



Thatcher vindictive in victory Miners defiant in defeat

She had her courts, her cops, her press, her billions of pounds, but it still took Maggie Thatcher a solid year to beat back the miners. And when she finally forced them back, after twelve long and bitter months, they *marched* to the pit gates, heads high, banners unfurled. The strike has been defeated, but the NUM has not been broken.

The bloodthirsty bitch in Downing Street tried to hold the strikers to ransom by starving women and children. She ended up with an army of working-class women warriors and children whose first word is SCAB. Thatcher vows to be vindictive in victory, but the miners are defiant in defeat. And in the wake of that defeat the lessons must be hammered home, to pave the way for future struggle to bring down the Iron Lady and her whole system of murder and misery. *Hail the heroic miners -- Remember the traitors!*

In the final analysis, it was not the cops and courts that defeated the NUM; it was the fifth column in labour's ranks. Norm Willis and Neil Kinnock opposed this strike from the first day to the last; now they'll try to tell us class struggle doesn't pay. And from the TUC 'lefts' who could have shut down the country and achieved an historic victory for the working class, there came plenty of hot air speeches and even more backroom sabotage.

When NUM delegates gathered in Congress House on 3 March to vote on a return to work, several hundred miners stood outside in the rain demanding the strike continue. Anger and bitterness, frustration and tears were everywhere when Arthur Scargill finally came out to announce the end of the strike. 'Remember Davy Jones, remember Joe Green, don't sell us out!', they shouted. 'We cannae go back.' As Mick McGahey drove away from the scene Scottish miners shouted abuse and yelled, 'Tell us how you sold us down the river, Mick!'

This wasn't a sellout, not in the ordinary sense of the word. The NUM leadership under Arthur Scargill took this strike about as far



Anticipating the end, miners outside 3 March delegate conference. Bloody Thatcher succeeded in beating the NUM, but she has not broken this heroic fighting force.

as it could go within a perspective of militant trade union reformism, and still it lost. Why? Because militancy alone is not enough. From day one it was clear that the NUM was up against the full power of the capitalist state. What was needed was a party of revolutionary activists rooted in the trade unions which fought tooth and nail to mobilise other unions in strike action alongside the NUM. But all Arthur Scargill had was the Labour Party, and it would rather see the NUM dead than organise to take on the bosses' state in struggle.

The problem with Scargill, put simply, is that he is not a revolutionary. *The key lesson of this strike is the burning need*

to forge a revolutionary workers party so that the next battle can end in victory.

Bring down the Iron Lady!

Thatcher wanted to smash the NUM, to give them the same treatment Ronald Reagan meted out to the PATCO air controllers. Assured of her coal stockpiles thanks to the swinish TUC, she cruelly stretched out the strike, aiming to force the miners back to work isolated and humiliated and without a union. In this she has failed, but her appetite remains. Defeated and bloodied, *the NUM is not broken.*

Every worker in the world should be proud of the way the miners marched back. 'We're

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Warsop Main strikers march back to work together, with victimised militants leading the way.

Butcher of the Belgrano



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Miners defiant ...

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putting on a bit of a show', explained one Yorkshire miner on 5 March. 'We've got to. We can't just come down here with heads down.' At Barrow colliery near Barnsley, with Arthur Scargill present, a lone piper led the march, followed by the women, and when they approached the pit gate and were confronted by a line of pickets they turned around. Not today would they start crossing picket lines.

At Treeton colliery near Rotherham every man, woman, child and dog in the village turned out for the march back. And after they reached the pit gate they continued to the cemetery to pay tribute to a fallen comrade, a woman who had been a strike leader and died before it ended. This is the 'howling, unruly mob' that the pimps of Fleet Street have vilified for the past year, while glorifying committed anti-union scabs like Silver Birch and his gang of petty thieves and criminals.

At Maerdy, they marched back to the beat of drums, proud that not one of their number had been driven to scab through twelve months of hardship unrivalled since 1926. As the march approached the pit gate, the drumbeat changed to a slow, funereal cadence, a wordless recognition that this was not a march of victory but of orderly retreat. But the faces were not those of broken, beaten men. Explained branch chairman Arfon Evans, 'They've got determination, they've got strength. That's more important for the future, that we can carry on the fight.'

In many areas they did not return at all that day. Kent stayed out for another week, as did parts of Scotland and some Yorkshire pits, demanding amnesty for their sacked comrades. Flying pickets from Kent made it north of the Dartford Tunnel before the cops had a chance to regroup. And wherever a lone picket stood, no self-respecting miner passed. One Betteshanger miner said, 'We're going to start the whole thing rolling again.' But by week's end both Scotland and Kent had also decided to go back.

It is key now that the union preserve its fighting capacity. Especially towards the very end many strikers were being driven back to work in desperation. The 700-plus sacked strikers are effectively blacklisted, unable to move or obtain retraining, some imprisoned or facing jail sentences. Yet after the vote to end the strike many of them were instrumental in pressing for an orderly return without waiting for amnesty. At Monktonhall in Scotland all but one branch official has been sacked, yet it was the victimised miners who convinced the others to vote to go back.

Having vowed to be vindictive in victory, the Iron Lady is itching for new victimisations of militants. In the first two days back in Yorkshire alone, 12 more men were sacked and another 190 placed under 'investigation'. Returned strikers have been consigned to the dampest, deepest, dirtiest work and in many instances face deliberate provocations from the scabs aimed at endangering their jobs. In every way she can Thatcher wants to stick the boot in. A gratuitously punitive 30 per cent rise has been slapped on mortgage rates for strikers. Meanwhile bootboy MacGregor denounces the call for amnesty with the glee of a concentration camp commander: 'people are now discovering the price of insubordination and insurrection -- and boy are we going to make it stick' (*Guardian*, 11 March).

Thanks to the treachery of her swinish TUC lieutenants, Thatcher is today in the saddle, but not firmly. If the undisguised joy which greeted her near miss in the IRA Brighton bombing showed just how hated she is among wide sections of the working class and minorities, the Clive Ponting affair shows that even in her own circles in the middle and upper classes she is mistrusted and disliked.

The way must be prepared for a new workers' offensive. The union must remain cohesive in its return. However understandable the desire to continue the strike or carry out individual reprisals, the miners must above all keep their army intact. The existing sackings must be fought, intelligently and collectively, and new ones avoided as much as possible. Above all it is necessary to understand what went wrong in this historic battle.

Capitulation or class struggle

From the start the Spartacist League argued that with the open hostility of the TUC traitors to any serious class struggle and especially to the NUM, the road to victory lay through spreading the strike on the ground, particularly through the strategic 'left'-led

rail and transport unions. Even in the last days of the strike the TUC *openly collaborated with Downing Street* against the NUM. Scores of angry miners and other militants charged the platform when Norm Willis showed his face at the 6 March rate-capping day of action in London.

Through the past twelve months Scargill demonstrated his mettle as the only significant figure in the labour officialdom prepared to take on the Iron Lady in struggle. He fought hard, but he also sharply demonstrated the limitations of reformist trade unionism, which *proved incapable of providing a winning strategy*. It is not a matter of criticising one or another mistake Scargill made but of coming to terms with the fact that he remained tied to the same Labourite perspective as the Willises and Kinnocks -- that the final answer for the working class is to install a Labour government aimed at defending Britain's (decrepit) nationalised industry through reformist schemes like the Plan for Coal.

So while he initially opposed intervention by the scabby TUC and even issued appeals for



Arthur Scargill and Mick McGahey at 24 February support demo in London.

industrial action to back the miners, his whole strategy rested on pressuring the Labour/TUC 'lefts'. They in turn handed everything over to their right-wing brethren at every decisive point. In the end Scargill had no alternative but to appeal to the Labour/TUC scabherders for 'support'. While complaining that their hands were tied by Willis and the rights, the truth is that the 'lefts' were decisive in sabotaging every concrete strike initiative *by their own members*: from the derailment of a rail strike last spring, to the sellout of the two potentially explosive dock strikes over the summer, to the Seamen's leaders' eleventh-hour withdrawal of union support for their members' blacking action in the face of a court injunction.

Typical of the TUC 'lefts' was the role of the so-called Communist Party. From the first day to the last the *Morning Star* covered for the betrayals of Kinnock and Willis with rubbish about 'unity'. Meanwhile leading CPer Mick McGahey signed the deal allowing scab coal to pour into Ravenscraig early on in the strike while TGWU convenors Jack Adams and Joe Harris connived to keep the coal stockpiles building up in BL Longbridge and Rover Solihull.

Crisis of leadership

Thatcher has taken aim at the entire trade union movement. But in the hands of the reformist misleaders -- right and 'left' -- the unions were criminally misused to stab the NUM, to discipline the workers in the interests of the strikebreaking capitalist state. Kinnock went into last September's Labour Party conference despised by much of Labour's rank and file. But when he argued that Labour's way was changing the government through the ballot box and not through 'violence' (meaning the miners strike), he met no challenge from the 'lefts', not from Tony Benn, not from Arthur Scargill.

'Voting' was not going to stop the 10,000 cops who roared into the coalfields in the first week of the strike with their truncheons and Zulu shields. Here was the capitalist state in all its raw, naked brutality. The only way to stop that was through the combined and united mobilisation of the working class. And when it came to taking on the state, the lefts' hot air turned to cold feet. What the

Russian communist revolutionist Leon Trotsky wrote in the midst of the General Strike was equally true today:

'We must look facts in the face: the principal efforts of the official Labour Party leaders and of a considerable number of official trade union leaders will be directed not towards paralysing the bourgeois state by means of the strike but towards paralysing the General Strike by means of the bourgeois state.' (6 May 1926)

The Russian Revolution of 1917 showed in real life that the capitalist state can be defeated, its apparatus shattered and replaced by a workers state governed through workers councils (soviets). Mobilised in struggle the Russian workers swept away the bosses and created a planned economy based on the collectivisation of the means of production. Even after Stalinist degeneration the Soviet Union, with decent social services and no unemployment, looks pretty damn good from Thatcher's Britain.

There were plenty of Labour 'left' types in Russia in 1917 who argued for going slow, for going through the established capitalist institutions, for beheading the workers' struggles. But there was also a Bolshevik Party led by Lenin and Trotsky, who organised the workers and provided a strategy for victory.

Enough of Judas Kinnock -- For a revolutionary workers party!

In the course of this unprecedented twelve-month battle, tens of thousands of militants have come to hate the official leadership of the labour movement with a vengeance, to mistrust or despise key institutions of bourgeois society -- the police, the press, the government. Where do they go from here?

The NUM leadership is now urging strike activists back into the Labour Party fold. Thus Mick McGahey shamelessly declared 'I have no dispute with the leader of the Labour Party', even as Kinnock openly opposes full amnesty for the sacked strikers. And at the 9 March Chesterfield rally Scargill asserted that the strike ended with 'the 1984 pit closures programme not implemented', implying that there had been no defeat and thus were no sharp lessons to be drawn. Such talk does not serve the cause for which so much has been sacrificed. If the next battle is to end in victory we must recognise defeat as defeat and learn the lessons.

The Spartacist League is a small organisation. But those militants who have been reading *Workers Hammer* during this dispute know that what we do have is a programme for victory. Our paper told the truth, as a revolutionary workers paper must. We nailed the anti-communist witchhunt of Scargill at the 1983 Blackpool TUC for denouncing anti-Soviet warmongers Reagan and Thatcher and the Polish Spencerite 'union' Solidarnosc. We exposed the refusal of Labour 'lefts' like Tony Benn to defy (or even criticise) scabherder Kinnock and Cold War rights like Denis Healey. We stand in intransigent defence of the Soviet Union against Reagan/Thatcher's imperialist war drive.

