

Worker Tenant

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Editorial

1984 has witnessed an intensification of the world economic crisis which began 10 years ago and with it a heightening of the class struggle world-wide. So extreme has the recession become that banner headlines liken it countless times to the first capitalist crash of 1929. Not even the USA's conjunctural boom can act as any respite to its own working population or to those of the other nations linked inexorably in the Imperialist chain. In America capitalism can boast an increase in profits of up to 50% for 1984 and the truth is that this has been achieved by depressing the value of wages below the inflation rate since 1981.

For Latin America, America's boom has brought nothing but greater hardship as she reels under the economic burden of increased indebtedness, exacerbated by the soaring interest rates in the USA.

Caring little for traditional blood-ties America intensifies the death throes of her oldest rival - Britain. The buoyant dollar has suppressed confidence in sterling, pushing up the cost of credit and thus discouraging capitalists from investing. The threat of this ruthless business sense has expressed itself in the most tenacious struggles on the part of workers to defend their right to work.

In South Africa, hopes of an export-led recovery have been shattered by greatly diminished exports from the drought stricken agricultural sector, and the costly importation of heavy machinery from America and Japan where the rand finds very little in exchange.

This then is the meaning of America's boom. In a period of rapidly declining capitalism, there can be no talk of a protracted boom which brings about general social upliftment, but only an intensification of the most nationalistic throat-cutting and the immiseration of large sections of the working class.

It is this scenario of impending degeneration which has inspired the wave of political conservatism that is sweeping over the world. It expresses itself most clearly in the Reagan and Thatcher regimes and of course in the repressive rule of their junior partners in Latin America, Southern Africa and the Middle East. It is the unanimous yearn for the collapse of their outdated, parasitic system which drives the Imperialist armies to defend more viciously their "strategic areas", to support reactionary forces and governments in a bid to topple populist governments, and to crush the struggle of workers and their organisations by the "rule of law". In this period of convulsive class struggle democracy is unmasked for what it is - the dictatorship of the exploiters.

But let not gloom and defeatism be the only impressions gleaned from our present juncture. A reexamination of the same scenario is quick to reveal its progressive other side. It rests in the signal fact that despite the growing fascism of their rulers, or precisely because of it, workers everywhere are entering the political arena with renewed militancy and yearning for solidarity to take on the life and death struggles against their intensified exploitation and oppression frontally. Witness the protracted struggles of British and German workers against encroaching unemployment, the South American general strikes against intensified Imperialist indebtedness, and locally the two-day stay-away of half a million workers against the use of the army to quell struggles against exorbitant rent increases.

In the midst of this renewed zest for united defence against the ravages of a dying capitalist system stands a leadership crippled by cowardly economism and open reformism. In Europe there are those who, having lost all hope in the ability of the working class to lead a determined battle against exploitation and oppression, seek out pockets of petit bourgeois radicalism instead. And the trade unions which do organise workers never depart from narrow economism, thereby ensuring that the intensely political nature of class struggle in this period is diffused.

The South African variants display no greater appreciation of the convulsive nature of the class struggle at this juncture and the consequent need to revise "peacetime" tactics and organisational forms. Instead of boldly asserting the need for a workers united front as the best organisational form to express the growing desire of all workers for united defence of their sharply declining living standards, progressive trade unions are crippled by a cowardly economism. This position ignores the aspirations of the entire working class in order to protect the mere 10% of unionised workers through the most passive and reformist means available - appeals to liberal bosses and embassies to pressurise their more conservative brethren and the almost exclusive reliance on the state's Industrial Conciliation machinery to solve factory floor disputes.

Outside of the trade union movement, the UDF has nostalgically resorted to the tactics of the protest era of the '50's starting with the signature campaign against the New Deal, riding an incidental high in the Vaal triangle uprisings and initiating an adventurist two-day bus boycott in the Western Cape. No attempt has been made to weld workers into an independent and unified bastion against the bludgeon of decaying capitalism.

Centrist sections within the Cape Action League, while

paying lip-service to the need for working class independence and leadership argue that the economic crisis merely exacerbates the inherent oppressiveness of 'apartheid capitalism'. They therefore doggedly refuse to see how serious a premium the economic crisis places on the building of the Workers United Front as the means to combat the oppressiveness of capitalism in decay and of ensuring the defence, independence and solidarity of the one class that can save mankind from impending disaster.

Clearly, these are serious but challenging times. They demand of all organisations and activists genuinely interested in the leadership of the working class to revise old methods of struggle and normal organisational forms. In the four issues of the Worker Tenant to date, we have consistently raised the salient political problems of our day to create a forum for the debate of the monumental tasks which face workers' organisations. It is with dismay that we note the silence which has attended each issue and the paucity of vocalised criticism directed mainly at the vitriolic style. The struggle to achieve a non-exploitative democracy in South Africa is not going to be achieved by an agreement between gentlemen of the "liberatory movement" but by an intense struggle between exploiters and the exploited during which our programmes, propaganda, slogans and demands ultimately express the interests of one of the two combatant classes. No matter which way we look at it, no matter how clever the phraseology there is no comfortable third option and hence the necessity for the vitriol.

It is incumbent upon all organisations of the exploited and oppressed, especially in these challenging times, to drop stances of theoretical and practical sectarianism and to pin their colours boldly to the mast for the harshest public criticism. Only in this way can we develop, through practical and theoretical struggle, a leadership that will hasten the triumph of the working class in its creation of a progressive social order.

South Africa in Crisis:

(An overview with some

pointers on the way forward)

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The S.A. economy is in the grip of a particularly severe economic crisis, as indeed the entire world economy is. The international economic chaos is amply reflected in the Third World debt problem, which threatens the entire international financial system with collapse, the fluctuating gold price, highly unstable interest rates, panic selling and buying on the world stock markets, and leading capitalist countries like America's balance of payment problems. All these factors, to a greater or lesser degree, are an expression of the objective and contradictory laws of capitalist development themselves.

In South Africa, the economic crisis, or the crisis of capitalist accumulation for that is what it is, an inability to continue making profits - reflects itself in the sea of debt, company liquidations, a rocketing cost of living, the ever growing army of unemployed, and a falling rand. This situation has called forth from the bloated jowls of the well-fed, talk about "crisis management" and a "tightening of belts". What does this mean? It means nothing less than the headlong hurl into pauperism for the bulk of the population the working class. The bourgeoisie, as a stay of its own execution, has shifted the full weight of the crisis of capital accumulation onto the shoulders of the working class. Via spiralling prices, driving down wages and extending the working day, the bourgeoisie keeps itself from ruin.

For the working class, this has meant increasing poverty and want, growing unemployment (and as a result crime) prostitution, alcoholism and the general break up of family life. But workers have not been slow to engage the challenge of the ruling class. The rapid growth of the independent trade union movement, in the face of severe repression, the increasing number of strikes and the countless rent struggles, bus boycotts and squatter resistance conducted around the country all bear abundant testimony to this.

THE POLITICAL CRISIS

The economic crisis and the vehement response it has evoked from the working class has created a political crisis of unprecedented proportion for the ruling class in South Africa. The reproduction of the existing profit-making economic system is impossible unless capitalist social relations are reproduced. This means that a large degree of social stability is needed for the continued exploitation of

workers and accumulation of capital. In the epoch of Monopoly Capitalism, characterised as it is by a highly technical and sophisticated labour process, this "stability" becomes all the more important, for it requires a "settled" working class which can thus acquire the levels of skill required in production.

The State, via the juridical system which is designed to protect "private" property, the police which enforce these laws, and, of course the jackboot of the army, aimed as it is at the working class, plays no small role in the reproduction of the capitalist social relations. The events of 1976 and 1980, the "liberated zones" of Masinga and Soweto, the recent Vaal triangle struggles and the massive worker stayaway last month, to name but a few examples, have made it clear that the ruling class is facing serious challenges to its "peaceful" rule.

