THE ITALIAN general election of 14 June was meant to resolve an unwelcome governmental crisis for the Italian bosses. In fact it resolved very little.**

Bettino Craxi, leader of the Socialist Party and Prime Minister since August 1983, had led a five party coalition, the biggest component of which was the Christian Democrats. Opposition to Craxi's continued leadership had led both parties to seek advantage in new elections. In practice the results strengthened the hand of both the main contenders for leadership of a new coalition.

Both the Socialist Party and Ciriaco De Mita's Christian Democrats (DC) increased their votes. The Socialists' vote rose by nearly 3% to 14.3%, their best performance since 1948. The DC gained a further 1.4% to remain the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies with 34.3% of the vote. As a result Italy faces a considerable period of parliamentary manoeuvring as a new coalition is formed.

Craxi's coalition had served the bosses well in its near five years in office. It had continued the offensive launched against Italian workers at the end of the 1970s. It was Craxi who finally suspended the *scala mobile*, the indexation of wages against inflation which was a major gain for workers, especially the low paid, won in the 1970s.

He went on to win a referendum called by the Communist Party to reinstate the lost wages. Craxi's call for a 'no vote' was supported not only by the other bourgeois parties but by the socialist trade union leaders. He also launched attacks on the social security system in a period of growing unemployment, and enthusiastically installed Nato missiles on Sicily.

## COMPROMISE

The major opposition to the Socialists and Christian Democrats was the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The PCI, the leading Eurocommunist party, has been shedding every conceivable connection to communism for many years. From 1976 to 1979, in pursuance of its 'historic compromise' with Christian Democracy, its parliamentary support allowed the DC's to govern alone.

Their reward for restraining and demobilising trade union struggles against the government was to chair a few parliamentary committees. Their reward from their working class base was a loss of 2.5% in their electoral support and growing criticism within the party itself. By 1979, with no prospect of being allowed into government by the DC, the 'historic compromise' was replaced by a search for a 'democratic alternative', which in practice amounted to calling on the rightist Republican Party to join a coalition with the PCI and other parties.

At the same time however the PCI never completely ruled out another deal with the Christian Democrats providing the price was right. At the 18th Party Congress Alessandro Natta, the Communist Party secretary, described their perspective for government in the following terms, terms which could have been heartily endorsed by Neil Kinnock in Britain:

*'We have talked about the alternative as a project, that is, as a scheme, a line of renewal that cannot fail to make references to choices of fundamental values, as a process to be realised through a policy of reforms, an innovation in the system... For us communists, and no one can deny this, the basis for this labour of transformation is the values and principles of our republican constitution.'*



Student rank and file committees demonstrate in Italy

A bourgeois constitution of course defending capitalist property relations!

Further proving its trustworthiness to the bourgeoisie and its right to be considered a safe candidate for government coalition, the PCI stood no less than 125 'independent' candidates on its list; a motley collection of football stars, TV idols and — in the case of Signor Guido Rossi — the ex-chairman of the Italian Stock Exchange!

Behind all this and the Kinnock-style of 'slick' election campaign stands what? A record in 'opposition' of support for privatisation of Alfa-Romeo and other state owned industries, and support for Nato and cruise missiles in Italy. The result? A 3% drop in support and loss of 21 seats. Indeed the evidence is they lost votes both to their left, to Democrazia Proletaria (DP), and to the Greens and possibly to the Socialist Party.

Whatever the outcome of the discussions on coalition, it is extremely unlikely that the PCI will be allowed in to government. Craxi's mutterings about alternative alliances to the Christian Democrats are clearly designed to bolster his demands for the leading role in any new coalition with De Mita. The Italian bourgeoisie has no need for the moment to make concessions to the PCI in return for it holding back the working class.

Craxi and the employers have shown, over the last five years, their ability to claw back the workers gains of the late 1960s and 70s without the PCI in the coalition. Indeed it is extremely unlikely, outside of a mass upsurge of the class struggle which needed to be headed off and demobilised, that the bourgeoisie would allow such a powerful Stalinist party as the PCI, with its deep roots in the workers' movement, anywhere near governmental office.

Far more likely is a concerted attack on the system of proportional representation used in the Italian elections which is considered far too 'democratic' by the Italian bourgeoisie. It plans to eliminate the smaller parties by introducing a 5% threshold for representation in Parliament thus, it hopes, strengthening both the Christian Democrats and Socialists. Whatever coalition emerges the Italian workers can expect an increased offensive and austerity as Italy feels the effects of the coming recession in the European and World economy.■

**THE ITALIAN groups claiming to be Trotskyist approached the election in a typical state of centrist confusion. The Italian USFI section, the Lega Comunista Rivoluzionaria (LCR), formed an electoral bloc with Democrazia Proletaria (DP). DP is a loosely organised right-centrist party which was formed in 1977 out of the break up of two of the major centrist organisations, Avanguardia Operaia and the PdUP. DP won 1.5% of the votes in 1983 and had seven seats in the Chamber of deputies.**

DP rejects the idea that the USSR is a degenerated workers state and sees inter-state relations in terms of

a struggle between two 'super powers'. Within this context Italy must fight for its 'national independence'. Thus when a passenger plane was forced down to an Italian base by US fighters because it contained Palestinian guerillas, DP cheered Craxi's decision to put the Palestinians in an Italian gaol rather than hand them over to the USA. This was an example of 'national independence' no doubt!

Another example of the right wing logic of DP's third campism was its position when Libya was under increasing military and economic attacks from the USA and other imperialists. DP deputies demanded to know why the Italian government's ban on arms sales to Libya was not being enforced!

None of this, however, prevented the 'Trotskyist' LCR from adopting a common electoral programme with DP. That programme had nothing to do with Trotskyism whatsoever. It is in fact a mish-mash of reformist and democratic demands completely imbued with parliamentary cretinism and without the slightest whiff of a class struggle perspective. It talks of the need for 'direct participation and people's control'. The DP always supported the idea that a bourgeois parliament can co-exist happily alongside some vague form of 'direct democracy' of the workers.

It calls for 'Defence and extension of democratic rights through the introduction of referendums'. This places the parliamentary referendum in the forefront as a method of struggle without mentioning the methods of the class struggle — factory occupations, strikes, etc — to defend workers interests. It reaffirms:

*'the usefulness of our being represented in government so that there also, the fights and interests of the working people can be reflected and given weight in the political confrontation.'* ('Accord for United Slate', *International Viewpoint* 1 June 1987)

Transitional demands? Workers methods of class struggle? Workers government? Dictatorship of the Proletariat? Not a word of this in the electoral programme of the self-styled Trotskyists of the LCR.

