

LABOUR'S POLL TAX PANIC

WITH ONLY THREE months to go until the first poll tax bills are due to be sent out in England and Wales, Labour councils in Scotland are conceding that their attempts to break the non-payment movement - through threats, intimidation and legal action - are failing.

Strathclyde region despatched 400,000 'final demands' at the end of last year, ordering non-payers to settle the whole of the first year's poll tax within 7 days 'or face the consequences'. When - at the end of the week - over 80% of those 'final' demands had been totally ignored, exasperated council officials admitted that the response had been 'disappointing'. Strathclyde's experience has been typical. Lothian regional council are now well over 25.5 million pounds short in poll tax receipts. They're having to borrow money to make up the shortfall.

Ineffective

Many Scottish councils are now abandoning the use of bailiffs raids against those fined for non-payment, because they have proved so violently unpopular, and - in the face of large scale community mobilisations against them - completely ineffective.

Their plans to turn, instead, to 'arrestments' direct from people's bank accounts have also run into trouble. In late-November - the head of Scotland's clearing banks announced that they 'would be unable to cope with thousands of requests to trace the bank account details of thousands of non-payers'. Even if councils insisted on the costly and time-consuming process, he couldn't guarantee they would be able to find even 5-6% of the names.

Faced with a seeming dead-end in either direction, and an ever growing back-log of court action, Scottish councils are rapidly running out of options. Eric Milligan, head of Lothian region Labour council's finance department, spoke for many councils when, in December, he admitted: 'Such is the

scale of the non-payment movement in our region, that we may have to write-off large sums of outstanding poll tax'.

The December deadline for completing registration in England and Wales passed with many councils nowhere near finishing the job. Some have publicly warned the government that - because of the bureaucratic chaos that they're in - they may be unable to dispatch the first bills until May or June: putting everyone two months in arrears to start with.

Further government changes to poll tax law now seem certain, following the outraged response by industry bosses to news of the levels of Uniformed Business Rate (UBR) they'll be paying from April. In what can only be explained as a genuine civil service cock-up the upshot of the UBR calculations is that small business bosses in the south-east (ie loyal Tory voters in the Tory heartlands) face crippling rate rises, while big businesses in the Labour-heartlands of the north and north-east are set to enjoy massive cuts in their bills. The main bosses organisation - the CBI - has warned of tens of thousands of job losses and hundreds of business-bankruptcies.

The reason this should concern us, is, that in finding the money to sort out this mistake and relieve the burden on business, the Tories may well look to increasing the burden on domestic poll tax - meaning bigger poll tax bills - or in reducing the level of grant they give to councils - meaning an even greater threat to services. Businesses meanwhile, will look to make cost-savings by reducing their workforces, or trying to drive down wages.

Action on the industrial front against the poll tax received a major boost in January, when a majority of 17,000 local council workers in Leicester voted in favour of industrial action, if the city council tried to issue any redundancies because of poll tax-driven service cuts. The decision has already forced the council to back-

track and - for now - withdraw the threat of job losses. Leicester's example is certain to be followed by other council workforces as the extent of the threat to jobs and services hits home in the months ahead, as councils announce their budgets for the coming year.

Elsewhere, dole office workers in London have been on strike in protest at management plans to get them to pass claimants details from DSS files straight to poll tax officials. They've been joined by other groups of dole office workers who plan to refuse to process 'arrestments' of unpaid poll tax from non-payers who are signing on. And in Edinburgh, a group of local government workers are among the latest to announce plans to mount walk-outs if any employee in their department is penalised for non-payment.

Anxiety

The Labour Party's growing anxiety over the anti-poll tax movement is reflected in the decision of the National Executive not to sanction a national demonstration against the Charge in April - against the advice of Labour's front-bench poll tax spokesmen who desperately want an 'initiative' they can hide behind. In the past, Labour has been willing to sponsor harmless demonstrations as a low-risk way of parading its 'anti-poll tax' credentials. Now, Kinnock is quoted as fearing that groups committed to non-payment and strike action might 'take advantage' of the situation and expose Labour's true poll tax colours.

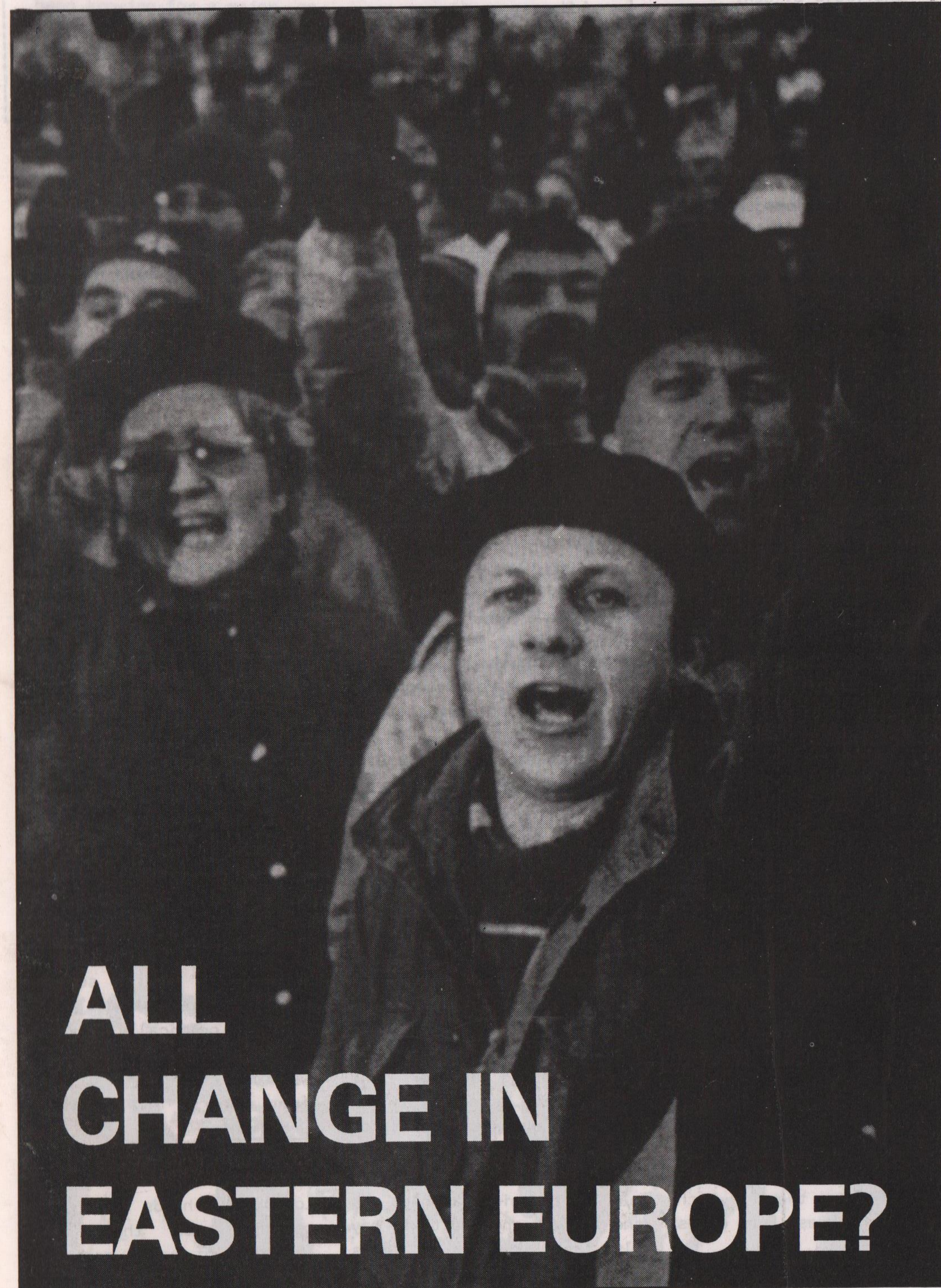
The implications of the Labour Party's total compliance with the Community Charge, seem, at last, to be sinking in with some sections of the party's 'Left' - particularly those whose dreams of building havens of 'municipal socialism' have been brought to an abrupt end by the poll tax. Amongst Labour-'Leftists', demoralisation and despondency is rife. In inner-London, for instance, Hackney Labour Party can't find any candidates willing to stand in 33 out of the 60 council seats to be contested in the May elections.

As the futility of pleading with council bureaucrats becomes ever more apparent, and council workers begin to organise themselves against threats from their employer, the necessity of linking the non-payment campaign in the community directly with the battle being waged by local government - and other - workers, becomes ever clearer.

The strength, resolve and determination of the non-payment campaign in Scotland must be used as inspiration to build the struggle in England and Wales. The coming weeks and months will be critical.

