

Socialist Worker

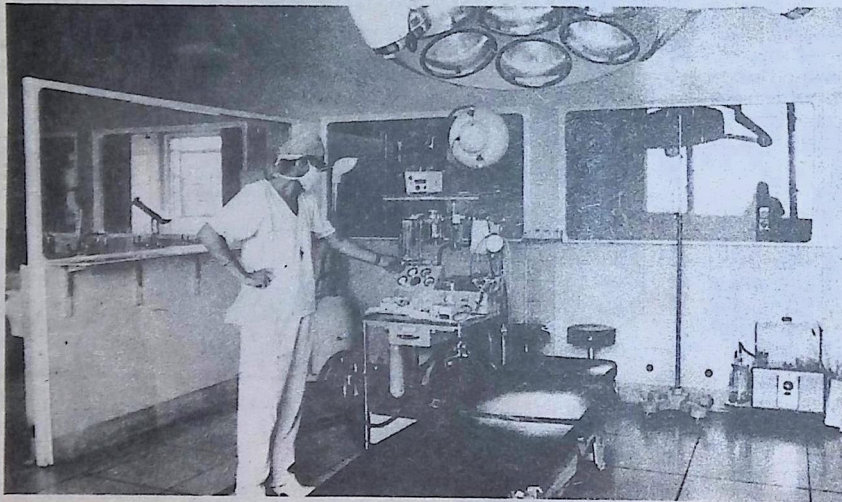
For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

As Fianna Fail's cuts bite deeper ...

HEALTH CARE IN CHAOS



O'Hanlon: more cuts



Wards and theatres closed

THE HEALTH service is teetering on the brink of collapse.

Wave after wave of cuts have left provision of the most basic health care for working class people entirely threadbare.

The latest crisis has broken in the Southern Health Board. At the end of April the SHB threatened not to pay it 6500 staff.

At the same time the board said that 200 temporary full-time staff would be laid off "as soon as possible".

Food for the region's hospitals is now only being supplied on a week

by week basis.

Children born with the crippling disease spina bifida must wait a year before being seen by a specialist—unless their parents are prepared to pay for private treatment.

Having halved the number of radiologists, the board has written to GPs telling them not to send in patients for X-Rays unless absolutely vital.

Over the last couple of years 1,200 staff have been shed from the region and a fresh round of redundancies has been initiated.

Incredibly Fianna Fail Health Minister Dr O'Hanlon has accused

the board of *not cutting enough*.

He said that other health boards have managed to "live within their means"—which means that the impact of cuts elsewhere in the state is, if possible, worse.

PLEDGE

And Haughey—who rode to power two years ago on a pledge to reverse the Coalition's cuts—made it plain last month that he was unapologetic.

In a television interview he said all his election promises are null and void "in the national interest".

This is the "national interest" which

demand that millionaire fraud beef baron Larry Goodman received £50 million from the IDA.

And in health matters the rich are served better by the "national interest".

Foreign minister Brian Lenihan drops into the prestigious Blackrock clinic for his health checks.

Haughey patronised the Mater private clinic for his spot of bother last year when just across the courtyard wards in the Mater public hospital were locked up for want of money to staff them and patients were finally treated after waits of a year or more.

In Galway in 1986 a consortium of rich consultants and the AIB purchased the public hospital and turned it into a yuppie medical centre bristling with high tech hardware. Food is prepared by a prize-winning chef and vintage wines are served

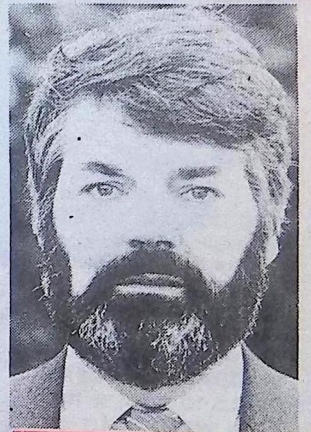
The "national interest" is no more than the interests of the rich and powerful—the class of people Haughey's government is dedicated to serving.

Yet while this fraud is perpetrated on working class people, the union leaders—instead of leading a fight against health cuts, unemployment and poverty—are co-operating with the government through the "Plan for National Recovery".

The union leadership instead of opposing the whole campaign of cuts settled for being consulted on the cuts. And in return they have done all in their power to deliver their members as lambs to the slaughter on the altar of the "national interest".

The official leaders of the working class have failed, and will go on failing. The only way forward is the creation of a movement of the working class dedicated to fighting the Haugheys and the Goodmans and all the capitalists and their rotten system to the finish.

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Loyalists befriend fascists

LAST MONTH'S revelations of South Africa supplies of arms for Ulster Resistance are only the latest example of the links that exist between Ulster loyalism and both South African apartheid and the extreme right in Europe.

For some ex-UDR men have served with the South African armed forces and an ex-UDR man was killed in the early eighties planting a bomb on a railway line in Mozambique.

In 1983 senior members of the UDA visited South Africa and claimed they were consulting those "actively involved in the fight against terrorism".

Both the UVF and UDA and Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party have been involved with the far right in Europe.

In 1974 members of the nazi National Front in Britain were convicted of



Paisley addresses Ulster Resistance

gun running to loyalists.

Several NF leaders also hold membership of the UDA and Orange Order. They have organised paramilitary training in England with the NF for loyalists.

The brother of the late

George Seawright—himself an open admirer of the NF—David Seawright is currently a National Front organiser in Scotland.

He and a number of NF/UVF supporters in Scotland were also involved in a plot to steal

★ **ULSTER** Unionist MP John Taylor claims that the Tories are preparing to "hive Northern Ireland off" into a united Ireland.

What is Mr Taylor's evidence for this claim? Simply that the government say that there are no plans to privatise water supplies in Northern Ireland unlike the so-called "British mainland".

It seems that if Britain's unfortunate

citizens are going to have to suffer Thatcher's privatisation, then the Unionists want it for the six county population too.

No doubt Unionist MPs will be making sure that hospitals and schools in the get the same level of cuts as are taking place elsewhere—after all we don't want to be left out.

Quite apart from the fact that the Tories are not to be believed in

this or any other matter, it's funny that the Unionist MPs have always opposed the extension of Britain's 1967 Abortion Act to the six counties.

Nor did they want the lifting of anti-gay legislation from the North in line with Britain. This is known as having your cake and eating it—something the Unionists have become very good at over the past sixty years.

The "respectable" leaders of the DUP disclaim any involvement in such activities but their hands are not clean either.

TAKEOVER

Both Paisley and Robinson were closely involved in setting up Ulster Resistance—the recipients of the South African arms.

Paisley and Robinson were photographed marching with NF leaders during the loyalist takeover of Hillsborough in 1986. Robinson refused to disassociate himself from the National Front.

Working class Protestants, who form the main support for loyalist politicians, can have no future with leaders who associate with hardened fascists.

Goodman stinks



WHEN Goodman International were accused of fraud, company spokesmen and right wing TDs went into a frenzy.

Goodman himself accused born-again-Bolshevik Barry Desmond of being "anti-bloody well everything".

Desmond, in true crawling tradition, pleaded that he didn't want to damage the company. He just didn't like to see Irish capitalists playing dirty.

But capitalists always have and always will play dirty. And as his record shows, Larry Goodman is no stranger to the game.

When Larry Goodman took over Bailiboro Co-Op he sacked half the workforce, as he had done in several companies.

His attitude to the environment hardly qualifies Goodman for

He then tried to take over Irish Sugar, giving rise to the Liam Lawlor affair.

We were all supposed to be scandalised to hear about a TD using his influence to swing a deal for Goodman. Yet the Lawlor affair is par for the course.

In 1987 Charlie Haughey saw to it that the IDA gave Goodman a £50 million grant. Meanwhile Fianna Fail were closing hospitals to "save" money!

The IDA handout was justified because Goodman "creates jobs".

Yet his companies only employ 2,500 workers between here and Britain. Hundreds of these work part-time.

The trade union leaders have also given Goodman a helping hand.

In 1983 Goodman complained that investors were suffering because unions were "seeking wage rises at way above the 2 per cent and 4 per cent pertaining in the UK".

No doubt the beef baron was well pleased when the unions agreed to a National Plan which has tied wage rises to a 3 per cent limit.

★ **CRAZY** Prices Supermarket workers in Lisburn have been told they can't wear their union badges at work.

The supermarket manager says that this is not an anti-union move, that no badges or emblems of any description are allowed.

The workers pointed out that some of them wore popples without any hassle and others have worn badges for charities. Seems the management just doesn't like to be reminded that their union badge is one emblem that all workers can wear with pride.

membership of the Green Party.

A few years go the Venezuelan government returned a cargo of his meat to Europe because it exceeded their radiation limit.

More recently a man shot 103 rats near the "beef baron's" Nenagh plant.

ROTTING

Waterford Proteins was closed because of the smell of rotting offal. Goodman certainly gives a new meaning to the term "stinking rich"!

And he is stinking rich. Last year Goodman spent £10 million on a jet plane because his helicopter was only useful for local trips.

Today his income is £20 million a year and he is worth £250 million on paper.

Goodman recently spent £100 million on stakes in British food companies Unigate and S. & W. Beresford.

TRAVELLERS LEFT OUT



Travellers being harrassed in Tallaght

BIGOTRY against travellers has once more reared its ugly head. In the last few months there have been numerous letters in leading newspapers from snobs complaining about travellers "lowering property values" in middle class areas.

Aiden Roche of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors spoke of "a new type of traveller with a fleet of Hiace vans" preying on the elderly.

In Dublin, travellers were forced to sign on at a separate dole office to other workers.

The government's In-

citement to Hatred Bill fails to mention hatred against travellers.

Meanwhile stereotypes of travellers persist among wide numbers of people.

We are told that travellers are "dirty". Yet many travellers exist in filthy surroundings because they are not given proper refuse collection and sanitation services.

We are told that travellers steal as if stealing didn't exist in the "settled" community.

BOTTOM

We are told that travellers have plenty of money and big cars. Yet they live in obvious poverty.

Anyone who bothers to look at the statistics will see that travellers are on the bottom rung of Irish society.

Infant mortality is highest among travellers and life expectancy is very low. In fact 78% of travellers are under 25 years of age.

Amid all the bigotry there has been one bright spark. At the INTO conference, teachers agreed unanimously to a motion demanding proper halting sites for travellers.

Other trade unions should follow suit. For Irish workers, anti-traveller bigotry is a diversion. The real enemies are Fianna Fail and their rich backers who are attacking our livelihoods every day.

Boss Heffo heads Court

IT WAS always a mistake to trust the Labour Court, but the recent appointment of Kevin Heffernan as Chairperson should dispel any lingering illusions.

Who's Kevin Heffernan?

Heffo, as his pals call him, has been the Federated Union of Employers' mouthpiece in the Labour Court for the last three years.

That might explain why they nominated him for the job. As a Fellow of the Institute of Personnel Management, he's also been double-jobbing with the ESB as personnel manager.

This, incidentally, is the same Heffo who managed the Dublin football team until a few years ago.