The heart of the political crisis facing the ruling class is how to guarantee the social conditions necessary for the continued accumulation of capital. Thus, the crisis of capital accumulation, arising out of the objective laws of capitalist development themselves, in the process of class struggle, gives rise to and is compounded by a political crisis, since the bourgeoisie, in response to militant struggles waged by the working class, can no longer hold society together, can no longer effectively wield power.

THE 'NEW DEAL' BRIDGE TO FASCISM

By the very nature of the problem, the state now has to find layers from among the oppressed and exploited whom it can co-opt into the service of the ruling class. Hence the "New Deal". Despite its appearance as an extension of bourgeois democratic rights, the New Deal, through the creation of an Executive State President represents a diminution of bourgeois democratic rights. Formal power has shifted from the hands of the bourgeois parliament into the hands of a dictator. This move towards Fascism is designed essentially to crush working class struggle. It is the rear-guard action of a frightened bourgeoisie, and must ultimately be seen as a defensive strategy.

The uncertainty and lack of confidence that marks the bourgeoisie at this point is best illustrated by the oscillations of the PFP. This, the more far-sighted, liberal, section of the bourgeoisie seriously considered joining the UDF when the latter first emerged. The decision not to do so was dictated by a fear of the groundswell of militant struggle which the UDF potentially (and unintentionally) could unleash. (We will examine later why this keenness on the UDF). Now, in an attempt to remain within the mainstream of political development, the liberal bourgeoisie, in a pathetic gesture, has opened the doors of its party to all

While the state has found ready class allies in the Hendrickses and Reddies, this alliance must not be viewed as given for all times. The co-opted sections of the black middle class view the "New Deal" as a new opportunity for capital accumulation, very much in the way that the petty bourgeois Afrikaner nationalists viewed control of the State apparatus as a means to greater wealth. The difference though, is that the Afrikaner nationalists gained control of the State apparatus at a time when the world economy was set for a prolonged period of boom. The pickings were thus more plentiful.

Today, the situation is entirely different. The money, quite simply, is just not there. The South African state, technically, is really quite bankrupt. While the international bourgeoisie has been prepared to prop it up to the tune of R\$2 billion in loans, this is clearly not enough to sustain the huge bureaucracy that has grown up, in addition to the "normal" state expenditure on infrastructure and social services. Already the social security services are breaking down. In the little town of Hanover, in the Little Karoo, a bare seven hours drive from Cape Town, the cash for pensions ran out before the last pensioner has reached the cashier. The economic crisis and its effects on the state can also be seen in the complete collapse of the influx control system. The high degree of bureaucracy, the constant monitoring of "illegal" urbanisation and its great cost have become a burden to the state.

The Hendrickses and Reddies will therefore have to be content with their annual salaries. Whether they will, and what form their disillusionment will take, remains to be seen. Even the acceptable bourgeois practice of jobs-for-pals will be difficult to effect. Already the whites-only Public Servants Association, has been making ominous noises about not entertaining threats to their jobs. Over and above these considerations, it must be borne in mind that Monopoly Capitalism, is characterised by the tight control of production and distribution in increasingly fewer hands. The effect of this is the squeezing out of the middle class, the petty bourgeoisie. Under conditions of crisis and decline, this process becomes telescoped, and any thought of building a sizeable black middle class, which in recent years the State has been attempting to do, becomes mere wishful thinking. Even Botha himself has openly lamented the failure of the State to introduce the New Deal under earlier, more prosperous conditions.

So, in addition to working class opposition to the New Deal, which has been clearly demonstrated, the State is faced with the added concern of its new-found junior partners asking for more than the budget can manage, thereby threatening the present honeymoon.

A NATIONAL CONVENTION

But should the "New Deal" for a combination of these factors, come unstuck, what options has the bourgeoisie? Here the PFP comes into its own. For a few years now it has been calling for a National Convention, and the release of Nelson Mandela. In recent months it has become clear that the State is now seriously pursuing this option. Nationalist MPs and Cabinet Ministers have hinted ever so coyly at this possibility, and the need, at some point, to "talk" to ANC. Nor has it remained simply at the level of rhetoric; the unbanning of the Freedom Charter, and the offer of freedom to Mandela, albeit a qualified offer, must be viewed in the context of preparing the ground, so to speak. The National Convention is of course the option which the international bourgeoisie best favours.

What does the PFP, the State or the international bourgeoisie mean by a National Convention? Does it differ from what the Populists mean when they call for a National Convention? Unfortunately not. This is only too well understood by all the above parties. The National Convention will be convened by the State, the agent of the Bourgeoisie, and to it will be invited the "legitimate" leaders of the people, democratically despatched from London and Robben Island, there to do a deal whereby they will take the place of the present incumbents of the juniorpartner jobs.

From the National Convention argue its proponents, will flow the democratization of capitalism in South Africa. With the coming to power of the "people" the apartheid system would be dismantled and full democratic rights such as universal franchise, freedom of movement, the right to own land etc would be extended to the exploited and oppressed. "Free enterprise" would then blossom unfettered. But this yearning of the international bourgeoisie, liberal sections of the South African ruling class and the oppressed petit-bourgeoisie for the halcyon days of democratic capitalism is anachronistic. Increasingly the degeneration of the present economic system is forcing the ruling class the world over to backpedal frantically on their traditions of bourgeois democracy. To protect their falling profits bosses seek more intensive methods of exploiting workers and cheaper ways of reproducing them. To do so requires a direct attack on the ability and freedom of the working class to organise in its own defence - ie. to make inroads into the very foundations of bourgeois democracy. In the grips of severe economic crisis Britain and the USA have spawned Thatcherism and Reaganism as the conservative bridges towards fascism.

Under these conditions the less advanced capitalist countries of 'sub-Imperialist' and 'Third World' states are even less capable of ensuring "peace and Stability" along the lines of bourgeois democracy. As the experience of 'liberation' in Zimbabwe so glaringly reveals, the

establishment of the formal parliamentary trappings of democracy are contradicted ten-fold by fundamental attacks on the living standards and democratic gains of the exploited. Just as the so-called "New Deal" was still-born, so an apartheid-free capitalism will be extremely unstable from its inception. Whatever the good intentions of reformists, they will amount to nought in the face of the necessity for declining capitalism to bolster itself at the economic and political expense of the working class. In short the National Convention will amount to a criminal betrayal of the working class in its struggle for a democratic South Africa free from exploitation and oppression.

The State will convene the National Convention as a last resort though, The other option it has, and which it may well settle for, is Fascism. We see the seeds of this already in the Executive State President with dictatorial power. We will discuss the prospects of the emergence of Fascism below.

THE OPTIONS FACING THE OPPRESSED MIDDLE CLASS

The drive towards the National Convention is of course propelled by the black petit-bourgeois populists. The guerilla struggle is designed exclusively to this end. But the economic and political crisis has also severely affected our petit-bourgeoisie. The rocketing cost of living has threatened many a petit-bourgeois with the prospect of being hurled into the ranks of the working class.

The economic, social and political insecurity which this class experiences generally under Monopoly Capitalism, compounded for the black p.b. by its severe oppression in S.A., is multiplied one hundred fold under conditions of crisis. The p.b. is left bewildered and frightened. Its response reflects itself in the UDF and National Forum. The UDF, particularly, now becomes a further lever in pressurising the State into doing a deal.

A large element of the fright of the p.b. derives from the escalating militancy with which the working class is prepared to enter struggle. The black petit-bourgeoisie understands the threat to its class position in this militancy of the working class, as well as does the bourgeoisie to its own position. This fear of the working class is best illustrated by the anti-election campaign. While of late there has been much talk of the working class its special role in the struggles, the single most characteristic feature of the campaign was the marked lack of involvement of the working class. The petit-bourgeois populists fear that should they mobilise the working class on any significant scale, they might not be able to contain and suppress the militancy of that class. Since the objective of the Populists is not the complete eradication of

working class struggle for fundamental social change would be counter-productive. Thus, in place of large mass mobilisation of the working class, we find instead a deliberate and batman nostalgia emanating from the ranks of the populists. The UDF from the outset, has attempted to dress itself up with the mantle of past "victories". This is nothing more than a transparent attempt to mask its bankruptcy. To be sure, the Populists will use working class struggle to rally support for itself, but it will do so from a safe distance, and with the sole purpose of further pressurising the State, in the same manner as its signature campaign and other publicity stunts are supposed to do.