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism



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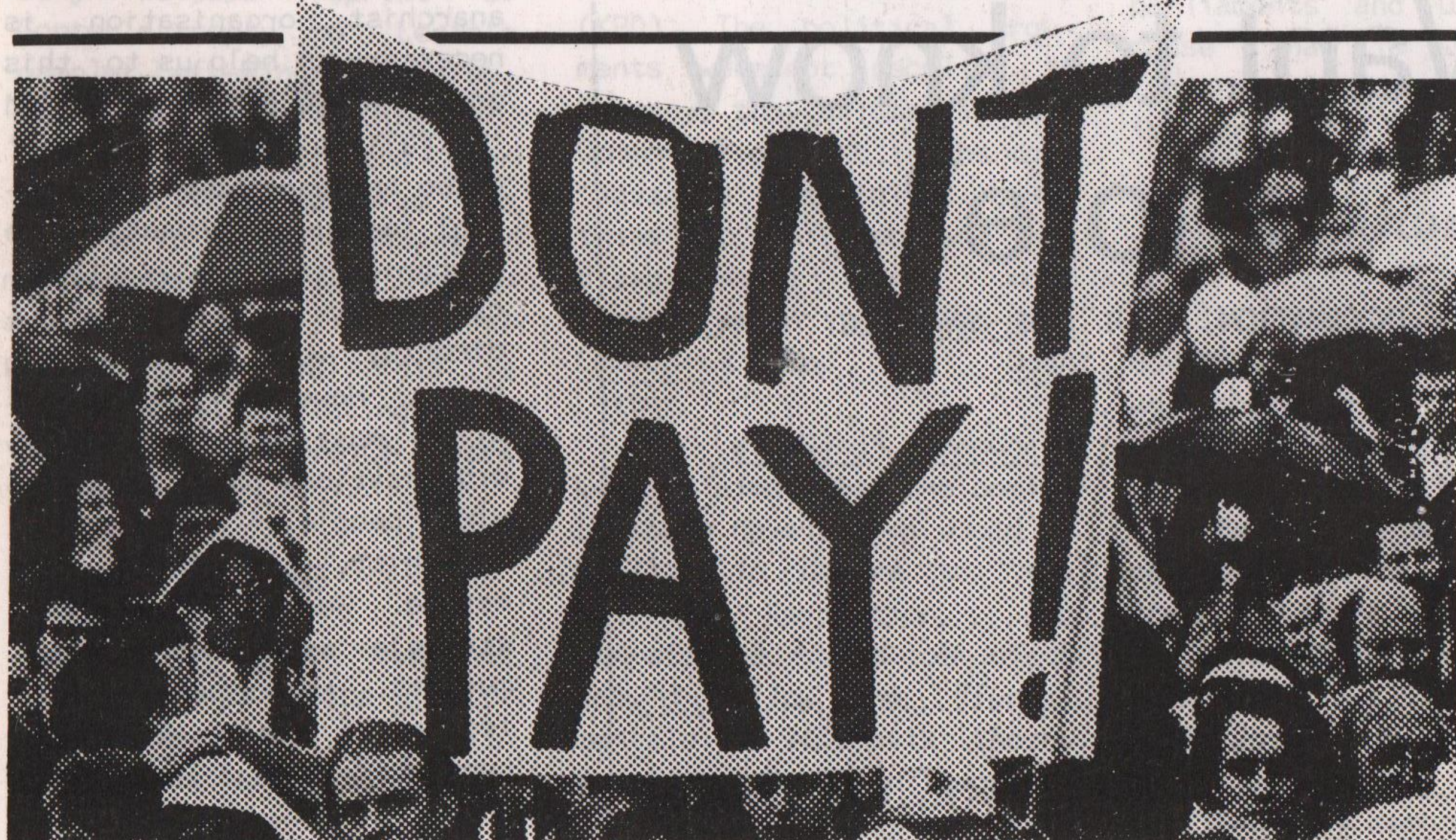
999 CREWS'
ACTION

THE REAL
RUSSIAN
OCTOBER

CIA IN
PANAMA

GERRY
HEALY:
DEAD AT
LAST

POLL TAX
BATTLE



THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the following areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Halifax, Kent, London, Newcastle, Northampton,

Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Swansea, and York.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 263, Sheffield S1 3EX.

ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up

debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to **Organise!** - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree without A&Ps at all).

The deadlines for the May 1990 issue are March 17 for features and reviews, and March 31 for letters and the news section.

LONDON ACF GROUP PUBLIC MEETING:

THE FALL OF STATE 'COMMUNISM' - THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST ALTERNATIVE

The East European regimes are falling. Does this mean the triumph of 'liberal' capitalism? Or is there an authentic alternative for those of us who are sickened by hierarchy and exploitation?

Wednesday Feb 28 1990

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
(nearest tube Holborn)

PRESS FUND

THIS ISSUE'S PRESS fund appeal has brought in just over 100 pounds, which - though good - is way below our target.

Several fund-raising events are in the pipeline - but we do really need more donations in from readers and those interested in supporting **Organise!**.

The ACF has set-up as Publications Commission to examine the possibility of producing an agitational

paper, and of improving the size and frequency of **Organise!**. But whatever plans we come up with, we'll need help in funding them - which is where the Press Fund comes in.

Our target for this issue remains 250 pounds. If you can help us towards that target, please send donations to:

ACF Press Fund, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham NG1.

SUBSCRIBE:

TO SUBSCRIBE TO **ORGANISE!** costs £1.80 per year (four issues) including post and packing.

Make cheques payable to "ACF" and send them to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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THE ACF'S RECENT dayschool, held in London, was attended by about seventy people. Most of those present were defending anarchist/communist, or left-communist positions, although a few pro-Bolshevik organisations were also 'represented'.

The discussions during the day were based around five workshops presented by ACF members, examining the history of class struggle anarchism, Marxism, the poll tax, racism and workplace struggles.

The diversity of views expressed by people who came made the discussions lively. It's clearly necessary to thrash out areas of disagreement between revolutionaries if we are to achieve tactical unity in struggle, and we hope that the day was useful in providing an arena for this.

It was certainly positive in clarifying some areas of agreement between those present; information was exchanged and some possibilities for more co-ordinated activity were examined.

Since we feel the dayschool was such a success, we are planning another one later in the year.

The contents of part of the dayschool's polltax workshop paper will be covered in our forthcoming pamphlet on the issue, and the text may also be printed in it's entirety for wider distribution.

As well as the poll tax pamphlet, we have several others in the pipeline. The nearest to completion is the text of a speech on "the myth of Labour's socialism", which

was presented by an ACF member at meetings in several towns last year.

The production of 'propaganda' continues to be a major aspect of our political activity as an organisation. Our recent national conference established a publication's commission, to examine the possibility of producing an agitational paper as well as **Organise!**.

We are currently clarifying our position on Ireland (in particular the connection between anti-imperialism and nationalism), and our recent national conference set up a commission on Ireland, which will write a pamphlet examining questions arising from the struggle there.

Other major discussions within the ACF at present concern the relationship of sexism and racism to the class struggle, and how sexism and racism should be fought in practice. Our recent conference made some progress in clarifying our position, as we agreed to abandon the use of the term 'patriarchy' as a separate social system. We will continue to critically reexamine our theory and activity, and welcome criticism and ideas from others in letters to **Organise!**.

London ACF holds discussion meetings on the first Thursday of every month at 8pm at the Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont St, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).

Copies of London ACF's **Common Cause** broadsheet are available free - with an s.a.e. - from the London address.

999 crews move onto the offensive

AS THE AMBULANCE pay dispute enters its fifth month, there are encouraging signs of a major rift developing between the striking crews and the union's negotiators.

At stations throughout the country, demands have been growing for a major escalation of the action: breaking with NUPE's 'official' strategy of relying on passive public support, by going all-out onto the offensive.

After 20 weeks - suspended without pay - ambulance workers have seen the dispute reach an impasse. They realise that all the union is offering to break the deadlock, are more 'heartfelt appeals' to the Tories to take note of public opinion.

Ambulance workers' frustration with the union's strategy, grew sharply in early January when NUPE's chief negotiator Roger Poole decided to ditch key elements of the crews' claim - a full 11.4% rise, pay-linkage to other 'emergency services', and a permanent pay formula - in yet another 'final' bid to bring Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke back to the table for talks.

Time and again, the union has shown its 'flexibility', and eagerness to stitch up a quick compromise deal with Clarke - well short of their 'official' public claim - but he has repeatedly

rebuffed them.

The union seems genuinely surprised by Clarke's 'intransigence'. Poole has made clear the union's willingness to agree (to what in practice would be) a 'no strike' guarantee - if Clarke will only deliver an ongoing pay review formula. Having failed to sell their members the derisory 6.5% offer last year, NUPE officials have publicly stated that they 'never want to have to go through another ambulance dispute'.

Deal

In pleading with the government to let the claim go to binding arbitration, NUPE has portrayed ACAS not as part of the bosses' pay apparatus, but as an independent, neutral third-party who can be relied upon for a 'just settlement'.

The government hope to decisively defeat the ambulance crews and - with the help of the union - enforce a minimal pay-rise on them, to set a benchmark for the coming round of pay negotiations with hundreds of thousands of other public sector workers.

A major pay victory for ambulance staff would encourage the nurses, civil servants, teachers and doctors (whose pay rounds open on April 1) to press

ahead with higher wage demands - and so threaten the government's 'anti-inflationary' pay-restraint plans.

It's the union's hopeless, dead-end strategy that has encouraged crews to begin to take matters into their own hands.

Some ambulance stations have again decided only to take calls direct from the public, hospitals and doctors - and not those passed to them by 999 controllers. Other crews are planning to re-occupy their depots.

What's characterised the dispute so far has been the constant battle between crews determined to keep an accident and emergency service running, and health service chiefs determined to stop them. While suspended crews have worked double-shifts without pay, ambulance bosses have lifted insurance cover on vehicles to stop crews leaving their stations; they've confiscated keys and removed batteries. They've ordered telephone lines to ambulance stations be cut. Several have threatened court action against any crew that responds to an emergency call.