His appointment to the Labour Court was cynical enough to move even Ruairi Quinn to comment that "it was tantamount to making Heffo referee between Dublin and Kerry and expecting him to be impartial at all times".

Labour deaf to women

THE BRITISH Labour Party came to the North last month to listen to what women want, or so they said.

Marjorie Mowlan and Jo Richardson, Labour MPs, organised a conference in Queen's University for over 150 women to tell the Labour Party how they could relate to the needs of women in the North.

The conference was dominated by middle class "professional" women organisers so the content of the workshops represented their views. Working class women

either were not invited, or don't easily get days off from work and families to come up to Queen's.

The issues and problems presented to the Labour Party were varied, covering the wide range of economic and social deprivation and inequality women face in the areas of work, health, education, the law, social security benefits.

But there was no particular focus on the needs of working class women nor any discussion about how women could change things, except by voting Labour—but then we can't do that here, so unfortunately that's not a serious option.

Political issues were studiously avoided, so you could have had practically the same kind of conference in any disadvantaged part of Britain.

The present of British troops, the repression suffered by large sections of the nationalist community, the large numbers of people in jail, which presents hardship

not just for the prisoners but as well for their families outside, were ignored.

The fact of sectarian discrimination which is increasing the divide between Catholic and Protestant workers was totally ignored—that might upset one section of women, so it wasn't discussed.

Serious issues like the lack of abortion rights was referred to as controversial and had to be put to a vote before being put on the list of relevant issues.

Of course there was no discussion of how the Labour Party—which totally supports British capitalism—is responsible for the conditions suffered by working class women, and men, in the North.

Nor was there any challenge to the Labour Party by asking how their policies would be any different if they came to power again.

There was even reluctance to put the demand that the Labour Party should support striking hospital workers now.

Market madness

"BECAUSE we want to extract a few rotten teeth, does it mean this party is against enterprise, against money, against going out and doing your own thing?"

"No. We stand for enterprise, energy, experimentation..."

"Work will be well rewarded and the lazy penalised—and that means dole spongers as well as tax dodgers, short day shirkers..."

Alan Dukes? Dessie O'Malley? Charlie Haughey? Perhaps Margaret Thatcher? No. These words were spoken by Workers Party president Proinsias De Rossa in his keynote speech to the party's ard fheis last month.

And the quotes are not unfairly torn from their context.

De Rossa's presidential address concentrated on two themes. On the North he identified the Provos as the main enemy for fighting British imperialism. In words that could have come straight from Ian Paisley he described the IRA campaign as a "genocidal war against the Protestant people".

In the familiar old tirade he had nothing to say about the discrimination and repression that is the official policy of the sectarian state.

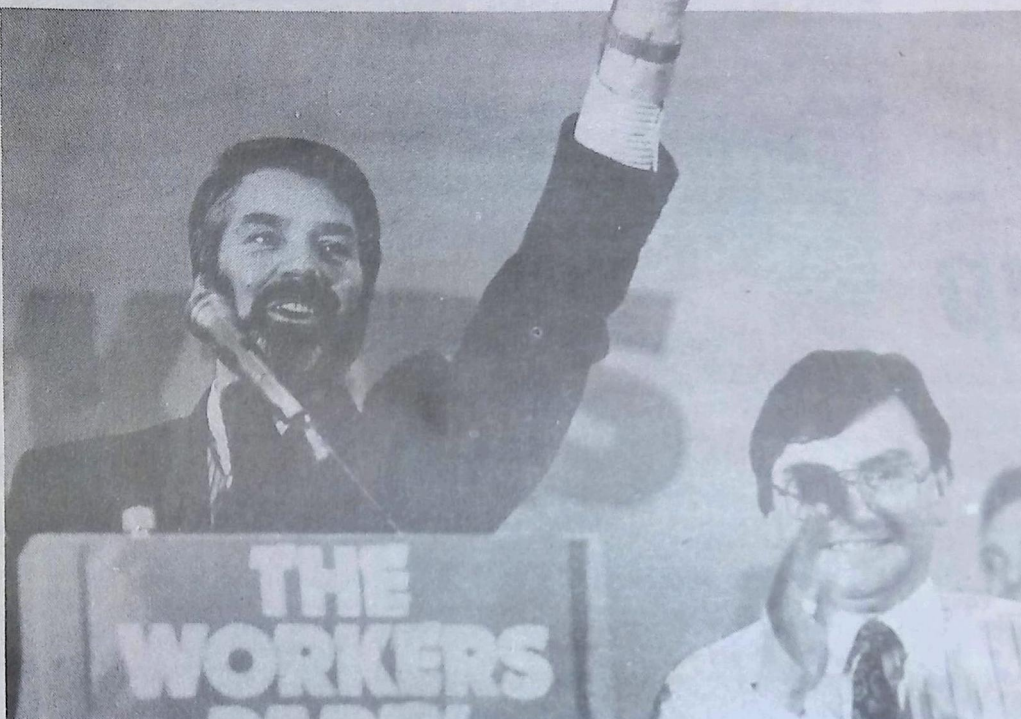
But less familiar from a party that in the past was fond of quoting Lenin and describing itself as "revolutionary" was the complete embracing of "market socialism".

His argument was simple: Nationalisation is unpopular. Many people believe that market forces must be left to decide what is produced. For the market mechanism to operate, capitalists must be allowed to benefit from the profit motive. We want to be popular and win votes. We will therefore abandon nationalisation and champion money making and the enterprise culture.

This is his strategy for making the Workers Party the "leading party of social democracy in the nineties". It is craven opportunism.

The claim of socialists—whatever means they proposed to remedy the situation—was that capitalism created low pay, unemployment, poor housing and oppression and misery for the mass of people.

WE THINK



De Rossa proclaiming his love of the enterprise culture

The reason for this is that production is organised for profit and not for need. Market forces are simply the shifts and turns in production brought about by capitalists pursuing the maximum profit.

It follows from this that things cannot improve substantially unless industry is brought under the control of the mass of people. This requires taking it from the capitalists.

And that means that "market socialism" is a contradiction in terms. By abandoning nationalisation the Workers Party has abandoned any remaining vestige of a claim to being socialists.

For a party which has so closely identified its vision of socialism with the Soviet Union the influence of Gorbachev's "reforms" is part of the explanation.

But this change within the Workers Party is a reflection of a more general shift to the right among the left in Ireland and beyond.

In March the Labour Party—in an attempt to gain respectability

and prepare the ground for a future coalition—voted to expel *Militant*. It also removed other left-wingers like Emmet Stagg from leading positions.

The Irish trade union movement is openly collaborating with the vicious Haughey government through the Plan for National Recovery.

WELCOMED

In a move warmly welcomed by Fianna Fail industry minister Ahern, the executives of the Federated Workers Union of Ireland and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union have stitched up a deal to amalgamate.

The merged union—SIPU—will have the accent firmly on selling its members cut price services rather than organising in defence of jobs and conditions. Its structure will reduce still further rank and file influence leaving the bureaucrats more powerful than ever.

In the opinion polls Fianna

Fail are riding high, despite the massive attacks on health, social security and employment which the government has implemented.

So confident is Haughey that he could brush off a Dail defeat on his refusal to allocate money to AIDS victims by threatening the opposition parties with an election.

Official figures published last month showed the lowest level of strikes in the South since 1962.

There has been over the past few years a broad shift to the right in Irish society. It has its roots in the collapse of the seventies boom.

The self-confidence of workers in taking on their boss was hit by the large rise in unemployment and the feeling that Irish capitalism couldn't afford to improve the lot of the mass of people.

The trade union bosses had sought through a succession of "National Wage Agreements" and "National Understandings" to avoid leading a fight for jobs, pay and conditions.

At the same time as workers had less confidence in their own ability

to fight, their leaders demonstrated their inability to give a lead. Instead they sought a cosy accommodation with the bosses and government.

The result is that over the past ten years workers in the South have seen their real incomes decline by about a quarter and unemployment and poverty mushroom.

The Labour Party—instead of conducting a vigorous opposition to a succession of conservative governments, spent much of the past decade in coalition with Fine Gael.

It was Labour ministers that collaborated with the last Coalition's introduction of hospital charges, VAT on children's clothes and cuts.

And it was the last Coalition that paved the way for Haughey's frontal assault of all aspects of welfare provision.

In the face of these attacks and the collaboration of the Dail Left and trade union leaders, for many workers anger turned to demoralisation and the feeling that nothing can be done.

Having squandered the opportunity to harness that anger into a fight against attacks on the working class, the Dail Left is now adapting to the right wing drift.

And in adapting to the mood to win a few more votes, they are reinforcing it.

If all the acknowledged trade union and political leaders of the working class are promoting "new realism" and refusing to oppose the cuts—and they are—ideas that workers can fight for and win a better world take a battering.

As Haughey's much vaunted "economic recovery" displays unmistakable signs of coming apart at the seams, as the scourge of emigration hits new highs and the lot of the poor fresh lows, there has never been a greater need for a genuine socialist party.

Such a party would stand on the side of all the oppressed against the horrors of capitalism. It would champion the idea that workers have the power to smash capitalism and create a new world.

Such a party does not exist today. The first step in building that party is to bring together those individuals who are sick to death of the treachery of the official Left. That is the task the Socialist Workers Movement has set itself.

AIDS hypocrisy

FOR a fleeting moment last month it looked as though Health Minister Rory O'Hanlon was a liberal.

This flash of liberalism appeared when Labour proposed a Dail motion on funding for HIV-infected haemophiliacs.

O'Hanlon said he could not give special treatment to one group and discriminate against other

groups on the basis of their life styles.

Of course the real reason was the government's refusal to provide adequate funding for any AIDS sufferers.

In the same week they refused to include any reference to homosexuals in the Incitement to Hatred Bill.

But what were the left wing parties doing?

Socialists should demand more funding to fight AIDS. But we should

also be to the fore in fighting anti-gay bigotry.

Instead of doing this Labour and the Workers' Party confined themselves to winning Fine Gael's support in a motion about haemophiliacs.

In doing so they have pandered to the notion that there are "innocent", and therefore "guilty", AIDS sufferers.

Of course the priority of Labour and the Workers' Party is to win votes and to do that it is easier not to campaign for gay rights. Socialists who want to fight the right wing should make the defence of gays a matter of principle.

Crime: Is tougher sentencing the answer?

On a Tuesday evening in April, Thomas Bogle was found hanged in a police cell in Longford. He was 20 years of age and had just been sentenced to four years in prison.

He pleaded guilty to robbing an elderly man of £2000. It had occurred amidst a wave of attacks on the elderly in isolated areas. Many people had been so outraged at the time that they demanded higher sentences for the guilty.

Judge Sheehy certainly obliged in the case of Thomas Bogle. He described him as

'hardened criminal' who committed a 'dastardly act'. He sentenced him to four years.

The call for higher sentences has become increasingly popular. Some socialists have gone along with this demand, particularly in the case of rape.

The case of Thomas Bogle shows why socialists should have no truck with the catch cry of the right wing.

Thomas Bogle had eight previous convictions in his short life. Most of

them were small time burglaries at his Vocational school. He was hounded for these for the simple reason that he was poor.