We said, 'The miners must not stand alone!' And from the start we fought for it where we could. NUR and TGWU members fought to enforce blacking action and to win strike action. For his efforts, Land Rover TGWU militant Patrick Sliney became one of the hundreds victimised for supporting the miners strike. If there had been a few thousand more like him, there would have been victory not victimisation.

When the dockers came out and brought the country to the verge of an explosion, it vindicated the strategy we'd been fighting for. We rushed out 15,000 copies of a special supplement to NUM strike centres and rail, transport and seamen's branches around the country calling for a fighting Triple Alliance to 'Shut down the country!'

We base ourselves on the lessons of past victories, especially the Russian workers' conquest of power. We are part of a revolutionary international, which incorporates the experiences of the most militant struggles of the workers and oppressed around the world. A party is needed which acts as an organising centre for those militants who want to fight, which draws in the women and minorities who are doubly chained by capitalism and thus make doubly fierce fighters. Without it the struggles of the workers, no matter how militant and courageous, are prey to the sabotage of the reformist traitors. As Trotsky reiterated after the 1926 General Strike: 'Without a party ... the proletarian revolution cannot conquer.' ■

Butcher of the Belgrano

Thatcher: Wanted for murder!

For over two years now Margaret Thatcher has been pursued by the ghosts of the hundreds of Argentine sailors who died when their cruiser, the *General Belgrano*, was sunk by the navy during the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war. After numerous leaks about the affair started coming out in early 1984, we concluded that 'If Thatcher dispatched those Argentine boys to the bottom of the sea, she richly deserves hanging' (*Spartacist Britain* no 57, May 1984). Now the published facts are overwhelming. The Iron Lady should swing.

Thatcher's attempted cover-up has been ripped to shreds in the Clive Ponting affair. The government was determined to see this senior civil servant imprisoned for leaking the *Belgrano* papers which exposed her pre-meditated war crime. MI5 and the Special Branch hand-picked a jury from 80 candidates. Anyone suspected of leftist sympathies was weeded out. The judge acted as a second prosecutor, unambiguously calling for a conviction. When the jury nonetheless returned a unanimous 'not guilty' verdict, it was a clear message from the bourgeoisie that they want to preserve parliamentary rule.

An insistent whiff of bonapartism surrounds the Thatcher regime. On a whole series of questions she is seeking to assert her personal supremacy over parliament. In the words of the Ponting trial judge, 'the policies of the state are the policies of the government then in power' -- ie she can do damn well anything she pleases. That's what Hitler thought too! This has generated much disquiet and even hostility amongst broad sections of Thatcher's 'natural' base in the middle and upper classes. They may agree with many of her anti-union, social service-slashing aims in the leafy suburbs of South-east England and the clubs of St James's. But they are deeply worried by the autocratic methods, the overhead costs and the consequences. This crisis of the Thatcher government is the kind of crisis which revolutionaries welcome.

Maggie's dirty fingers are everywhere. Fearing her wrath, the 'Independent' Broadcasting Authority sought to ban a Channel Four programme detailing MI5 snooping against the citizenry. Dissident ex-agents confirm that anyone and everyone who opposes the government, from trade union leaders to CND pacifists, is a target for cop surveillance.

She thought beating the miners could bring another Falklands factor (this time a 'Scargill factor'); instead she has sunk lower than any time since the South Atlantic war. According to the latest opinion polls fully 60 per cent of the public think Thatcher has handled the coal strike badly. Those dissatisfied with her overall performance outnumber those satisfied by 20 percentage points. Even the divided and discredited Labour Party, despite the major split to the SDP four years ago, is neck and neck in the polls.

During and after the Falklands/Malvinas conflict, British officials had bragged to the world that the navy operated under strict civilian-issued 'Rules of Engagement' in the undeclared war -- 'minimum force' and 'a civilised code of conduct' were the keynote according to Commander Christopher Craig, commanding officer of HMS *Alacrity*, writing in the *US Naval War College Review* (May-June 1984). Much ado was made of the announcement of a Total Exclusion Zone around the islands -- a zone within which Argentine naval vessels and aircraft would be subject to attack.

So when the attack submarine HMS *Conqueror*



Margaret Thatcher:
Wanted for murder!
Her bloodlust sent young
sailors aboard the *General
Belgrano* to a watery
grave.

sank the *Belgrano* on 2 May 1982 well outside the 'exclusion zone', questions began to be asked. The fact that the 'civilised' British naval officers made no effort to rescue the survivors huddled together in lifeboats trying to avoid freezing to death also belied the government's propaganda. The initial government explanation presented by then defence secretary John Nott to the House of Commons two days after the sinking was that the *Belgrano* was 'closing in' on the British task force. Thatcher herself argued in 1983 that the *Belgrano* 'was a danger to our ships'. But Labour MP Tam Dalyell knew Thatcher was lying and pursued the matter.

Finally in the summer of 1984 Clive Ponting, a high official in the defence ministry, could no longer stand the government cover-up and passed critical documents to Dalyell. An unclassified 'confidential' memo, advising the defence secretary how to answer embarrassing questions about the changes in the Rules of Engagement in the critical period, reveals that: the rules were changed on 30 April so that Argentine aircraft carrier *Venticinco de Mayo* could be engaged outside the Exclusion Zone (the carrier was never caught); and they were further broadened on 2 May, a change that was 'not restricted to BELGRANO but included all Argentine warships over a large area'. (See 'The Belgrano papers', *New Statesman*, 24 August 1984.) No warning was issued to Argentina until five days after the *Belgrano* was sunk. So much for 'fair play'!

Then chief of defence staff Lord Lewin says the critical 2 May change in the orders was made 'in twenty minutes' at lunchtime at Thatcher's country residence Chequers (*Guardian*, 30 August 1984) -- hardly the time span of an agonising, conscience-wracked decision. Speaking to Parliament on 5 May 1982, defence secretary Nott tried to blame the sub commander for the decision to sink the antiquated Argentine warship. But the *Conqueror's* captain, Christopher Wreford-Brown, told the press that 'the decision was taken by London', the orders were repeated twice and confirmed after he had reported the *Belgrano* was heading away from the Falklands (*Guardian*, 13 February). Since the *Belgrano* is specifically mentioned as one of the reasons for the expanded 'Rules of Engagement', it's perfectly clear that Thatcher personally ordered the sinking. By 3pm London time the deed was done -- barely enough time for Thatcher to lick her lips after a satisfying meal.

Like Nixon caught with his pants down over Watergate, Thatcher began issuing lie after

lie in an attempt to disappear the escalating exposures, but each one only put her deeper in it. Last autumn she claimed not to have known about the *Belgrano's* changed course until November 1982. When it was pointed out that this conflicted with the government's December 1982 White Paper her story changed -- she was 'finally informed' only in March 1984. But, Thatcher added haughtily, so what: even if she had known the *Belgrano* was heading home, reported the *Times* (21 November 1984), 'she would still have ordered the sinking'.

While the government's tissue of lies was falling apart, Thatcher struck back with state



repression. Ponting was put on trial on charges of violating the draconian 1911 Official Secrets Act -- by revealing the truth to Parliament! Meanwhile, Ministry of Defence officials paid unannounced visits to anti-government publications like the *New Statesman*, warning journalists that they might be 'in violation' of the Act. Mysteriously, the six-volume navigation log of the HMS *Conqueror* was discovered 'missing' in November, along with the submarine's signals log.

And then there's the case of 78-year-old Hilda Murrell, found stabbed to death in a West Country woodland in March 1984, supposedly murdered by 'burglars', even though they took none of her valuables. Murrell was the aunt of Commander Rob Green, a Royal Navy intelligence officer who had access to sensitive naval communications during the 1982 war. Tam Dalyell insisted in Parliament:

'I am informed the intruders were not after money... but were checking the house to see if there were any Belgrano-related documents of Commander Green in the home of his aunt. Things went disastrously wrong. They had no intention of injuring, let alone killing, a 78-year-old ex-rose-grower. Yet, being the lady she was and in her home, Hilda Murrell fought and was severely injured. She was then killed or left to die from hypothermia, and the cover-up had to begin because I am informed that the searchers were men of British Intelligence.' (*Newsday*, 31 January)

The very proper Commander Green backs up Dalyell:

'I haven't gone off my rocker, flipped and become a raving leftie who wants to attack the police, but it [Dalyell's] is the most plausible explanation I have yet heard to explain the strange circumstances surrounding my aunt's death.'

And in January another Royal Navy officer, Lt Commander Peter Hurst, who also handled secret intelligence during the 1982 war, found his flat mysteriously ransacked with no valuables stolen; he thinks 'it could just have some connection with the Hilda Murrell affair' (*Daily Mirror*, 16 January).

Sink the Iron Lady!

Thatcher and her big brother Ronald Reagan are wed to a programme of global ruling class war to drive the working class back a century or more. Internationally, the Reagan/Thatcher axis has its sights set on the destruction of

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WORKERS HAMMER

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Lessons of the past: 1921, 1926 miners strikes

The heroic coalfield women

As the past twelve months of bitter struggle have shown, once awakened, women become the best fighters not only for their rights but for the whole of the working class and oppressed. On the occasion of International Women's Day 1985, we are reprinting two selections from historical Communist publications on the women of the British coalfields. The first, entitled 'Support by Women for the Great English Miners' Strike' of 1921, is from the Communist Women's International Monthly (Vol I, no. 5/6 [1921]), published by Clara Zetkin on behalf of the Executive of the Third (Communist) International and the International Communist Women's Secretariat in Moscow. This is followed by short excerpts from Zetkin's preface to a German pamphlet by Katherine Cant, 'The Miners' Wives of England in Struggle', 1926. Both have been translated from the original German.

The thousands of women who turned out to the 9 March International Women's Day rally in Chesterfield expressed their determination to remain politically active class fighters and not be chained again to the kitchen. But while Arthur Scargill paid tribute to their heroism, he urged then to now turn their energies into reformist campaigns around rate-capping and the 'peace movement', in effect becoming a pressure group on scabherder Judas Kinnoch's Labour Party. The courageous activism of miners' wives in previous strikes depicted in the excerpts below must not be dissipated yet again because of the treacherous Labourite misleaders.

Steeled in struggle women from the mining communities have an invaluable role to play in the forging of a truly revolutionary workers party. As communists we understand that the struggle for women's emancipation is inseparable from the struggle for the emancipation of the working class. Only a workers state based on a planned collectivised economy can lay the material basis for women's liberation. To this end we seek to build a communist women's movement linked to a mass revolutionary party. Our journal Women and Revolution is specially dedicated to this task. Forward to the day when the murderous Iron Lady and her class receive justice from the women of steel of the working class! All honour to the heroic coalfield women! For women's liberation through socialist revolution!

1921

Support by women of the great English miners' strike has been an outstanding characteristic of this enormous proletarian class battle. Of this there can be no doubt! It is especially due to the miners' wives that the miners remained at their posts, battling the lords of the mines and even the state power which protects these lords. In England this has been universally recognised. It has been admired by those who, with their hearts and their understanding, took the side of the miners' cause, by those who, in the face of the wave of price increases, have resisted wage cuts by the exploiters, those who have defended their own and their families' bread. The others, to whom capitalist profit is all and the right of existence of the proletariat nothing, have reacted with slanders and muck-raking. They all agreed that, without the deep sympathy and the clear understanding by the women of this gigantic battle, the strikers would not have been able to survive so long.