The stand-in 'emergency service' being run by the army and police, has left a steady catalogue of fatalities in its wake. Hospital consultants report a 'significant increase' in the

number of patients found to be dead on arrival.

At least three people have died in army ambulance road smashes - as untrained squaddies try to navigate tight city-streets at speed.

Bosses who've suspended crews have had no hesitation in calling them out on duty, when the army service is caught out of its depth. After picking up the pieces at incidents often made worse by the army's incompetence, crews have been immediately re-suspended on their return to station. The callous cynicism ambulance bosses have displayed over this has been beneath contempt.

Now some stations - in London and elsewhere - having begun balloting on all-out strike action: including the withdrawal of all emergency cover. But it's unclear (as we write this) whether crews plan to continue answering calls direct from the public or not - different stations appear to saying different things.

Push

While the moves towards all-out action reflect the growing militancy of ambulance crews, and their willingness to push beyond the constraints of the union, it's a strategy fraught with dangers and contradictions.

An absolute strike might just force the Tories to cave in and come up with a bit more money - but it could also threaten the lives of working class people in need of emergency medical help, and undermine support for the kind of effective class action that would win the full claim.

Ambulance crews work in a service industry vital to other working class people - and the kind of strike action they can mount is different to that open to - say - car workers.

Ultimately, an isolated all-out strike by ambulance crews is industrial action still stuck within the 'logic' of militant 'trade



Continued over >

unionism'. Why must they fight alone?

Crews would do better to tackle a far bigger obstacle to them winning themselves a swift victory: their continuing - union-enforced - isolation.

Linkage

Roger Poole has made it clear throughout the dispute that the union regard ambulance workers as a 'special case'. He's emphasised that the union would in no way use a 'fair settlement' for ambulance workers, as a leverage to improve other health workers pay settlements.

While huge support for the crews' pay-fight exists right across the health service, and beyond, no real

attempts have yet been made to mobilise that support into effective solidarity action.

Crews' growing disgust with their union, could be used as the basis for appealing directly to other health service workers to strike in support of both the ambulance workers and their imminent pay demands.

The widespread discontent that exists in the health service - from nurses bitter over regrading, staff threatened by competitive tendering, to opposition to the opt-out proposals - means there's a real basis for spreading the ambulance workers dispute, throughout the service.

In place of the competing union structures that will inevitably try to

block such moves, open strike committees should be set-up to organise the most wide-scale plan of action possible.

A generalised pay-revolt throughout the whole of the health service, is exactly what neither the government - nor the unions - want to be faced with.

Spread

There have already been examples of industrial action in support of the crews - not just limited to the health service. In London on December 6, construction workers, local government workers, teachers, bus drivers, and engineers joined in a day of action. Rallies linking all health workers

have been held at some London hospitals. Some Telecom engineers have refused to cut phone links to ambulance depots.

All of these examples are just a glimpse of the kind of action that is possible, if crews dump the divisive and damaging strategy of their union, and start to take direct control of the dispute themselves.

With the government feeling under increasing pressure from the simmering pay revolt (growing at Fords and elsewhere), victory for the ambulance workers could trigger cross-industry wage demands that would wreck all the Tories hopes of 'pay restraint'.

immediately drugs allegations appeared in the US press. The US is certainly not prepared to give over control of the canal to an unreliable and powerful regime, and required either a compliant puppet government or a reason to reverse the Treaty in the face of tyranny.

The invasion succeeded not only in deposing Noriega but also ensured the installation of such a government in the name of Guillermo Endara, who lost last May's elections due to a rigged ballot.

Church

The churches position in this is less clear. When Noriega entered the Vatican Embassy on Christmas Eve, the Vatican could not wait to get him out. How he stayed so long is probably for two reasons. Firstly the Catholic church is seen as one of the guardians against US imperialism, for instance in El Salvador where some church leaders have gained support of the left (and the left in Britain in some cases). It could not be seen to be giving in freely to an "occupying power" and compromise relations with other Latin American states. Secondly the church is well known for its worldwide money



NORIEGA

from the supply of arms and intelligence to the Contras in Nicaragua, to protecting the Shah of Iran for four months immediately after the 'Islamic revolution' in 1979.

The real reason for the invasion and this apparent turnaround by the US is more to do with the fact that according to the Panama Canal Treaty signed by Carter in 1979, control of the canal is due to be returned to the Panamanian government at the end of 1999. In spite of his

usefulness to America, Noriega was never the most reliable of allies; he was also trading secrets, technology and arms with Cuba, the Sandinistas, the Eastern Bloc, Palestine, Libya and Syria, even as far as tipping Castro before the US invasion of Grenada.

This was known and tolerated but the last straw came in 1985 when Noriega refused to back America directly against the Nicaraguan government, and almost

laundering activities including those through Panamanian companies as became apparent during the Banco Ambrosiano scandal and the mysterious death of Vatican linked banker Roberto Calvi, who was found hanging in London from Blackfriars Bridge in 1982. Noriega would be in a good position to make things difficult for Vatican business. Therefore it is also seems likely that US call for the freezing by European banks of accounts controlled by Noriega, on the very same day as his entry to the nunciature, was more to do with threatening the Vatican who would stand to lose financially by investigations into banking activities. Money talks, while on the surface both sides argue morality.

Democracy, it is said, is now restored. What the media does not like to say is during the invasion, far from celebrating in the streets the end of a corrupt dictatorship, the working class were busy looting shops and luxury apartments and Endara was forced to mark the beginning his rule by declaring an overnight curfew.

Hong Kong hypocrisy

WHILST WESTERN GOVERNMENTS are welcoming with open arms the so called "Refugees from Communism" of Eastern Europe, there is an ongoing situation in Hong Kong where the British government is forcibly sending back Vietnamese immigrants, and preparing for the hand over of the colony to China in 1997.

Past years have seen the exodus of thousands of 'boat people' from Vietnam, to escape the poverty and famine caused by the war, and the economic restrictions imposed by the US afterwards. They also hoped to escape the political repression of the ruling parties - many refugees are fearful for their lives should they return. In November 1989 the British government announced its plans to 'forcibly repatriate 39,000 of the 57,000 boat people living in Hong Kong refugee camps. In these concentration camps, far from extolling the 'goodwill' of the West, the authorities have subjected the Vietnamese to food shortages and there have been

outbreaks of cholera. Riot police have been sent in to put down any attempts by the people to defend themselves against being dragged away against their will.

Handover

At the same time the government has announced its intention to give entry rights to Britain for up to 50,000 'important' people and their families (250,000 in total), when Hong Kong becomes part of China in 1997. These include the top business people, civil servants and the police.

The hypocrisy here is clear. It's all a question of economic worth. Britain and China both want to inherit the top people and ignore the rest, and this is why China is extremely unhappy about the British legislation. As for refugees, they are worth nothing.

In Britain, some politicians have used the situation to argue for even stricter immigration laws. Tory back-benchers like

Norman Tebbit have gone against the government, worried that being 'soft' on immigration of any sort will lose them support in the next General Election, saying that Britain never wanted a multi-cultural society. Others are using the opportunity to argue against the handing over of Hong Kong to a 'communist' power. Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, Gerald Kaufman also spoke out against immigration from Hong Kong.

Racism has always been used by the ruling class to divert our attention away from real issues. When the capitalists need cheap or skilled labour at home, immigration is not a problem - hence the recent welcoming of Eastern Europeans by the West, and 'valuable' Hong Kong and South African professionals.

When the labour is no longer needed, racism is used to section out part of the working class for scapegoating. Their aim is to prevent us seeing that the capitalist class is international, and we can only fight them as a united international working class.

New ACF pamphlet:

Beating the poll tax

Published in mid-February, with the arrival of poll tax bills in England and Wales just a few weeks away, this new ACF pamphlet outlines the kind of collective class action that can crush the Community Charge.

It examines the strength of poll tax resistance in Scotland so far - and exposes the role of the Labour Party in trying to put down this revolt.

It explains the objectives that lie behind the poll tax, and the cynical way whole sections of the Left have tried to move in on, and suffocate, the growing opposition to it.