The black p.b. has one of two options. It can go either the way the Hendrickses and Reddies, and the Populists are, that is, become willing partners in providing capitalism in S.A. with a new lease of life. The economic and social position of the p.b. is steadily deteriorating. It must begin to see that only a strong working class can champion its causes of debt, housing shortages, escalating costs and so on. It will mean for the p.b. a complete subsuming of their class interests to those of the working class. The key in this process is a strong working class which will show itself capable of solving the present problems confronting S.A. society a whole.

THE GROWING MILITANCY OF THE WORKING CLASS

What then of the working class itself? The political crisis of which we talked so much, has been brought on directly by the working class struggle. The struggle from the early seventies onward reflects a growing desire for classunity and solidarity. This is best exemplified by the phenomenal growth of the trade union movement (it has grown by 50% over the last three years) and the growing incidence of strikes. The noteworthy feature of these strikes has been the growing number that relate to victimization and unfair dismissal. This reflects a growing class consciousness on the part of the workers.

While the working class has made enormous gains via independent trade union movement, the latter has been marked by a clear shift to the right of the leadership. The erstwhile "progressive" unions talk now of "weathering the storm" of recession, instead of understanding now more than ever there is a need to link the daily focus of trade union struggle to the major political issues of the day. When this is done, it occurs in the form of sheer tokenism; the occasional mass meeting, a letter to the honourable Minister asking for the exemption of basic foodstuff from G.S.T., and so on. From the recent events in the Transvall it is quite clear that the working class is not prepared to "mark time" with the trade union leadership. Instead workers will increasingly pressurise their leadership to develop the forms of organisation and methods of struggle that can best defend them

against increasing immetisation.

Objective conditions propel more and more layers of the working class into struggle. Lamontville, Cradock, the Vaal triangle and Soweto are all aflame with worker militancy. Nor is this situation confined to urban areas. The severe drought of the last two years has created great hardship for the rural workers. Unemployment and starvation are rife. (Farmers collectively are in debt to the tune of R2 000 billion). In the Eastern Transvaal, dissident unemployed farm workers have taken to roaming from farm to farm, creating a general climate of tension and instability.

White workers have not escaped unscathed, either. The desperate money shortage which the state faces means that some of its cherished privileges such as housing subsidies and free education must now be kissed goodbye. Nor can the bourgeoisie any longer afford the luxury of job reservation. Soon these will be scrapped altogether. The white section of the working class too has one of two choices; either it shifts to the Conservative Party and becomes the first battalion of fascism, or it joins in the struggle of black workers, as at Highveld Steel, where black workers belonging to MAWU and white, skilled workers belonging to the S.A. Boilermakers Society, undertook a joint strike ballot. 70% of the workers voted in favour of a joint strike.

If working class struggle over the last decade has always been heroic, then it has also been characterised by its essentially spontaneous and unco-ordinated nature. This is not surprising. Objective conditions drive workers into struggle, but the working class lacks the leadership and the organisational forms to give proper expression to its struggle. Without proper channeling and co-ordination of working class rent struggles, transport struggles and factory struggles, it will be impossible for working class struggle in general to be raised to higher levels.

THE WAY FORWARD

What then is the way forward for the working class in the era of "The New Deal"? Our emphasis must be threefold. Firstly, we must continue our commitment to building strong, independent working class organisations, untainted by bourgeois influences. Ever-mindful of the contradiction between the objective conditions which increasingly oblige more and more workers to engage in class struggle, and the primitive methods at its disposal, we must be sufficiently farsighted and bold to initiate timeously newer and better organisational forms that correspond with the dictates of class struggle intensifying in rhythm. Concretely this means popularising workers clubs, initiating committees on prices, unemployment, housing action committees and having these generalised. This will afford us the prospect of co-ordinating working class struggle, of wresting sections of the

working class away from its reactionary petit-bourgeois leadership, and raising to higher levels working class struggle. This process must be seen as a first step in the process of building the Workers United Front, which is the best weapon for the working class in defending its constantly eroding living standards. The Workers United Front provides the working class with the necessary unity in struggle to allow it to go immediately on the offensive in this defence of its living standards. It can in this way best confront an already frightened and uncertain bourgeoisie and drive its advantage home to the hilt.

Secondly, the demand of the Workers United Front must be for a Constituent Assembly, convened by the democratically elected representatives of the masses themselves. The demand for a Constituent Assembly is predicated on the understanding that the interests of the bourgeoisie and the working class are absolutely irreconcilable. There can be no question of a "deal" or a compromise. Any such deal or compromise, no matter what "conditions" are attached, can only extend the life of capitalism and the untold misery of the toiling masses.

Thirdly, and lastly, the pressure which the working class has increasingly brought to bear on political life in S.A., has forced all tendencies to recognise the independence of its interests. This situation has led to much fashionable talk of "working class struggle" and the "leadership role of the working class" in the struggle. Weaved into all this rhetoric are some more blatantly reformist slogans, which, if they take root within the political consciousness of the working class, can only lead to its betrayal and defeat. For us, then, the task must be a turn to theory, to study it constantly, for without it we will not be able to rid the working class of petty bourgeois, and ultimately, bourgeois influences that seek to deflect the working class from fulfilling its historic task.

The Vaal Uprising

AND THE NEED FOR A WORKERS UNITED FRONT

THE CLASS STRUGGLE INTENSIFIES

Over the past few months the working class has come out in open struggle against its growing impoverishment and misery. The convergence of disparate and largely spontaneous strike actions and militant rent protests into the massive 2-day stayaway of half a million workers in the Transvaal serves as a signal warning of decisive battles to come. What is at stake is not this or that partial gain but the choice of two stark alternatives - either tragic defeat, demoralisation and the likelihood of fascist rule, or a decisive struggle for a new progressive social order.

The events in the Transvaal and the Eastern Cape spell out far better than any pamphlet or article the tasks of all committed working class fighters - the overwhelming and spontaneous yearning felt by workers for united defence against the attacks of bosses and the state and the need for a well-developed and consistent tactical approach to the question of united working class defence. Instinctively the working class has understood the depth and the extent of the economic crises and through its as yet disparate and uneven struggles has pointed out the need for united action to its present heel-dragging leadership.

Two weeks ago the Minister of Finance announced with bitter irony that we have in fact just lived through a mini-boom and that the nation should prepare for even darker times in 1985. This "mini-boom" has already made devastating inroads into the impoverished living standards of the exploited. The fall of the rand from 130 US cents in 1981 to 50 cents in 1984, the downturn in the gold price, an inflation rate of 13% and the high interest rates have forced productivity down and dealt a severe blow to the profits of the bosses. Forced into a catch-22 situation which demands that South Africa increase its productivity and its exports in order to remain competitive on the world market and correct its massive balance of payments deficit, the bosses have sought only one path - to shift the task of lifting a crippled economy out of its stagnation onto the working class.

Real wage cuts, higher prices, mass scale retrenchments, short-time and a more intensive exploitation of a smaller number of workers are forcing the vast majority of the country into a day-to-day struggle for survival. The bosses have cut all corners in their rapacious drive. Since July 3200 workers have been retrenched in the motor industry and factories have been closed down well before Christmas so that bosses can avoid paying holiday bonuses.

At the same time the state, facing a debt of three and a half million rand and with its expanding tri-cameral bureaucracy to sustain, has cutback on expenses which vitally affect the working class. A sixty-eight million rand cut in public transport subsidy, removal of subsidies on basic foodstuffs, a drastic cut in the amount of funds available for housing to a mere eighty million rand and its inability to pay out the meagre pensions that it offers to the exploited. In the face of this the working class is forced to finance a defence bill of R3 755 million and prop up the homelands with R1 650 million by spending 10% of its wages on GST. While the "nation" is called on to "tighten its belt" the working class is being strangled.