The Irish Gardai, like all other police forces, concentrate their energies on the working class. Half of all prison sentences are for offences against private property.

There is not a single case of a builder who uses fake material or an Irish meat factory owner in prison. The cells are full of young working class people. Half of all prisoners are aged

between 17 and 25. A high proportion have been homeless.

Moreover, prison offers no solution. Two out of every three prisoners have previous convictions. 40% had four or more convictions. Prison does nothing to rehabilitate.

Calling for higher prison sentences only gives the police and the courts more power. It does nothing to solve the crimes that arise from a rotten system that distorts peoples lives and leaves many in miserable poverty.

INTERNATIONAL

NAMIBIA:

UN backs South African carve-up

by DOMINIC CARROLL

WHEN the blue, red and green flag of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) was run up on April 1st, it was meant to signal that at last, after 119 years of colonial rule, Namibia was free.

But on another pole nearby, the pale blue flag of the "United Nations" was also being hoisted.

And further along, the blue, white and orange standard of South Africa showed no sign of coming down.

This was independence UN-style.

Within a week, 259 SWAPO guerrillas, among 1,500 returning to Namibia from Angola, were reported killed by the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF).

In the words of the *Guardian's* correspondent, "the South Africans had been unleashed for a campaign of slaughter" by the UN representatives in Namibia, who didn't even understand the terms of their own supposedly "historic settlement".

When they realised that there was nothing in the small print to prevent SWAPO guerrillas from returning to Namibia, it didn't matter anyway because the South Africans have been ignoring the UN for decades.

The South Africans took control of Namibia from the Germans during the First World War, and were granted a "mandate" to govern the territory by the UN's equally hapless predecessor, the League of Nations.

Apartheid was extended to Namibia, and in the sixties, the South Africans declared their intention of integrating Namibia into South Africa itself. Black resistance ensured that this was never possible, and in 1966 the UN was persuaded to revoke the mandate.

The Portuguese revolution in 1974 and the subsequent end to colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique, both of them "front line states", forced a change of attitude on the South Africans.

In an attempt at "detente", Namibian independence was promised,

though SWAPO was to be excluded from proposed elections. SWAPO decided to maintain the struggle.

It was the explosion of black anger in South Africa itself that finally convinced the regime that the game was up in Namibia.

Huge expenditure and

heavy losses in their war with Angola and SWAPO couldn't be justified when the regime was facing near-revolution at home.

During the last few years of negotiation with the UN, the South Africans busied themselves furiously stripping Namibia's mineral assets.

The settlement contrived with the UN, with SWAPO excluded from talks, allowed the racists to retain Walvis Bay, Namibia's main harbour.

SWAPO were to turn themselves in at UN posts located in SWATF bases.

There they would be photographed, fingerprinted and "interrogated" by the feared and detested 101 Battalion of the SWATF. SWAPO wisely decided against turning up, so the South Africans went after them with UN blessing.

This is the sort of stitch-up that the UN are expert at.

In 1982, they stood passively by as the Israelis invaded Lebanon, murdering 19,000 people as they made their way to Beirut where they killed 5,000 more.

From India, to Korea, to Egypt, to Iran, the UN's primary objective has always been to protect Western interests whatever the cost in life.

In Namibia they've let the South Africans call the shots.

Even if final independence is granted in July as promised, Namibia will still be under the shadow of the apartheid monster, and economically in hock to it.

The hope for Namibia and all Southern Africa lies with the mighty black working class in South Af-



South African troops deployed throughout Namibia

Moses Mayekiso freed!

MOSES Mayekiso, general secretary of the black Metal Workers' Union in South Africa and four other black activists were acquitted on subversion charges in Johannesburg at the end of April.

Jubilant supporters carried Moses away in triumph as police ordered the crowd to stop singing and told journalists to leave.

Moses had been held for 30 months in jail before being bailed in December.

Workers' action in South Africa together with an international solidarity campaign saved Moses and his four co-defendants from execution.

Before the verdict,

Kola Mayekiso, a South African black trade unionist and Moses' wife, visited Ireland.

As the trial was approaching a verdict, Kola's tour of Ireland, Britain, Sweden and the USA was intended to galvanise support at this crucial time.

In Cork, she met local trade unionists and socialists, and addressed a packed public meeting. She talked about the difficulties, dangers and achievements of five years of struggle.

Kola herself felt that the lessons of Zimbabwe had to be learnt, which means "workers being in the forefront of the struggle".

She was also clear that the liberation movement needed to see its aim as not just the dismantling of apartheid, but the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a socialist South Africa.

In Dublin, Kola joined members of the SWM and supporters of Militant in a picket of Dunlop's parent company, BTR, a multinational involved in South Africa's longest running strike.

She went on to meet the ICTU who added their voice to the international chorus demanding Moses' release.

CHINA:

Students defy the Party

MASSIVE student demonstrations have rocked China since mid April.

In marches as large as 150,000 students have demanded an end to corruption and more democracy.

Defying government bans and claims that the agitation was "a planned conspiracy" aimed at overthrowing Communist Party rule, demonstrators burst through cordons of police and troops to besiege Party headquarters in Beijing.

Cheered on by thousands of office and building workers, the students have shown the isolation of the government.

Chinese premier Deng Xiaoping had demanded the crushing of the dem-

onstrations "with bloodshed if necessary" and darkly threatened reprisals against those involved.

But police and troops began to waver when faced with the chanting of thousands of onlookers to "let the students through".

And the revolt spreads far wider than the students.

Teachers at the People's University have threatened to resign from the party if the government cracks down.

Journalists at the Workers Daily, the China Youth News and other party papers have signed letters of protest demanding that the party publish fair reports of the student protests.

Spanish strike wave

AMID growing discontent with the right wing policies of Spain's Socialist Party government, a wave of strikes spread across the country at the end of last month.

The General Workers Union (UGT) has called the strikes in support of more "left wing" social and economic programmes and can claim the support of more than half the population in opinion polls.

The UGT has linked up with the Communist Workers' Commissions to organise the action which was set to involve over 2 million workers.

The UGT announced it will not be supporting the Socialist Party—for the first time in the party's 110 year history—in June's European parliament elections.

Solidarnosc at polls

THE Polish Solidarity trade union movement will be contesting parliamentary elections in June. This follows constitutional concessions by the government after last winter's massive strike wave.

Although 65 per cent of seats in the Sejm will be reserved for Communist Party candidates, this election will see a parliamentary opposition for the first time since 1947.

Solidarity's Citizens' Committee will be standing 159 candidates on a platform of demanding fully democratic elections, abolishing censorship, widening union rights and penal reforms as well as privatisation. This last demand reflects widespread illusions in "market socialism" among the opposition.

With inflation approaching 100 per cent and shortages of consumer goods, Solidarity is campaigning for cuts in military and interior ministry spending.

At China Daily journalists have each day pasted up accounts of the student protests, but editors have reluctantly refused to publish them.

The protest wave follows the death last month of Hu Yaobang who is being hailed as a champion of liberalisation and the example of recent general election in the Soviet Union.

China's rulers have been "restructuring" the economy over the past few years—promoting foreign capital, removing subsidies and enlarging the market sector.

But in the last year the economy has gone into crisis. High prices, unemployment and scarcities have not been improved despite recent centralisation.

And the political liberalisation associated with reform in the Soviet Union has not been implemented in China.

Deng was one of the few Communist leaders to applaud the outlawing of Solidarnosc in Poland by Jaruzelski in 1982.

He has also said that the "political pluralism of the USSR" will never be appropriate to China.

As the crisis deepens and the regime becomes more isolated from the mass of the Chinese, the prospect opens up of the workers—who have so far remained largely passive supporters of the protest—coming to the forefront.

This would create a revolt of revolutionary proportions.

What went wrong in Iran?

by CATHERINE CURRAN

IN 1979, the Iranian revolution overthrew the oppressive regime of the Shah. With that, the stranglehold of American imperialism in the Gulf was broken.

In the United States, Jimmy Carter lost the presidential election as the Ayatollah Khomeini taunted him with the 52 hostages held in the US embassy in Tehran.

Iran was declared an Islamic Republic and the reverberations were felt throughout the Arab world. Islamic fundamentalism had come to the forefront in the struggles of the oppressed. But the class that was to take power in Iran was not interested in fighting oppression.

Traditionally, the social base of the Islamic clergy, the "ulama", was among the marketplace traders and artisans known collectively as the bazaar. Fundamentalist Islam—Shia Islam—did not attract a large following among workers.

The opposition of the bazaar and the petit bourgeoisie to the Shah was based on their exclusion from the Shah's programme of development which was based on state-led investment, as opposed to private enterprise.

As the bazaar was threatened, and the large landowners lost out in the Land Reform of 1965, the source of the ulama's wealth was threatened.

The political power and influence of the religious leaders was being undermined by the Shah.

The "White Revolution of the Shah" which had aroused the opposition of the clergy was the monarch's attempt to modernise Iran.

The land reforms had created a layer of capitalists in agribusiness operating alongside the old landowners, who had lost some land but been richly rewarded.

Underneath this layer was the huge mass of landless labourers. In the 1970s, thousands of these migrated to the cities that had been modernised by oil revenues.

But only casual employment and further poverty awaited them there. These alienated and rootless masses would add to the support base of the Ayatollah, without giving him the power to effectively threaten the regime.

The Shah's modernisation programme promoted rapid industrial growth from the mid-1960s. This entailed the development of a manufacturing work force which numbered 2.5 million by 1979. Service industries employed 3 million workers.

As native and foreign capital prospered, a modern professional middle class emerged.

However, the state's repressive ap-

paratus was not dismantled. Only unions controlled by the secret police, the SAVAK, were permitted in the workplace.

The state capitalist development programme required a huge level of exploitation. This was coupled with severe political repression.

Due to the dependence of Iran on oil revenues, the fall off in world demand for oil in 1975 had severe repercussions within Iran.

Already high rates of inflation combined with wild speculation on the part of the ruling class brought austerity programmes.

But the "White Revolution of the Shah" had failed in its objective: to create a popular support base for the Shah and his regime. Thus the late 1970s saw a variety of forces in opposition to the Shah.

On the left, the pro-Russian Tudeh Party had been inactive since its disastrous policy of support for the nationalist government of Mossadeq in 1951-3.

When Mossadeq turned the army on strikers and demonstrators calling for greater reforms, the Tudeh stood by and remained silent.

When the government was subsequently overthrown in a CIA-instigated coup, and the Shah returned to power, it had no support from the masses.

After the Second World War, the Tudeh Party had supported Russia's imperialist claims to Iranian oil.

Dissident left-wingers had broken away from the Tudeh in the 1960s to form the guerilla organisations of the Mojahedin and the Fedayeen.

These groups were strongly influenced by Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao. The Mojahedin also looked to Islamic fundamentalism, while the

SUBVERSIVE

Fedayeen was communist-oriented.

Although their efforts were extremely heroic, the groups' strategies revealed one major flaw: the notion that the party could substitute itself for the working class, and jolt the masses into activity by subversive activity.

Instead of being seen as shining examples, they were thought of as somewhat loony and were isolated from the very people on whose behalf they wanted to act.