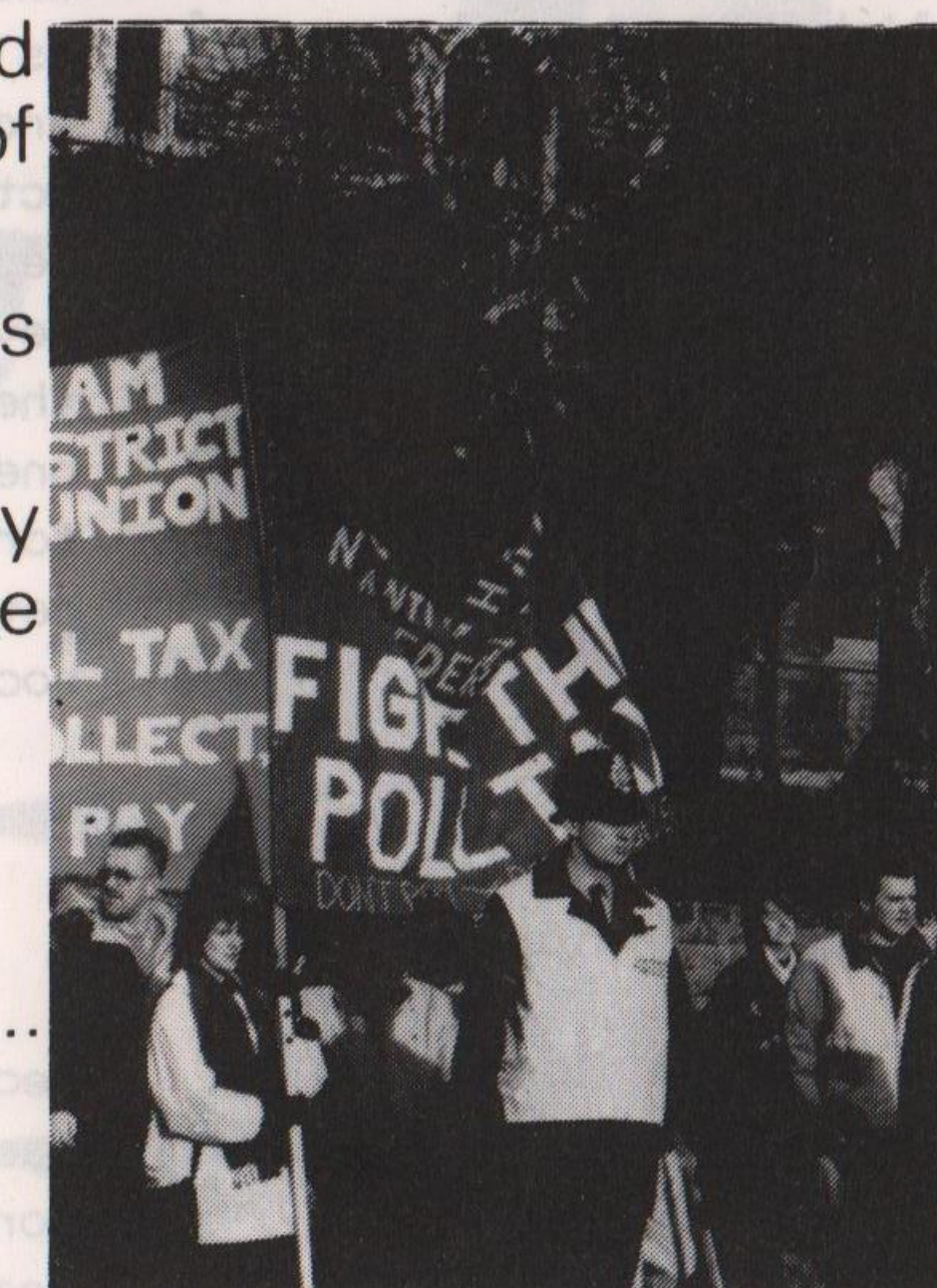
This is a brand-new pamphlet, completely revised and updated.

Available from: **ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.**

Please send me copies of **Beating the poll tax** at 60p each, I enclose (Cheques made payable to the ACF)

Name:

Address



The *real* October of the workers and peasants

Libertarian communists criticise the current events in the Eastern Bloc from an entirely different starting point to those who describe the Soviet Union as a 'degenerate workers state'.

It was not just the 'evils of Stalinism' that 'corrupted' the 1917 revolution, leading to the necessary overthrow of dictatorships over the whole soviet sphere last year. Elitism, lack of accountability and brutal repression are the inevitable outcome when a Bolshevik party takes power.

This article, written only 10 years after the October Revolution by one of its most enthusiastic participants and virulent critics, shows the inherently authoritarian and capitalist nature of Bolshevism. It puts the current events behind the iron curtain in their true perspective. It also bemoans the absence of an influential organisation capable of putting across truly revolutionary ideas in 1917, a criticism as relevant today to the situation in the Eastern Bloc.

This article was translated and published in 1974 by the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists, in London. It has been edited by the ACF.

THE TWO OCTOBERS, BY PIOTR ARCHINOV

THE VICTORIOUS REVOLUTION of the workers and peasants in 1917 was legally established in the Bolshevik calendar as the October Revolution, but this is only partly the case.

Decisive

In October 1917 the workers and peasants of Russia surmounted a colossal obstacle in the development of their Revolution. They abolished the normal power of the capitalist class, but even before that they achieved something of equal revolutionary importance and perhaps even more fundamental. By taking the economic power of the capitalist class, and the land from its country owners, they achieved the right to free and uncontrolled work in the towns, if not total control of the factories.

Consequently, it was well before October that the revolutionary workers destroyed the base of capitalism. All that was left was its superstructure. If there had not been this general expropriation of capitalism by the workers, the destruction of the bourgeois

state machine would not have succeeded in any way. The resistance of the owners would have been much stronger. On the other hand, the objectives of the social revolution in October were not limited to the overthrow of capitalist power. The workers faced a long period of practical development in social self-management, but it was to fail in the following years.

Therefore, in considering the evolution of the Russian socialist Revolution as a whole, October appears only as a stage, although powerful and decisive. That is why October does not by itself represent the whole social revolution. In thinking of the victorious October days, one must consider those historical circumstances as determined by the Russian social revolution.

Agrarian

Another no less important peculiarity is that October has two meanings- that of the working masses (including the Anarchist Communists) who participated in the social revolution, and that of the political party that captured power from this aspiration to social revolution, which betrayed and stifled all

further development. An enormous gulf exists between these two interpretations of October. The October of the workers and peasants meant the suppression of the power of the parasite classes in the name of equality and self management. The Bolshevik October meant the conquest of power by the party of the revolutionary intelligentsia, and the installation of 'State Socialism' with its 'socialist' methods of governing the masses.

THE WORKERS' OCTOBER

The February Revolution caught the different revolutionary parties in complete disarray, and without any doubt they were considerably surprised by the profound social character of the dawning revolution. At first, no one except the Anarchists wanted to believe it. The Bolshevik Party, which made out it always expressed the most radical aspirations of the working class, could not go beyond the limits of the bourgeois revolution in its aims.

Bolsheviks

It was only at the April conference that they asked themselves what was really happening in Russia. Was it only the overthrow of Tsarism, or was the Revolution going further - as far as the overthrow of capitalism? This eventually threw up the question of what tactics to employ. Lenin became conscious of the social character of the revolution before the other Bolsheviks, and emphasized the necessity of seizing power.

He saw a decisive advance in the workers and peasants movement which was increasingly undermining the

industrial and rural bourgeois foundations. A unanimous agreement on these questions could not be reached even up to the October days. The Party manoeuvred all this time between the social slogans of the masses and the conception of a social-democratic revolution. Whilst not opposing the slogan of the petit- and grand-bourgeoisie for a Constituent Assembly, the Party did its best to control the masses, striving to keep up with their ever increasing pace.

During this time, the workers marched impetuously forward, relentlessly running their enemies of both left and right into the ground. The big rural landowners began to evacuate the countryside, fleeing from the insurgent peasantry and seeking protection for themselves and their possessions in the towns. Meanwhile, the peasantry began a direct redistribution of the land, and did not want to hear of peaceful co-existence with the landlords. In the towns as well, a sudden change took place between the workers and the owners of industry. Workers' committees sprang up in every industry, intervening directly in production, taking it out of the hands of the owners. Thus in different parts of the country, the workers got down to the socialisation of industry.

Soviets

Simultaneously, all of revolutionary Russia was covered with a network of workers' and peasants' soviets, which began to function as organs of self-management. They developed, prolonged, and defended the Revolution. Capitalist rule and order still existed nominally in the country, but a vast system of social and economic workers' self-

management was being created alongside it.

By their very appearance, this regime of soviets and factory committees threatened the state system with destruction. It must be made clear that the birth and development of the soviets and factory committees had nothing to do with authoritarian principles. On the contrary, they were in the full sense of the term organs of social and economic self-management and were opposed to the state machine which sought to direct the masses, and they prepared for a decisive battle against it.

"The factories to the workers, the land to the peasants" - these were the slogans by which the revolutionary masses of town and country participated in the defeat of the state machine of the possessing classes in the name of a new social system which was based on factory committees and the economic and social soviets. These catch-words circulated from one end of workers' Russia to the other, deeply affecting the direct action against the coalition government.

October

As was explained above, the workers and peasants had already worked towards the entire reconstruction of the industrial and agrarian system of Russia before October 1917. The agrarian question was virtually solved by the poor peasants as early as June-September 1917, and the urban workers too had seized the means of production, and put social and economic self-management into operation. The October revolution of the workers overthrew the last and the greatest obstacle to their revolution - the state power of the owning classes, already defeated and disorganised.

This last move paved the way for the full achievement of the social revolution, the creative reconstruction of society already pointed at by the workers in the preceding months. That is the October of the workers and peasants. It meant a powerful attempt by the exploited manual workers to destroy totally

the foundations of capitalist society, and to build a workers society based on the principles of equality, independence and self-management of the towns and countryside.

However, this October did not reach its natural conclusion. It was violently interrupted by the October of the Bolsheviks, who progressively extended their dictatorship throughout the country.

THE BOLSHEVIK OCTOBER

All the statist parties, including the Bolsheviks, limited the boundaries of the Russian revolution to the installation a social democratic regime. It was only when the workers and peasants of all Russia began to shake the agraro-bourgeois order, when the social revolution proved to be an irreversible historical fact, that the Bolsheviks began discussing the social character of the revolution, and the consequent necessity of modifying their tactics. There was no unanimity in the party on the questions of the character and orientation of the events that had taken place, even up to October. Furthermore, the October Revolution as well as the events which followed developed while the Central Committee of the party was divided into two tendencies.