With heroic sacrifice, the miners' wives have lived in want and starvation and have endured the misery of watching their children live in want and starvation. From the first to the last day of the strike, their belief in the proletarian cause and the rights of the mine slaves was unshaken. They did not complain to their husbands to pressure them to give in; no, on the contrary, they inspired them to stand fast. Had the English rail and transport workers demonstrated as much proletarian class consciousness, as much sense of solidarity as the miners' wives, it would have been impossible for the trade union leaders to put on the brakes and the fight would have had a different outcome.

The mood and the perception of the women



Women take their role as class fighters, class leaders: miners' wives march through London, 11 August.

in the miners' districts was unambiguously expressed in an open letter by them, directed to Lloyd George for publication in his kept press. It reads:

'The miners are not the only creators of the wealth which you control. We proletarian women also share in their sacrifice and misery. At least in part, the exploiters owe their comfortable life and their luxury to our need and our drudgery. You wouldn't want us to think that you believe our fathers, spouses and brothers would prefer pathetic pennies to our love and trust. The crumbs which drop from your banquet table will not satisfy us.'

1926

The coming forward of women is one of the signs, indeed one of the most pronounced characteristics, of revolutionary situations and events. The mighty strike of miners in Great Britain is not lacking in this indicator of its significant historic content. In both classes, each trying its strength, women have come forward in great numbers as active fighters. Even before the strike broke out, as the bourgeoisie began methodically and eagerly to arm itself for the great battle, it was mobilising bourgeois women against the 'restive' miners. Under the leadership of well-known women philanthropists, social reformers and campaigners for women's rights, many thousands of them became active -- as at the last elections -- as anti-proletarian, anti-

lines at the mines and on the roads, stopping the transport of foreign coal, in skirmishes with the police, distributing supplies, setting up and running communal kitchens, particularly for children, collecting and raising material resources etc. In solid ranks of many hundreds, not seldom accompanied by their children, the miners' wives appear before school, relief and welfare boards to demand and to argue for continuing or raising benefits for small and school-age children, youths, pregnant women and maternity cases, lonely old people, the sick. They participate in the men's meetings in dozens, their own women's meetings are overflowing. And what spirit pervades those meetings! Not despondency, not strike-weariness holds sway here, rather enthusiastic determination to struggle.

Is it perhaps bitter suffering alone that explains the wonderful heroism of the miners' wives of Great Britain? Such a conception would not give full due to their level of sacrifice and their enduring courage. A driving force glows in the hearts and minds of these women. A sense of proletarian class and solidarity, a revolutionary impetus towards a life of equality, in freedom and cultured conditions. In them that transformation of which the poet Leopold Jacoby sang, has begun: 'Someone has said to the anvil That it's made of the same material As the hammer, And behold, it doesn't want to be an anvil any more.'

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Together with the men we will throw out the capitalists! — 1920s Russian poster.

Lessons of the past: 1921, 1926 miners strikes

For a revolutionary party to lead the struggles ahead

We reprint below an extract from the writings on Britain by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian October Revolution and leader of the fight against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and Communist International. Written on the eve of the General Strike, this extract from a 5 March 1926 letter seeks to orientate the young and relatively inexperienced British Communist Party to the tasks of revolutionary leadership before it. Trotsky particularly warns against placing reliance on the leadership of the trade union and Labour Party 'lefts', notably TUC leader Purcell, miners secretary A J Cook and Labour's George Lansbury.

In 1926, the CP under the leadership of the Stalinist Comintern did not heed Trotsky's warning. Constrained by Stalin's desire to maintain the Anglo-Russian Committee -- his alliance with the 'left-wing' TUC tops -- prior to, during and even after the General Strike, the CP covered for the betrayals of the 'lefts' who sat on their hands while the right-wing under J H Thomas did all the running -- thus cementing both the betrayal of the General Strike and the defeat of the nine-month miners strike that followed. Up to the bitter end, the CP continued to call for 'All power to the General Council', failing to pose the need for an alternative revolutionary leadership.

Following the catastrophic defeat in Germany in 1933 -- which saw the bankrupt policies of the powerful German CP allow Hitler to come to power -- Trotsky concluded that the Communist International was dead as a revolutionary instrument and issued the call for a new, Fourth International. The British CP of today -- both its bitterly divided wings -- bears absolutely no resemblance to the CP of 1926 let alone a genuinely revolutionary party. Today openly reformist, it alibied the TUC traitors like Murray and Willis and Labour's Judas Kinnock at nearly every turn. In 1926 it built illusions in the 'lefts', today it extends those illusions to the rights.

Today, as in Trotsky's time, it is necessary to bring together those militants in the working class who have been steeled to meet the class battles ahead and regroup them under the banner of revolutionary communism. What is needed is a revolutionary Leninist/Trotskyist vanguard party, section of a reformed Fourth International, that can not only draw the correct lessons of history, but act on them in order to lead the working class to final victory.

In Britain more than in all the rest of Europe the consciousness of the working masses, and particularly that of their leading layers, lags behind the objective economic situation. And it is precisely in this direction that the main difficulties and dangers lie today. All shades of bosses of the British labour movement fear action because the historical impasse of British capitalism places every prob-



Leon Trotsky (right) with V I Lenin and soldiers of the revolutionary Red Army.

lem of the labour movement, however major, at point-blank range. This applies especially to the coal industry. The present miners' wages are maintained by a subsidy from the state, burdening an already crippling budget. To continue the subsidy means to accumulate and deepen the economic crisis. To withdraw the subsidy means to produce a social crisis.

The necessity of a technical and economic reconstruction of the coal industry represents a profoundly revolutionary problem and requires a political 'reconstruction' of the working class. The destruction of the conservatism of the British coal industry, this foundation of British capitalism, can only be through the destruction of the conservative organisations, traditions and customs of the British labour movement. Britain is entering an entire historical phase of major upheavals. An 'economic' solution of the problem can be expected only by the conservative British trade union leaders. But it is just because the British trade union leaders direct their efforts towards an 'economic' (ie peaceful, conciliatory, conservative) solution of the problem, that is they run in defiance of the historical process, that the revolutionary development of the working class in Britain in the period to come will have higher overhead costs than in any other country. Both the rights and the lefts, including of course both Purcell and Cook, fear to the utmost the beginning of the denouement. Even when in words they admit the inevitability of struggle and revolution they are hoping in their hearts for some miracle which will release them from these perspectives. And in any event they themselves will stall, evade, temporise, shift responsibility and effectively assist Thomas over any really major question of the British labour movement (with regard to international questions they are a bit bolder!).

Hence the general situation can be characterised in this way. The economic blind alley of the country which is most sharply expressed in the coal industry thrusts the working class on to the path of seeking a solution, that is on to the path of an even sharper struggle. Its very first stage will as a result reveal the inadequacy of the 'usual' methods of struggle. The whole of the present-day 'superstructure' of the British working class -- in all its shades and groupings without exception -- represents a braking mechanism on the revolution. This portends over a prolonged period the heavy pressure of a spontaneous and semi-spontaneous movement against the framework of the old organisations and the formation of new revolutionary organisations on the basis of this pressure.

One of our principal tasks is to assist the British Communist Party to understand and think out this perspective fully. Inside the trade union apparatus and amongst its left wing the active elements, that is the elements which are capable of understanding the inevitability of major mass battles, and who are

not afraid of them but go to meet them, must be sifted out far more energetically and decisively than has been done up to now. The tactic of the united front must be increasingly and more firmly placed within the context of this perspective.

With regard to the miners' strike, it is not of course a question of an isolated strike, however big it may be, but the commencement of a whole series of social conflicts and crises. In this situation one cannot of course orientate oneself with the conceptions of Purcell and others. They fear the struggle more than anyone. Their thoughts and words can at best have in our eyes the importance of a symptom.

The British trade unions fear (in the form of their bureaucracy and even of its left) our 'intervention' in their internal affairs no less than Chamberlain does.

There are any number of inhibiting elements in the apparatus of the British working class. The whole situation can be summarised in the fact that the alarm, discontent and pressure of the British working masses is all along the line running up against the organisational and ideological barriers of the conservatism of the apparatus. Under these conditions to worry about how best to assist the impatient leaders is really to pour water into the ocean.

Everything goes to suggest that in Britain in the next period (I have in mind two or three years), a struggle will break out against the will of the old organisations yet with the complete unpreparedness of the young ones. Of course even with the firm revolutionary (ie active) footing of the Communist Party and of the best 'left' elements it cannot be assumed that the proletariat will come to power as the result of the first big wave by itself. But the question is this: Will this left wing pass

Trotsky: 'Without a party...'

In 1928 Trotsky drew up a balance sheet of the betrayal of the General Strike and quoted from his earlier pamphlet, *Lessons of October*:

Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer. That is the principal lesson of the past decade. It is true that the English trade unions may become a mighty lever of the proletarian revolution; they may, for instance, even take the place of workers' soviets under certain conditions and for a certain period of time. They can fill such a role, however, not apart from a Communist party, and certainly not against the party, but only on the condition that communist influence becomes the decisive influence in the trade unions. We have paid far too dearly for this conclusion -- with regard to the role and importance of a party in a proletarian revolution -- to renounce it so lightly or even to minimise its significance.

through the first stage of the revolution at the head of the working masses as we passed through 1905; or will it miss a revolutionary situation as the German party did in 1923? This latter danger is in the highest degree a real one. It can only be reduced by helping the left wing (the really left wing and not Lansbury or Purcell) to an effective orientation. And to accomplish this task (that of assisting the revolutionary elements in Britain to a correct orientation) it must be clearly understood that all the traditions, organisational habits and the ideas of all the already existing groupings in the labour movement in different forms and with different slogans predispose them either towards direct treachery or towards compromise, or else towards temporising and passivity in relation to the compromisers, and complaints about the traitors. ■

Women and Revolution

Journal of the Women's Commission of the Socialist League 1983

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Twelve bitter months of class war

A week after the start of the miners strike a resolution of the International Secretariat of the international Spartacist tendency affirmed 'our duty domestically in Britain and internationally to throw our full weight into assisting the British working people' in defence against Thatcher's deadly assault.

This we have done in every country where our tendency is active. Fund-raising efforts were organised: in France some £1500 was collected and in the US more than \$20,000 had been raised as of 6 March. Experienced cadres from other Spartacist sections came to Britain. Most importantly, our comrades internationally agitated within their labour movements for solidarity action, seeking to black coal exports to Britain.

Meetings organised in America, France, Germany, Canada and other countries brought home the vital lessons of this historic class battle. Printed below is an edited version of a speech given by comrade Jon Brule at a meeting in New York on 26 February. Comrade Brule spent ten months here reporting on the strike for our US comrades' paper Workers Vanguard and assisting the Spartacist League/Britain in our revolutionary intervention into this heroic strike.

I had the privilege of spending ten months in Britain during the miners strike. It's a strike in which two miners have been murdered on picket lines, several other miners and members of their families have been killed, something like 10,000 strikers have been arrested, over 600 have been fired from their jobs. And a strike that has gone on now almost one full year, reflecting the grim determination of the miners to fight against great odds against Reagan's best ally, union-buster Margaret Thatcher.