The political agenda could therefore be set by the more vociferous clergy, and the ideas that were to come to the forefront came from the conservatives among the opposition to the Shah.

This meant that in 1977, when protest erupted on the streets over the austerity programme, it was the clergy who rallied the crowds and called for the overthrow of the Shah.

The early months of 1978 saw a succession of demonstrations organised by the religious leaders.

However, a further downturn in the economy resulted in severe wage cuts and precipitated a new wave of strikes. Independent working class activity was suddenly a possibility.

Although workers had previously

تساوی دستمزد برای کارگران زن و مرد



On May Day 1979 unemployed women workers led a huge demonstration. Their banner reads "Equal wages for women"

concentrated on economic demands, from June 1978 political demands were also raised. These included the removal of the SAVAK (secret police) offices from workplaces, calls for independent trade unions and changes in management.

In September, workers in the crucial oil industry went on strike.

Although on American advice the Shah had conceded much to the Islamic fundamentalists, the continuing wave of strikes and riots convinced him to turn to his preferred method of crowd control.

On September 8th troops fired on demonstrators in Tehran, killing thousands.

It was at this point that the mass strike emerged as the most powerful weapon in the struggle against the Shah.

While the demonstrations organised by the mullahs could focus resistance to the regime, without the working class they were effectively powerless.

Only the working class could bring down the government. The strike spread rapidly throughout the various industrial sectors. US support for the Shah was wavering.

Rank and file conscripts in the army were beginning to turn against their leaders.

Capital left the country at a rate of \$50 million a day. The workers' confidence was boosted as the Shah continued to make concessions.

But the only nationally recognised leader to emerge was the Ayatollah Khomeini. This was because, although the workers organised within their factories and workplaces, they left it to the religious leadership to co-ordinate activities, raise slogans, and generally act as the political representatives of the masses.

The flight of the Shah in January 1979 left a power vacuum which Khomeini prepared to fill. Nowhere on the Left was any alternative presented, as the Communist-influenced

groups lacked any support base among the workers and thus could only follow the revolution.

Strike committees (shoras) were formed in many places, but although these workers had effective control of industry, they did not control the state.

The new regime sought to divide them on a religious basis and thus wrest control from their grasp. The objective was the creation of an Islamic republic with wholly capitalist relations of production.

Although the provisional government was asserting itself, in reality it had not yet consolidated its grip or managed to subordinate the workers' movement.

On May Day 1979 one and a half million workers and unemployed marched in Tehran in defence of the shoras.

But the failure of the march to confront pro-Islamic thugs led to a symbolic victory for the regime.

The Mojahedin avoided joining the rally for fear of seeming to oppose the regime. Thus there was no leadership for the masses of workers; the confusion of the Left opened the way for a full-scale attack on the democratic rights of every section of the working class.

ATTACKED

The rights of women and national minorities were attacked, while the Left largely evaded the issue. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards took on the role of the SAVAK, and the counter-revolution continued apace.

However, in the autumn of 1979 struggles continued, in spite of the savage repression. The reaction of the Ayatollah was to mount an attack on US imperialism which threw the opposition into confusion. Opponents of the Islamic Republic were called agents of US imperialism.

The Tudeh Party fell in behind

Khomeini, as did the organisations of the "New Left". Workers and militants were abandoned for the sake of a phoney anti-imperialism.

Had the Left been less enamoured of nationalist politics in the first instance, they would not have fallen for Khomeini's ploy. A referendum was held, and the Islamic constitution was passed.

The names of those who voted against it were not recorded by the organisers. Not to vote would have invited the attention of the Revolutionary Guards. The regime now had a free hand to attack the Left.

But in spite of the vicious attacks on left-wing organisations and independent trade unions within Iran, in spite of a catalogue of oppression of women and minorities, including Kurds and the Baha'i religion, Islamic fundamentalism has become the voice of the oppressed in the Middle East.

This has come about largely as a result of the failure of the Left to offer effective political leadership. Socialists welcome the challenge to US imperialism in the Gulf, and to the hierarchy of Arab states who supported Iraq's invasion of Iran.

Islamic fundamentalism has given a new focus to the struggle for Palestinian liberation, thus challenging the state of Israel.

But at the same time it is no more than a current of reform within capitalism. It opposes independent working class activity and any change in the capitalist mode of production.

While socialists must support Iran in its opposition to imperialism, we must oppose the Iranian regime's suppression of independent working class activity.

Where the fundamentalists are fighting imperialism we support them. But where they are advancing their own class interests by imposing oppression and repression, against women, Kurds or writers like Salman Rushdie, we do not.

Marxism made easy

Nationalisation and market socialism

THE QUESTION of how much of the economy is state-directed, was traditionally seen as the central issue of socialism for many on the Left.

There were many schemes: from the state replacing imports with home products and self-sufficiency drives in the "Third World", to Keynes's ideas in the West, that state spending could prevent crisis. (The slump in the early '70s, that has seen millions thrown on the dole, tore a hole in that one).

The ultimate in nationalisation is of course Eastern Europe, where a state bureaucracy controls the whole economy.

Faith in stalinism was shaken by revolutions within it, especially Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1962. But still many on the Left saw a greater role for the state as the way forward.

For revolutionaries the starting point is always the interests, and the potential, of the working class movement.

A worker in the "state sector"—a Dublin Bus worker, for example—is just as exploited as a supermarket cashier. The most vicious tactics have been used by bosses in the public service—the National Coal Board, for example, in the British miners' strike of 1984, or the assaults by gardai and army on Dublin Corporation workers more recently.

But there are many occasions where it is directly in workers' interests to demand nationalisation.

We have seen this twice in the last weeks.

Bakery bosses launched a competitive war; workers' jobs were the casualties. Union bosses demanded price controls to raise the price of bread. Workers have no interest in high bread prices.

Instead an occupation to force the state to nationalise Johnston Mooney and O'Brien would have combined the demand for low bread prices with defending jobs.

Shortly after this we saw the Minister for Finance put on a show to the oil companies to oppose petrol price rises.

Then they were treated to cheaper supplies from Whitegate, at an effective, hidden, subsidy to the oil companies of about 3p per gallon of public money.

Again socialists demand nationalisation of all oil supplies. And in cases of price increase the state should subsidise oil—in our interest.

The general point is that workers demand nationalisation in order to be able to put pressure on the state—to prevent job losses, price rises etc. But all these demands, can only be won by workers fighting for them.

Experience continually shows us that state intervention or nationalisation on its own offers no guarantee of workers' interests.

However there is a yawning gap between this—pointing the limits of nationalisation and the centrality of workers' own activity—and the thinking that dominates the established Left today.

State planning—and state responsibility—are out. From Gorbachev to De Rossa, "market socialism" is the hideous new formula.

Gorbachev says there is no contradiction between socialism, and a man "getting rich by his own hard work".

China's rulers took these ideas very much to heart for some years—until inflation, chaos in food supplies and corruption frightened them back to strict centralism (a direct cause of the inspiring mass demonstrations of Chinese students and workers that we have seen in recent weeks).

The failure of Russian-style "state socialism" to deliver the goods lies behind Gorbachev's attempts to introduce some elements of the market in the Soviet economy.

And the failure of state intervention to sustain the boom in the West has discredited the idea of nationalisation among the official Left here.

Here, in its Tralee conference, Labour's "new" economic policy poses "a thriving private sector" as the key to the future—and praised Waterford Glass workers for cooperating with modern enterprise (no mention of job losses here).

But Workers' Party Proinsias de Rossa has gone much further—praising "enterprise and innovation", "sturdy individualism", "risk-taking and competition" and "getting on in the world by your own efforts".

He argued that what the people want is not public ownership but a market system—and that the state should leave enterprise alone to play "a full productive part in public life".

He did suggest that the state should intervene in cases where enterprise "damages people"—but proposed no formula for differentiating between capitalist greed that causes unemployment, poverty and environmental disasters—and some form of "good" enterprise.

The fact is that those who talk "market socialism" are marketing a contradiction in terms.

Contrary to the claims of the marketeers, price competition not only does not solve waste, it creates waste at every turn—the waste of arms spending, the waste of human lives in famine and disease, the waste of human potential in petty and alienating badly-paid jobs.

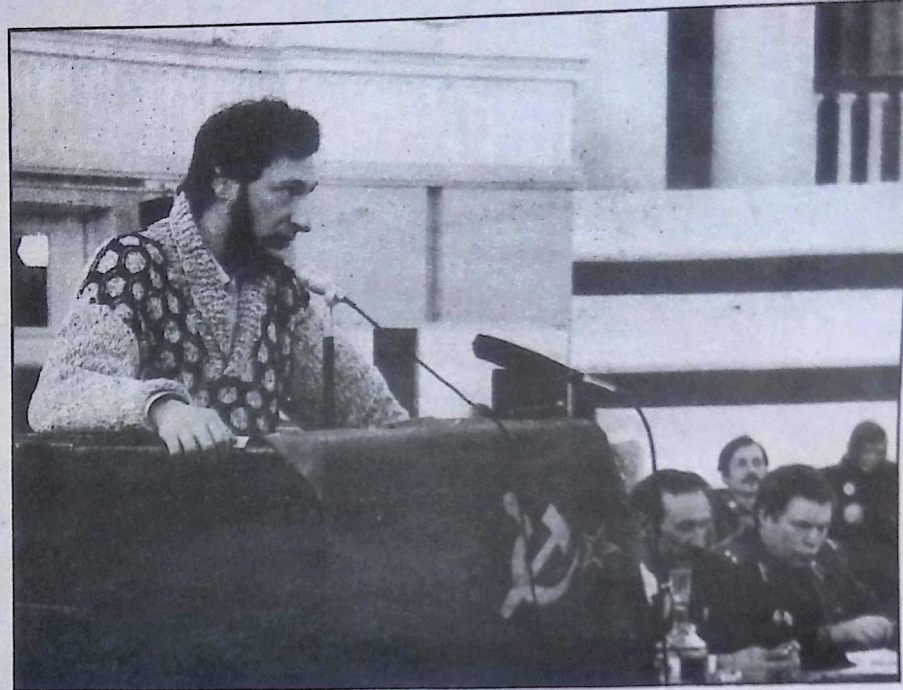
Airplanes, or pieces of them, fall out of the skies as a direct result of price competition; and the unemployed, so-called, are millions of people banned from taking part in society.

Just as with Gorbachev's Russia, the huge corporations that control most of the Western world's wealth protect the vested interests of those within them and do not in any sense provide for workers' needs.

Only workers themselves, in challenging this huge world system, and fighting, can rid the world of disaster and waste—and fighting the bosses' state—will be a vital part of that struggle.

MARY KILLIAN

'People mustn't be



to pa of re

BORIS KAGARLITSKY
People's Front and a
explained to us what

What points are in the People's Front Programme?

FIRST THAT people must not be made to pay the price of the reforms.

If officials want to reform society, good, we support. But the people mustn't pay the price. The people were not responsible for the failure of the economic system.

If there are reforms which are implemented democratically, if decision making at all levels is democratic, then perhaps people can accept some sacrifices. But that's not the case at present.