Lenin

Whilst one part of the Central Committee, headed by Lenin, foresaw the inevitable social revolution and proposed preparation for the seizure of power, the other tendency, led by Zinoviev and Kamenev, denounced the attempt at social revolution as adventurist, and went no further than calling for support of the Constituent Assembly in which the Bolsheviks would occupy the seats furthest to the Left. Lenin's point of view prevailed, and the Party began to mobilize its forces in case of a decisive struggle by the masses against the Constituent Assembly.

The Party threw itself into infiltrating the factory

While the mass of workers considered them to be the organs of social and economic self-management, the committees and the soviets of the workers' deputies, doing its best to obtain the most mandates possible in order to control their actions. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks conception of, and approach to, the soviets and factory committees was fundamentally different to that of the masses.

Bolshevik Party looked on them as the means by which it was possible to snatch the power of the sinking bourgeoisie, and afterwards to use this power to serve the interests of the Party. Thus an enormous difference was revealed between the revolutionary masses and the Bolshevik Party in their ideas and meaning of October.

In the first case, it was the question of the defeat of power, being replaced by workers' and peasants' soviets. In the second case, it was the question of seizing power and subordinating all revolutionary forces to the Party. This

divergence played a fatal role in determining the future course of the Russian Revolution.

Power

The Bolshevik's success is explained by their ability to substitute the idea of a Soviet power for the social revolution and the social emancipation of the masses. For them, these two ideas appear as non-contradictory for it was possible to understand Soviet power as the power of the soviets, and this allowed them to substitute the idea of Soviet power for that of the Revolution. Nevertheless, in their realisation and consequences, these ideas were in violent contradiction with each other.

The conception of Soviet power incarnated in the Bolshevik state, was transformed into an traditional bourgeois power, concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who subjected to their authority all that was fundamental and most powerful in the life of the people - the

Continued on page 12



Peter Arshinov (1887?-1937)

[1926]

THE BREATHTAKING EVENTS of the last few months in Eastern Europe seem to have taken everyone by surprise. There have been mass demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, as hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in Prague. The Berlin Wall, that hated symbol of the Cold War, has been physically destroyed and the border restrictions between East and West Germany have been relaxed.

Poland has seen a non-'Communist' participation in the government for the first time since the Second World War. And most dramatic of all, Romania has seen the demise of Ceaucescu and his corrupt Stalinist regime, as civil war broke out at the end of last year.

Who could have predicted - perhaps only six months ago - that one by one the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe would begin to crumble, and then, with the accelerating pace of change, totter on the edge of collapse.

However, despite the scale, pace and suddenness of these changes, it is possible to trace their origin in the events that have been shaping Europe since Stalin took power in Russia at the end of the 1920s.

Stalin instigated a series of policies that, in many ways, were the logical extension of Trotsky's 'War Communism'. Stalin, with the full backing of the 'Communist' Party, forcibly collectivised agriculture and instigated a massive industrial programme designed to 'modernise' the Russian economy. This was the ultimate expression of State power, a planned (or command) economy that was planned not by the working class who would do the work and need the products, but by the bureaucrats and gurus of the 'Communist' Party.

Worries

Until very recently, nothing much had changed in Russia, but it became increasingly obvious that the Russian economy, and those modelled on it in the Eastern Bloc, had failed even in the most basic terms: shops were empty, there were endless queues for bread, meat and other basic foodstuffs, and 'luxuries' (like warm clothes and shoes that would fit) were in even shorter supply.

This was all the legacy of Stalin's programme. Far from providing for the Russian people, Stalin's 'Socialism in one Country' had led to ridiculous and unplanned shortages and surpluses: anarchists have always argued that this must be the result when production and distribution are 'planned' by a centralised State, rather than by the full participation of the working class.

As Nikolai Shmelyev put it (ironically, in this context!), "Attempts to establish 100% control over

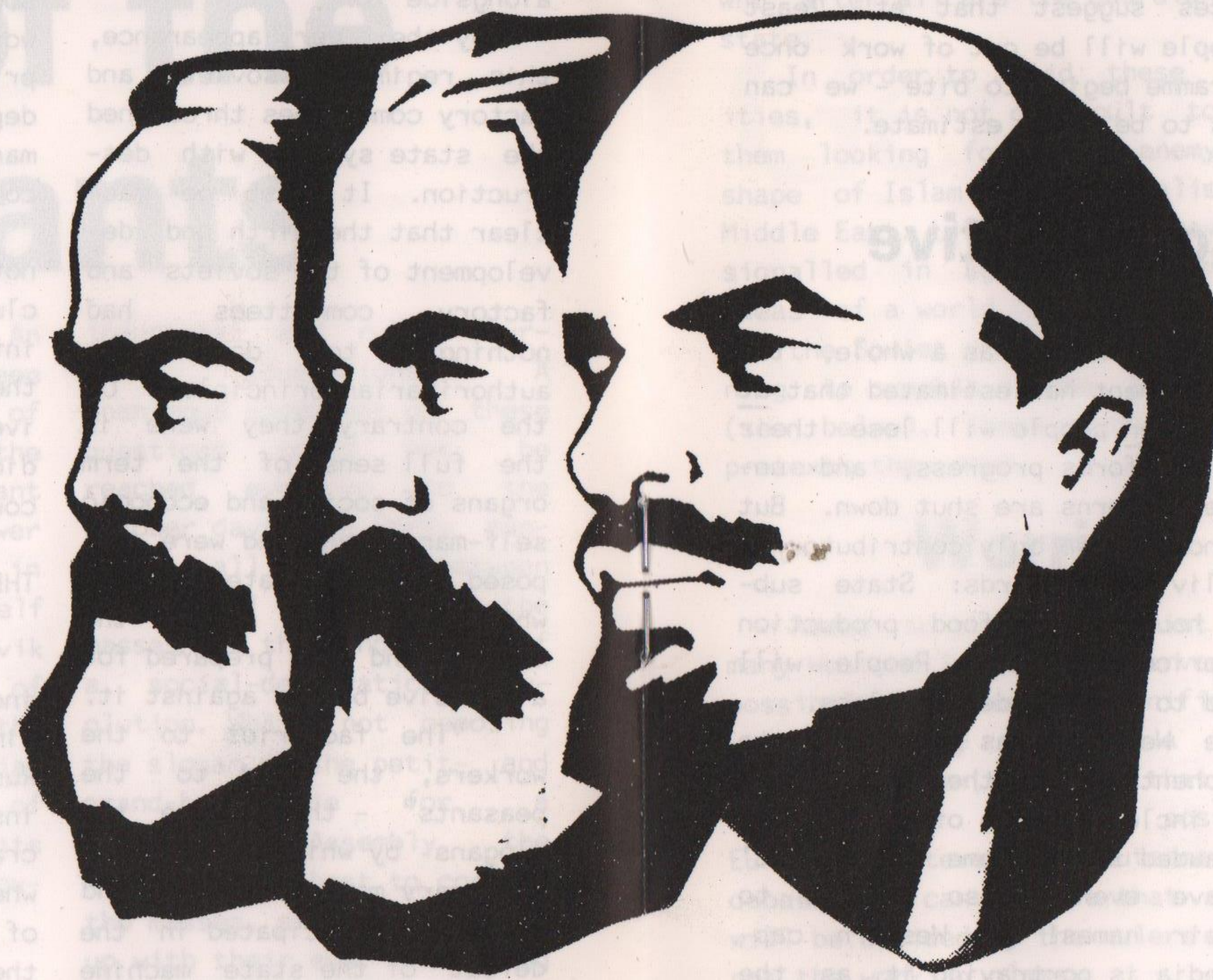
everything lead to such spontaneity, to such an uncontrollable situation, that all anarchy (sic) becomes a paragon of order by comparison".