The militant rumblings of the working class are a direct response to these severe attacks. Workers are increasingly prepared to lay their jobs, their homes and even their lives on the line to express their indignation. Strikes for higher wages on the gold mines, for union recognition, against the victimisation of fellow workers; protests against transport increases and rent hikes; opposition to "African" town council and ethnic parliamentary elections - this is the workers' answer to Botha's so-called "New Deal".

THE VAAL STRUGGLES

It was out of such disparate and spontaneous struggles that events in the Transvaal and Eastern Cape reached a head. In the midst of massive student uprisings against an oppressive education system, township after township in the Vaal triangle and on the East Rand erupted into an open and militant rejection of the rent increases introduced by the new financially bankrupt Town Councils. In mid July workers in Tumanole near Parys protested against the GST increase and a 15% rise in rents. Close on their heels followed the tenants in Daveyton and Tembisa on the East Rand where thousands of workers retrenched in the metal and chemical industries faced an increased rental charge. Militant action spread to Saulsville, Atteridgeville and Rathanda to escalate into a demonstration in Evaton, Sharpeville and Sebokeng which left 31 dead. Central to all these struggles have been demands that the rent increases be dropped, that rents be reduced and that town councillors resign. Central to the escalating militancy of the protests has been the violent action of the state - shootings, arrests and massive intimidation through the army-police raids on Sebokeng, Sharpeville and Boipatong.

Pushing through the surface of these separate struggles was the common reality of a life-and-death defensive action on the part of all workers and an urgency for united action.

The various UDF civic associations in the Transvaal, COSAS, FOSATU and CUSA were forced to recognise the groundswell and formed the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee to coordinate a regional 2-day stayaway in response to the

repressive actions of the state. The success of the stayaway - 85% on the East Rand and 90% in the Vaal Triangle was a clear testimony to the militant mood of the workers. Predictably the state and the bosses responded with brute force - 6 000 workers being retrenched at SASOL 2 and 3 and immediate detention of the stayaway organisers.

But beneath the events lie the seeds of defeat and demoralisation. For the traditional populist and "progressive" trade union leadership the lessons made so clear by the actions of workers are being entirely missed. Instead of grasping the need to prepare new organisational forms and methods of struggle for coordinated defence of the working class the UDF is riding a nostalgic high by looking back to the stayaways of the fifties and measuring its success in terms of how much publicity it has received. On the other hand the unions, somewhat shaken by their reckless abandonment of cowardly survival politics in the recession, have been negotiating away the possibility of further action with the bosses. Through their retrenchment deals with the bosses, their strategy of weathering the recession in order to survive and their formalistic, sectarian and bureaucratic approach to worker unity they show not an inkling of a real understanding of the full meaning of the economic crisis for the working class and offer a suicidal course of "marking time".

The question of 'defence' is not to be understood in dry formal terms of protecting what presently exists. A formal compromise with bosses on short-time or retrenchment may protect a union and its membership in the short term but loses all meaning for the real defence of the working class when the ground is being swept from under their feet in a hundred other ways through rent increases, high prices, forced removals etc. To the question of defence the spontaneous answer of the workers in the Transvaal is written in blood on the streets of the townships - no to high rents, no to wages that shrink with higher prices and sales tax, no to retrenchment, no to forced removals, police detentions and mass arrests - yes to the defence of the interests of the whole working class through united action.

AFTER THE STAYAWAY - THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP

The burning lessons of the Transvaal workers' struggles have to a large extent gone unheeded. As the smoke begins to clear it becomes evident that the populists and the trade union leadership continue to travel along their respective paths of publicity politics and cautious economism.

UDF

Having raised its profile dramatically in the north, the UDF hastened to organise a bus boycott in the Western Cape. Not having agitated extensively on the fare increases nor having assessed carefully the willingness or unwillingness

of workers to undertake such action, amounted to adventurism. Lack of real support for the campaign forced the organisers to retreat into a token two-day protest. The opportunistic nature of the boycott did not lie in the fact that there was a poor response, but rather in the complete absence of any attempt to advance the struggle of workers organisationally or to raise and politicise their understanding of their declining living standards. Instead of simply trotting out the time-worn slogan "Transport for people and not for profits" it was absolutely essential to make the connection between this single attack on the living standards of workers and the economic crisis as a whole. Only in this way can the struggle around busfare increases be consciously deepened and extended to embrace the struggle against rent increases, rising prices, low wages and unemployment.

Organizationally what is required is not simply a grouping of seasoned organisers but the timely establishment of action committees of workers that would for example monitor fare increases, agitate extensively around the transport crisis and its relation to other attacks on workers, be instrumental in the establishment of committees in new areas, and in the process build up the confidence and power of workers to exert control over various aspects of their lives.

The UDF's publicity campaign has also proceeded apace beyond the borders of South Africa. Scarcely had interest in the Durban consulate affair begun to wane than American liberals were queuing up outside South African embassies to stage sit-in protests against the detention of trade unionists and political activists. While Bcesak's invitation to Ted Kennedy to visit South Africa only made small news, the grander attempt by UDF-sympathizer Tutu to persuade Reagan to disinvest reached the headlines. No doubt the South African state keeps a wary eye on the effects of these actions on its cherished relation of "constructive engagement" with the USA, but it is also grateful that the UDF does not pay more attention to mobilising the exploited within South Africa.

The Trade Unions

In contrast to the UDF, Fosatu was "most unhappy" about having been forced to ride the crest of the recent worker uprising. The detention of key union organisers and the retrenchment of 6000 SASOL workers shocked the FOSATU leadership into the realisation that "We are now dealing with the state. We have a tiger by the tail." Shortly after the stayaway FOSATU convened union meetings to decide what action should be taken against the sacking of the SASOL workers. The recommendations that were made, notable only for their lack of boldness, hardly bore any relation to the militancy of the Transvaal workers:

* that unions put pressure on bosses to take sides on

the SASOL issue.

- * that pressure be brought to bear on the Federal Chamber of Industries and foreign companies to persuade SASOL to reemploy the dismissed workers.
- * a "Black Christmas" in which workers would boycott the festive season (even though the economic crisis forces the working class more than ever before into a "Black Christmas" anyway).
- * and most recently a highly elaborate legalistic scheme that would eventually culminate in a national one-hour legal work-stoppage as a means of pressurising SASOL into reinstating the 6000

There is very little chance that any of these formal, legalistic and protracted gestures of solidarity can be filled out with any militant content. Unless the unions set up permanent committees of shop stewards that can constantly monitor, coordinate and combine parochial struggles of individual trade unions into defensive united action then any isolated expression of solidarity will be futile in this period of intensified class struggle. It can only be hoped that this urgent form of unity is not being dismissed bureaucratically as a threat to the "sensitive" trade union unity talks that are still in progress.

The caution of the unions in this period is not accidental but an expression of two fundamentally incorrect strategies. Firstly, the unions have understood their tasks in this period of economic recession in a very parochial sense. The attack of the bosses threatens the survival of the unions which should therefore keep a very low profile and weather the crisis. This line of reasoning sees defence of existing organisations as being more of a priority than defence of the working class. For the working class to keep a low profile would mean to submit to greater impoverishment and more intensive exploitation. Secondly, some unions (particularly FOSATU) see the task of organising workers as somehow separate from the process of struggle itself. Unions, they claim, should delay their involvement in political struggle until such time as strong national trade unions have been built, built, that is, around exclusively factory floor issues. In a period which requires that workers draw together all aspects of their exploitation and oppression and which makes every so-called 'economic' struggle immediately political as well, such a strategy can only drag the organised working class backwards.

What Alternative is there?

The task of taking the call for united action forward organisationally poses a direct challenge to traditional and routine leadership. Protest politics aimed at "shaking the state to its senses" and raising the profile of populist leadership together with the unions' reluctant economicistic participation in struggle does not take workers forward one inch in the present period. Worse still it acts as a brake on the initiative taken by workers and thereby threatens to

undermine the growing confidence of a working class on the move. The alternative is not adventurism. Premature mass action can only spell defeat at the hands of state repression and thus the likelihood of a serious setback that could render the working class defenceless and demoralised for a long period. An irony of history is that adventuristic initiatives are in most cases the flipside of a vacillating directionless reliance on spontaneous pressures from below. Both display an opportunism that takes as its starting point the narrow sectional interests of particular organisations and which ignores the objective needs of the working class, its actual movement in struggle and the need to consciously fashion new forms of organisation and methods of struggle.