The immediate thing that kicked the strike off was the announcement of the Thatcher government that they were going to close down 20,000 mining jobs, which was only the first drop in the bucket. What it means is not only busting the union, but wiping out whole mining areas in Britain, particularly in Scotland and Wales, in Yorkshire, in areas where the official unemployment rate is something like 18 to 20 per cent, areas where if you walk through these villages you find men who are 20 or 21 years of age and have never worked a day in their lives. And because they leave schools roughly at the age of 15, it means that they've been completely out of work for their entire adult life.

I had the opportunity to look at the pay stubs of an older South Wales miner, who's a skilled craftsman in the mines, and his take-home every week was £65, which is roughly that number of dollars. Britain is a particular example of the advanced decay of capitalist society in which there is no possibility of even maintaining the substandard existence for the working masses in that country under capitalism. What is starkly posed in Britain is the alternative between a barbaric solution under capitalism and socialist revolution.

If you look at England, or Britain, it's essentially an island built on coal. It's the motor force of the economy in that country, and therefore the struggles of the miners have become time and time again the clarion call

for the working masses as a whole. And the fate of the miners has frequently proven to be the fate of the British working masses. The alternatives in this struggle are either a massive defeat and further levelling of everyone's living standards, or else opening the road forward to the possibility of a workers government.

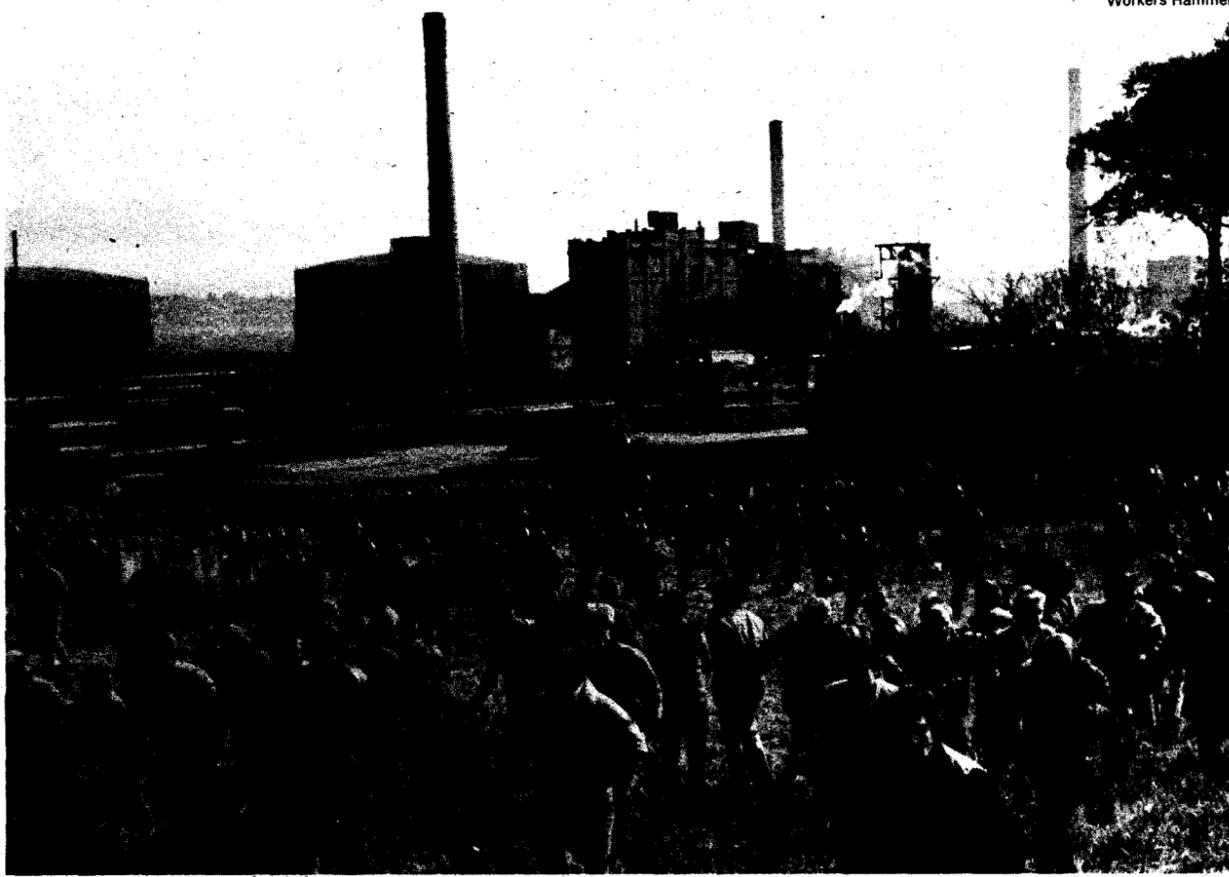
Among the miners there's a deep historic memory of some of these past battles, going back to the period of the 1920s and the miners strike at that time which led briefly to a general strike that was betrayed by the labour bureaucracy. One South Wales miner told me about what it was like after that defeat: about his grandfather who was killed in an in-

'What a picket line means is the right to have a conflict, the right to have a battle. We are for picket lines that nobody crosses!'

dustrial accident in the mines and never received any compensation. About his father, who lost his leg in a mining accident and received £50 compensation. About his uncle who was blacklisted after the 1926 General Strike and was never able to get work until World War II -- for 14 years he was blacklisted from the mines.

And on the other side, the bourgeoisie also has a certain memory. There's a reason why the miners are Number One on Thatcher's hit list. They remember as well that it was the miners who in 1974 toppled the previous Tory government under Edward Heath. So there's a deep gulf and class bitterness on both sides of this strike.

Thatcher also has a particular hatred for the leader of the union, Arthur Scargill. Scargill was the only labour leader within the union movement in Britain to call Thatcher to order for her support for Reagan's anti-Soviet Cold War. When he came back somewhat over a year ago from a trip to Russia, he denounced 'Ronald Ray-Gun' and the 'Plutonium Blonde', Margaret Thatcher. And he denounced the CIA union in Poland, Solidarnosc, as anti-socialist. That not only earned Scargill the hatred of Thatcher, but also of the pro-capitalist trade-union and Labour Party bureaucrats in Britain, who led a redbaiting attack on Scargill at a conference of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in September 1983. Not a single delegate rose to defend Scargill. It was at that point that Thatcher determined



The battle of Orgreave, 30 May. We said: Joint strike action can stop Thatcher's rampage against the NUM!

Workers Hammer

that Scargill was isolated and she could undertake an assault on the miners.

When the pit closures were announced, there was a walkout in the mining area of Yorkshire at a pit called Cortonwood, which was the first target. And from there they set up flying pickets, or roving pickets, that went out to the other mines and shut down the coalfields. The strike was not actually called by the union leadership. They were presented with an accomplished fact. At this point Thatcher and the ruling class set up a huge hue and cry about how there was no ballot taken by the miners. This was picked up also by such people as Neil Kinnock, the head of the Labour Party. But the miners didn't play by the bosses' rules. They voted ... with their feet!

The bourgeoisie and its labour lieutenants

were miffed. They wanted a ballot all right, because they wanted to know where, when and how the strike was going to begin, so they could get their cops, their soldiers and everyone else there beforehand. Well, it didn't work. There were actually areas that voted to remain at work, and when they saw the pickets they came out on strike because they knew the union was determined. That's a fundamental lesson that we had better understand in the trade-union movement in this country -- the power of class solidarity and the power of the picket line to mould this strike. And the capitalists have taken dead aim at the picket line; they have made it clear that if they win they will enforce Taft-Hartley type laws requiring secret ballots before any strike, outlawing secondary picketing and crippling the unions.

One of the more obscene things that Labour Party head Neil Kinnock and the labour bureaucrats have ranted about throughout the strike is the 'violence' of the pickets toward scabs and cops. According to them, picketing is all right ... as long as it's 'peaceful'. But what a picket line means is the right to have a conflict, the right to have a battle. We are for picket lines that nobody crosses! Now sometimes you'll find picket lines, like on the New York docks, where it's usually pretty peaceful. You see one guy there and nobody crosses that picket line. The reason why nobody crosses the picket line is because they know something unhealthy will happen to them if they do. But that kind of peaceful picket line has to be earned in the class struggle. Not by dismantling the class struggle, but by mobilising the power of labour so that the bosses respect your picket lines and the scabs think twice. In this country we put out a very nice supplement, 'Labor's Gotta Play Hardball to Win', where we publicised a slogan that the coal miners in this country have -- which is popular among the British miners now -- that says: 'Scabbing Is Dangerous To Your Health'.

I want to convey the attitude that these miners have toward those who have scabbed on their strike. One story I heard was about a guy who had scabbed in 1926. And he still lived in the same mining village that he lived in at that time. When he died at the age of 85, nobody had spoken to him for 60 years, and nobody went to his funeral. In some of the marginal areas of the coalfields where there was a fair amount of scabbing, you run into the situation of sharp divisions within a

family itself. When I asked this guy what his family was doing, he said, 'Well, I've got one brother who's on strike in the northeast and I've got another brother who's scabbing.' Then he said, 'Let me correct that -- I have an ex-brother who's scabbing.' So it's a real bitter blood line.

We sought to put forward a programme that could lead to victory in this great battle. The problem confronting the miners is that you can't defeat the capitalist state alone. The Thatcher government has marshalled a massive amount of police power. You have 400 cops from Sunday to Sunday occupying a small mining village. If you're on strike they follow you to the store, they follow your kids to school, you can't go to a neighbouring village a mile and a half away. If you try to ride a bus to that village, the police get on the bus and throw you off.

So it was abundantly clear that in order for Thatcher to be defeated, the key task was to mobilise other sections of the working class. From a trade-union standpoint, it would seem to be a relatively simple question. The British economy is fundamentally based on coal. If the steelworkers, railworkers, longshoremen and power workers refused to handle coal, the country would quickly grind to a halt. And in Britain these kinds of actions are not all that strange to the trade-union movement. It is a union movement that is far less straitjacketed than the American trade-union movement has been within the past two or three decades.

The problem is that it is fundamentally a political question which is posed: once the country is shut down, who is going to start it up again? In short which class is going to

'It was abundantly clear that in order for Thatcher to be defeated, the key task was to mobilise other sections of the working class.'

rule this country? Will it be the working class or will it be the capitalist class?

That fundamental question has been posed in any number of miners strikes in Britain. In 1919 for example, there was an alliance between the miners, railworkers and transport workers called the Triple Alliance. The bourgeoisie was sweating it out, so they called in the three top union leaders. The prime minister Lloyd George told them he was at their mercy -- they had the power to shut down the country. But he asked them what they would do next: 'If a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state or withdraw.' They had no answer to that. One of the trade-union leaders remarked that from that time on they knew they were beaten; because they were not prepared to exercise power. It's a little highlight on a statement that Marx made well over 100 years



Frank Chapple (left) and Len Murray: leaders of anti-communist witchhunt of Arthur Scargill at 1983 TUC.



TGWU dock leaders announcing sellout of dock strike.

ago in the *Communist Manifesto*, that every class struggle is a political struggle.

And despite the sabotage of the labour bureaucracy, the question of power was raised sharply by this strike. The courageous example of the miners' hard class struggle displaced the normal mechanisms of bourgeois society. This was palpably evident in terms of 1) key trade unions, 2) general social relationships between the oppressed layers of the country and the miners, and 3) the loss of self-confidence by the bourgeoisie itself. At least in the ranks of several strategic unions -- dockers, railworkers, seamen -- there was determination to bypass the established TUC to defend this strike. Had these unions gone on strike alongside the miners, it would be effectively a general strike. What was missing was a leadership willing to have an all-out confrontation with Thatcher.