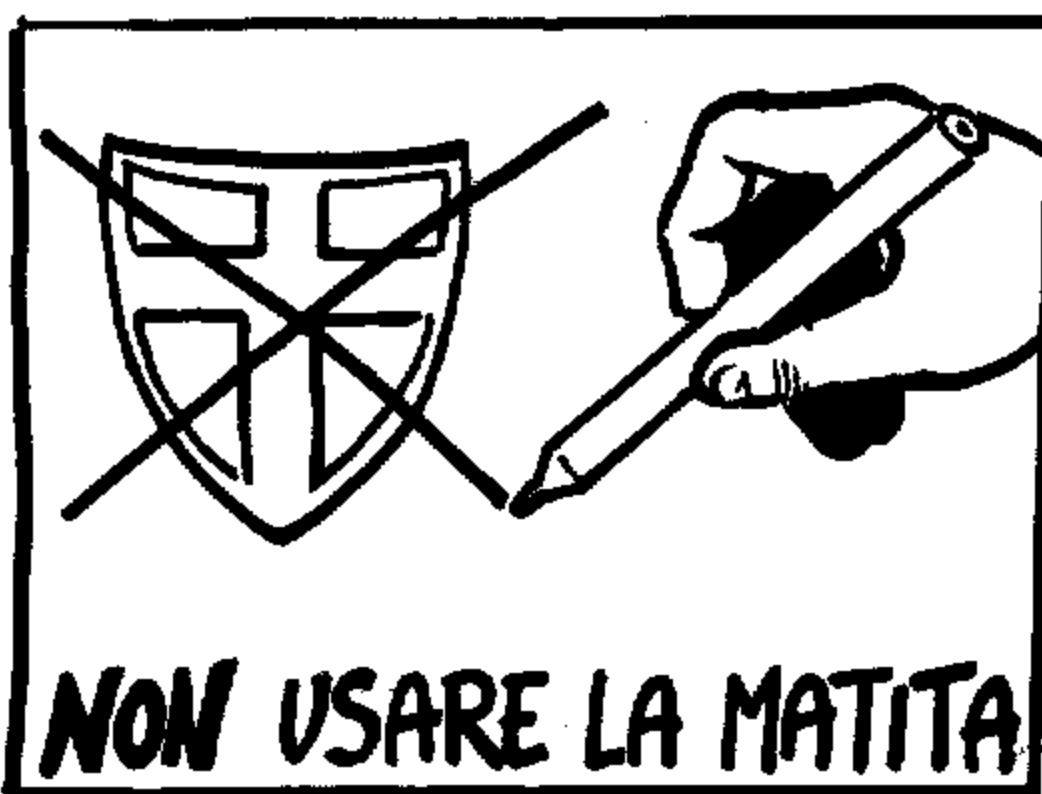
Both the Morenoite LSR and the Gruppo Operaio Rivoluzionario (GOR) advocated abstentionism, correctly rejecting a vote for DP on the basis of its centrist programme. In Italy voting is a 'civic duty' so abstention often takes the form of calling for spoiling the ballot paper 'with revolutionary phrases'.

However such a position fails to come to grips with a key question for Italian revolutionaries of how to break the most advanced workers who, in their overwhelming majority, still support and vote for the PCI.

The tactic of critical support for the PCI, based around demands that it broke from coalitionism with the open bosses parties and took the road of struggle for a workers government, would have been an important tactic in relating to the working class base of the PCI. This was especially the case as there was open opposition in some areas to including people like the ex-chair of the stock exchange on the slate.

Trapped in the milieu of the 'movements' and the student left, the Italian centrist left cannot contemplate voting PCI. Frightened of being seen as giving support to 'decaying reformism' they either retreat into a useless sectarianism or an opportunist alliance with DP. Thus they fail to develop any operable tactic which could relate to the anger and disillusionment of the PCI's working class base against its class collaborationist leaders. This would serve to prove in united action the need for a revolutionary workers' party in a way that all the siren calls of the DP and 'proletarian abstentionism' have signally failed to do.■

by Stuart King



Italian ballot paper:  
LSR say —  
don't use the pencil,  
use the rubber!

## INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

### DOWN THE 'POISONED WELL'

*'As a result the USFI as it stands today — for all its pretensions — represents in our view neither the political nor organisational continuity of Trotskyism. Rather, through its obstruction of any serious international discussion on the historical problems of the Fourth International, it stands as a block to the reconstruction of the FI.'*

This was how Alan Thornett's organisation, the Workers' Socialist League (WSL), summed up the role of the USFI in 1979 in a document entitled *The Poisoned Well*.

Eight years on a statement from the *Socialist Outlook* (SO) editorial board announced the fusion of Thornett's Socialist Viewpoint with International on

*'The basis of political solidarity with the United Secretariat (USFI) of the Fourth International.'* (*International Viewpoint* 1 June)

You will scour the pages of SO for an explanation. Perhaps it was an oversight that SO did not

publish the programmatic basis of their fusion referred to in their press statement. Perhaps they did not have room. We look forward to seeing how it assesses *International's* previous position that the major struggles in the coming period will take place in the Labour Party, 'around the struggle to refashion it to serve the interests of socialism'.

Will the magazine 'critically' support Tony Benn in the tradition of *International* by never making any criticisms? Will it hold that the 'social movements' — women, blacks, greens, etc — retain their 'anti-capitalist' dynamic irrespective of their class composition? And will they declare that fighting to win sections of these movements to socialism under the leadership of a

party is 'economistic'?

Such positions are not only *International's*. They originate in the USFI. It is not the USFI that has changed its spots over the last eight years. It is the Thornett grouping. Ravaged by splits, and stumbling from one fusion to the next, Thornett's broken-winged troops have finally collapsed into the USFI. The Thornett group's failure to correctly analyse the degeneration and collapse of the Fourth International into centrism led them inevitably in the direction of the 'poisoned well'.

For the Workers' Socialist League the Fourth International was not dead. It existed in the 'world family of Trotskyism'. The task was not seen as an intransigent struggle against centrism. It was seen as putting back together the fragmented 'world Trotskyist movement'. The task of refounding a Leninist-Trotskyist International still lies before us. The lessons of the political collapse of the WSL must be learnt by all forces seeking to achieve this goal.■





# Korean Students Rock Dictatorship

**RENEWED STUDENT protests in recent weeks have met with heavy handed repression from President Chun Doo Hwan of South Korea.**

Ever since military-backed moves swept Chun Doo Hwan to power in 1980 there has never been any question who is in charge. The former general and head of National Security Planning (previously known as the Korean CIA) presides over a dictatorial government backed by the pervasive, all-seeing eyes of South Korea's intelligence agencies.