Party

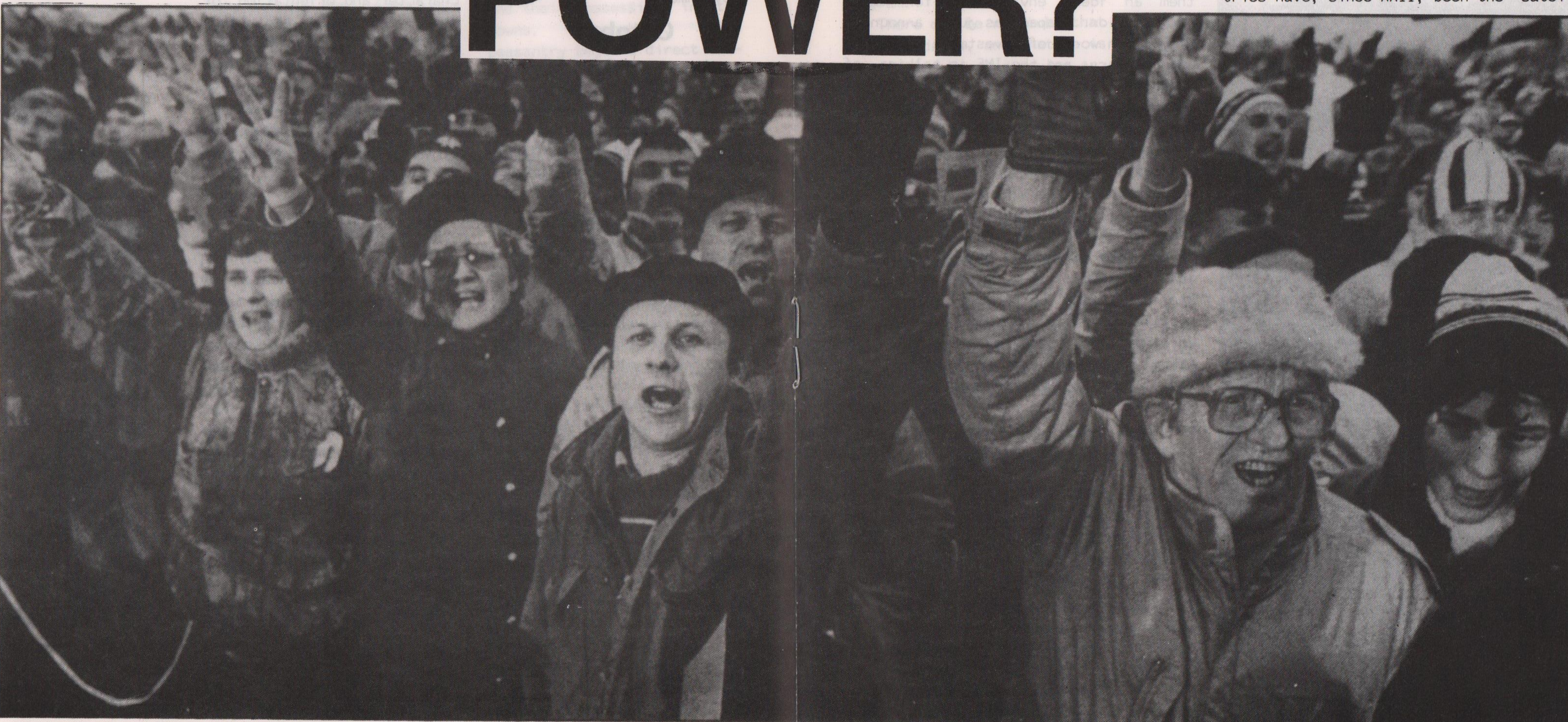
It was clear to the 'Communist' Party that something had to be done if they were to retain credibility and power. But the inertia of the bureaucracy (which resisted all attempts at change), the enormous expenditure on arms that was required to finance the cold war, and the sheer stagnation of the Russian economy made any reforms extremely difficult to implement.

Added to this, previous reforms had failed. The events of 1956 in Hungary, and of 1968 in Czechoslovakia were witness to this. In both cases, it was not because Moscow wanted to crush reform movements in these countries that it sent in the troops, but because the reforms that it needed to revitalise the economy of the Eastern Bloc were so much less than the aspirations of the working class of these countries. People simply didn't listen to the reformers and given the hint of a chance, decided to take matters into their own hands. Moscow, fearful of a working class revolution toppling their regime, crushed the rebellions by armed force.

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he saw that for economic reform to be successful, political reform under



PEOPLE POWER?



the guise of 'democratisation' would be necessary to overcome the inertia of the bureaucracy and the stagnation of the economy.

His hope was that this would lead to the rejuvenation of the economy, and thus secure the continuing dictatorship of the 'Communist' Party, and yet further strengthen it by increasing its economic muscle. It is this that is the driving motive behind 'perestroika' (or 'restructuring'), not some miraculous sudden abjuration of Stalinist doctrine.

Authority

Gorbachev's other well-known policy, 'glasnost' (or 'openness') is another vital part of this plan. If the Russian economy is to be reconstructed, Gorbachev will need to court the goodwill of Western governments to prepare the way for introducing 'free market' techniques. 'Glasnost', both within Russia and the world at large, is an integral part of this process. So, Gorbachev has broken with Stalinism, but he has absolutely no intention of allowing his class, the ruling class, to fall from power, nor any weakening of the CPSU as a leading party in Russia itself.

It is against this backdrop that we must see the events of the last few months in Eastern Europe. The 'Communist' governments of these countries have, since WWII, been the satel-

lites of Moscow. They have been little but puppets, following Moscow's line in all of their policies. Gorbachev and his supporters are themselves part of this same bureaucracy, and the reforms that they have forced through in order to introduce 'market forces' and retain power have lessened the overt oppression of the Soviet State, and have in turn created a 'space' into which protests could move throughout the Eastern Bloc.

The picture of 'peoples revolutions' that have toppled these regimes, a picture that has been put about by Western media and politicians, is quite simply wrong. We must ask, what is the difference between now and Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Tianamen Square 1989? The answer is: nothing! Are we really to believe that a few mass protests could not be crushed by the regime if they wanted to? No, it is precisely because Gorbachev sees these reforms as necessary that the room for these protests has been created by the bureaucracy, and why Gorbachev's supporters in the Politburos of these countries have not allowed the remaining Stalinist conservatives to crush them. Indeed, Gorbachev has made it clear that Russia will not back internal military action by the leaderships of these countries, a strategy not without its risks.

When we look at the changes that have occurred in each country, we can see exactly how successful this has been. Poland was the first country to break with Stalinism when Solidarity formed a coalition government with the 'Communists' in the middle of last year.

But this 'deal' - which has finally seen Solidarity show its true colours as the ruler of the Polish working class, not the instrument of its emancipation - has left the 'Communists' in charge of the army and the security forces, much of the media, and allowed them the continued 'right' to impose martial law should they choose to do so. A few prominent 'Communists' may have been removed, but they have been replaced with new rulers in collusion with many of the old regime.

Revolt

The most striking example of how little these changes have to offer the working class has come with the 'revolution' in Romania. Despite the blood of many ordinary Romanians having been spilt to end Ceaucescu's dictatorship, little has changed.

It has become clear that even before the demonstrations in Timisoara and Bucharest, the so-called 'National Salvation Front' was meeting in secret sessions, ready to seize power should the opportunity present itself - in one of these sessions, the head of the

Securitate was even present! The army, quick to protect its own interests, only sided with the people when it became clear that they could direct and control events to their own designs.

There can be no doubt that there was much sacrifice and bravery in the brief but bloody civil war that ensued, but after the victory, bought with working class blood, it was the political opportunists of the 'National Salvation Front' who seized power, not the people of Romania. They soon began to co-operate with 'dissenting' 'Communists' from Ceaucescu's regime, all of whom were supporters and beneficiaries of his brutality. At the moment of writing, all this resembles a 'coup' rather than a revolution.

Terrorise

Meanwhile, the army remained their guarantor to power, and took to guarding the Securitate building in Bucharest that contains all the secret records that were kept on thousands of people, and were used to terrorise and oppress dissenters of the regime. These records have not been destroyed and no-one but the new authorities are allowed to look at them.

In the outlying regions, there have been reports that even these cosmetic

changes have not been enacted. Securitate still walk free, 'Communists' still wield power. As Stefan Heym, a 'left wing' activist in East Germany has said of his own country, "The structures of the police, security and army are still there, and in the middle ranks, the same people are still in charge", and this seems typical of all of Eastern Europe.

This is just an indication of what seems to be in store for the working class of Eastern Europe. In every country similar groups of intellectuals, poets, playwrights, and 'dissidents' have surfaced to take power and co-operate with the authorities. East Germany has the 'New Forum', Czechoslovakia the 'Civic Forum'. The common factor is that these groups are all middle-class in nature, a ruling-class-in-waiting that will co-operate with the old regime in the new but equally devastating forms of capitalist oppression that they want to introduce.

Poland again provides us with an excellent example of what can be expected if these new governments are allowed to settle into their stride. Lech Walesa has vowed many times to introduce a rapacious 'free market', and has recently completed a tour of Western capital to encourage investment. The Solidarity government has outlawed

strikes, and recent estimates from their own sources suggest that at least 400,000 people will be out of work once this programme begins to bite - we can expect this to be a low estimate.

Competitive

In the Eastern Bloc as a whole, the Russian government has estimated that at least 15 million people will lose their jobs as the reforms progress, and uncompetitive concerns are shut down. But this will not be the only contributor to cuts in living standards: State subsidies in housing and food production will go, prices will soar. People will be expected to work harder for less.

In the West, it has been hard to find opponents to these changes. Everyone, including much of the left, have applauded them - some 'Communist' parties have even gone so far as to change their names! The Western capitalist media is portraying it as the final defeat of communism, and are hailing a return to the 'natural higher order' of capitalism.

There can be no doubt that many Western capitalists are rubbing their hands in glee at the new opportunities that will fall to them to make even more vast profits on the backs of the working class. The cheap labour costs and complicity of the 'new' governments offers them an ideal environment for their exploitation. Japan has just announced \$2 billion worth of investment to Poland and Hungary, and the IMF is talking of making loans to Poland and Romania. The EEC has just offered membership to East Germany when its 'democratisation' is complete.

Despite this, both Thatcher and Bush have pleaded with Gorbachev to exercise restraint. Their fear is that if the pace of change is too great, and that their ally Gorbachev may be toppled, leading either to a slide back into Stalinism, or the rise of a far more hostile political movement rooted in working class struggle. Above all, the stability of the East/West divide has been lost, and Western capitalists do not want to run the risk of losing their new-found markets and cheap labour pools in an uncontrolled re-alignment of countries.