Some degree of marketisation of the economy is inevitable and needed. But we must not accept the rules of the market as governing the development of the economy.

The market can help us get goods of better quality, which can make enterprises more dynamic, but it cannot produce positive social results by itself. It can't guide social and economic development.

Those problems are unsolvable by the market. So we must have social and economic regulation and democratic planning. The ideal combination of plan and market cannot be found without some kind of industrial democracy.

Fetishisation of the market is no better than the Stalinist fetish of the plan. If you're sacrificed for profit or you're sacrificed for gross output, what's the difference?

It is very important for us to say that we are against technocratic solutions which sacrifice democracy to the market. We are

for the defence of democracy against market forms as well as against Stalinism.

The central question for us is democracy, industrial democracy as well as political democracy.

We oppose any price reform before the creation of a new system of democratic management. We are against lay-offs without programmes of new training. We want a legal system defending the rights of workers from lay-offs.

Our concrete proposals are first to abolish the decrees on demonstrations and special troops.

Second, to change the electoral system and return to the system of one person one vote. Now bureaucrats have two votes—as ordinary citizens and as members of official institutions.

The third point is more power to the local councils and for councils to be closer to the people.

Do you campaign for independent trade unions?

WE SAY the Popular Front can be an embryo of many things—the socialist party, independent trade unions and civil society.

We say it is better not to separate these issues now.

Probably it's better not to create independent trade unions, but to conquer the lower levels of the official trade union, as happened in Spain in the last years of Franco.

First you take some steps through the official system. If you don't succeed you can create a new system. But you must exploit

all the possibilities produced by the official system and show people the limits of those possibilities.

The same thing with the party. There are a lot of party members and sometimes they are influential in their party organisations, so we must go as far as possible inside the party while in principle we advocate a multiparty system.

Do you think in principle the system cannot be reformed?

I DON'T like the argument of unreformability.

Our position is that we must go as far as possible on the reformist path, but we mustn't exclude the possibility of a revolutionary change.

You can't be either purely revolutionary or purely reformist. You must be reformist without reformist illusions.

This means, while going through the reform process, you know the limitations, you are prepared, psychologically and politically, to go further, to overcome the limitations and to go deeper into the process of change, thus becoming a revolutionary.

We also want a new law to give power to elected bodies at the enterprise level.

These will function both in defence of the social rights of the workers and as self management, or at least workers' participation in management.

Also we support all those campaigns like the one against conscription of students and against military education in the

universities. There were a lot of demonstrations over that and people boycotting the military education.

Finally we say to people that by strengthening the People's Front you are strengthening the democratic tendencies in society and making it more likely that positive changes will be irreversible.

How do you relate to the elections?

THE ELECTORAL law is very contradictory, although it's not stupid.

The people who proposed the law were quite clever. To put forward a candidate you have to pass a lot of barriers.

It is very difficult to see any sign of the electoral campaign now in Moscow.

But when you have an electoral meeting there can be an outbreak of emotion.

For instance there was a big demonstration in the Academy of Science after the praesidium failed to choose Sakharov and other prominent reformers as candidates.

There was an angry crowd of 2,000 scholars and scientists which was not very different to any other crowd you can imagine.

They were chanting slogans demanding the praesidium resign. After that there was a nucleus of so to say, class conscious young academics who began to build independent unions of scientists and scholars. Now most of them are in the Popular Front.

We have the same problem with the Yeltsinist movement.

Who is the opposition?

TWO MAIN centres of opposition to the bureaucracy have emerged in the last year.

THE PEOPLE'S FRONTS People's Fronts exist in a number of areas. They vary enormously in their size and their political stance.

But all stand for a deepening of glasnost and for opposition to the

conservative direction of most of the party and state apparatus.

The Moscow Popular Front held its congress a fortnight ago. About 80 delegates attended from local groups and supporting organisations, along with around 100 observers.

The main arguments were over the Front's

programme.

A few people argued it should be concerned solely with supporting the reforming elements within the bureaucracy. At the other extreme were people who called for a very hard attitude towards all sections of the bureaucracy.

Finally, there were the majority who saw the Front

as a way of drawing together a broad range of opinion in favour of reform.

THE DEMOCRATIC This organisation takes a very hard attitude of opposition to all sections of the regime and has declared itself Russia's first open opposition organisation.

Its members are forbidden to belong to either the ruling party (the Komsomol party organisation) and the bureaucracy as a "ruling class".

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...S KAGAN is one of the moving forces in the Moscow ... member of the Socialist Initiative Group. He ... the Front stands for.

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movement. He ... Five managed to get nominated and they were not accepted by the electoral commission. Only one, Sergei Stankevitch, got through to the final stage. But no other

In contrast we established 26 electoral committees, going to the people in each constituency. Some of our commissions were simply supporting prominent people like Korotich. But we were able to put forward many of our own candidates.

They organised rallies and demonstrations, showing their posters and slogans, and were immediately arrested. That produced a lot of noise in the Western press and also the Soviet official press.

But for the current electoral campaign in Moscow they did nothing because they had no organisation on the ground at local level.

They stand for the right of the minority nationalities in the USSR to self-determination and, if they so wish, to form independent states.

But the party's intransigent attitude to Russia's rulers is not matched by any clear understanding of the West.

They stand for the right of the minority nationalities in the USSR to self-determination and, if they so wish, to form independent states.

Bureaucracy shaken by election results



Yeltsin supporters campaign in Moscow

TELEVISION, radio and newspaper reports have presented the results of the recent election in the USSR as a triumph for *glasnost*, proof that Gorbachev's reforms are working.

In fact, the election results reflected the real disappointment of Russian workers at Gorbachev's failure to deliver on the reforms he promised through *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

Forty regional and city party bosses suffered humiliating defeat. The Western media concentrated on Boris Yeltsin's victory in Moscow.

Sacked as local party leader and junior politburo member sixteen months before, Yeltsin won 98 per cent of the vote in the city.

Yeltsin's success was matched by smaller victories for unofficial candidates, such as two supporters of the Moscow Popular Front (see interview with Popular Front members).

The response to Yeltsin's candidacy revealed just how concerned Gorbachev's regime was to keep control of events.

Their efforts to discredit Yeltsin clearly caused people who used to have illusions in Gorbachev to turn against him.

Before the election this disillusionment had led to open protests from only a narrow section of the population in the core Russian speaking parts of the USSR.

An important aspect of the election results was that they came after a campaign that almost everywhere was rigged in favour of the regime's nominees.

Yet people voted many of them down. Even where there was only one candidate on the ballot paper (as there was in nearly a

quarter of the seats) people often crossed out the name to deny them the 50 per cent vote needed for success.

For almost a year now, the USSR's leadership has been retreating from its own talk of *glasnost*.

Decrees passed last summer allowed for the banning of unofficial demonstrations and rallies, and established a special section of the police to impose such bans.

Troops were sent to Armenia to enforce a curfew and members of the Karabakh committee, which had massive support when it organised strikes and protests, were imprisoned.

More recently, the use of military intervention to halt the rebellion of the non-Russian nationalities has led to carnage in Georgia, as troops broke up peaceful demonstrations that called for independence.

It is continuing economic deterioration that has done most to make people demand much more radical changes than hitherto.

This has not, at least yet, found expression in redundancies (except among some grades of administrative employees).

But it has meant sharp increases in prices and worsening shortages of particular sorts of basic consumer goods (sugar, tea, coffee and especially soap powder).

Gorbachev's concessions to east East-West tension—disengagement from Afghanistan, the prospect of a settlement in Kampuchea, the willingness to accept South Africa's "policing" of Namibia, the ruling out of revolution in the impoverished countries of Latin America, etc.—are the international consequences of economic crisis and the USSR's increasing inability to compete militarily with the West.

Reports before the election told of people's growing disillusion with the regime's talk of *perestroika*.

In voting down those seen as most opposed to changing the old system, people found a channel for that disillusionment.

But votes alone will not bring the changes they want. Rigging of election procedures has ensured that the great majority of deputies will be loyal to whatever instructions come from above.

Moreover, the congress of deputies has no power of its own except to elect a state president and a smaller full-time supreme Soviet.

The CP leadership should have no difficulty fixing both elections.

Meanwhile the official candidates who lost seats have kept their key positions as directors of enterprises and regional party chiefs.

REFORM OR REVOLUTION?

The election result and fear of further involvement of the masses in politics will encourage their friends at the top of the police, the KGB and armed forces to push for a policy of repression.

What is really important is the extent to which the electoral revolt encourages people to take practical action on their own behalf.

While this has already been happening for months in the non-Russian republics, the real significance of the election is that it shows how easily this mass activity could spread to Moscow and Leningrad.

Much depends on whether the successful opposition candidates see their job simply as exerting pressure—through parliamentary channels—for the regime to reform itself, or whether they build permanent mass organisations.

The election shows the anger growing among millions of workers as attempts to reform the system get nowhere.

The key to the future lies in channelling this into struggles which build workers' organisation in the factories and creating a power that can take on the might of the regime.

They agree with Gorbachev's economic programme but would like to see it go further in the direction of attacking jobs and workers' living standards.

However, some of the successful candidates, like the two who support the Moscow popular front, stand for a

genuine attempt to implement socialist policies, based neither on the old style stalinist command economy nor on the Western style market.

It is to be hoped they draw the conclusion that it is possible to organise for such policies well beyond intellectual circles.

A product of the party apparatus, Yeltsin is unlikely to build a mass organisation.

Given the chance he would compromise with the rest of the party leadership.

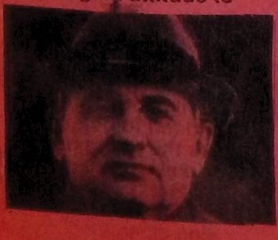
And what applies to Yeltsin also applies to a fair number of the other official candidates.

At the same time as wanting greater political democracy, some also want more privileges for managers in industry and more austerity for the working class.

This will not be possible without demands which talk not just of "democracy" and still less of the "market" but of workers themselves taking control of the economy, a control they had briefly after 1917 and lost to Stalin and his heirs.

This is a policy of revolution, not of reform.

BRUCE MORTON



Russia's rulers is not matched by any clear understanding of the West.

We were told the party contains several factions, ranging from social democrat and Eurocommunist to a Republican faction which admires Reaganism.

Unfortunately, this faction seems to make most of the running in Moscow.

The party's symbol is the flag of the Kerensky government in 1917, and its members regard Bolshevism and Stalinism as the same thing.

ANALYSIS

Unity and the Left



Unity is the buzz-word on the Left these days. Shouldn't we all sink our differences in a broad front to remove the border. And what of a broad front based on the victims of poverty?

JOSH CLARKE answers the question: *What should a socialist's attitude be?*

THE Republicans aim to build a broad anti-imperialist front. Labour Left mooted something called a Rainbow Coalition, and Proinsias De Rossa writes letters to leaders of trade unions, Left parties, community organisations, even church groups urging unity around a minimal programme of social justice.

Whenever any of these fronts organises some genuine action, such as demonstrations or even strikes, the Socialist Workers Movement will be there to do our bit.