Yet Korea is not a backward peasant country. From the early 1960s industrial production has risen fifty-fold. Its real GNP has risen by 9.1% per annum in this period. Two thirds of Korea's population is now urban. There is thus a contradiction between a developed industrial economy with a large educated middle class and the military regimes that have screwed the lid down on dissent for many years.

## ELECTIONS

The protests were sparked off by Chun Doo Hwan's decision to postpone a debate on whether to hold direct presidential elections. This was put off until after the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Moreover, the systematic repression of opposition activists by the police and government agencies has recently been exposed by an enquiry into the murder of a student activist whilst under interrogation and water torture by the police. This led to the resignation of the Chief of Police, the Prime Minister, the Director of the Agency for National Security Planning and six cabinet officials for the subsequent cover-up. Still the government meted out violent treatment to the protest demonstrations and memorial services for the murdered victim.

Opposition in the Assembly is led by Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung. The latter is under permanent house arrest for his part in the Kwangju rising of 1980 when 2000 people were massacred by the security forces.

The ruling Democratic Justice Party (DJP) proposes a presidential election in December, with the president chosen by an electoral college of popularly elected deputies. This has an in built majority for the DJP. The DJP also proposes a parliamentary cabinet

system of government.

The new bourgeois opposition party, the Party for Reunification and Democracy (PRD) insists on direct presidential elections. Kim Young Sam reiterated at a press conference the opposition's determination to see change through non-violent means and to achieve power through an electoral revolution.

The PRD is going to boycott the scheduled presidential election and its electoral-college system. This will ensure that the ruling party's nominee, Roh Tae Woo, will have the presidency. Roh was head of the powerful Defence Security Command, a network responsible for domestic political surveillance as well as monitoring dissent within the army.

South Korea has a large student population. Seoul alone has 22 universities and a quarter of a million students. There is intense competition for university places. Education is seen as the only path for upward mobility to join the middle class professionals. In reality, a university education is no guarantee for a job. It is estimated that only 39% of the 200,000 graduates this year will get jobs.

Korean students have a history of political activism. There were student uprisings against the Japanese occupation in 1919 and many students supported leftwing Korean nationalism in 1920s and 1930s. Student demonstrations toppled a government in 1960, and were close to doing so again in 1965 when the late president Park Chung Hee normalised relations with Japan.

## BANNER

Student activist cells are now merged under the banner of *minjung* (people's revolution). It is generally held amongst student activists that that it is impossible to overthrow the current military backed regime without uprooting *maepandokchom-chapon* (monopolistic capitalism) and replacing it with *minjung* (masses) democracy in which the urban poor, factory workers, peasants and petit bourgeois will have their interests fully protected.

There is a very strong feeling against American's support for Chun. It is known that the Korean government could not, and would not, do anything without US consent e.g. the sending in of Special

Forces into Kwangju to brutally quell the uprising. Some students hold up North Korea as the revolutionary model, and Kim Il Sung as the leader. With the strict censorship laws, students could work only with translated works of Marx and Lenin smuggled from Japan and North Korea. Naturally in these conditions Stalinism, with its stages theory and popular front strategy, is very influential. The slogans raised on anti-government demonstrations are, for 'unification' (with the North), 'justice', 'kill Chun Doo Hwan', 'kill yankee imperialists'.

The immediate objective for the Korean masses must be the destruction of the Bonapartist regime of Chun Doo Hwan. The emergence onto the streets of middle class elements indicates that the bourgeois opposition may be attempting an Aquino-type 'people power' restoration of democracy. Possibly the White House will also intervene to make sure this is done in as conservative a fashion as possible.

## GENERAL STRIKE

The only way to ensure the toppling of the regime would be if the movement develops into one led by the country's young proletariat whose exploitation has fuelled the 'Korean miracle', and who have many scores to settle.

A massive general strike would open up a whole new period. Revolutionaries should call for the overthrow of Chun and for the convocation of a directly elected sovereign constituent assembly. Workers', peasants', soldiers' and students' councils must be formed in the process of overthrowing the regime.

The Korean people have experienced the division of their country at the hands of imperialism. Hence the burning desire for unity. North Korea stands on post capitalist property relations and they must be defended. But the monstrous bureaucratic tyranny of Stalinist Kim Il Sung in the North can hardly be a model for the southern proletariat.

The southern working class must set itself the task of seizing power — of creating a healthy workers democracy and aiding the workers of the North to carry through a political revolution. Only in this way can the country be unified in a thoroughly progressive fashion. ■

by Din Wong

## LETTER FROM COLOMBO

**THE MILITARY operations on the Jaffna peninsula have resulted in the killing of several hundred Tamil people — very largely civilians — and the maiming for life of many more hundreds. In addition we have seen the wholesale destruction of hundreds of dwellings, businesses, shops and temples.**

During the military operations the army executed 43 Tamils inside the hospital of the sacred city of Anuradhapura where they had been transported from the north, allegedly for medical treatment. The so-called army camp at Butha, which — being an abandoned old warehouse — is simply inconceivable as a human habitation, was during this same day the scene of the murder of seven young boys. These boys were among some 4,000 young men indiscriminately rounded up from among the innocent civilians in the northern province.

In preparation for all this that the Jayawardene government implemented an economic blockade of the northern province with its 850,000 Tamils, cutting off all petroleum products to the province. This meant the halting of all transport from January 1987.

The Tamil people protested against this move to bring death by starvation. The most articulate sections of the Tamil people — the students of the colleges in Jaffna — boycotted classes in protest against this full embargo.

Protests came more forcibly from the mainly Tamil area around Batticaloa in the eastern province. The 48 hour hartal (general strike) brought the whole of the Batticaloa district to a crippling halt.

It was not the intransigence of the Tamil fighters that led to failure to arrive at a political solution. In fact these fighting groups participated in negotiations for less than their goal. They were prepared to settle for regional autonomy. Even today they remain prepared to negotiate on such a basis.

The truth was and remains that Jayawardene's roots in Sinhala chauvinism and his links with the most reactionary sections of the pro-imperialists demands his resistance to any concessions to the Tamils. And his whole strategy in the talks was to gain time until he

was sufficiently ready to launch a military offensive to disrupt and destroy the Tamil liberation struggle.

For quite some time after 1983 Jayawardene could not think of a military solution because the armed forces were ill equipped for an all-out offensive against the ten thousand armed Tamil youth who had dedicated themselves to the cause.