When instructions were issued by the leadership of the rail union to its members not to carry coal during the strike, the ranks were steadfast, with the exception of two or three areas. These workers have braved considerable numbers of victimisations and in some instances firings in order to carry out this policy of solidarity. There's one area called Leicester, a heavily scab area where out of some 2000 miners, there are only 30 on strike -- they're nicknamed the 'Dirty 30', I believe. But in the rail depot adjoining that mining area,

called Coalville, for ten months the railworkers have refused to carry coal and have been sent home every day without pay. The leadership refused to back them up with nationwide strike action. And twice the dockers went out, fed up with the government using scab labour to unload imported scab coal into that country. In an island economy like Britain, if you stop what comes in and out of the country, you grind that country to a halt. It was only due to the cowardice of the leadership, which in both instances called off the strike, that the Thatcher government was not toppled.

Secondly, I want to talk about something that's even more startling in certain respects. In normal capitalist society there are numerous divisions promoted by the ruling class. In England there are racial divisions between the white population and the minority of blacks and Asians. And also national hatreds, particularly directed at the Irish in that country. Here you have a union that's predominantly white miners, and not only that, they come from the backwaters. Yet in the course of the strike, there was an amazing social radicalisation of the miners. At the same time, those layers of the population which are generally those whose needs are least addressed by the trade-union bureaucracy have rallied most strongly to the cause of the miners.

For example, at demonstrations in Belfast initiated by the Irish Republican movement, there were actually -- and this was not reported in the press -- large contingents of striking British miners who marched with the Irish Catholics. Throughout these very poor Catholic ghettos, hanging over the streets were large banners that said, 'Victory to the Miners!' It was similar in Dublin where large food and money collections have been taken up for the coal miners. And this is very unusual, that the Irish populace supports any struggle of the British proletariat.

You have to understand the impact of this stuff on the miners. You will hear many miners basically say the following thing: that until this strike I never knew what it was like to be an Irishman in Ulster, I never knew what it was to be like a black or an Asian, mistreated by the police. In London, the miners organised collections on the streets in order to finance food for their families. And there's quite a bit of competition among the different lodges to get down to Brixton first and to get a good street corner. Now Brixton is the West Indian ghetto in London, and it's an area of the city which is far poorer than many other working-class areas of the city. But the miners go down there because proportionately the support they get from the blacks and the Asians is much greater. One miner told me a story, that on one occasion on his picket line the police attacked the strikers and arrested 54 miners. Fifty-two miners were charged with disturbing the peace. Two miners were charged

continued on page 8

Derbyshire strike militant's message:

'The SL put forward a strategy for winning'

Dear comrades,

Please accept my apologies, but owing to a longstanding promise (which I nearly forgot) I am unable to speak at the dayschool. However I am sure my substitute will make my absence insignificant.

Although I think it's wrong in general to make a statement (ie no one has the opportunity to ask questions) today I'll break that chain of thought.

It seems to me that myself in particular and the strike committee in general at Warsop Main colliery owe a deep debt to the SL.

In the first instance, the economic factor, with the raising of money, which enabled many pickets to alleviate the hardships they endured during the dispute.

Secondly, the comradeship shown by all the members of the SL towards many of our pickets. For instance feeding and finding free accommodation for pickets every time we asked.

Thirdly, and most importantly the political factor. Unlike the rest of the fake left in British politics the SL never wavered or capitulated their basic principles. They put forward a strategy for the winning of the dispute, which was unfortunately not taken up.

So on behalf of the Strike Committee at Warsop Main we thank the SL for their tremendous efforts on our behalf not only in Bri-

tain but throughout the rest of the world.

Personally I pay tribute to the SL in the following way. It seems to me that in this century in the Soviet Union in 1917 the Bolsheviks led the Russian masses to the greatest victory of the working class. Therefore it would seem logical that to achieve our

aims we too require a Bolshevik party.

Having bumbled around the left for twenty years, it now seems to me the SL is the nearest thing to develop into that party.

Fraternal greetings comrades,
Dick Hall.

Workers Hammer



Militants massed outside NUM delegate conference, Sheffield, 19 April 1984. From start of strike, Spartacist League fought for a strategy to win through spreading the strike.

Bitter months...

(Continued from page 7)

with malicious wounding of a police officer. The two miners charged with assaulting a police officer were both black miners. The striking miners learned something from that.

Then there is the magnificent role played by the miners' wives who have in many ways become the real backbone of the strike. While at the beginning their activities were centred around the food kitchens, it wasn't very long until they pushed their way onto the picket line and took their place beside their class brothers and husbands in fighting against Thatcher's police. I've heard many a story where you've had demoralised miners who were considering returning to work, and it's the wife who has put some backbone into these guys.

bring this government down in struggle, that makes sense. Because significant sections both of the trade unions and the oppressed populace are thirsting for a fight. The problem here is the leadership within the workers movement. And in Britain the official leadership of the labour movement, like the AFL-CIO in this country, is dead-set against class struggle of any kind, let alone a class struggle that would actually drive out the Thatcher government.

At the same TUC conference where Scargill was rebaited for having told the truth about Solidarnosc, the TUC adopted a policy called 'new realism'. It was like the AFL-CIO which just issued a self-criticism saying they'd been too hard on the bosses! Thatcher took this as an invitation to go out and bust unions. One significant thing that happened was at this spy operation at a place called

money there. Whereas here you can buy off union leaders by giving them big salaries, in England, because it's a very poor country, you make them into lords.

This is a very, very political strike where the trade unions have lined up, not simply on union positions, but on the basis of their attitude to the Soviet Union. Those people in the British trade-union movement who most hate the strike and instruct their members to cross picket lines are those that most rebaited Scargill and hate Russia. You can't defend the unions unless you defend the Soviet Union. Despite the political degeneration in the Soviet Union under Stalinism, we defend the revolutionary gains that were made in October of 1917: the booting out of the landlords and the capitalists, and the establishment of a planned economy. And we seek to extend this to the capitalist countries. Conversely, the social democrats and labour traitors hate with a passion this idea of social revolution and don't want to see it happen at home. So when you raise the question of power, you also raise the question of, politically, where does an organisation within the working-class movement stand in terms of its duty to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism?

On this question there's not only a division within the workers movement in Britain, but internationally. In particular, the bitterly anti-communist trade-union movements in the United States and Germany have done nothing to assist the miners. In Germany when collections were taken up for the miners, they were actually sent to the Steelworkers union in Britain, which is scabbing on the miners strike. The AFL-CIO doesn't even make a pretense. When I came back I called up the AFL-CIO, and just for the record asked what they were doing about this strike. They put me on hold and about two minutes later a woman got back on the line and said: nothing, we haven't given any money. That's fairly well known among active strikers in Britain, so there's a real appreciation there for the solidarity campaign initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee. And let's not forget Lech Walesa & Co. During the PATCO strike, this CIA company union was the only so-called union in the world that refused to defend the air traffic controllers, because they wanted to be buddy-buddy with Reagan. Same thing this time around. Lech Walesa issued statements saying that Thatcher is a wise and brave woman, and welcomed a delegation of scab miners from Britain.

At the same time, one of the nice things about the strike is that there are actually some sections of the proletariat internationally where defence of the Soviet Union and hatred of imperialism is a virtue. In France, where a good section of the proletariat is pro-Soviet, the large CGT union, tied to the Communist Party, has organised an extensive campaign of fundraising and food shipments. French miners had dumped a series of truckloads of coal that were destined for Britain. And this flew right in the face of the usual protectionist practices of not only the conservative AFL-CIO bureaucrats but also the French Stalinists and British 'lefts'. They have a programme that the way to save your own job is by keeping out imports from foreign countries -- that is, blaming foreign workers for the absence of jobs. This was an instance where French workers destroyed their own coal shipments in order to side with their British class brothers. It reflected an understanding that if the British miners could win a major battle against a government that wants to smash their union and eliminate their jobs -- the same problems faced by workers not only in Britain but in France, the United States, and throughout the capitalist world -- then the struggles could much more easily be fought at home.

And there was the £1,000,000 donation collected by Soviet trade unions for the British miners. That drove the anti-Soviet left in Britain nuts: they couldn't handle it, so they refused to mention it. It is well known among the Russian miners and the Ukrainian miners that Scargill stuck his neck out to defend the Soviet Union against Reagan and Thatcher. And they appreciate it. And when the Soviets sent this aid, they said we remember what the British working class did for us after the civil war when the imperialists tried to invade our country. We remember that the British workers went out on strike and the dockers refused to load munitions for our enemies.

Now, one of the great crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy has been to gut that sense of internationalism. A typical example is the conduct of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy under Jaruzelski which has scabbed on the British miners by sending massive shiploads of coal to Britain. But in Russia this time it was somewhat different: the miners strike dem-



Strikers, wives and children march back united at Treeton colliery, S Yorks, 5 March.

You also have a loss of self-confidence in the ruling class itself which continues to this day. The pound has hit rock bottom. Even at the time I went over there in March last year, I think it was \$1.40 to one pound, whereas now it's something like \$1.10, and going down. Every time that there was a threatened mobilisation of the working class, for example during the dock strike, or when the foremen's union in the mines threatened to go out on strike along with the miners, the stock market would shoot down. In the second instance it shot down by a record 30 points in one day. And just recently, Thatcher couldn't even get a vetted jury to hand down a conviction of a senior official in the defence ministry who had leaked documents about Thatcher's premeditated butchery of 300 Argentine sailors aboard the battleship *Belgrano*.

All of this has happened within a year or two after Thatcher was re-elected with overwhelming majorities on the basis of the Falklands/Malvinas bloody little war. A wave of chauvinism swept over the British populace and her reactionary government was the beneficiary of that. The soldiers who came back from the Falklands had a big banner on the aircraft carrier. At the time there was a railroad strike in England, and the banner read, 'Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike.' But much of this anti-trade unionism and chauvinist prejudice that engulfed the working masses of Britain largely evaporated during the miners strike.

There was a particular incident that illuminated this social realignment. In October the IRA set off a bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton where the Tories were holding their conference. The responses were quite interesting. The common joke in the mining areas and among other working-class areas was the IRA ought to be shot ... because they missed Thatcher. A comrade in a car plant in Birmingham reported that somebody there made the observation that the police had better start rounding up their suspects now because there are 50 million of them.

This is a plant where ten years earlier, after a bomb blast attributed by the press to the IRA killed a number of people in a local pub, the Irish workers were physically driven out of the plant. The reaction this time was much, much different. Even among the bourgeoisie, where one could imagine them whipping up an anti-terrorist crusade, the response was more outrage at the lousy security preparations and the police incompetence.

So when we talk about a programme of power and of mobilising the workers movement to

Cheltenham in England. It turned out that the unionised clerks there were known to take union action on occasion. One of the times they walked off the job was during the KAL 007 provocation that Reagan initiated. That strike was fine with us -- but not with the CIA and

'Those people in the British trade-union movement who most hate the strike and instruct their members to cross picket lines are those that most red baited Scargill and hate Russia. You can't defend the unions unless you defend the Soviet Union.'