A refusal to take part in real activity, whatever our criticisms of the general thrust of the particular "broad front", would be sectarian.

But there are a number of problems with these fronts (existing or intended) though each is obviously different.

The Republican broad front is centred on the demand for national self-determination.

The idea is that women, workers, the poor, in fact all the oppressed in Ireland, face partition as the main obstacle on the road to their liberation.

This is a more left-wing variant of the traditional republican argument about the need to get rid of the border before anything else can be done.

In the South we have a fully-formed ruling class with quite a large base in the middle class and beyond, which oppresses us on its own behalf.

Women in the South looking for the

cause of their oppression don't have to look to London. The Catholic church and weak-kneed "liberal" establishment here in the 26 Counties are the culprits.

When workers go on strike, it's just as likely to be Irish capitalists as foreign that they come up against.

When the poor feel oppressed by the "National Debt" the culprits aren't simply foreign imperialists, they're just as likely to be some of the Irish bosses to whom roughly half the debt is owed.

To claim that the struggle against partition is the cutting edge of every struggle in Ireland is to let off the hook our own "native Irish" oppressors.

A common theme in all the broad front plans is that the "people" need to come together to form electoral alliances against the three "anti-people" parties that dominate in the Dail at the moment.

The idea, certainly in De Rossa's case, is that for the indefinite future, socialism is off the agenda. If we can find "progressive" sections of the middle class and even bishops who sound off about poverty, we can form a grand coalition that eases the brunt of the cutbacks and initiates some very basic reforms.

To the extent that this idea motivates those involved in these broad fronts, it represents a retreat for the Left, which reflects massive demoralisation.

It is reminiscent of the Popular Front slogan that dominated in the 1930s, all over the world. Marxists have always rejected the Popular Front in favour of the United Front.

A *United Front* involves agreements between workers' parties to cooperate on some immediate action that requires the mobilisation of workers' strength and can be considered worthwhile by reformists and revolutionaries alike.

At the same time, within a united

front the different parties retain freedom of criticism and no compromise is made on more long-term political objectives.

In the '30s the most urgent united action of workers' organisations was around fighting the fascists, physically clearing them off the streets wherever they showed themselves.

The *Popular Fronts*, on the other hand, dealt with the fascist threat by forming electoral agreements with the more liberal bosses' parties, which necessarily involved curtailing workers' militancy and self-activity.

Popular Fronts arise when the reformist/stalinist left is either frightened by its own strength or embarrassed by its own weakness, and seeks out "nice" sections of the middle class who can give them a more respectable veneer.

Popular Fronts, by demobilising workers' struggles, end up failing to achieve even their more liberal aims, because the demobilise the main force for change in society, the self-activity of the working class.

Wherever you see left wing politicians extending a hand to "sympathetic" bishops or more "radical" members of Fianna Fail, in the case of Sinn Fein, the spectre of the Popular Front lurks close behind.

Another theme common to all these initiatives is that socialists should look to the most down-trodden groups in society—the unemployed, travellers etc.—rather than organised workers.

The idea is the more oppressed you are the more likely you are to fight; that those in work have been bought off by prosperity and that anyway the working class is declining as a force in society.

For some, particularly around the more radical clergy in inner cities influenced by ideas of liberation theology it is the poor who are the main force for change. The traditional working class are seen as part of the problem, being part of the affluent society that depends for its prosperity on the poverty of those on its margins, whether in the inner cities of the metropolitan countries or in the Third World.

These arguments are particularly out of place in Ireland, which has seen a massive growth in the working class. In the '50s half the population

earned a living from their own property. Today less than a third do so and that includes the one acre farmers.

In the '50s 45 per cent of the population lived on the land. Today only 16 per cent are farmers. There has been a vast increase in wage workers, so that they make up more than 60 per cent.

Neither are the unemployed a separate class from workers. Two-thirds of the unemployed remain on the dole for less than a year.

Sure enough, the unemployed are worse off than those working, but does that make them more likely to fight back? No. Even though the working class are on their knees, the unemployed are further ground down because they feel powerless and lack the collective strength that workers have at work.

Rioting by the unemployed is important, but as with student activity or the black riots in Britain's inner cities, unless it links up with the organised working class it risks being wasted.

Of course any campaigns built by members of the Labour Party, Workers' Party or Sinn Fein are bound to involve some sort of activity amongst workers. The point is that workers will be treated as another group of oppressed, of equal importance with the women's movement, community groups, Travellers' organisations, etc.

This follows from a very different understanding of oppression to that of marxists.

Instead of looking at women's oppression or gay oppression or any other form of oppression as arising within capitalism and tailored to the needs of capitalism, they each oppression is seen as existing outside of history.

Rather than look for the origin of sexist ideas within capitalist society, for their material roots, they are treated as the unchanging expression of a biologically determined male sexism.

Consequently the struggle against sexist ideas and institutions is turned into a struggle by all women against all men.

There is an obvious problem for this view. How to unite the different struggles against different oppressions. After all, if all men benefit from women's oppression and all straights benefit from the oppression

of gays and so on, how are we to create a single movement that embraces middle class feminists and male trade unionists, or middle class gays and the Travellers who "lower their house values"?

For marxists, it is only the workers who have an interest in overcoming the divisions between the different groups of oppressed.

Unlike all the other groups of oppressed, workers collectively exploited as they are in the factory or office, have only one way of fighting their exploitation and that is as a collective.

But oppression of women, travellers, unemployed, or gays, for example, affects them as *individuals*—in the home, by the police, by repression and discrimination. That makes it very easy for the bosses to pit one group of oppressed against another. Workers have to unite if they are to win.

This is more than a pious slogan. Capitalism has created factories and offices where numbers of workers are *collectively exploited*. If the boss cuts your wages or worsens your conditions you are not alone. Your workmates will have the same cuts imposed and it's much easier to collectively organise to do something about it.

Secondly, at the end of the day, all power in society, political power included, rests upon the control of wealth. Workers, and in this they are unique among the oppressed, have the power to seize the wealth of the bosses where it's actually produced.

Many of the oppressed are themselves workers. The possibility exists of arguing with fellow workers that sexist, anti-gay or anti-traveller prejudices weaken the *whole* workforce. And that it is the boss—the common enemy—who benefits from divisions within the working class.

That is why marxists place such importance on the working class. It involves taking up all questions of oppression—no matter how unpopular—within the working class and winning the argument that it is in *all* workers' interests to defend *all* the oppressed.

The prize to be gained is the mobilisation of society's most powerful force for the liberation of humanity.

JOSH CLARKE

NEWS FROM SWM

Belfast Branch

Meets every Monday at 7.30 pm in the Ulster People's College, 30 Adelaide Park, Belfast (between Lisburn Road and Malone Road, opposite Queens Elms Halls of Residence)

May 1st: *Afghanistan—Russia's Vietnam?* speaker: **Mark Hewitt**
May 8th: *Organising Meeting*
May 15th: *Soviets versus Parliament* speaker: **Bruce Morten**
May 22nd: **PUBLIC MEETING** See posters and SW sellers for details
May 29th: *Art and revolution* speaker: **Martin Mooney**
Further details of Belfast Branch write to: PO Box 418, Tomb St, Belfast BT9 5PU

Bray Branch
Meets every second Tuesday at 8.00 pm in Hibernian Inn, Marine Terrace

Cork Branch
Meets every Tuesday at 8 pm in the Anchor Inn, George's Quay
May 9th: *Will socialism inevitably end up as Stalinism?*
May 16th: *Armed struggle or class struggle?*
May 23rd: *Socialists and the struggle for democratic reforms*

May 30th: *China—from cultural revolution to market socialism*

Derry Branch

Meets every Tuesday at 8.00 pm in Dungloe Bar, Waterloo St

Dundalk Branch

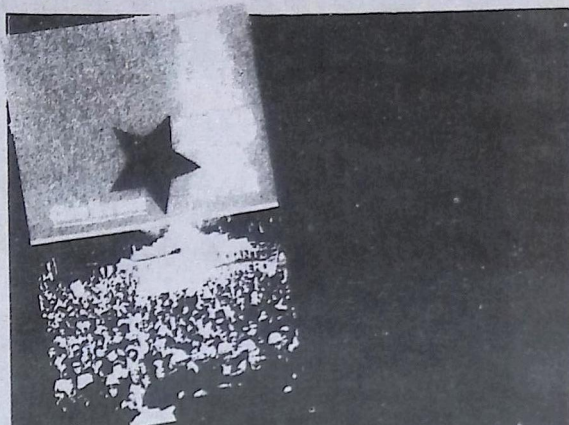
Meets every second Tuesday at 8.00 pm in ATGWU, Francis St

Dublin Branch

Meets every Wednesday at 8 pm in the Bachelor Inn, O'Connell Bridge
May 10th: *The politics of the Greens*
May 17th: *What is market socialism?*
May 24th: **PUBLIC MEETING:** Gorbachev's Russia—a second revolution? Venue: Kinlay House, Lord Edward St (top of Dame St) 8.00 pm
May 31st: *China today*

For more details of regular branch meetings in BRAY, DERRY, DUBLIN, DUNDALK, DUNGARVON, GALWAY, KILKENNY, PORTLAOISE & WATERFORD contact: SWM, PO Box 1648, James's St, Dublin 8

Books are weapons



THE FIRE LAST TIME: 1968 AND AFTER
by Chris Harman

The year 1968 was a political watershed: the year of the May events in France, of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, of the ghetto risings in the USA. It was the year when political certainties were called into question everywhere. This book looks at the contradictions in the world economic and political system which gave rise to the upheavals of 1968, at the decade of radical change that followed, and at why and how the world system re-asserted its control.

416 pages paperback £7.50
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two new pamphlets from the SWM

IS SOUTHERN IRELAND A NEO-COLONY.

MARXISM AND OPPRESSION

by Josh Clark
Where do the ideas of racism and sexism come from? How is it possible to overcome oppression of all kinds. This pamphlet examines the Marxist case and brings it up to date.
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by Kieran Allen
Nationalists argue that unemployment, poverty, emigration and industrial backwardness is caused by Britain's dominance of Ireland. Is this true? What of the Southern capitalists? Kieran Allen explodes a myth.
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IRELAND'S PERMANENT REVOLUTION



by Chris Bambery

For 300 years it has been the 'Irish problem'. Labour and Tory, reformists and hard-liners, the soft hand of parliament and the mailed fist of the army — all have failed to solve it. This book argues for a socialist solution.

£3.00 from: SW Books, PO Box 1648, James's St Dublin 8

What we stand for



The Socialist Workers Movement is a marxist organisation fighting for a workers' republic in Ireland and for socialism internationally.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

We begin from the proposition that what determines the nature of any society is the system by which its wealth is produced. In the system we live under, capitalism, production is geared to profit, not to human need. Among its inevitable features are poverty, war, racism and sexism. Capitalism cannot be destroyed and these evils thus eradicated by piecemeal reform. It can only be destroyed by revolutionary action by the class which creates all the wealth, the working class. The machinery of the capitalist state—parliament, courts, army, police etc—is designed to protect the interests of the ruling capitalist class, not to regulate society in a neutral fashion. At most, parliament can be used, sometimes, to make propaganda against capitalism. It cannot be used to smash capitalism. Only a workers' revolution can do that and establish a truly democratic society in which workers hold power directly through delegates elected from workplaces and areas and are re-callable and replaceable at any time by those who elect them.