In this context what is relevant for the Tamil people, the Tamil liberation fighters and all the workers and toilers of Sri Lanka is to organise struggles for the overthrow of this dictatorial fascist regime. Such a task cannot be assigned to the Indian bourgeois government or any other government. It is unquestionably an unpostponable task of the workers and toilers of all communities in Sri Lanka.

It is time for the Sinhalese workers to understand that Jayawardene and his regime are their enemy. It is time that the Sinhala workers, who are a majority in relation to the Tamils, understood that they cannot look on while Jayawardene is engaged in the slaughter of the Tamils and in the destruction of their liberation struggle.

The Tamil people's armed struggle is a just struggle for they fight for equal rights and self-determination, which has no other meaning than the right to a separate state. Whether the Tamil liberation fighters insist on their demand for a separate Tamil state or are willing to negotiate on a suitable form of regional autonomy, that is their choice.

Under all circumstances Tamil workers are aware that their closest allies are the workers and toilers of the whole of Sri Lanka. The emancipation of the Sinhala workers cannot be other than through the overthrow of capitalist class rule. Concretely today this means the overthrow of the fascist Jayawardene regime. Similiary the real liberation of the Tamil workers is through the overthrow of capitalism. Thus the aims and the related tasks of the Sinhala workers converge with those of the Tamil workers. ■

Edmund Samarakoddy for the  
Revolutionary Workers Party  
(Sri Lanka), Colombo, 19 June 1987

## South Africa

### WORKERS' LEADER CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY

**JAY NAIDOO, the General Secretary of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) paid a flying visit to Britain on 17 June. His message, aimed at workers both in Britain and internationally, was that South African workers needed 'concrete' solidarity action.**

As the repression in South Africa increases, Naidoo explained how important it is to intensify the economic pressure on the Pretoria regime. This he said, can be done most effectively by increasing workers' action against apartheid. COSATU wishes to form links with any 'democratic workers organisation' to help strengthen this action. However, he stressed that this solidarity must be on COSATU's terms.

Naidoo also called for an increase in the pressure put on the government. But he also criticised the TUC for its failure to get information to its members on South Africa and on what solidarity action could and should be taken.

COSATU is in great need of increased solidarity as the apartheid

state has stepped up its attacks on its property and its members. With the renewal of the State of Emergency, the government has brought in new regulations, the most important being the banning of all boycotts and 'labour-related activities' — COSATU's most prominent forms of activity.

An urgent task facing the international labour movement is the defence of Moses Mayekiso who is due to go on trial in August for treason and faces the death sentence. Moses is General Secretary of the newly merged National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA).

British workers have a particular responsibility to support the 900 workers of BTR-Sarmcol who have been locked out for two years by the holding company, British Tyre and Rubber Company. NUMSA is launching a major campaign in Britain to force BTR Chairman Owen Green to negotiate and to raise pressure on BTR around the forthcoming court case. ■

by Liz Hunt

## IN THE UNIONS

**CIVIL SERVANTS**, teachers and hospital ancillaries are now in the front line of the struggle against the Thatcher government. Fighting over pay and negotiating rights, each represents an important obstacle to Thatcher's overall strategy of dismantling education, health and social services.

In each sector, workers are being sold the same useless strategy of selective and one-day strike action.

In each sector the union

bureaucrats are cringing before Thatcher's 'democratic mandate'.

Militant workers across the public sector should be giving their union leaders their own democratic mandate: for all out strikes, linked at local and national level by rank and file committees, to stick the boot into the Thatcher government now.

- All out strikes!
- Link the claims!

## TEACHERS

**NOW THE election is over the opposition of the leaders to any form of direct action is even more plain to see. Speaking two days after the election, Doug McAvoy, Deputy General Secretary of NUT said:**

*'I believe the way we can deal with the proposals of the Conservative Party is to ensure there is a unity with the profession and a partnership between teachers and parents. I feel that unity and partnership will be more effective if at the same time there is no disruption in schools.'*

*'The decision is taken by the electorate. To try to pretend it hasn't happened would be absolutely futile for the NUT and the teaching profession.'*

McAvoy is wrong on every point: protecting schools and education is not counterposed to ensuring that teachers have the ability to negotiate decent wages. Why should a leader of the biggest union talk about 'unity with the profession'? His members are a majority of the profession by themselves. Together with the other TUC affiliated union NAS/UWT they are the overwhelming majority of teachers. 'Unity between teachers and parents' means absolutely nothing. Unity about what? And between which teachers and which parents? The only expression of organised parent opinion of recent years was a statement of support for teachers' action against the Tories last year.

However, McAvoy's real argument is taken directly from the Tories, 'The decision is taken by the electorate.' 42% of the electorate voted Tory. That is a fact — so what? No one knows what those people who voted Tory think about education or, indeed, if they think about it at all.

Already the executive is acting to undermine the action. By 16 June, all of the nine NUT associations who had received executive backing for working 'no cover' had seen that backing withdrawn. In Inner London, where no cover is being worked unofficially, the Labour controlled ILEA is threatening to deduct £40 per day from teachers. The NUT executive's attitude can be seen from its attempts to expel the Inner London teachers' leaders from the union

The Tories' plans for education are a major part of their overall strategy. They hope to create, in all major cities, areas which are 'safe' for their wealthy supporters, complete with housing provided cheap from the councils and schools where their kids won't have to mix with, or compete with, those of working class families. Strong union organisation amongst teachers would be a major obstacle to those plans. Building it will mean breaking not only with the half-hearted tactics the unions have used for the last two years, but also with the politics that is leading them to abject surrender today. ■

by Adrian Swain

## NUPE

**MOST NHS ancillaries are now earning wages more than £50 a week below the EEC decency threshold and over £100 less than the average industrial wage. But the Tories have offered us only 4%.**

Only all out strike action can achieve victory for the lowest paid. The pre-election strategy of the Nupe leadership was to sit back and wait for Labour. This now leaves health workers facing a reinvigorated government committed to smashing the power of public sector workers.

During the election the union leaders failed to campaign for in-

dustrial action. Instead they sent a directive to branches to 'consult members about holding a ballot' over unspecified action. They preferred to rely on the return of a Labour government and their much vaunted statutory minimum wage.

While the leadership has stalled, the tiny Broad Left has contented itself with producing slates of left candidates.

What we need is an organised, class conscious rank and file movement across the NHS unions committed to organising for all out action linked to other public sector disputes. ■

by Mike Leece

## NUM

**OVER THE next five years the miners will face a renewed pit-closure offensive. The threat of privatisation is hanging over the coalfields. No sooner was Thatcher back in office than British Coal (BC) announced the closure of Snowdown. The Kent coalfield will be reduced to one pit — Betteshanger — and only 676 men.**

Other areas are also earmarked for the axe. Renishaw Park and Ireland in North Derbyshire are under threat. South Kirkby in Yorkshire is being starved of investment.