But there are still many unanswered questions for the West. These changes mean that the rationale for the Cold War, rooted as it is in the idea of the 'Communist' enemy, has collapsed. The USA and her European allies have for years poured enormous quantities of capital into the arms industries under this pretext. It is difficult to imagine these multinationals taking kindly to a cut in this expenditure, and indeed most Western governments will be extremely

loath to cut back their armed forces, who after all are the guardians of the state.

In order to avoid these possibilities, it is not difficult to imagine them looking for a new enemy in the shape of Islamic Fundamentalism in the Middle East. Libya and Iran have already signalled in aggressive terms their ideas of a world 'Islamic Revolution', and the Soviet empire is already beginning to crumble on the Iranian border (see below). These might be the only pretexts they need.

Worries

Added to these capitalist worries, many Western leaders are nervous at the possibility of German re-unification. A united Germany would be a formidable economic power, and one that is in a strategically dominant position in Europe. Whatever the outcome of this debate, we can be sure that the issue will be decided by the rulers of Europe, not the working class.

Gorbachev's own position is extremely precarious. Other sections of the 'Communist' bureaucracy could easily move against him if they thought that the Russian empire was breaking up, or that their own power was being threatened. Just such a thing happened after Brezhnev took over from the 'reforming' Khrushchev, with the Stalinist conservatives re-establishing their own program.

There can be no doubt that Gorbachev is expendable, and that he is not unassailable. He is pursuing an extremely dangerous strategy that many in the 'Communist' Party have shied away from before. Fully aware of this, Gorbachev has had no choice but to concede the right of 'self determination' to his Eastern Bloc allies, but is extremely reluctant to make such concessions in Russia.

Nevertheless, there has been widespread nationalist unrest in Azerbaijan, with many people in the province of Nakhichevan calling for their region to be united with Iran. In the same region there is now an ongoing state of civil war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Recent years have seen the re-emergence of active nationalist movements in the Baltic states, and the Lithuanian 'Communist' Party has just announced its formal separation from Moscow. Further secessions and fragmentations of this nature seem to be on the cards in Latvia and Estonia.

These nationalist tendencies have fermented under repeated invasion and Imperialist domination, and have found expression because of Gorbachev's reforms. But like all nationalist movements they are reactionary in nature, and the emergence of 'independent'

statelets in the backwaters of the Russian empire has absolutely nothing to offer their working class, who will continue to be exploited by their respective rulers. But for Gorbachev, they are a formidable challenge, as the recent deployment of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan has demonstrated.

A further challenge to Gorbachev's 'perestroika', and possibly a far more serious one, is the outbreak of labour unrest in Russia. The miners of the Ukraine and in Siberia proved to be one of Gorbachev's biggest embarrassments last year, when they defied the official 'no strike' policy. In so doing, they set up their own strike committees and support organisations, rejecting the official state unions which had become discredited as nothing more than another wing of the bureaucracy.

This dispute is just a foretaste of what is to come as the reconstruction continues, hi-lighting the role of the state unions as they begin to join in the governmental demands for wage cuts and job reductions.

But there is no doubt that the bureaucracy would rather see the growth of 'free' trades unions after the Western model, than a revitalised class struggle by the whole working class. It is an open question as to whether these workers can broaden their struggle to

call into question the whole process of reconstruction in Russia.

Nationalist unrest and heightened class struggle are not the only manifestations of the instability in the Eastern bloc. There has been an explosion of fledgling opposition movements in Romania, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Rhetoric

This not only exposes the Western rhetoric of demands being made only for a political and economic re-alignment along the model of Western 'democratic' and capitalist lines, but also makes it clear that Gorbachev is far from being in total control of the situation. The outcome of 'Perestroika' cannot be predetermined by the ruling classes, neither East nor West.

There is a great potential for revolutionary change, but in order that the people of Eastern Europe and ultimately Russia as well, do not become the latest and most tragic victims of the exploitation and degradation of capitalism, it is necessary to fight capitalism on a global scale. It is the working class of the whole world, united and determined in our own creativity, that can make true communism a reality.



Czech workers arguing with Soviet soldiers in 1968.



Continued from page 7

social revolution. Therefore, with the help of the 'power of the soviets' - in which the Bolsheviks monopolized most of the posts - they effectively attained total power and proclaimed their dictatorship throughout revolutionary Russia.

This enabled them to strangle all revolutionary currents in disagreement with their doctrine of altering the whole course of the Russian Revolution, and make it adopt a multitude of measures contrary to its essence. One of these measures was the militarisation of labour during the years of War Communism - enabling millions of swindlers and parasites could live in peace, luxury and idleness.

Another measure was the war between town and country, provoked by the policy of the Party in considering peasants, as unreliable elements, foreign to the Revolution.

Finally, there was the strangling of libertarian thought and the Anarchist movement, whose social ideas and catchwords were the force of the Russian Revolution. Other measures consisted of the proscription of the independent workers movement, and the smothering of the freedom of speech in general. Everything was centralised, from where decrees were enforced on the thought, action and way of life of the working masses.

That is the October of the Bolsheviks. In it was incarnated the ideal followed by decades of the revolutionary intelligentsia, finally realised now by the wholesale dictatorship of the All-Russian Communist Party. This ideal satisfies the ruling intelligentsia, despite catastrophic consequences for the workers; now they can celebrate with pomp the anniversary of ten years of power.

THE ANARCHISTS

Revolutionary Anarchism was the only politico-social current to extol the ideas of a social revolution by the workers and peasants, as

much during the 1905 Revolution as during the October Revolution. In fact these ideas could have played a colossal role, and could have been the means of struggle employed by the masses themselves. Likewise, no politico-social theory could have blended so harmoniously with the spirit and orientation of the Revolution.

The interventions of the Anarchist orators in 1917 were listened to with a rare trust and attention by the workers. One could have said that the revolutionary potential of the workers and peasants, together with the ideological and tactical power of Anarchism, could have represented a force which nothing could oppose. Unhappily, this fusion did not take place.

Some Anarchists occasionally led intense



Gulyai-Polye Insurgents.

revolutionary activity among the workers, but there was no sizeable Anarchist organisation to lead to more continuous and coordinated actions (outside the Nabat Confederation and the Machnovchtina in the Ukraine). Only such an organisation could have united the anarchists and millions of workers. During such an important and advantageous revolutionary period, the Anarchists restricted themselves to the activities of small groups instead of orientating themselves to mass political action.

They preferred to drown themselves in the sea of their internal quarrels, not attempting to pose the problem of the common policy and

tactic of Anarchism. By this deficiency, they condemned themselves to inaction and sterility during the most important moments of the Revolution.

Organisation and a common tactic have always been raised as fundamental anarchist principles. But their absence prevented them making a single organisational, enabling them to orientate the social revolution in a decisive fashion.

Thought

However, there is no actual advantage in denouncing those who, by their demogogy, their thoughtlessness, and their irresponsibility, helped to create this situation.

The tragic experience which led the working masses to defeat, and Anarchism to

The Bolshevik practise of the last ten years shows clearly the counter-revolutionary nature of their dictatorship of the Party. Every year it restrains a little more the social and political rights of the workers, and takes their revolutionary conquests away. There is no doubt that the 'historic mission' of the Bolshevik Party is emptied of all meaning and that it will attempt to bring the Russian Revolution to its final objective: State Capitalism of the enslaving salariat.

That is to say, of the reinforced power of the exploiters and at the increasing misery of the exploited.

In speaking of the Bolshevik Party as part of the socialist intelligentsia, exercising its power over the working masses of town and country, we have in view its central directing nucleus which, by its origins, its formation, and its life-style has nothing in common with the working class, and, despite that, rules all the details of the life of the Party and of the people.

Nucleus

That nucleus will attempt to stay above the proletariat, who have nothing to expect from it. The possibilities for rank and file Party militants, including the Communist youth, appear different. This mass has passively participated in the negative and counter-revolutionary policies of the party, but having come from the working class, it is capable of becoming aware of the authentic October of the workers and peasants and of coming towards it. We do not doubt that from this mass will come many fighters for the workers' October. Let us hope that they rapidly assimilate the Anarchist character of this October, and that they come to its aid. For ourselves, let us indicate this character as much as possible, and help the masses to reconquer and conserve their great revolutionary achievements.

Gerry Healy: a red who's better dead

GERRY HEALY - FOR 35 years leader of one of the largest, most influential and wealthiest Trotskyist organisations in post-War Britain - died of a heart attack at his London home on December 14, aged 76. This happy event was long overdue. As one overjoyed obituary writer commented: 'With a bit of luck, we'll never see his like again'.

Healy - General Secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party (the WRP) and its forerunners since the 1950s - was unquestionably the single most universally hated figure on the Trotskyist Left.

Healy gained tabloid notoriety in 1985 when the WRP exploded after it came to light that This Great Trotskyist Leader had been raping young women in the Party's youth section for years; had been guilty of 'the physical abuse of comrades and slander against political opponents'; and of setting up shady and corrupt financial deals with the governments of Iran, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. These 'hidden' crimes had been carried out with the full knowledge (and active assistance) of Healy-loyalists on the Party's Central Committee.

Obedience

The chain reaction of splits and re-splits that followed The Healy Revelations, saw the Party fragment within weeks into half a dozen warring factions - battling it out for control of the Party's substantial assets: printing presses, youth centres, bookshops, the heavily fortified central office, and the party's daily-paper The News Line.