Thatcher. Under Reagan's orders, Thatcher declared that henceforth there would be no unions at Cheltenham, and the TUC basically sat on its arse and did nothing. This was only, I think, a month before the miners strike began and it was a premonition of what was going to come. The TUC's been in Thatcher's camp, and has been rewarded for services rendered. In the midst of the strike, the former head of the TUC, Len Murray, and the head of the electricians' union, Frank Chapple, a vicious right-winger, were both elevated to peers of the realm. They don't have a lot of



Spartacist supporters in NUR and TGWU who fought for solidarity strike action join miners in demonstration outside Congress House, 3 March.

onstrates in embryo how militant class struggle in the West linked to defence of the Soviet Union can crack the nationalist stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracies on the working masses. What is necessary to carry this perspective through consistently is the building of Trotskyist parties internationally.

That was the political context of the strike: on the one hand a considerable section of the British working people that are eager to fight. On the other hand, a Cold War division within the trade-union leadership -- the right wing is openly scabbing, and the left wing is talking solidarity, but when anything decisive happens, they retreat in disorder. What kind of programme do you put forward in such a situation in order to give the most conscious militants in the workers movement a programme to fight around?

We knew there's no point in approaching the TUC. If you want to shut down the country, to call on these guys to do it is the kiss of death. The left groups who shared the TUC's anti-Sovietism felt perfectly at home appealing to their social-democratic brothers for action. They were miles to the right of the miners themselves. I remember when the new head of the TUC, Willis, was invited to speak at a miners rally in South Wales last autumn. One of the strikers climbed a 50-foot pole and dropped a noose about two inches from this guy's head. It was an unambiguous message. So instead we singled out a number of strategic unions that claimed to back the miners -- the seamen's union, the Transport and General Workers (which includes the dockers and the truck drivers), the rail unions -- to break with the TUC scab policy and go out on strike together with the miners around a programme of demands that could unite the working class in struggle: no layoffs, a 10 per cent wage hike with full cost-of-living protection, an end to Thatcher's policies of privatising -- or selling the nationalised industries back to the private sector. We demanded no victimisations of anybody by the government and the bosses. It was a fighting programme that addressed itself to those sections of the class that were prepared to struggle, it put the left union leaders on the spot, and would effectively mean a general strike.

We raised some other demands that are equally crucial. One is that we wanted to incorporate the most militant pro-miner elements among even those who are not represented formally by the trade unions. We wanted the women's committees in the coalfields to have representatives on the strike committees, and delegates from the unemployed and minorities who have been the most militant supporters of the miners strike. We said bring the women in and kick the scabs out of the union, who still to this day have not been expelled from the NUM.

Now, we are a fairly small organisation in Britain. But when we talked about class solidarity, unlike countless left groups waiting on the TUC or crossing picket lines, we meant business. We had a supporter in a Rover car plant in Birmingham. Now, they had been running a real dirty operation there. Basically, they'd been sneaking in large quantities of scab coal. The union leadership, Communist Party members, were pretending to back the strike and giving money to the miners, but they were collaborating with this scab operation. So we found out about it and our supporter, Patrick, initiated a campaign against this scab coal.



Furling the banner outside Congress House, 3 March. Now is the time to retrench and learn the lessons of this defeat: Workers need a revolutionary party!

Free the jailed miners!

The anti-working class savagery of this government is underlined by the vicious jail sentences handed out to many of the best strike activists. The most outrageous so far is the 5-year prison term doled out to Terry French from Betteshanger colliery in Kent. Chris Tazey, a young miner from the same pit, got three years' youth custody.

Similar things are happening in every coalfield. Four members of the Coventry colliery strike committee were sentenced to serve six weeks of an 8-month suspended sentence on charges of 'affray' -- ie they defended themselves and their homes against a bloody police assault. It was a deliberate attempt to take the local strike leadership out of circulation. And immediately after they were sentenced all four received sacking notices from the Coal Board.

The charges and sackings are the NCB's equivalent of the coal owners' blacklist in the aftermath of the 1926 strike. Nine miners

from Shirebrook colliery, North Derbyshire, got sentences of up to three years for supposedly setting fire to scab buses. Only days after the strike ended, three strikers from Warsop Main colliery were sentenced: Dick and Steve Gregory got 18 months each, and Chris Hatfield, fifteen.

Most seriously, three South Wales miners still face murder charges over the death of scab taxi driver David Wilkie last October. The cops routinely used deadly force in trying to batter the strikers into submission. Two strikers died on picket lines, murdered by scabs, but despite the Tories screaming bloody murder over miners' 'violence' no one has been or will be charged with these killings. Typically, Judas Kinnock refuses even to demand an amnesty for all strikers! We demand the dropping of all charges against the South Wales militants and all victims of the Tories' bloodlust. The entire labour movement must take up the jailed miners' cause as class-war prisoners. Free the imprisoned miners!

At one particular miners' support demonstration that Scargill addressed in Birmingham, Patrick had a sign that said, 'No Scab Coal in British Leyland!' The miners there remarked on this sign -- they were shocked and furious at the scabbing. Then afterwards, one of the trade union leaders, the equivalent of a Teamsters leader here, came up and said, 'You know, I've been reading the Spartacist paper, and we're going to do something about this scab coal.' An article appeared for the first time in the bourgeois press on this scab operation. And miners and lorry drivers actually organised a small picket line outside the plant. It wasn't enough -- it didn't shut out the scab operation. But it polarised the local trade-union movement.

Unfortunately Patrick, like many other militants who have fought to defend the miners, was victimised. He was fired for putting out a statement that when the car workers' pay claim came up they ought to go out on strike alongside the miners. The striking miners them-

'The Labour Party with its millions of members is impotent to defeat Thatcher because the trade-union fakers and Neil Kinnocks who run it don't want to fight capitalism. We seek to forge a different kind of party -- a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party which will serve as the general staff of the working class.'

selves organised a contingent from at least two lodges in the surrounding area to demonstrate at the plant gates in defence of this man who had stood up for them. That showed the potential for establishing unity in struggle among diverse sections of the British masses, if you have principle and determination.

This points to the need for a revolutionary political party of the working class. But what the British working class has got is the Labour Party, which we characterise, in the words of comrade Lenin, as a 'bourgeois workers party'. While organisationally based on the unions, its policies in practice are to

administer the rotten capitalist system. The last Labour Party government closed more mines than Thatcher and the Tories. They called out the troops against striking firemen. They sent the army into Ireland. You name it -- they're stewards of the British ruling class.

On the road to the British socialist revolution the Labour Party must be split, its working-class base split from the pro-capitalist tops and regrouped in a revolutionary Trotskyist party. For almost the entire British left, however, the Labour Party is sacrosanct. The Labour Party can be reformed, they claim, into an instrument to achieve socialism

through nice, polite discussion and debate, while maintaining it as a party that encompasses every element of the class. This Kautskyan conception of the 'party of the whole class' has proven utterly bankrupt during this strike.

'Judas' Kinnock, as the miners call him, is widely reviled throughout the coalfields. Middle-aged strike leaders were resigning their long-time memberships because their local Labour Party branches were run by scabs. Kinnock's own branch passed a motion endorsing his expulsion. At a time when class struggle was threatening to blow the Labour Party apart, the Labour 'lefts' and their apologists were closing ranks behind Kinnock. The group that publishes *Socialist Action*, which is loosely affiliated with the SWP here, wrote an anguished editorial denouncing the very idea of expulsion as treason.

Well, we'd like to see the CIA-loving right-wingers driven out of the Labour Party. Not because we trust the 'lefts', but because we want to make these pseudo-socialists responsible for their treacherous policies before their working-class base. But what these guys want to do is hide behind the coat-tails of Kinnock & Co. This was graphically demonstrated at the Labour Party conference in October, where there was a partial revolt against Kinnock and his bootlicking. They voted down Kinnock's motion to condemn the violence of the pickets as well as the violence of the cops. They voted to authorise local councils to defy Thatcher's spending limits. Yet nothing came of it. No one wanted to take up Kinnock's challenge which he laid out in his address: if you want to change the government, you do it through the ballot box and Parliament and not by picketing and defying the law. Prominent 'lefts' like Tony Benn and Scargill himself did nothing. Even a feeble call for a one-day strike was rejected. Kinnock was unanimously re-elected as head of the Labour Party. Later Benn explicitly justified this by claiming that 'unity' is necessary and you can't criticise even Neil Kinnock at a time like this.

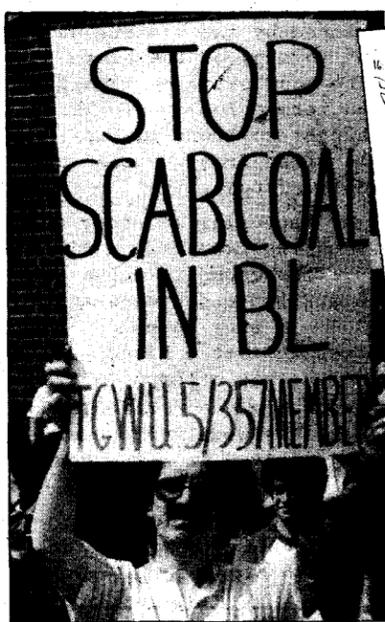
Even those like Scargill, despite their militancy and gut desire to win, are chained to reformism and Labourism, which means ultimately subordinating themselves to the class traitors. By refusing to break openly and sharply with the Labour/TUC misleaders, particularly the 'lefts', the NUM leaders have greatly weakened the strike. Futile back room negotiations with Kinnock and the TUC scabherders have taken the place of the necessary appeals to the key transport and rail unions for joint strike action. To this phoney scab unity with the class traitors we counterpose unity in action on the picket line.

The Labour Party with its millions of members is impotent to defeat Thatcher. It's impotent because the trade-union fakers and Neil Kinnocks who run it don't want to fight capitalism. We seek to forge a different kind of party -- a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party which will serve as the general staff of the working class. Such a party has no room for this fifth column of scabherders, racists, pro-imperialists and their left apologists. We seek to forge a party that would embrace the tens of thousands of militants who have been struggling today with all their power to see the miners victorious -- a party that consciously will lead the working masses to crush capitalism for good through the road of the class struggle. ■

Miners rally to Pat Sliney's defence

Since his 31 January sacking, the blatantly anti-union victimisation of Land Rover TGWU militant Patrick Sliney has been widely publicised. Both the Morning Star and Birmingham Evening Mail of 4 February ran articles, as did the Armthorpe NUM Tannoy subsequently. Not surprisingly the Tory Evening Mail refused to print a letter from Sliney (printed here) correcting numerous slanderous falsifications. At two recent appeal hearings, BL made it clear they sacked him for fighting to spread the miners strike and black coal at Rover and Longbridge. His case awaits an industrial tribunal.

Meanwhile miners have continued to rally to his support. Reprinted below are excerpts from a speech by Nigel Ashfield, secretary of the Lea Hall strike committee, at a 23 February Birmingham Spartacist League public meeting. Sliney has addressed strike committees at Lea Hall, Keresley and Armthorpe as well as a joint lodge committee of Cynon Valley, South Wales. In addition, Whitwell NUM members have expressed their solidarity. Among the letters of support to the TGWU, one from Hatfield Main NUM branch delegate Dave Douglass said, 'Mr Sliney has been loud and highly visible in support of our union'. Coventry Colliery strike committee urged the TGWU to 'take the case of Patrick Sliney who was sacked at Land Rover over trying to link the miners dispute with Land Rover's pay claim very seriously -- we believe that he was right'.