There is more to the new BC onslaught than the threat to jobs. On the wages front they have imposed on NUM members the deal they agreed with the UDM. This lousy deal means a measly 2.6% increase for face workers.

Another attack on the miners is a proposed new disciplinary code. It stipulates that you can be sacked for offences such as drunkenness, even if you are neither at work nor on BC property. The Big Brother of BC is now watching you when you go for a pint!

The Tories and BC have not been deflected from their aim of creating a slimmed down and profitable coal industry ripe for selling off to the

# DON'T RUN FROM THE TORIES



Striking civil servants demonstrate, 8 June

## SCPS/CPSA

**ON JUNE 8 and 9, three civil service unions, CPSA, SCPS and NIPSA, mounted their first ever all-out strike. More than 75% of civil servant trade unionists supported the strike. This, together with selective strikes like those in the ports and the Customs and Excise computer centre, shows the determination of civil servants to fight for the whole of their 15% claim.**

Now instead of building on this to launch an indefinite all-out strike the union leaders are calling for a return to selective regional two day stoppages. This idea of a long-drawn out 'war of attrition' is supposed to wear down the government. But it has already been proved ineffective. In 1981, six months of it only wore down the confidence and militancy of the union members.

The massive victory for the Broad Left in the CPSA NEC elections (in which they won 17 out of 26 seats) reflects the rank and file's desire for a fight. Both the NEC Broad Left majority and John Macreadie, who was elected Deputy General Secretary, are verbally committed to an all-out strike.

CPSA members should demand that the Broad Left turn words into

action. But there are no grounds for believing that they will. A Broad Left leadership, in 1979, insisted on regional selective action and led the union to defeat.

Throughout the dispute, Workers Power supporters have argued that an all out strike has to be built, not only by demanding that the leadership act, but by the most militant offices starting the strike themselves. These strikes must be linked to the many existing local disputes. Most of these are directly connected to the main issue behind the national campaign, the government's cuts.

From here pressure should be brought on the leaders to call a national all out strike. At the same time speakers should be sent to other offices to spread the strike itself. What better chance of forcing the leaders to escalate the action? If there has to be a ballot, what better way of winning it than by holding it on the picket line!

But even all out strike will not automatically lead to victory. By far the most widespread militancy is within the DHSS. In itself, a strike here will not seriously threaten the government. On the contrary, it will save not only on our wages but by withholding claimants' giros.

Whilst strikers will obviously sympathise with the unemployed and would actively campaign for other workers to prevent people

having electricity or gas cut off for non-payment, they themselves are not the cause of the problem and they cannot solve it.

In the short term, the only way in which suffering can be reduced is by winning the strike as quickly as possible. That means spreading the strike to absolutely every area of the civil service, above all to departments which collect revenue and control the actual administration of government. In the long term, suffering can only be removed by destroying the system that condemns 14 million people to live on poverty-line payments.

Demands for other workers to provide a service for claimants, for example the SWP's proposal for local government workers in Nalگو to process emergency payments, are, no doubt, well-intentioned. They are nonetheless wrong. Rather than overloading an already over-loaded local social services department with more work it would be more effective to call for sympathetic strikes from these and all other public sector workers.

Such a strategy can win civil servants their full claim. It can also turn the tide on the Tories.

- **Forget the fear-mongers, an all-out civil service strike is there to be won!**

by Jeremy Drinkall

City swindlers.

In order to organise the fightback the growing influence of the conciliators in the union must be countered. Des Dutfield is leading the fight to get the six-day working week accepted at the planned Margam super-pit. Haslam has made it quite clear that he sees Margam as a means of ripping up the 1908 Act enforcing the eight-hour day. It would be a cue to introduce barbarous shift patterns everywhere.

Mick McGahey had been using his retirement speeches to preach unity with the scabs. At the Northumberland miners' gala he argued: 'Forgiveness doesn't only

belong to Christians.'

For good measure he called on miners to support the efforts of the South Wales Executive to secure the Margam deal.

Against this trend towards class collaboration and betrayal, stands the militancy of the miners. Their spirit has not been broken. Last year only 15 pits out of the then total of 125 were free of strikes. Haslam has been tearing his hair out at the fact that the miners are eight times more likely to strike than any other section of workers. In South Wales, there are signs that the men are opposed to the leadership's march to the right. Since April there have been strikes at eight pits in the area.

Fragmented and isolated disputes on their own will not stop the Tories and BC. Scargill says he believes action is needed once again. He must be called upon to come out openly against the conciliators and help organise the rank and file. Every fight against new shift patterns or new closures should be used to launch rolling strikes across the areas. In 1969 and 1970 it was rolling strikes in a number of key areas that rebuilt the fighting capacity of the NUM. That perspective must be at the centre of the strategy of the rank and file movement that is needed. ■

by Mark Hoskisson

## REVIEWS

Jon Lewis reviews

1919:

Britain on the brink of revolution  
by Chanie Rosenberg  
(Bookmarks £2.25 pbk)

ONE THING dominated the agenda of the British Cabinet in 1919: the spectre of 'Bolshevism' in Britain. But as this new book, by SWP member Chanie Rosenberg, shows this was no paranoid fantasy — the honourable gentlemen's fears of a workers' revolution in this country were well founded.

At the close of the First World War in 1918 the prime minister, Lloyd George, had promised a 'land fit for heroes'. Reality in 1919 was somewhat different; there were food and housing shortages, inflation and unemployment were rampant and demobilisation from the armed forces was at tortoise-pace. The workers and service personnel demonstrated their anger in a wave of strikes and mutinies. And many in this rebellion of the exploited were directly inspired by the 1917 Russian Revolution and the subsequent uprisings in Austria, Germany and Hungary.

## SOVIET

In 1919 there were, on average, over 100,000 workers on strike every working day. There was an insurrectionary general strike by engineering workers on the Clyde in pursuit of a 40 hour week, a spate of unofficial strikes by miners, a national rail strike... and in Belfast a 'soviet' was actually set up. Countless other groups of workers also took industrial action. Besieged on all sides by unruly proletarians, Lloyd George declared to trade union leaders: '... in our opinion we are at your mercy'.