There is no definitive, impartial history of the violent and bitter power struggle that followed Healy's fall from office, since - naturally enough - each faction has written their own, claiming that their breakaway is the legitimate descendant of the real WRP tradition. But there's no need to pick through the confusion of claim and counter-claim in search of the The Truth about the split. In the WRP Story there really are no 'good guys' - just rival sets of bad ones.

The exposure of Healy was not down to the 'shock discoveries' of aghast

comrades who'd just uncovered the sordid truth and now felt compelled to tell the world.

The one thing that unites the leaders of all the subsequent WRP-splits is that they were all high enough up in the Party to know exactly what Healy was up to. And they all chose to keep quiet about it for years, until some of them decided that (for their own reasons) the time was right to move against him. It was a straightforward cynical, tactical decision. Morality didn't get a look in.

That the resultant power struggle descended into episodes reminiscent of a gangland war should come as no real surprise - seeing as, in many ways, that's exactly what it was. Assault, burglary, raids on rival premises, the physical seizure of Party property, asset stripping, street-fighting - you name it, it went on. One group sledgehammered its way into a Party bookshop



to stake their 'rightful claim' to the stock. Court room battles became common - with defendants readily denouncing their opponents 'flight to bourgeois law', whilst keeping quiet about the legal cases that they were lodging themselves.

For a while there were two rival daily editions of The News Line, with vans following each other around London bookshops to buy up all the copies of the 'bogus' edition and re-stock the

'genuine' one - often several times a day.

As the Party Empire gradually became carved up between the ex-comrades, the full extent of the WRP's collapse became clear. Where once - under the ruthless iron fist of Healy - there had been a large, disciplined, tightly organised Trotskyist machine, now (amidst the wreckage) were eight or nine burnt-out grouplets, waging war on themselves and each other - with aptly-named protagonists like Slaughter and Hunter slugging it out for control of the dwindling membership.

At Gerry Healy's funeral at Mortlake crematorium in London on December 28, bouncers at the gates excluded anyone likely to upset the Great Man's send-off. This was probably a wise idea. There'd be no shortage of ex-Party members who'd happily dance on his coffin given half a chance - or ram a wooden stake through the lid into his heart just to make sure.

Loyal

The ever-loyal Redgraves - Corin and Vanessa - presided over the service, attended by representatives from both WRPs (Workers Press and News Line) and by Labour MP Ken Livingstone (who apparently was 'not very happy' when photographed). Corin explained that the collapse of the WRP in 1985 was - in fact - all a clever plot 'engineered by the state', designed to get Healy and wreck the Party.

In her three-page obituary in The News Line on December 21, Shelia Torrance too neglects to mention the rape of YS women, and other crimes that led to Healy's ousting. She points to the desire of 'a small group of spiteful, selfish petit-bourgeois intellectuals' inside the WRP who sought to 'smash the party' in pursuit of 'their quest for personal comfort and even better jobs'. At the time of the splits, ex-Party members report that - in protecting Healy - she argued that his greatness as a political leader far outweighed any trifling details about his personal life.

Describing Healy as a 'giant of Trotskyism', Torrance declares that

Continued over

'when those who revile him are forgotten in the dustbin of history, his achievements will inspire new generations' (to do what we aren't told). In Vanessa Redgrave's tearful farewell to her 'dear comrade' in *The Guardian* on December 18, she honours the debt she owes Healy for all her 'subsequent development as a political woman and artist'.

Dot Gibson - at one-time Healy's close 'financial adviser' and trusted forger of the Party's accounts - takes a different view. In an obituary in the other-WRP's paper, *Workers Press* (on Jan 6), she denounces him as a 'renegade from Trotsky' who 'depended on the Red-graves as a dead man relies on a life support unit'. A later piece in *The Guardian* by Jim Higgins (December 22) points out that Healy's bullying, paranoid megalomania had created 'more ex-Trotskyists than anyone else except Stalin'.

Paranoia

Whilst in power, Healy ran the WRP with an ideological rod of iron (and an actual iron rod when necessary). His swift despatching of perceived rivals in the Party, and his obsessive fear that the Party was constantly under surveillance by MI5, helped create a climate of uncertainty and fear of infiltration that Healy used ruthlessly to protect his position at the top. He broke up sections of the Party that he

feared might be getting strong enough to mount a challenge to his leadership, and frequently 'uncovered plots' to destroy the Party.

Healy demanded a staggering amount of work, commitment and money from the Party faithful. One of the purposes of *The News Line* was to absorb as much of the membership's energy as possible, through the never-ending round of writing, photographing, selling, fund-raising, and daily paper-round distribution. A membership locked in a cycle of hyper-activity was a membership less able to question the Party apparatus.

One of the criticisms made by Healy's opponents in the split, was that the constant demands and costs of the daily-paper made it a liability not an asset. To Healy's supporters this claim was a heresy of the highest order.

Healy ended his political life as he began it - as a supporter of, and apologist for, the Soviet bureaucracy. In 1928 he had joined the Young Communist League as a fresh-faced young Stalinist. After the demise of the WRP, Healy and the Redgraves formed the Marxist Party which quickly decided that Gorbachev's 'Political Revolution' was 'entirely progressive' in character.

In *The News Line* Torrance explains this political about-turn was due to the 'shock' Healy suffered after the split of the Party, which was - apparently - 'too much for him to bear'.

Five years after the split, have the different splinters of the WRP

learnt anything from the 'degeneration' of their Great Leader and the collapse of their Party organisation?

The answer - clearly - is no. Even now, no faction has offered the slightest explanation for Healy's behaviour. How was it that this Giant of Trotskyism became a corrupt, madman, mobster and rapist?

Splits

No breakaway-Party has drawn the slightest connection between Healy's actions and the nature of Trotskyist political organisation. In place of blind obedience to the omnipotence of Healy's 'political genius' they have simply substituted a new leadership clique for the membership to unquestioningly obey.

Healy is explained away as an 'aberration': an unfortunate accident. You know, a bit like Stalin.

In 1985, in the final hours before Healy and his supporters were forced to flee the Party headquarters, they removed crucial files from the WRP's records that have never been recovered. The evidence of Healy's crimes that we know about come largely from files that they overlooked.

What horrors were documented in the files that Healy took and surely destroyed? Now that the old bastard is dead, we'll never know.

reactionary parliaments and trade unions "because they will still find workers who are duped by the priests and the dreariness of rural life". Lenin's argument is that wherever the workers are, the revolutionary must go to them, and encourage their faith in bourgeois parliaments and unions because that is where the "underdeveloped, downtrodden, ignorant rural masses" are.

Opportunist

In the *Open Letter*, Gorter calls Lenin's argument an 'opportunist fraud' and correctly maintains that all bourgeois parties both in and outside of parliament are opposed to the workers and the revolution, and therefore no revolutionary should deceitfully encourage proletarian "illusions of the impossible" in bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

To Lenin he writes of *Left-Wing Communism* "it is the first book of yours which is no good. For Western Europe it is the worst book imaginable".

In his *Open Letter*, Gorter does not criticise Lenin because his tactics are 'wrong'; he writes that Lenin's tactics were right for Russia (although he later changed his opinion) but wrong for Europe because of the different nature of capitalism. And although Gorter argued for organisation from below and against the dictatorship of the party, he still defended the need for "centralisation and iron discipline".

History has shown the counter-revolutionary nature of centralised organisation, whatever the context. Overall though, the book is well worth reading, both as a historic document, and a concise criticism of Leninism.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

5. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise

out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

6. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by cap-

italism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

7. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

8. As anarchist we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

ACE Editions

ACF pamphlets are available from: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

ACE NO 1. *Basic Bakunin*: The ideas of Bakunin, one of the founders of class struggle anarchism. (50p in p&p).

ACE NO 3. *The Libertarian Communist Manifesto*: A translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process. (60p p&p).

Also *Anarchism as we see it*: The original pamphlet outlining the theory, politics and direction of the ACF (50p inc p&p).

Also *Russia 1917 - A Libertarian Communist Supplement*: Describes what happened in the soviets and factory committees (10p & sae).

Want to know more?

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION, SEND THIS TO:

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Trashing tyrant Lenin

OPEN LETTER TO COMRADE LENIN, Herman Gorter; Wildcat, BM CAT, London WC1N 3XX, 3.00

THIS IS A long overdue but very welcome reprint of Gorter's reply to Lenin's pamphlet *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*. Written in 1920, the *Open Letter* first appeared in English in Sylvia Pankhurst's anti-parliamentarian communist paper *Workers' Dreadnought* in 1921. This is its second printing in English after seventy years of obscurity.

Battle

The *Open Letter* outlines the arguments of the 'Left-Wing' communists and their disagreement with the opportunist reformism of Lenin and

the Third International. Gorter was a member of the Communist Workers' Party of Germany (KAPD) which had formed after differences with the German Communist Party (KPD). The political arguments were not peculiar to Germany, they existed in the Communist parties in the more 'advanced' capitalist countries at the time, and the disagreements are most clearly seen in *Left-Wing Communism* and the *Open Letter*.

In *Left-Wing Communism* Lenin claimed that the coming European revolutions would be similar in nature to the Russian Revolution, and therefore European communists should follow the "fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics". These "tactics" included participation within