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

This kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers do not have control in Russia, China, Cuba etc. Instead, power is held by a state-capitalist class. A workers' revolution is needed in these countries too. We are against NATO and the Warsaw Pact and all weapons of mass destruction. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO PARTITION

The Northern State was created by British imperialism in its own interests. Sectarianism and bigotry were built into it and will continue to exist for as long as the state exists. The marginal privileges given to Protestant workers are just that: marginal. It is in the immediate interest of Protestant as well as Catholic workers to fight against their exploitation. It is in the interest of all Northern workers to unite against the state and aim at socialism in Ireland. We support all forces struggling against imperialism and the Northern state, regardless of differences we may have with them.

The interests of the Southern ruling class are no longer in fundamental conflict with those of imperialism. Southern capitalism is a junior player in the world capitalist system. The Southern state too, props up partition, despite occasional nationalist rhetoric. The "national question" can be solved only by mass working class struggle against both states. Republicanism, by limiting the immediate struggle to the achievement of "national unity", and by appealing for all-class alliances in pursuit of this goal, can never lead the working class towards the defeat of imperialism.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We fight for free contraception, abortion on demand and the right to divorce. We oppose all discrimination against gays and lesbians. We stand for secular control of hospitals and schools. We fight for the complete separation of church and state.

FOR A FIGHT IN THE UNIONS

Trade unions exist to protect workers' interests under capitalism. The role of trade union leaders is to negotiate with bosses over workers' position within capitalism. To destroy capitalism, we need a rank and file movement in the unions separate from the leaderships and fighting for workers' interests regardless of the needs of capitalism.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To destroy capitalism and achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class must be organised in a revolutionary party. The SWM aims to build such a party through spreading its ideas and through its activity in the working class movement.

Join Us!



- I would like to join the SWM
- I would like more details of the SWM

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Send to SWM PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Letters

McCann is 'too rigid'

Dear Editor, Commenting about a recent court case in Britain in which a Judge Pickles jailed a woman for refusing to testify against the man accused of assaulting her, Eamonn McCann (April Socialist Worker) stated that marxists wouldn't back a campaign for his sacking.

Whilst accepting that Judge Pickles is probably no more reactionary than all the other ruling class toffs who sit on court

benches, and understanding that rape and assaults on women won't be eradicated by stiffer sentences, we nevertheless feel that Eamonn is too rigid in his view.

If a campaign was launched to get Pickles fired, socialists should support and others like it, whilst discussing with those involved the most effective way to tackle the problem of violence against women.

DOMINIC CARROLL, MIKE TIERNEY, Cork

Keep that bastard away

by EAMONN McCANN

ONE of the least-publicised aspects of the Hillsborough soccer disaster was the reaction of some of the injured fans who were visited by Margaret Thatcher at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield.

"Keep that bastard away from me," one patient demanded.

Another, in intensive care, told her directly to "get lost", while a third who wasn't able to speak managed to make his feelings clear by kicking the bedclothes off.

Nurses' descriptions of these scenes were carried only in foreign papers and in left-wing British publications. Which is about par for the course for the British media which, with good reason, has no wish to face up to the facts about the disaster.

The Tory tabloid press played a significant role in creating the conditions for the disaster to happen. For years, they have represented soccer "hooligans" who deserve to be herded into cages by the cops every Saturday.

The fact that the fans had this image made it easier for the clubs to treat them appallingly too.

Fans are the last in the queue when it comes to tickets for matches such as a FA Cup semi-final—and are not even allowed into the queue for stand tickets. Any working class fan who has tried to get a stand ticket for an All-Ireland or FAI Cup final will know that this is by no means a British phenomenon.

This is why, as at Hillsborough, there are frequently crowds of fans without tickets trying to get in. It's not that they want to dodge paying. It's that although they are far more anxious to see the match than the big-occasion fat-cats in the stand, they aren't able to get any sort of tickets at all.

Fans who stand on the terraces every week knew that the fences were potentially lethal. There had been warning after warning in fan magazines and in letters to club programmes.

But it had become fixed in the minds of the people who run football that "hooliganism" was the game's major problem, that the fans had to be contained. This fixation was an expression of the "law 'n' order" attitude which had flourished under the Thatcher government. The attitude which holds that the great social virtues are order, obedience, respect for the law and so forth, and which regards working class people gathered in large numbers as something to be suspicious of, and even feared.

Of course, there is hooliganism at soccer matches in Britain, but there's two things need to be said about it. One is that it's only the proverbial tiny minority who are involved. So relentless has been the propaganda and sensationalism that this obvious fact is often forgotten.

The second thing is that the hooliganism which does exist is commonly an expression of the right-wing bigotry which Thatcher personifies and which is fuelled by the tabloid press day in day out. The louts who wrap themselves in Union Jacks and attack "foreigners" at England's international away games are expressing the values of Sun-reading Thatcherism.

From no matter what angle you look at Hillsborough you can see the rottenness of Thatcherism and of capitalism generally. And you can also see shimmering through it all the values of a different world altogether.

It was the "ordinary" fans who took charge in the ground, organised the care of the casualties, made makeshift stretchers from hoardings and gave the kiss of life, while the cops and FA officials milled around uselessly. Every home around the ground was thrown open to people who needed to sit down or drink tea or phone home.

The working class city of Liverpool, ravaged by Thatcherism, suffering from mass unemployment, decayed housing and deep poverty, united in communal grief and care for one another. The spectacle at Anfield, the Kop festooned with Liverpool and Everton scarves and the pitch carpeted with flowers, was as genuinely moving a sight as Thatcher "mourning" was disgusting.

In far-away Milan tens of thousands of Italian and Spanish fans at the European Cup semi-final between AC and Real Madrid joined together and swayed as they sang "You'll Never Walk Alone".

Nobody organised these things. Nobody paid or ordered anybody to do them. Things like this happen at times like Hillsborough, when people act by instinct, because working class people are not naturally competitive or individualistic in their approach to life. They are not out to claw or gut one another.

It's the society we live in, the society which makes disasters like Hillsborough inevitable, which compresses people into antagonistic roles, which instructs them to believe that it's morally correct and natural for everybody to look out for themselves, which holds that society progresses by means of competition, not cooperation.

When working class people feel at one with one another, even if it's only to sigh simultaneously with one another, we can glimpse the sort of world there could be if we were rid of what Thatcher—and Haughey, Paisley, Hume and the rest—represent.

The Hillsborough casualty who told Thatcher to "get lost" was saying a lot.

REVIEWS

The quiet revolutionary

BARBARA WILSON reviews "The Quiet Revolutionary" by Margaret Dewar, £6.50 from SW Books

Margaret Dewar was born in 1901 and grew up in pre-revolutionary Russia.

Although as a school girl she was not particularly interested in politics, she recalls the euphoric optimism of the February 1917 Revolution and the overthrow of the hated Tsarist regime.

The hardship and privations of life during the 1914 war and subsequent civil war she remembers quite vividly.

She recalls the desperate search for food and fuel, but also the efforts of the young revolution to encourage and improve educational and cultural standards.

And the great upsurge of interest among working people in the arts.

After her mother remarried a German she emigrated to Berlin in March 1920.

Soon she joined the International Workers Relief and finally, in 1930, the German Communist Party.

At that time, with fascism growing fast, the Communist Party had an ultra-left position of describing the Socialist Party as "social fascists".

It claimed they were no better than the Hitlerites and refused to propose united



The last Communist Party demonstration before Hitler's rise to power

front action with them against the real fascists.

Margaret Dewar describes how she gradually came to question Stalinism and the discussions she had which led to her becoming a Trotskyist—a very unpopular thing to be at that time.

In 1933 Hitler came to power and all socialists were subject to severe repression. Dewar recalls here difficult search for jobs and somewhere to live.

She continued her revolutionary work—which she reports in a matter of fact way—under these almost impossible circumstances and emerges as independent and resourceful.

She describes the Gestapo

searches, hoping they would not find the hidden literature in the loft; the books and Trotskyist papers smuggled in from abroad and clandestinely duplicated; the anti-Nazi leaflets "which were left around when and where possible."

Finally this almost underground existence became impossible and she fled, first to Czechoslovakia, then to France and finally to England as a refugee.

Margaret Dewar is still alive and a revolutionary and concludes: "It is now up to the younger generation to give a lead".

She ends her book with a poem written by her comrade and husband Hugo Dewar before his death in 1980.

*If I should grow so old and wise
I look no longer with joyful surprise
at sunset and at sunrise
—let me forever close my eyes.
If there is nothing left to know
If the blood runs so cold and slow
I yearn not for all tyrants'
overthrow
—then let me go.
If I forget the seed that lies
beneath the snow will
someday rise;
If at the sight
of workers arming for the fight
my heart beats not with delight
—then bury me tight.
For he that his whole youth
denies
is surely dead before he dies.*

Film of the month

Scandal

Reviewed by EVE MORRISON

Scandal was a film I was dying to see.

I watched the trailers anxiously for months.

A film about the Profumo Affair—the scandal that not only exposed the lurid past-times of Britain's ruling class but is also credited with bringing down the Tory government in 1964, after 13 unbroken and seemingly unassailable years in power.

I couldn't wait! Unfortunately, Scandal is a mediocre film at best.

It's a glossy, slick and slow re-inactment of what became Britain's most notorious in the decade.

The actors were picked and made-up to look exactly like the real life characters they portray.

The film never rises above the level of a newspaper expose, making Scandal disappointing and eventually tedious.

My major criticism of the film (perhaps unfairly) is that Scandal tells you nothing you don't already know.

No insight is given into why Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davis became party girls for rich old men—only that they did.

The film is also faithful to all the romantic nonsense surrounding Steven Ward.

It tries, unsuccessfully in my opinion, to portray Ward as a sympathetic character.

I have never had very much sympathy for pimps—even if they do kill themselves.

That Lord Astor and the rest of the fascist sympathisers in the

"Cliveden Set" allowed Wards neck to be put on the public chopping block to save their own, is certainly true, though.



The Tory party's hypocrisy knew no bounds either. John Profumo resigned

from the House of Commons because he was caught lying

about his relations with Keeler and not for having had such.

The talk about morality was all bluster.

But the film manages to spend an hour and a half re-telling the tale without really saying anything.

It draws no conclusions, motivations or insights. It's not objective film-making though, it's simply shallow.

There are still reasons to go and see this film.

John Hurt manages to give a good performance despite what he had to work with.

If you simply want a blow-by-blow account of what happened you might enjoy it. Go and see Scandal, but don't expect too much.

INDUSTRIAL

No to merger on these terms!

FWUI and ITGWU members will have received a ballot paper through their letter boxes at home.

The majority of them will be completely in the dark as to what the vote is about. And it's not surprising.

The first members heard of the merger was a short time ago in the press. Billy Attlee and John Carroll considered a press release more important than informing their own members.

As a result, it is only in the last couple of weeks that members have got to know what the issue is about.