Even more worrying for the bosses was the unrest in the armed forces and the police. The Cabinet wanted to send the army to Russia to crush the revolution. The troops,

eager to get home, refused to go. No less than 20,000 soldiers mutinied at Calais. Sailors at Milford Haven hauled down the naval flag and hoisted the Red Flag. Nor were these isolated episodes. Back in London the police went on strike — as they had in the previous year — shutting the capital's police stations by using flying pickets!

There are some serious weaknesses in Rosenberg's history of 1919: but what else should we expect from an SWP historian? Just two examples will suffice.

## BUREAUCRATS

First, Rosenberg's 'analysis' of the trade union bureaucrats does not extend much beyond the view that they were (and are) a bunch of rats and that:

*'the greater the bureaucrat's distance from the workplace, the more conservative he or she is.'*

Yet the mere physical 'distance' of the bureaucrats from the workplace hardly constitutes a Marxist analysis of their counter-revolutionary nature: the bureaucrats betray because of their social roots in the labour aristocracy and their role as the arbitrators between capital and labour. And the rank-and-file Shop Stewards Movement hardly merits a mention in 1919, because in the SWP's cosmology such tendencies were either doomed to end in failure or become bureaucratized themselves.

## REVOLUTIONARY

Secondly, according to Rosenberg, in 1919:

*'The situation was as revolutionary as it could be without the existence of a revolutionary party [i.e. the British Communist party had not yet been formed — JL]; it could be more accurately described as a "semi-revolutionary situation".'*

When and what on earth is a 'semi-revolutionary' situation? Anyway it



Police on their own picket line, 1919

# WHEN BRITAIN'S BOSSES TREMBLED

is false to suggest, as Rosenberg does, that it is impossible to have a revolutionary situation where there is not a revolutionary party in attendance. The party is indispensable if the situation is to be transformed into the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a healthy proletarian regime.

## PARTIES

Moreover, there were self-proclaimed Marxist parties in existence in Britain in 1919, of which the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party were the most influential. Rosenberg only

mentions them in passing. Why? Because for Rosenberg the task of the revolutionary party is to be big enough to co-ordinate organisationally the existing sectional disputes — and the BSP and the SLP were just too small to do the job.

Such an outlook betrays a hopelessly mechanical approach to party building. A rounded revolutionary history of 1919 must deal with these organisations. After all, Marxists should learn from the mistakes of their ancestors. And if Rosenberg and the SWP cared to look at the activities of the SLP in 1919, they would see the mirror

image of the sectarian syndicalism they practice today.

## MOMENTOUS

That said, 1919 is probably the best account of that momentous year currently in print. It is also a powerful weapon against those who proclaim that a revolution in this country is an impossible dream. It nearly happened in 1919, and similar opportunities will occur in the future. But only a revolutionary party which has rejected the syndicalism of Rosenberg and the SWP will be able to seize them. ■

## AGONY OF BOLIVIAN MINERS

AT THE end of 1985 the price of tin on the world market plummeted from £8,000 per tonne to less than £4,000. Many countries suffered from this collapse. Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia all cut production. Even in Cornwall one of the three remaining tin mines was closed.

It was in Bolivia however that the most dramatic effects were seen. It was here that tin mining had dominated the export economy for decades and still accounted for a third of all exports at the time of collapse.

This Latin American Bureau pamphlet concentrates on the impact of the crash on Bolivian society, and especially on the mining communities. It portrays the impact of massive mine closures on a country which was already second only to Haiti as the poorest country in the Western hemisphere.

## HUNGER

Miners' families live on one meal a day of bread, bean leaves and potato peelings. Faceworkers collapse in the mines from hunger, working in horrific conditions made worse by broken and unrepaired machinery. Children fall asleep at their desks from malnutrition. Hospitals have no medicines. But it also describes the

fightback by the miners and their communities against a government determined to use the collapse in tin prices to push through its 'New Economic Policy'.

The Bolivian government has launched a massive attack on the nationalised mining industry aimed at closing most of it, privatising profitable parts. The rest, run down

mines with no money for investment, have been offered to the miners as 'cooperatives' for them to work as best they can.

The pamphlet does a good job describing the roots of the crisis in the Bolivian mining industry. These lay beyond the immediate crash in prices — in the lack of investment and mineral exploration by con-

secutive governments. This itself is a reflection of the lack of capital resources in a rapaciously exploited semi-colonial country. It also describes the international system of commodity markets, dominated by the major imperialist countries with the power to build up enormous stocks of raw materials and influence prices.

Stuart King reviews  
The great tin crash:  
Bolivia and the world tin market  
Latin American Bureau  
(LAB £2.95 pbk)

The pamphlet is at its weakest, however, when it comes to offering solution to the dramatic crisis it describes. It offers no criticisms of the tactics and strategy of the miners' leaders, which led in the end, despite the militancy of the rank and filers, to a dramatic defeat.

## SOLIDARITY

On an international level there is not a whiff of the necessity of solidarity action by the workers of the imperialist countries. It says nothing of the need to fight against the imperialist system which keeps countries like Bolivia chained in debt to the international banks. Instead it pleads with the imperialist governments to follow the United Nations call:

*'to use commodity agreements to increase the income of third world producers'.*

Some hope!

Despite its weaknesses The Great Tin Crash is essential reading for its information on the Bolivian struggle. It is a case study of how imperialist exploitation operates today. ■

Dear Comrades,

I would like to question an assertion made in the article 'Fighting Racism in the Schools' in *Workers Power* 93 and perhaps more especially the manner in which it is made.

The article argues that while socialists in the NUT should argue against the establishment of religious schools:

*'We do so from a standpoint of recognising that so long as the state sector under capitalism is tied to the Anglican Church through the 1944 Education Act we defend the right of religious minorities to establish schools.'*

It is elementary for communists to advocate, as a basic democratic right, absolute equality between believers of differing religions. But no democratic rights are absolute and children have rights too (especially, in this context, girls). They have the right not to have their heads stuffed with