Workers Hammer

DAVID DOUGLASS
N.O.M. BLANCH
HATFIELD MAIN NUM

Dear Pat
We were very shocked to hear of the sack of Sliney one of our members who has been given the full exercise of his principles. Mr Sliney has been loud and highly visible in support of our union.

ARMTHORPE TANNOY
18th Feb 1985
Newsletter - Organise

Local pit news
The Yorkshire 21

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HINDSCHE
RUSLEY
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Sir
We the Coventry Colliery Branch, the Transport General workers, and of Patrick Sliney who was sacked at Land Rover over trying to link the miners dispute with Land Rover's pay claim very seriously -- we believe that he was right and link both cases so you know that if the mine battle with the Government and they will come for you next.

Local district committee to see the reinstatement of Pat Sliney. Please send left notes.
But wish you gratefully
Nigel Ashfield
Coventry Colliery
Strike Committee

Statements of support for Patrick Sliney from Hatfield Main, Coventry, Lea Hall NUM strikers and Armthorpe NUM newsletter.

The following letter has been submitted for publication to the Birmingham Evening Mail.

7th February
The Editor, Evening Mail

Dear Sir,
I would like to reply to some points in your 4th February article about me: 'Worker sacked in leaflet row'.

Land Rover's management say I was sacked 'for distributing unauthorised material in the factory, not a result of the material's content'. The signed personal statement I put out, from one union member to his brothers and sisters (not a 'Sparticus news pamphlet' as you reported), called for strike action in support of the Rover unions one-year pay claim and in support of the miners. As the plant convenor pointed out when my appeal was heard last Monday, tens and hundreds of leaflets, notices and posters of all kinds are continuously on display or handed round in the factory, without reference to management.

The fact is that BL want industrial tyranny: when these junior thought-police dismissed me they were decreeing that legitimate trade union activity and militant class-struggle opinions are 'unauthorised'. As you point out I have 'been an active campaigner against coal brought into the BL factory during the miners strike'. That's why Land Rover sacked me. I stood for defending the trade-union movement by fighting for the miners to win, and for other unions to join their heroic struggle.

It is also wrong to say 'pickets' outside the gate on Monday were 'ignored by the workforce'. Trade unionists including striking miners (from Lea Hall and Littleton Collieries) came to the plant to demonstrate their support for me by handing out a leaflet calling for strike action to demand my reinstatement. They were not pickets, and the overwhelming majority of workers going in stopped to take the leaflet. Many expressed strong support for action in defence of myself and the union.

I object strongly to the innuendo in Carson Black's report that my statement

BIRMINGHAM
Evening Mail

Worker sacked in leaflet row

By CARSON BLACK

A Land-Rover worker has been sacked for giving fellow workers Left-wing literature, urging them to strike.

Mr. Patrick Sliney, was sacked at the end of last week after a series of disciplinary hearings. He was appealing against the decision today.

Pickets, including striking Midland miners, were outside the Lode Lane, Solihull factory early today.

But they were ignored by the workforce. Production was continuing normally.

Mr. Sliney had been an active campaigner against using coal brought into the BL factory during the miners strike.

Mr. Sliney, who works in the Range Rover paint shop, was caught distributing the Sparticus news pamphlet. It urged workers to reject the company's two-year pay deal and take industrial action.

Birmingham Evening Mail, 4 February, repeats BL management lies.

around the pay claim was somehow the work of conspiratorial 'ultra Left-wing' 'breakaway groups' outside the workforce. If he had spoken to me or the hundreds of Rover workers who have known me in the 6-plus years I have worked there, he would have found out that I have always openly expressed my support for the views of the Spartacist League and its paper Workers Hammer. The Spartacist League is not a breakaway from the Communist Party, it is a revolutionary Marxist, ie Trotskyist organisation. (By the way, as anyone who has seen the Kirk Douglas film on the Roman slave uprising knows, it's 'Spartacus' not 'Sparticus': your odd spelling mistake was first used by the American FBI and has since cropped up whenever someone is out to smear the Spartacist League.)

I expect you will give the space for this reply, given the falsehoods and misrepresentations in the article, which fit in neatly with BL management's anti-union campaign.

Despite all the attempts to illegitimise trade union activity, especially on behalf of the miners, I and the many supporters from the union and labour movement who have defended me will continue to fight this blatant victimisation.

Yours faithfully,
Patrick Sliney

Belgrano...

(Continued from page 3)

the Soviet Union, the homeland of the October Revolution. There are no lengths to which these war criminals will not go in their reactionary crusades. While Thatcher has the blood of 368 crewmen of the Belgrano on her hands, the price for a 'nice little war' that got her re-elected, Reagan is responsible for sending 269 passengers of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 to their deaths in an insane war provocation against the Soviet Union.

Thatcher's denials of involvement in the Ponting prosecution led even the wretched Neil Kinnock to protest 'I do not believe her.' But

that is about the most forceful piece of 'opposition' Labour's leaders have put up to the government -- a parliamentary bleat. How could they do more? As loyal lackeys of imperialism the Labour chiefs supported Thatcher, full stop, during the Falklands/Malvinas war itself. The 'lefts' cried 'Withdraw the fleet', arguing for saving Britain's military for something important. And as the New Statesman (22 February) pointed out:

'On Monday night not one MP -- not even Tam Dalyell or Tony Benn -- was prepared to vote against the government motion that approved the sinking [of the Belgrano] as "a necessary and legitimate action in the Falklands campaign".'

In contrast, throughout this reactionary war we said, 'The main enemy is at home -- Let the war be Thatcher's downfall!'

The sight of Thatcher pinning medals on Falklands 'heroes' (traditionally the prerogative of the monarch) was a cameo of 'Queen' Margaret's ambitions. But pride comes before a fall. This particular pretender just can't shake off the stench of the Belgrano war crime, which exposed her as a mass murderer. The heroic miners' battle, so ignominiously betrayed by the Labour/TUC traitors, showed the road towards defeating and toppling this tyrant. The answer lies not in Labourite parliamentary tinkering; Kinnock & Co only want to manage the same corrupt capitalist system from the Treasury benches. Instead a revolutionary vanguard party must be forged to do away with capitalist rule and mete out justice to the blood-soaked Iron Lady and her cohorts.

Adapted from Workers Vanguard no 373,
22 February 1985

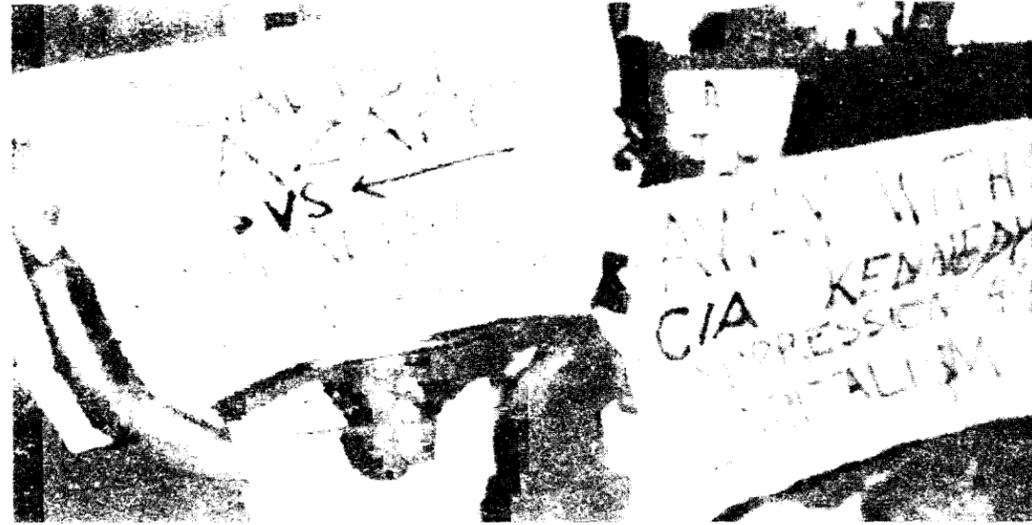
Mandela ...

(Continued from page 12)

gets -- this from a government which has slaughtered over 150 blacks in the last year alone!

Mandela has lost none of the dignity and courage he showed in the dock in the early 1960s. In a defiant statement read by his daughter Zinzi to a crowd of 9000 in Soweto he declared, referring to Botha:

'Let him renounce violence. Let him say that he will dismantle apartheid. Let him unban the people's organisation, the African National Congress. Let him free all who have been imprisoned, banished or exiled for their opposition to apartheid. Let him guarantee free political activity so that the people may decide who will govern



South African militants protest against recent visit by 'liberal' imperialist Ted Kennedy.

them... I cannot sell my birthright nor am I prepared to sell the birthright of the people to be free.' (New York Times, 11 February)

And in an interview with Lord Bethell in January (clearly granted to set the stage for Botha's 'offer'), Mandela reaffirmed the obvious fact that the armed struggle had been forced on South Africa's blacks by the regime and vowed to defy any restrictions should he be released.

At this point Botha is stalling, manoeuvring to place on Mandela the responsibility for his continued imprisonment. This move comes amidst what are, for South Africa's ruling Afrikaaner Nationalists, unprecedented overtures to the ANC: foreign minister Pik Botha said last November that the ANC might one day be legalised (if it 'renounced violence', of course); a journalist for a *verligte* ('enlightened') Afrikaans newspaper met with ANC officials in exile; and P W Botha had to deny rumours that Nationalist members of parliament had done likewise. In a parallel move, business associations representing 80 per cent of South Africa's commerce and industry came out with a memorandum calling for an end to racial restrictions on jobs and business opportunities and for 'free' trade unions, common South African citizenship (instead of relegation to citizenship in the poverty-stricken bantustans) and 'meaningful political participation' for the African majority.

Ten years ago one could talk about the ANC only in deep secrecy and all this 'reform' talk would have been heard only from the most far-sighted English-speaking capitalists such as Harry Oppenheimer of the giant Anglo-American conglomerate. So why the change? In part because the once-booming apartheid economy is now stagnant, dogged by rising unemployment, low productivity and a chronic shortage of skilled workers, which requires the formation of a stable layer of skilled black workers. But much more decisive, apartheid capitalism has been rocked by many-sided struggles over the last decade; the awakening of South Africa's black proletariat with the 1973 Durban strike wave, followed by many others; the 1976 township revolts centred on the youth of Soweto; and ANC guerrilla attacks.

Last August Botha's 'reform' constitution (heavily supported by big business) was utterly discredited when the 'coloured' (mixed race) and Indian minorities heavily boycotted elections to separate coloured and Indian puppet parliaments. Then followed bloody township upheavals sparked by rent rises and a short strike by the strategically placed black gold miners. The culmination, so far, came in early November when hundreds of thousands of workers paralysed the industrial heartland of Transvaal province with a two-day general strike. Called by black union leaders and the United Democratic Front (UDF) -- a sprawling popular-frontist coalition supported by the ANC and

the Stalinist Communist Party (SACP) -- the strike shattered any illusions that black industrial workers could be bought off from the struggle against racial oppression by Botha's 'legalisation' of highly state-controlled trade unionism. A South African company director remarked: 'More than any other single event, that convinced almost everyone that we were in a crisis, that we had to act' (Los Angeles Times, 14 January).

Apartheid is indeed in crisis, and at the heart of that crisis is the prospect of a massive uprising by the black proletariat. The spectre of revolution frightens the racist rulers not only in Pretoria but also their big brothers in Washington, London and the other imperialist capitals. Social revolution in South Africa would shake the world.