The question of timing is obviously important but must be given its proper weight within a broader understanding of the way forward and the tasks of the day. What is most crucial is that within our understanding of the need for united defensive worker action through a Workers United Front we begin to make timely preparations for the decisive struggles to come. This does not mean building up trade unions at the factory floor until we deem them large enough to regard attacks on the living standards of workers as "political". Nor does it mean courting the liberal Imperialist bourgeoisie in anticipation of a National Convention. It means understanding the reality of an irreversible economic crisis that is forcing the working class into a battle for survival. It means that the fate of the working class will depend on its ability to defend itself. It means a far-reaching innovation of our traditional organisational forms into structures that are able to break down the boundaries between "civic" and "factory" issues and draw in workers on the widest possible level be they organised or unorganised, employed or unemployed. It means the coordination of action committees, unions, factory committees and other worker organisations on a local, regional and national level. It means building a Workers United Front.

UNITED ACTION AND THE WORKERS UNITED FRONT

One of the most significant developments in the progressive trade union movement of late is the proposed new trade union federation. It marks an important step in the organisation of the working class in South Africa. Its present non-affiliation to any political organisation is progressive insofar as it has broken with the SACTU tradition of surrendering independent working class interests to populism, but reactionary insofar as it is motivated for economicistic reasons.

The proposed federation is however, fraught with sectarian, divisive and bureaucratic features that stand in the way of united working class action. Workers should seek unity on the basis of their common experiences of retrenchment, unemployment, bad housing and low wages rather than

according to the political affiliation of their union or on issues such as union registration and participation on Industrial Councils. In its proposals to the April 1983 trade union unity talks, the Orange Vaal General Workers Union rejected the "bureaucratic solution" that many of the major industrial unions are imposing on the task of building trade union unity. They argue correctly that worker unity cannot be formally constructed through "manoeuvres at a leadership level" which aim to federate like-minded unions, but that it must be built by workers in struggle and find its organisational form in worker-led Solidarity Action Committees. These SAC's must not only draw in workers across union lines and provide the basis for uniting organised workers, as was proposed, but must call into their ranks the unorganised and unemployed as well.

The task of establishing worker unity in an organised form has been approached in a very formalistic manner by FOSATU. They dismiss 'united front unity' on the basis of its looseness and lack of discipline and because of procedural problems of decision-making and representation. The better option, they argue, is a 'tight federation' or 'disciplined unity' where affiliates subscribe to a common political position and are bound together very closely organisationally. To counterpose the two is extremely problematic. A 'tight federation' of likeminded organisations is necessary and desirable but it is by definition exclusive and therefore unable to respond to the need to unite all workers. Furthermore, when united defensive action is on the order of the day how could such a 'tight federation' become a part of a regular coordinated force with other worker organisations other than through the United Front strategy?

In 1980 the Metal and Allied Workers Union (a FOSATU affiliate) set up Shop Steward Councils in the Germiston area to help alleviate the work load of the union organisers and to streamline recruitment to the union. These councils developed spontaneously into dynamic workers committees that drew together shop stewards in the area from a number of different unions. As more and more militant workers swelled the ranks of the SSC it began to operate with ever-increasing independence from the formal union structure. The year 1981 confronted workers in the East Rand area with drastic price increases, a 30% rent hike, retrenchments and a tighter than ever enforcement of influx control. This led to a strike wave of unprecedented proportions in which the SSC played a vital role by generalising the experiences at different factories and coordinating both the recruitment and struggles of workers. The council not only gave conscious expression to the need for united action in factory floor issues but also attempted to give direction in the struggle for better housing in Kitlehong.

FOSATU was disturbed by the 'looseness' of these councils

which began to flounder due to the lack of overall direction that they were given and to the inexperience of the shop stewards. In April 1982 Fosatu dealt a death blow to these potential action committees by drawing them formally into the union structure. Whatever good intentions FOSATU had in streamlining its organisational structure in this manner, it amounted objectively to nothing less than the bureaucratic stifling of an extremely progressive development in the labour movement. The lesson of the Germiston SSC is an

The lesson of the Germiston SSC is an extremely important one. It gives us a concrete example of the kind of organisation that can best take forward the defensive struggle of workers in this period. The collapse of the Germiston SSC was less due to its lack of "sound organisational foundations" as Swilling argues in the SALB but to serious leadership problems. The strength of the SSC lay in its militant worker content, its weakness, in the fact that it was not a part of a broader plan. Such a plan would not have incorporated the SSC into the formal structure of a union but would have sought to generalise the new form of organisation and to propagate its necessity as the building block of a Workers United Front.

AN URGENT TASK

Conditions of economic crisis and the severe attack on the living standards of workers make their united defence the most urgent task of the day. This truth is being borne out daily in the militant spontaneous struggles that are escalating and by the readiness with which workers have seized hold of structures such as the SSC's. The leadership of the exploited and oppressed need to go beyond isolated and improvised defensive actions to propagate the formation of committees of action in all areas of working class struggle. It is crucial that such committees transcend the divisions and political differences that exist in the working class and that they draw in all workers, even the most backward and unorganised layers. Unless the most impoverished and desperate are drawn into the struggle in this way they will fall prey to bribes and be mobilised into Fascist gangs.

Where existing leadership acts as a brake on worker militancy, workers must thrust forward their own leaders. Workers must form factory committees alongside the traditional trade unions if the latter try to divert the militancy of workers into partial economicistic struggles or where they negotiate away worker's jobs in retrenchment deals. The present economic crisis does not allow the leadership of the working class to denounce open action in the name of 'defence', nor to embark on isolated adventuristic action. The task is to create the political and organisational conditions that can generalise, coordinate and sustain defensive action and to make clear the general prospects of such a struggle. The call must be

for committees of action on a local and regional level and their coordination on a national level through a Workers United Front.

The workers United Front cannot be called into being overnight through a formal agreement at a leadership level. The successful development of a Workers United Front depends on whether or not it is a movement that is built 'from below' in the heat of working class struggle. The task of the leadership is to propagate a clear idea of the way forward and to agitate in every struggle for the formation of defensive worker committees.

It is important finally to consider the general principles on which a united front of workers organisations would operate. Firstly it is open to all workers; employed, unemployed, organised, unorganised and cannot exclude any section of the working class as a matter of principle. Insofar as 'white workers' in South Africa are explicated as workers they cannot be excluded; insofar as they have historically sided with the forces of reaction it is the task of activists to attract them to the Workers United Front over the heads of their leadership. Secondly the WUF is only open to workers and workers' organisations. This does not mean that the oppressed middle class is to be excluded from the struggle but that it recognise the need for workers to unite to defend themselves as a class and to organise themselves independently as the leading force in the struggle against exploitation and oppression. Neither does it mean that existing alliances that include non-worker organisations such as youth affiliates must simply disband. Insofar as they recognise the need for the independent organisation of the working class and the need for united working class defence they are the immediate vehicles for propagating and building the Workers United Front. Lastly, each organisation that enters the united front has the right to maintain its independence and to criticise the leadership of other organisations. Although each member-organisation of the front is bound by the discipline of 'unity in action' it retains the right to put forward an independent position.

One of the strongest criticisms of the call for a Workers United Front in South Africa is that it "ignores the peculiarity of the South African struggle" (ie. the fact of oppression and the assumed identity of interests between the oppressed middle class and the working class). Recognition of the need for a WUF is based on the understanding that the working class must be organised independently of all other classes and lest we lose our bearings in our apparent uniqueness we must realise that just as the economic crisis and the growth of fascism are international trends so the Workers United Front is not a 'European' solution to a 'European' problem. Just as the coalminers' strike is the clarion call for united working class defence in Britain so the recent struggles in the Transvaal reveal to us the urgent need for a Workers United Front in South Africa.