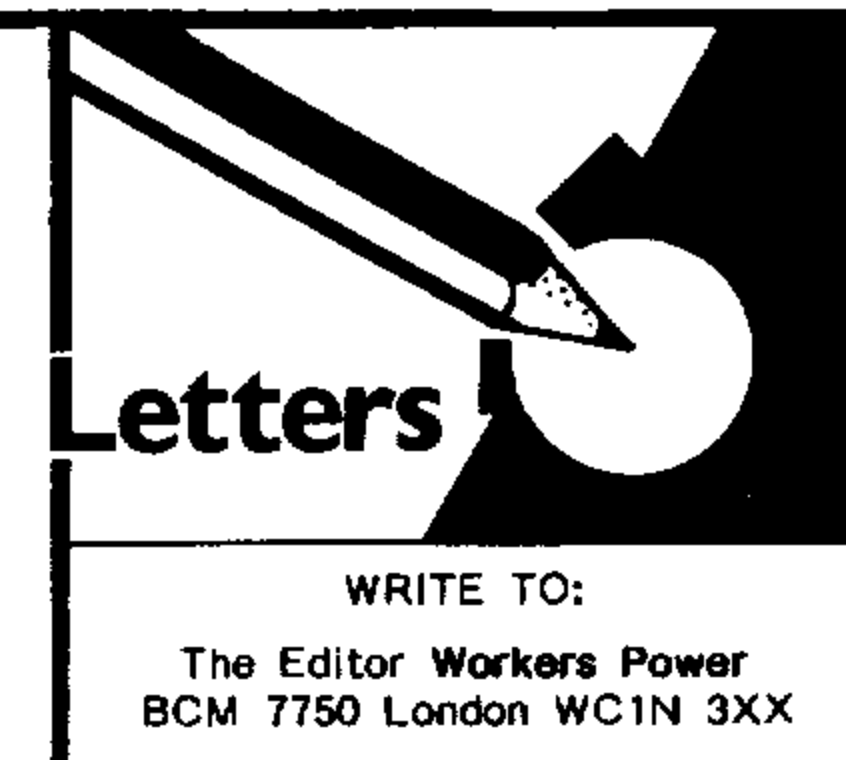
reactionary, obscurantist rubbish, whether Christian, Islamic or any other sort.

It is a question of balance, of tactic. It may well be that the article has judged correctly. But I would suggest that the issue ought to have been addressed with rather more seriousness than was the case. I would suggest it would be better not to 'clutter up' the demand for the complete separation of schools and church/mosque, etc.

Yours in comradeship  
J Tandy

Comrade Tandy is right to point to the potential ambiguities in the statement. It could be read to mean that we want to amend the 1944 Act to give equal access to all religious orders to fix children's heads in state schools.

As the article said we are for the total separation of religion from education. That means we are for the repeal of the 1944 Act.



We also defend the right of religious minorities to establish their own 'after hour' schools such as Koran schools. But we don't have to fight for that right. It exists already. Our real job is to organise youth in every community against being made to attend them. We stand for organising those who resist the community pressure to submit to what comrade Tandy rightly calls 'reactionary obscurantist rubbish, whether Christian, Islamic or any other sort.'

# workers power

## JTS - BOYCOTT MUST BITE

**THE TORIES** are speeding up their drive for compulsory 'work for dole' schemes. They plan to deny benefit to school leavers and force them onto the Youth Training Scheme. Under this scheme 70,000 young people's jobs have already gone because of job substitution. Thatcher's intention to wrest further power away from the local authorities includes strengthening the hand of the unelected Manpower Services Commission (MSC) within further education and training.

The responsibility to defend young workers and the young unemployed now falls four square on the trade union movement. It must start by maintaining and strengthening the boycott of the Job Training Schemes (JTS).

### BOYCOTT

The local government workers' union, Nalگو, overwhelmingly confirmed its position of boycotting the scheme at its annual conference. Pressure from the local level of the TGWU has forced Ron

Todd to review the union's position and come out against the scheme. Now there must be a fight to get the TUC General Council and Congress to reverse last February's General Council decision to participate in the scheme.

The TUC members on the MSC have time and again toed the Tory line. They have been prepared to stomach a scheme which gives six months 'training' to 19-25 year olds in which they will receive a training allowance equivalent to benefit level. The Tories aim to have 110,000 on the scheme by the end of the year. This will both reduce official unemployment figures and help the bosses to further drive down young workers' wages.

### RESOURCES

The scheme is to be financed from within existing resources. This can only mean a cut in existing adult training provision. Already the national computing centre estimates that computing training will be cut by 60% as a result of the transfer of resources to new JTS. This is just one illustration of the fact that JTS is about quantity and not quality. Of the two 'training' days in the week, one day's training can be 'integrated' into work experience and the other can be completed through 'open learning'. Even with this low level of expected



John Harris (FL)

training, the money available per trainee for training agencies means that some are having difficulty keeping their heads above water.

However, trade unionists cannot wait for the scheme to collapse of its own accord. The MSC might be prepared to make this or that adjustment to ensure its survival while leaving the essence intact. A further danger is that the major Metropolitan Authorities, which until now have refused to co-operate with JTS, might surrender as a result of renewed post election pressure from the Commission. Already Birmingham, whose Labour Group voted to boycott the scheme after intense lobbying, is being starved of alternative adult training funds. Council officers are proposing that the City should 'top-up' JTS with its own money to make it a higher quality.

### STRENGTHENING

The Birmingham JTS Campaign committee is intent on ensuring that the Council sticks to its guns. It rightly argues that if money is available for 'topping up' JTS, then it ought to be used for proper City controlled adult training. Its hand has been strengthened by the fact that alongside Nalگو and Nupe, which have national boycott policies, the further education teachers union Natfhe has voted for a local