So important sections of the South African ruling class and its foreign protectors are

finally starting to see the liberal-nationalist ANC, with its great moral authority among the masses gained from decades of anti-apartheid struggle, as perhaps the last hope of reconstituting South African society on a less rigidly racist capitalist basis. Thus, even an arch reactionary like Iron Lady Thatcher has called for Mandela's release. And Teddy Kennedy in his recent grandstanding tour of South Africa asked to meet with Nelson Mandela in Pollsmoor Prison (the regime denied this request). Instead he visited Winnie Mandela, wife of the ANC leader and herself banned. The ANC leadership welcomed Kennedy's efforts. It was left to the radical petty-bourgeois nationalists of the Black Consciousness group AZAPO to protest Kennedy as 'the epitome of US imperialism' making a cynical play to refurbish his 'liberal' credentials back home.

The ANC has always insisted, and Mandela repeated this in his recent statements, that the ANC would negotiate with the apartheid regime if it would legalise the organisation and free its leaders. The chief organiser of the ANC's military actions and prominent SACP leader Joe Slovo recently stated: 'For the first time it is recognised by most of the more realistic members of the South African ruling establishment and many of its friends outside that there can be no real solution without the ANC' (Washington Post, 1 February).

And what is the 'solution' these 'more realistic members of the South African ruling establishment' would like to negotiate with the ANC? No section of the white ruling class, even the most 'liberal', contemplates the elementary democratic right of one man, one vote, which means black majority rule. Instead they put forward 'consociational' and 'federal' schemes which are only a warmed-over version of the apartheid system -- that is, white political and economic domination over the mass of superexploited black toilers. Given the strength of white racist reaction and the explosive militancy of the black masses, a 'power-sharing' deal between the Afrikaaner Nationalist regime and the ANC would be near impossible to arrange in the foreseeable future. However, this represents a strategy of betrayal of the struggle against apartheid.

In Britain, the Communist Party-supported Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) exemplifies the worst aspects of this approach, appealing to the 'democratic' imperialists like Thatcher and Reagan to 'oppose' apartheid and pushing impotent disinvestment schemes. Last month the AAM expelled its City of London branch, heavily influenced by the third-worldist Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), simply for its flamboyant activism, like the weekly pickets of South Africa House. But despite its more radical rhetoric the RCG shares the same strategy, pleading with racist mass murderer Thatcher to 'shut down the Embassy'. And so committed are the RCG to pressuring imperialism that, despite all their blather about

'solidarity' with the liberation movement, the February *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* does not see fit to even mention the AZAPO protests against Kennedy.

Nelson Mandela has spoken movingly of the support he finds in popular hatred of racism around the world. But instead of appealing to liberal 'world opinion' (ie, Western imperialism) with disinvestment schemes, we Trotskyists call for international labour action in solidarity with South Africa's embattled workers. A motive force for the Washington/London/Pretoria axis is the imperialists' war drive to reconquer Soviet Russia for capitalist exploitation. Thus unconditional defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism is inextricably linked to social revolution in South Africa.

It will take a Trotskyist party, armed with the programme of permanent revolution based on the Russian October, to lead the workers revolution which can avenge all of South Africa's martyred anti-apartheid fighters and unlock the socialist development of all black Africa. Free Nelson Mandela and all imprisoned anti-apartheid fighters! Smash apartheid and open the road to a black-centred workers and peasants government!

Adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 373, 22 February 1985

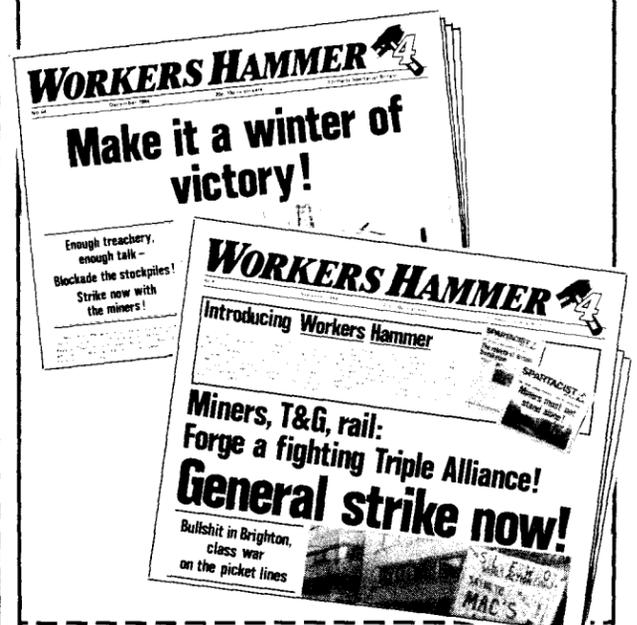
RUC killers...

(Continued from page 12)

working class at home and enforces the clerical obscurantism of the Catholic hierarchy. Capitalism, whether under Orange or Green, can show no way forward for the workers and oppressed of Ireland.

Genuine liberation for the Catholic masses from national oppression and social deprivation, North and South, can come only through the united mobilisation of Catholic and Protestant workers, in common with their class brothers across the Irish Sea, not through nationalist schemes for forced reunification, which would only reverse the terms of oppression and drive Protestant workers deeper into the arms of the Paisleyite reactionaries. The miners' courageous struggle, which fostered unparalleled bonds of solidarity between workers of both islands, points the way forward. For a revolutionary vanguard party! Down with RUC death-squad terror -- Troops out now! For an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles! ■

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Free South African black leader!

Nelson Mandela: fighter

The brutally racist apartheid state of South Africa is today in deep crisis. Against a widening revolt by South Africa's black masses, particularly the six million-strong black proletariat, the regime is responding in the only way it knows: with mass terror and political repression. Last month dozens of blacks fighting against forcible 'removals' at the Crossroads squatter camp were shot down in cold blood; several days later eight more anti-apartheid leaders were arrested on charges of treason. But the vicious repression has not quelled and cannot quell the black revolt. So the regime is looking for other 'solutions'; hence Botha's recent 'offer' to release Nelson Mandela.

For 22 years, Nelson Mandela has been a prisoner in a country that is a prison for its black majority. The 66-year-old Mandela is head of the long-banned African National Congress (ANC) and the most respected black leader in apartheid South Africa. His jailer, President P W Botha, heads a powerful white supremacist police state. But that state has been shaken by mass revolt, and now it is the jailer who is looking for a way out. At the end of January Botha announced that he would consider releasing Mandela if the ANC leader would renounce 'violence', namely the campaign of sabotage and guerrilla attacks against military tar-

continued on page 11



Nelson Mandela.

RUC death-squad killers get theirs

Strabane, 23 February: an undercover SAS unit fires 100 rounds of bullets without warning into the bodies of three Irish Republican Army volunteers who had already surrendered. A witness says he heard two people shout, 'Mercy, do not shoot me, please do not shoot me', but the firing continued. To finish their job, the soldiers then fired single, point-blank shots into the head of each man. It was another El Salvador-style death-squad execution by the British Army in Northern Ireland.

But six days later the IRA struck back, with a highly effective mortar attack on the Royal Ulster Constabulary's fortress-like police station in the Catholic town of Newry. An IRA statement said, 'This was a major and well planned operation, indicating our ability to strike where and when we decide.' *Guardian* (2 March) reporter Paul Johnson described the aftermath:

'There were not many visibly wet eyes among the citizens of Newry who came to stare yesterday -- from a distance -- at the devastation of their police station in the town centre.

'Children jeered as they ran past the taped-off roads on their way to school, and at least two motorists sounded their horns as if in jubilation.

'It had been worse the night before. A few hours after the IRA mortar attack which killed nine policemen and policewomen the public houses ejected their customers. One man passed the scene and shouted "RUC bastards". Another yelled "Up the Provos".

Nor were many tears shed among British workers, themselves increasingly victims of militarised police terror. One miner on an Armthorpe picket line was heard to yell to the cops: 'Why don't you go to Northern Ireland and get yourselves blown up?'

The RUC are sure as hell no Dixon of Dock Greens. This brutally sectarian, overwhelmingly Protestant police force is increasingly employed instead of the army for day-to-day terror aimed at keeping the Six Counties Catholic minority down and in its place. The 16 February *Guardian* gives a detailed report on one of its death squads, known as the Headquarters Mobile Support Unit, whose members 'are taught to shoot at the trunk and have information about suspected terrorists that the police do not possess'.

Since the Newry attack, the RUC has engaged in its usual indiscriminate round-up of 'suspects', pulling in Catholic people at random. Two young men have now been charged for the

attack. Stop the dragnet -- free those arrested! Jail the RUC/SAS murderers!

Thatcher's brazen use of death-squad terror in Northern Ireland, with scarcely a figleaf for cover, is in fact nothing new. It was Labour's Northern Ireland secretary Roy Mason who introduced the SAS killer squads in the first place, and even today the despicable Kneel Kinnock can comment on a trip to Derry, 'If there is reason to believe that people are going to commit acts of outrage, every force must be used to stop them.'

Labour too was responsible for the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act, employed by Thatcher with particular bloodlust to seek revenge for the widely applauded Brighton bombing. A nationwide series of raids on New Year's Eve resulted in the arrests of Peter Lynch from Birmingham and another man from Bristol; the same day the Special Branch broke into the house of 65 year-old Birmingham psychiatrist Dr Maire O'Shea and rifled through files containing confidential details of her patients. O'Shea herself was arrested under the PTA on 5 January and eventually charged along with Lynch with 'conspiring to cause an explosion in the United Kingdom', although the supposed explosion was not mentioned. A more likely explanation for the arrests is that both were members of the Irish in Britain Representation Group, while Lynch was reportedly involved in a campaign lobbying for the re-

lease of six men framed for the Birmingham pub bombings of 1974.

O'Shea and Lynch now face the prospect of rotting in jail indefinitely -- it is normal to wait over a year before even getting a trial on conspiracy charges. And what happens then is shown by the case of Annie Maguire, released last month after more than nine years of 'living hell', as she put it, in prison for alleged possession of explosives -- though no explosives were ever found and the forensic test which led to conviction was later discredited by the scientist who developed it. Down with the PTA! Free Lynch, O'Shea and all victims of imperialist frame-up 'justice'!

For all the heroism of many of its militants, the IRA and Sinn Fein have no strategy for true liberation in Ireland. Their futile strategy of individual terror stems from a deep hostility to the mobilisation of the working class against capitalism. The Republican nationalists carry out not only defensible actions like Newry and Brighton but grossly indefensible acts of indiscriminate sectarian terror like the bombing of Protestant civilians at the La Mon restaurant in 1978 or the Irish National Liberation Army pub attack at Ballykelly three years ago. Now the INLA threatens a grotesque bombing campaign against English sportsmen who come to the Six Counties. Recent, occasional 'socialist' rhetoric notwithstanding, these nationalists are the aspiring rulers of a 32-county bourgeois republic. Thus, while workers in Belfast and Dublin donated many thousands of pounds for the British miners, none came from Sinn Fein.

The Garret FitzGerald government's sequestration of IRA funds from a bank account in Co Meath, carefully timed for the eve of Thatcher's visit to the US last month, showed yet again the weak Irish bourgeoisie's bootlicking fealty to London and Washington. While extraditing IRA fighters to the North to face British 'justice', the lackey Dublin government regularly attacks its own impoverished

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RUC death-squad killers shoot down Sean Downes, August 1984.