Coalminers Strike

(Which way Britain)

THE COALMINERS' STRIKE - AN URGENT CALL FROM THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

Ten years ago, in the 'winter of discontent', a nationwide coalminers' strike brought Britain's Conservative government to its knees. In March of this year the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) once again called on its members to down tools, this time in response to the decision of the National Coal Board to shut down "uneconomic" pits. The strike, which has now entered its ninth month, has been one of the most militant and protracted struggles of a section of the British working class this century. In the wake of pitch battles between picketing miners and police the strike has cost the British Treasury upward of R4 billion thus far and has made a 3,5% dent in industrial production. The use of oil instead of coal to fuel the power stations, whose coal reserves have dropped from 17 million tons to 4,5 million since early July, has quadrupled the expenses of electricity production.

At this point however there are strong signs that the determination of the miners is beginning to flag and that the strike may collapse. While NUM still confidently defies a flurry of court rulings, its assets of R18,9 million have been put in the charge of a government receiver and are not accessible to striking miners. Although Scargill continues to adamantly reject peace offers from the Coal Board there is strong pressure from the Trade Union Congress leaders to call off the strike. Most crucially, about one-third of the original 189 000 strikers have returned to work; demoralised with the lack of success and lured underground by offers from the Coal Board of R3 896, Christmas bonuses.

The threat of retrenchment facing the coalminers is not the only issue at stake in this conflict. Like the recent militant struggles in South Africa, it has brought the central question of our times sharply to the fore; is degenerating capitalism to rumble down the path to fascism and crush all forms of democracy in its wake, or will the working class be able to defend itself against this onslaught and translate its defence into a progressive reordering of society?

Neither course is predetermined, but the option is posed more starkly every time the working class comes out in open struggle against increasing attacks on its living standards. Although Thatcher has not yet succeeded in breaking the strike decisively, the symptoms of collapse and the parochial, hesitant and opportunistic behaviour of the reformist TUC and Labour Party portend years of demoralisation for a large section, if not the whole, of the British working class.

To say that the outcome of open civil war is not predetermined is not to suggest that its course is unaffected by man's intervention. The course of class struggle is very much shaped by the relation of concrete forces - by the relative strengths of the classes in conflict. In this process the direction given by the leadership of the working class, its ability to develop the forms of organisation and methods of struggle that correspond to the needs of worker defence is of fundamental importance.

It is essential that the British working class, and the working class internationally, understand the coalminers' strike as a clear expression of the intensified class conflict that is being forced into the open by the deepening economic crisis. It is significant not simply as another milestone in a long history of labour struggles but as the clarion call from the British working class for workers to enter decisive struggle through united action. For the traditional TUC and Labour Party leadership to hold back the militant tide with their routine economic and parochial responses is to leave the working class defenceless in the face of the extraordinary methods of attack being used by the ruling class.

TWO IMPORTANT LESSONS

There are two important lessons that need to be drawn out of the recent events in Britain.

Firstly, the brutal actions of the Thatcher government in the form of anti-union legislation and unprecedented military-style police action reveal quite clearly that the ruling class in Britain can no longer allow workers to exercise their hard-won democratic rights. In a period of deepening economic crisis Britain has spawned the conservative bulwark of Thatcherism to enable the state to make deep inroads into social security welfare and to force British workers to submit to state cutbacks, retrenchments, unemployment and declining living standards. In a desperate attempt to protect declining profits the British state, the one-time bastion of bourgeois democracy, is increasingly giving way to the last refuge of degenerate capitalism, namely fascist rule.

Secondly, the leadership of the British working class, deeply rooted in a reformist and economicistic tradition, has shown itself incapable of breaking with its past to give militant miners the appropriate means to undertake effective united action in their defence. In spite of his radical rhetoric Scargill has not gone beyond calling for "protectionism" as a concrete alternative to pit closures. Even the loud calls for support made by NUM to other sections of the British working class have been based narrowly on support for the miners' cause specifically and

not as a means of extending their militant action. The response of other trade unions has been hesitant and erratic and is echoed formally by TUC's reluctant expression of solidarity. Whatever dent the miners' strike may make on Thatcher's recession policies no single section of the British working class will be able to defend itself properly unless its struggle becomes generalised organisationally through a Workers' United Front and practically by means of a general strike.

THATCHERISM AND THE ATTACK ON THE COALMINERS -THE DRIFT TOWARDS FASCISM

Britain's Economic Crisis

Britain, the pace-setter of progressive capitalist development in the 19th century, has not escaped the international economic crisis. The second Imperialist War of 1939-1945 signalled Britain's eclipse by the USA as the most advanced capitalist country in the world. Introducing itself as the "arsenal of the democracies" during the war, America took on the task of pumping millions of dollars in aid, loans and capital investment into the war-torn economies of Britain and Western Europe.

With this massive injection of capital, Britain was able to resurrect its young pre-war welfare policies and once again passify the working class through massive state expenditure and social security. The foundations of this post-war boom were however extremely shaky, based as they were on the reckless policy of deficit budgeting. The resultant inflation, balance of payments deficit and massive debt problem forced Britain into a period of economic stagnation in the late 1960's - a recession which reached crisis proportions 20 years later.

Thatcher's Monetarism - A Severe Attack On The British Working Class

The year 1980 saw the beginning of the worst recession in Britain in more than 40 years with inflation running at 20%, a 22% interest rate, 3 million unemployed and a 3.3% decline in GDP. It also saw the Conservative Party oust the Labour government at the election polls and the ruling class dig in its heels behind a decisive anti-recession policy - Thatcher's monetarism. In essence Thatcher's solution to rampant inflation and the effects of budget deficitting is to cut back drastically on public spending. Directed more against capital investment and state expenditure than against consumer spending, the monetarist anti-inflation policy takes the form of "privatisation" of state industry (this is even making inroads into the National Health Service), the withdrawal of state subsidies for ailing industries, drastic cutbacks on local government

spending and a severe clipping of social security benefits.

While these austerity measures to some extent force capitalists to "tighten their belts" they in fact mean a severe attack on the living standards of British workers - high unemployment, retrenchments, cutbacks on housing, education and health and a drop in real wages. Bracing herself for strong resistance from the organised working class, the "Iron Lady" has abandoned the laissez-faire consensus politics of Labour governments, centred decision-making firmly at 10 Downing Street and declared total war on the political weight of the trade unions.

In March 1984 the Coal Board announced that it would be closing 20 "uneconomic" pits which meant that 20 000 men would lose their jobs. The unemployment figure in Britain stands at 3.3 million and is rising at the rate of 10 000 a day. On 10 March 1984, 180 000 coal miners came out on strike against the pit closures. The announcement to close the pits was not an accidental one according to the whims of some politician, but a well-strategised long-term plan.

In May 1978, THE ECONOMIST printed a draft of the Ridley Report written by a Tory MP. It proposed privatisation of nationalized industries in an attempt to shift the state's economic burdens to the private sector in a period of economic decline. Ridley expected resistance from unions over wage reductions and redundancies as some of the consequences of the proposals. The Coal Industry was cited as a likely area of resistance, thus Ridley proposed that the government should make preparations to cope with possible worker opposition. The proposals were that the government should:-

1. Build up coal stock, particularly at power stations.
2. Make contingency plans for the import of coal.
3. Encourage hauliers to recruit non-union drivers.
4. Introduce dual coal/oil firing in all power stations.
5. Cut off money supply to strikers and make the unions finance them.
6. Establish a large mobile squad of police to deal with picketing.

The Ridley Report had a two-fold thrust - to suggest austerity measures by which the state could cut back on its expenditure on failing industries, and to propose methods which the state could use to resist protracted strike action; methods which Thatcher has wasted no time in implementing.

The Drift To Fascism

To strengthen the barricades against working class resistance the Thatcher government introduced a barrage of anti-union legislation when it came to power in 1980.