Even then, they have been denied any possibilities of suggesting how they would like to see a merger happen.

And most members, quite rightly, favour the idea of union amalgamations in general.

The concept of One Big Union goes back to the very best traditions of Connolly and Larkin, or of the Industrial Workers of the World in the USA in the early years of this century when unity across the unions was being pushed for from the rank and file.

It stood for solidarity across trades and skills and for the principle of "an injury to one is an injury to all".

Attlee and Carroll have been quick to refer to the traditions of their union founders. It is but sick rhetoric on their part.

They are the people who have signed the Programme for National Recovery, who are in cahoots with the government, and, with inflation set to rise, have pegged our wage increases to a meagre 3 per cent for the next three years.

These are the people who have presided over 10,000 job losses in the public sector, have allowed unemployment to rise to Europe's highest at 18 per cent, and done nothing to stem the 40,000 emigration trail.

With trade union leaders like these, no wonder Bertie Ahern sees no threat coming from the new merger.

In fact he was one of the first to welcome it.

But if our trade union leaders are not to be trusted from their record, even less are they to be trusted as custodians of democracy in the union.

Again they are long on the rhetoric. The new union—according to the glossy version from the union head offices—is to be a new "super union", "the union of the future".

SIPTU—Services, Industrial, Profession and Technical Union (what happened to "workers"?—is to be "tailor-made for the challenges of the 1990s".

It is going to have new democratic regional structures, reserved seats for women on executive com-

mittees, special consumer discount schemes.

It is going to try and involve itself in the needs of every individual member.

In fact, the whole proposal from the head offices reads more like an ad from "your friendly bank" than it does from an organisation to fight for workers' interests.

But it's not just the ethos of the new union that sounds like new business unionism. It's also the consolidation at the top.

A so-called "transitional" period for the union will ensure that the two present executives of each union are going to stay put for five years, and thereafter, for four.

At present an executive member is subject to election every two years in the FWUI and three in the ITGWU. Billy Attlee must be particularly chuffed at his job security; he will be General President until 1998.

RESERVATIONS

There is no doubt that this merger has been proposed at the top, by the top, for the top.

Many members expressed reservations along these lines at the Special Delegate Con-



Carroll and Attlee toasting a bureaucratic stitch up

ference held on 15th April.

Nevertheless when it came to the vote the delegates voted overwhelmingly at the FWUI Special Conference in favour of the merger (249 to 36). The ITGWU Special Delegate Conference did not move to a vote.

The truth is that the Special Delegate Conferences were anyway only a window dressing exercise for the media.

Any votes taken had no proper status since the issue is to be decided by postal vote (an uncanny shape of things to come with the new union) and the conferences anyway had no power to amend or review any aspect of the proposed

rule book of the new union.

It was this frustrating situation that meant that the leadership had the whole operation stitched up.

Activists felt caught in a cleft stick—either they had to accept the thing in toto or reject it altogether.

No input into the structure or rule book was allowed.

DETERMINE

In this situation is very important that the biggest "no" vote is polled.

The question is simple. We do not accept amalgamation on these terms. We want a chance to determine aspects of the new union

ourselves. We want a chance to make the executive of the new union accountable to the membership and the union officers subject to election.

More importantly still we want to send a clear message to Carroll and Attlee that we have no confidence in their Programme for National Recovery.

If that's what they are proposing for their new union—continued cabals with government, more pay restrictions, more workers paying for the government's crisis—then we want no part of it.

We do want unity. But unity on our terms and to fight for our interests.

UNIDARE WORKERS FIGHT BONUS CUT

230 WORKERS are on strike at the Unidare engineering plant in Dublin. The strike began when management cut bonus payments for thirty workers, without negotiations.

The strike is a breath of fresh air following a year of demoralisation at the Finglas plant. Last year the company pushed through a restructuring scheme which undermined conditions and resulted in 95 redundancies.

The restructuring involved splitting the plant into four "stand alone" operations: Unidare Cables, Oerlikon Welding, Tinsley Wire (Ireland) and Unidare Transformers.

As well as trying to increase profits, management used this break-up to divide the workforce. Each group was encouraged to identify with its own operation. The strike has shown the failure of this strategy.

The bonus cuts were made in the Transformers section. They would result in an average loss of earnings of £25 per week for each worker. In two cases there were losses of £40 and £70 per week respectively.

Workers in all four sections voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. When management attempted a back-to-work move by holding meetings with two of the sections they failed. Even with a second secret ballot there was still an 80% vote to continue the strike.

The company have tried to justify cuts in bonus by pointing to the loss of £156,000 made by Transformers last year.

Yet the entire Unidare operation made profits of £5.8 million. When the new board of directors took over they voted themselves a pension scheme with payment guaranteed after ten years. The offices of the new holding company, Unidare PLC, were refurbished complete with gold-plated taps and three chandeliers which cost £1,000 each.

Crumlin Hospital domestics strike

Workers at Dublin's Crumlin Hospital have been on strike since the beginning of March.

The dispute arose when domestic staff were instructed to do catering work which had previously been done by other workers.

The domestic workers were expected to perform extra duties without any increase in pay or status.

This work was carried out in good faith by these workers under protest for five weeks to enable management to organise other arrangements.

However, after this good will gesture, management insisted that the domestics carry on the duty permanently.

When the domestics refused they were suspended without pay.

The majority of cooks, catering assistants and porters then came out in support of the domestics' action.

The management in the hospital have continually refused to negotiate meaningfully with the strikers.

The one "concession" offered by the matron has been that in return for lifting the suspension of the six workers the domestics would carry out the duties they originally struck against!!

This the workers quite

rightly rejected as they did a Labour Court recommendation that they return to work pending a commission investigating the situation in the hospital.

Accounts of the strike in the media have been trivialised and caricatured as "a storm in a tea-cup".

The strike is against an attempt by management to implement the ongoing savage health cuts.

This dispute is both in defence of workers' rights and the health service, which has been systematically under attack by the government.

The strikers have applied to the ICTU for an "All Out", the result is not yet decided as we go to press.

To continue their struggle money and support is needed for the strike fund—workplace collections would be very welcome.

Donations will be received by strikers who are picketing Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin, 24-hours a day.

Belfast health fight

WORKERS in Belfast City Hospital have been leading the way in the campaign against privatisation of hospital services.

Members of the National Union of Public Employees stopped work on two occasions when private companies visited the site in preparation for contracting out cleaning work.

When Mediclean, a multinational private contractor, came to the hospital, workers immediately stopped work for an hour, followed the visitors about, and made it clear they weren't welcome.

The following week a 24 hour strike by caterers, porters, cleaners, ambulance and maintenance workers who blockaded the hospital entrance forced two representatives of Initial Services to abandon their visit.

The privatisation of cleaning services could affect thousands of jobs through redundancy and deterioration of working conditions.

Hospital management is offering to keep present workers on under private contract if they agree to greater flexibility.

This would mean a cut in hours for part-time workers, bringing the women cleaners under the 16 hours per week which entitles them to be

covered by state benefits.

Management also wants to introduce a split shift bringing workers in for peak morning and evening hours.

Such conditions would create severe disruption for the women, while they would get less money and have less job security.

It is essential that actions like those taken by the City workers be spread to other large hospitals like the Royal in Belfast and Altnagelvin in Derry.

As well it is important for ancillary workers to link up with and gain support from other sections of hospital workers like nurses who have been fighting for their own pay claims and doctors who have been speaking out against the hospital cuts.

Cuts in services and staffing levels recently announced will have a further severe effect on the access of working class people to decent medical treatment.

One of the most drastic is the plan to close the Royal Victoria Hospital casualty unit after 9 pm.

The Royal, in the midst of West Belfast, an area with one of the highest levels of unemployment, poverty and poor health, has one of the most used casualty units in the North.

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

NORTHERN LOCAL ELECTIONS:

Vote Sinn Fein but build a revolutionary alternative

The Thatcher Government has done all it can to ensure a drop in the Sinn Fein vote in the North.

The "anti-violence" declaration was an effort to stop SF candidates standing at all.

This was backed up with the broadcasting ban.

And, as always, SF candidates and their workers are being subjected to systematic harassment and disruption of the campaigning.

It should be clear from this that the surest way to give Thatcher and her ruling-class cronies a headache in the elections is to vote Sinn Fein.

A vote for Sinn Fein is a vote against repression, against discrimination, against the sectarian State itself. And since these are the main points which

need to be made in the election this is how socialists should vote.

At the same time it would be silly to imagine that voting Sinn Fein will make any major difference. Even if SF won a majority of the seats on a majority of the councils there would be no transformation in the day-to-day lives of the working-class they would represent.

DILIGENT

We can see this from the way SF councillors have operated on the councils over the past few years.

For the most part they have been diligent and hard-working. But a lot of the time it's been virtually impossible to distinguish them from the SDLP—except on issues arising directly out of the IRA campaign.

For much of the rest of the time they have differed

from the SDLP only in degree, not in principle.

The SDLP wants more money for nationalist areas? Sinn Fein wants *much* more money.

The SDLP wants tough action against discrimination? Sinn Fein wants FAR tougher action.

The SDLP condemns harassment by the RUC? Sinn Fein unequivocally *denounces* harassment.

And so on.

The revolutionary socialist approach would be different.

Lenin put it perfectly when he said that socialists should look on councils and parliaments as dung-hills—useful for standing on so that your politics can be heard by more people, but that what you should be saying is that the dung-hill is a dung-hill and not the democratic platform which the ruling-class would like to con workers into

believing.

Connolly made the same point during his first-ever involvement in electoral politics, standing as an independent socialist for a council seat in Edinburgh in 1894. The election of a socialist, he told voters, "is only valuable in so far as it is the return of a disturber of the political peace".

But it isn't as disturbers of the political peace that SF councillors sit in the chambers.

ASPECT

The worst aspect of SF's use of their Council seats has been the way in which they avoid other controversial issues which might lose them votes. For example, Derry City Council recently voted to give SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) financial

support for its office in the city. Mitchell McLaughlin, the SF leader on Derry City Council, *abstained* on the vote.

SF in Derry were given a perfect opportunity to expose the bigotted reality of SPUC in the local press. They chose not to because it might lose them votes.

This is a perfect example of why, while voting for Sinn Fein, we must organise *now* to build a socialist alternative to the Republican tradition.

What's urgently needed is a revolutionary socialist party that is consistent in its opposition to British imperialism and to the repression, discrimination and sectarianism of the Six County State but which is also consistent in its fight, not just for a united Ireland, but for a socialist united Ireland.

Such a party would, like Connolly, believe in

"disrupting the political peace" of the Council and parliamentary chambers—on *every* issue of importance to the working class. It would not sit on the fence for fear of "alienating" voters but would be loud and clear in its opposition to religious bigotry from whatever quarter and in its support for the right of women to control their own bodies.

STANDING

Most of all a revolutionary party's approach to each and every issue would be decided not on the basis of how it would affect the party's standing with the voters but on how it would affect the interests of the working class.

Few people in Ireland today see the need for a revolutionary socialist party. The SWM is trying to at least lay the basis for one. Why not join us?