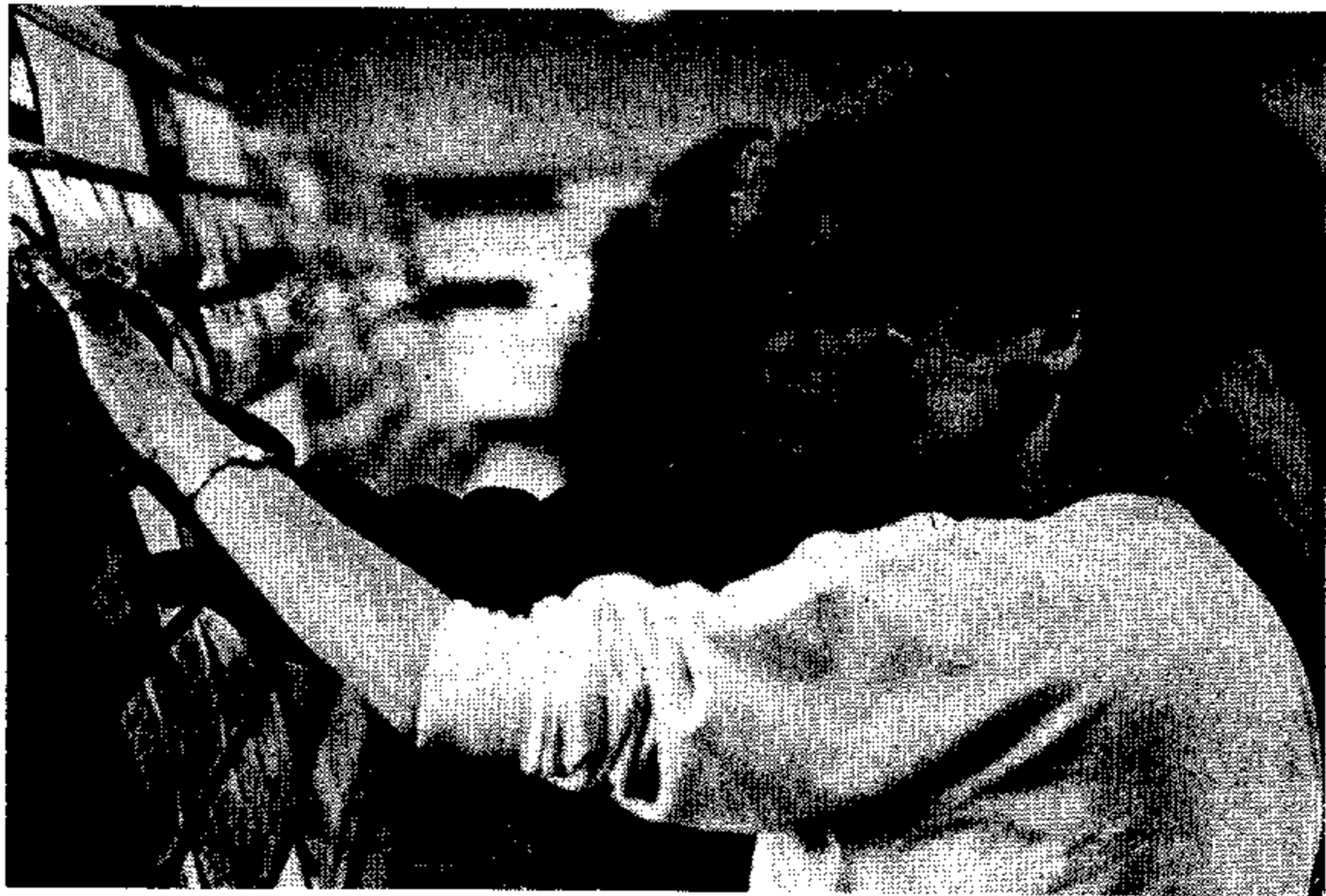
boycott.

Similar campaigns need to be set up in other areas if JTS is to be defeated. There also needs to be a renewed push inside those unions like CPSA and Natfhe which have an official national position of opposition to the scheme short of boycott. In the CPSA demands should be put on the new left leadership. In Natfhe the boycott position was lost at conference. The broad left advocated opposition within the framework of collaboration. Activists must still go for the boycott alongside other public sector unions.

### BACKSLIDING

The present campaign against JTS can succeed if the rank and file prevent the trade union tops from backsliding. In doing so we can reverse the retreat of the trade unions in the face of unemployment. That is why when action is planned within unions, workplaces and unemployed organisations we must also fight to force the TUC to withdraw from the MSC, and for an end to trade union collaboration with the Youth Training Schemes.

It is time to show that united action by trade unionists and unemployed groups can halt the Tories' plans — as the Birmingham Unemployed Centre's slogan says — Just Say No! ■



Thatcher offers work for dole

## LOCAL SERVICES UNDER FIRE

**THE ELECTION** victory has given Thatcher the green light for her planned attacks on local government.

The plans to introduce a poll tax — already on the statute books for Scotland — effectively mean charging workers more for declining local services. Each adult will face a community charge — the amount to be set by the local council. The remaining local government income, from national funds and local businesses, will be fixed by central government. Therefore any decision by councils to increase spending on services will have to be funded by levying a higher poll tax, thereby clobbering the local community.

Thatcher hopes that this will atomise Labour's supporters in the inner cities — turning the working class as tax-payers against the local authority workers as service providers. It is one step further in her moves to divide and rule.

There is also a sting in the tail for

the unemployed. Anyone on benefit will have to pay 20% of any such charge. But while benefits would be raised accordingly this will be done on the basis of a national average of 20% not the local charge. Where more services are needed, such as the inner cities where unemployment is high, the tax will be above average and the unemployed penalised. The Tories also plan to break up the council estates which are notorious Labour strongholds.

The pattern of attack is familiar. First starve the councils of money to build, to repair and to improve the housing stock. Then when discontent amongst tenants begins to mount, start to drive in the wedges. Let the better off employed workers buy their houses and improve them themselves. Then allow tenants disgruntled at the council's appalling record on repairs and frustrated at red tape and regulations to opt for the blandishments of private landlords to whom the houses can be transferred at knock-down prices.

Thus the big housing estates and blocks of flats — bastions of Labour — can be invaded and tamed by 'popular capitalism'.

Wandsworth council has in many ways provided the model. Over the past five years they have sold off council blocks and whole estates to private developers. They have removed 2000 tenants from the electoral register and replaced them with very high earners paying up to £120,000 for ex-council flats. Wandsworth was among the first to put services like refuse collection out to private contractors. The Tories now plan to force all local authorities to do this. The effect, like privatisation in the health service, is to force down the wages and conditions of the workers and decimate union organisation.

Again this is vital for Thatcher's success. Many local authority workers have shown they are prepared to resist attacks from Tory or Labour employers. Weakening of their union power through privati-

sation will add to the confusion and demoralisation felt by many council workers who have seen 'socialist' employers like Lambeth and Islington implementing the cuts and attacking their conditions of work.

The Labour councils, left and right, are in a poor state to resist this round of Tory plans. Having caved in over ratecapping and council house sales, many of them have got into enormous debt, mortgaging their Town Halls in order to balance their budgets. They hoped to be bailed out by a Labour government. Instead they face a Thatcher regime.

The working class must mobilise to resist these Tory plans. The council unions are central — militants must organise to defend every job and service, refuse to co-operate with a poll tax or the privatisation of housing and services.

Council tenants must set up action committees to demand decent housing and repairs, and to resist any poll tax. If the tax is levied there

should be mass organised refusal to pay.

We must mobilise the council estates for action and mobilise private tenants threatened with the rebirth of Rachmanism. Unless we mobilise working class parents and unite them with council workers, teachers and transport workers we will lose. Local councils of action — with delegates from unions, estates and community groups — should be built to lead the fight. They must demand of Labour councils that they refuse to implement the poll tax, refuse to put services out to tender and embark on a programme of public spending on housing, jobs and services. They should refuse to pay back the interest or the loans to the city.

Such a programme means confrontation. The alternative is to cave in, to allow the bosses and the city to strip us of our services, our houses and our schools. We cannot afford to dream of Labour in 1992. The fight must begin now! ■