- * In May 1980 Social Security (No. 2) Bill was passed, it penalises strikers' families by deducting assumed strike pay from social security payments. This deduction would be made irrespective of whether workers were actually receiving strike pay or not.
- * In August the employment Act introduced restrictions on picketing and "secondary" action e.g. sympathy strikes.
- * The Employment Act of 1982 makes unions financially liable in court for "illegal" action; it further redefines "Trade disputes" making it difficult to determine what kind of industrial action is permissible within the law.
- * A further Bill was passed calling for compulsory secret ballot for strikers and for the election of union officials. The government justified these laws by claiming that they were an attempt to "democratize" unions. But these antiunion laws are an attempt to disarm unions politically and reduce them to the role of "benefit societies".

Thatcher's introduction of these repressive restrictions on trade union rights has not prevented workers from defending themselves. There have been numerous major strikes during the Conservative Party's reign. The steelworkers in (1980), civil servants (1981), health workers (1982), train and print workers (1983), and now the coalminers (1984). These workers recognise that attacks on their living standards and political rights is reducing them to a state of immiseration, and that their struggle is therefore one for survival.

In many cases this has brought unions into a headon collision with Thatcher's antiunion legislation. The train drivers and print workers came into conflict with the courts earlier this year for defying the laws against secondary picketing. Despite the law against secondary picketing a serious attack on the democratic right of British workers to mobilise support for their action this tactic has been widely used by the striking coalminers. The British courts alledge that the strike is illegal because NUM called the strike without conducting a national ballot of all its members.

One of the most marked features of the strike has been the unprecedeted use of naked force by the state. Behind the media attacks on Scargill, the court injunctions against the NUM and Thatcher's tirades against the "mob", the British police have become a direct arm of attack in the state's attempt to break the strike. 85 000 arrests, hundreds injured, 2 deaths, phonetapping, surveillance of miners, harrassment of pickets and overt intimidation of miners'

families and others lending material support to the strikers bear testimony to the desperation of the government. In a striking parallel with the SADF invasions of working class township in the Transvaal, British riot police terrorised the militant miner stronghold of Armthorpe, smashing their way into workers' houses in an attempt to intimidate pickets.

But the state's response to the action of the coalminers has not been a simple one of unsophisticated brute force and repression. It has to a large extent not yet played its full hand and has been cautious in its implementation of the new antiunion legislation. Fearing the united strength of the working class, the British government has deliberately not taken action against other unions which have undertaken hesitant supportive action as that would be a sure way of driving them closer to the militant miners and of precipitating a general strike. For example no court injunction was served on railwaymen for the "illegal" secondary action they took by refusing to carry coal to steel plants. No doubt British Rail was keen not to antagonise its workers, keeping in mind the devastating effects that the 1980 national strike had on the British steel industry.

Instead the state has played off different sections of the British working class against one another in a number of ways. Firstly it has exploited long nurtured divisions amongst the coalminers. In the 1970's the National Coal Board introduced areabased productivity schemes which resulted in different levels of earnings from area to area. The closures of 1984 have coincided with this scheme, that is, less productive pits have been closed and the more "profitable" pits are still open. It is not surprising that resistance to the strike from amongst coalminers has come largely from Nottinghamshire where wages are relatively high.

Furthermore the barrage of criticism that has been levelled against Scargill by the state and the press for not holding a compulsory secret ballot before taking strike action has found credibility amongst reactionary mineworkers. The rightwing section of NUM has repeatedly criticised the initiators of the strike for being "undemocratic". To these accusations Scargill responded by referring to the decision to close the pits, "Nobody balloted the 20000 who will lose their jobs." Secondly the state has been able to rely quite confidently on the bankruptcy of the traditional leadership of the British working class to weaken the resistance of the coalminers. Thatcher has obviously fostered the careerist power struggles in the TUC and the Labour Party as well as the parochial interests of many of the individual unions in order to paralyse the one form of action that would bring her government crashing to the ground - united defensive action in the form of a general strike.

THE LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN BRITAIN

The Militancy of the Coalminers and the Potential for United Action

The willingness of the coalminers to take action in defence of their jobs was made clear when 75% of NUM membership responded positively to the strike call and brought 80% of the country's coal production to a halt. Faced with the prospect of lifelong unemployment the miners have understood their strike as a life and death struggle for the right to work. The low ebb of worker militancy in the late 1970's in Britain gave way to an increasing confidence during the massive strikes of the steelworkers (1980) and the printworkers (1983). This has reached a climax in the determination of the striking miners not to back down. Tens of thousands of workers have been involved in picketing daily with well-coordinated movement of "flying pickets" to blockade still-operating mines.

On the spontaneous level there has been extensive solidarity with the striking miners - regional solidarity strikes by workers in Wales, a solidarity strike by bus and train drivers and blocking action by transport workers. The use of non-union dockworkers to load blocked coal triggered off a massive dockworkers' strike in July. Although it was shortlived it indicated the potential for the struggle of the coalminers to become generalised and to fire workers in other industries with confidence to come out in their own defence. By the end of June the miners had received £10 million in donations, the Bakers' Union was supplying their families with free bread and women in the mining communities had established support groups campaigning for material help and joining miners on the picket lines.

Support for the miners' struggle has extended beyond Britain's borders. Financial assistance has been forthcoming from workers in France, West Germany, New Zealand, Holland and the USSR and transport workers in Belgium and Australia have refused to handle coal bound for Britain. Most significant were the joint meetings between British strikers and West German metal and print workers who recently struck for a 35-hour working week where miners stressed the international nature of their defensive struggle.

Although the strike has been characterised by an unprecedented militancy and disparate expressions of workers' yearning for united action, this potential has remained largely directionless. With the momentum of the strike clearly on the wane it is crucial to examine the failure of the leadership to respond to the needs of the working class in this period.

NUM, TUC And The Labour Party

The failure of NUM, TUC and the Labour Party to see the direct connection between the coalminers' strike and the life-and-death struggle of the British working class against Thatcherism and the economic crises is not altogether surprising. In spite of the hue and cry from the traditional leadership of the labour movement against Thatcher's austerity measures, the unions and the Labour Party have buckled on fundamental principles of working class defence.

In 1983 the TUC, which represents 10 million industrial workers made it clear that it would not automatically support individual unions which flouted Thatcher's anti-union laws. In practice this meant nothing less than the reactionary refusal to support the militant printworkers' strike in 1983 after they had undertaken extensive "illegal" secondary picketing. This represented a major victory for Thatcherism and the thin end of the fascist wedge was firmly driven home.

The response of the TUC to the miners' strike has been one of routine loyalty. The lip-service support given to the strike at the Brighton TUC conference in September was not only hesitant, but was motivated more by opportunistic and bureaucratic concerns than out of any sense of urgency. With elections to the General Council of the TUC taking place there were complex power struggles and internal shifts that had to be considered and the best way of preventing polarisation within the TUC was to give official and moderate support to the strike. The TUC saw its support for the miners not as a means of generalising their struggle and advancing it organisationally, but with the hope of being able to exert a "moderating" influence on events and pressurise Scargill and the Coal Board into a compromise. A recent issue of the ECONOMIST claimed that TUC support was reluctant; on the one hand because it feared the embarrassment of the possible defeat of the strike, but on the other hand success would be even more damaging because "it would associate more of the trade union movement with tactics of industrial anarchy, and silence those who are trying to find the unions a sensible role."

Although individual union affiliates of TUC have been far bolder in actively supporting the miners through solidarity strikes and blacking action, this has been hesitant, desparate and inconsistent. The Steelworkers Union feared retrenchment of its members and so undertook no supportive action; although the Transport and General Workers Union pledged "total support" this commitment was immediately broken by truckers transporting coal and the collapse of the dock strike. Once it was clear that a Nacod strike, which would have closed all of the coal mines, had been averted, the coalminers' last hope lay with the electricity supply unions which have the power to black out the whole country

overnight. The reluctance of their leadership to take decisive action was made clear by the vague commitment offered by the General Secretary of the Power Engineers to meet NUM "sometime in the future" and his admission, "I cannot see what else the Coal Board could possibly concede."

The timid economism of the majority of the trade unions found its twin in the reformist response of the Labour Party. The Labour Party has not begun to understand the intensification of the class struggle brought on by the economic crisis and anachronistically propagates the consensus politics between the government and the unions that Thatcher cast aside in 1980. When Thatcher introduced the anti-union laws the Labour leadership responded with complete passivity. In their view this legislation was not a significant turn towards a fascist repression of working class rights but an uncomplicated extension of the troublesome relationship between the unions and Conservative governments.

The Labour Party's solution to the problems facing Britain is a Labour government that would somehow ensure the "voluntary" restraint and co-operation of the unions. But any attempt to harmonise the conflict between capital and labour especially under conditions of economic crisis, where each can only defend itself at the expense of the other, will only mean a severe compromise of the interests of workers. This attempt to separate the problems facing the working class from the militant character of its struggle in this period was clearly expressed in Neil Kinnock's (leader of the Labour Party) condemnation of the miners' violence, "violence distracts attention from the central issues of the dispute. It obscures the justice of the miners' case." This comment is not far from Thatcher's "the rule of law must prevail over the rule of the mob."

Despite the organisational potential that exists in Britain for the working class to generalise particular struggles, the defiance of Thatcher's anti-union laws by certain unions has to a greater or lesser degree remained individualised. It is especially during this period of deep economic recession and brutal attacks on the living standards of workers that parochial action is doomed to failure. No single union is able to defend itself against the determination of a ruling class in crisis.

Scargill's calls for support from other unions have again reflected parochial interests. His call has been for other unions simply to assist the coalminers and there has been no attempt to connect their fate with the fate of the whole working class or to call out other sections of the working class on their basis of their own struggles. The objective basis for united worker action is the fact that the plight of the miners (i.e. retrenchment, unemployment and the attack on their rights to organise and strike) is the plight

of all British workers and that their struggle for the right to work is the struggle of workers internationally.

Parochialism is inevitably economicistic; that is, it does not establish the connection between the economic struggles of workers over wages, retrenchments etc. and the use of state power by the ruling class to ensure a high rate of profit. Thatcherism has made this connection hundreds of times by attacking the democratic rights of workers in their organisations and through the mobilisation of police to attack pickets in order precisely to force the working class to submit to more intensive exploitation.

Scargill, the much acclaimed "Red", has stated that "capitalism is obscene and needs to be overthrown". His bark is worse than his bite. His solution to the threat of the closure of "uneconomic" industries and thus to retrenchment shows no boldness,

"We need the immediate establishment of import controls, thus protecting our industry from outside unfair competition. The immediate introduction of import controls alongside subsidies similar to those applicable in Western Europe would enable this industry to embark on an expansionist programme, stop all pit closures, invest in existing collieries, develop new mines and at the same time use the enormous coal stocks currently dominating the skylines in Britain."

Scargill's proposals reek of reformism. Only through a more intensive exploitation of mineworkers and the extraction of greater profits would the mining bosses be able to embark on an "expansionist programme", "invest in existing collieries" and "develop new mines". Firstly, none of the measures proposed by Scargill, which were echoed by the TUC at their September conference, will be able to secure the jobs of the miners in the long term. Unemployment and retrenchment are inevitable features of a crisis-ridden capitalist economy. Secondly, the call for the protection of British industry and for import controls is irreconcilable with the need to build international solidarity amongst workers. Protectionism will merely foster and intensify a nationalistic spirit among British workers. From the leadership of the workers it is a reactionary call and reveals most starkly Scargill's failure to link the coalminers' strike with the struggle of workers internationally against retrenchments and unemployment.

ONCE AGAIN - THE URGENT CALL

The meaning of the British coalminers' strike is clear - it has brought into the open the decisive conflict between the efforts of declining capitalism to maintain its profits and the struggle of the working class against increasing

immiseration. Over the last four years the Conservative Thatcher government has embarked on a decisive and thorough-going attack on the living standards and democratic rights of the British workers. The anti-union laws and brutal police action are the first indications that the state is resorting to fascist methods to carry out its monetarist policies. As of yet the state has been neither forced nor able to make full use of its repressive armoury against the working class, being cautious not to provoke workers over the heads of their heel-dragging leaders and making use of the parochial, opportunist and reformist traditions of the labour leadership to divide and dissipate united action.

It is of crucial importance that the British working class begins to break with the bureaucratic tradition of its leadership. Neither NUM nor TUC nor the Labour Party has been able to effectively defend the mineworkers, and none of them, in their utterances and practices, have recognised the urgency of united defensive action as the only way of staving off the attacks of a desparate ruling class. The call from the British miners is not for a bureaucratic TUC alliance that issues formal declarations of protest against privatisation and unemployment, but for a United Front of all workers organisations - employed and unemployed, organised and unorganised - that can effectively halt the rising tide of fascism through united action. The call from the miners is not only for support for their own cause but for a general strike that would extend and broaden their struggle against retrenchment to diverse other workers' struggles. The call of the miners must become the more conscious call of the whole British working class - for a leadership that is able to read the signs of the times and take up the defence of workers through united action.

Nicaragua in Perspective

"If we (the USA) interfere with the internal politics of countries within our orbit in order to prevent them from falling into the communist orbit, we must deny them the privilege of choosing their own form of government. Since under the present arrangements we are also denying them economic prosperity, we are obliged to rely on increasingly oppressive regimes in order to maintain our domination." (George Soros, New York fund manager, writing in FINANCIAL TIMES, 23.5.84)

In recent months the threat of an American invasion of Nicaragua has loomed large across the headlines. In the wake of massive United States intimidation of the Government of National Reconstruction by mining Nicaraguan ports and conducting military exercises in neighbouring Honduras, the US government has launched a far-reaching propaganda campaign to justify the possibility of another brutal crushing of populist independence. But is the prospect of an American invasion the only threat to the gains of the 1979 Sandanista revolution? Nicaragua has not escaped world economic crisis. Its effects are more and more forcing the contradictions inherent in the populist programme of "harmonising" class differences into the open. Discontent among workers in Nicaragua and the strengthening of the local bourgeoisie are opening up a new phase of struggle which will be decisive for the fate of the Nicaraguan revolution.

AMERICAN CONTROL OF NICARAGUA

American control of Nicaragua goes back to the turn of the century. America's interest, was initially mainly strategic as control of Nicaragua meant control of the commercial shipping that passed through the Panama Canal. This strategic interest in Nicaragua changed significantly as America needed to extract raw materials and invest capital in Nicaragua in the face of falling profit in America itself. The former colonies of America now became mere areas of extraction, the basis of which was the super-exploitation of the cheap migrant and seasonal labour. This process of imperialist expansion led to impoverishment and underdevelopment in the areas controlled by the USA. In many cases capital investment and the extraction of raw materials required political control.

Before 1989 American control was limited to ensuring that the political leaders elected to the government supported

American interests. Often these political leaders, mainly emerging plantation or agricultural capitalists, went counter to the interests of America.

In 1939 the Nicaraguan government attempted to get Germany and Japan to challenge American control of the Panama Canal. This infuriated the US government which, via American companies in Nicaragua, sponsored a conservative overthrow of the Nicaraguan government. The coup d'état was successful, but there was no guarantee that the new leader and the government would secure American interests. The US Marines subsequently invaded Nicaragua and not only set up a government to ensure American control of the Panama Canal but also used this opportunity to take control over Nicaraguan factories and farms. It brought all the Nicaraguan banks, customs departments, post offices, railways and harbours under US control.

The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie protested vehemently, organising a national uprising in 1912 against American control. This was simply an anti-colonial struggle led by an aspirant national bourgeoisie and had no anti-capitalist intentions. Following closely on the events of 1912 was another American invasion and military occupation of Nicaragua. In the ensuing twelve years of occupation all anti-colonial opposition was brought to heel, the strong nationalist government was ousted and major concessions were granted to powerful American companies at the expense of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie. When the US army occupation ended in 1925 an open civil war broke out between opposing factions of the bourgeoisie (the pro-American liberals being overthrown by conservative nationalists) in which American arbitrated with force.

While the American imperialists "resolved" the crisis in bourgeois leadership more ominous forces entered the fray. The struggles of 1912-1925 had spawned an anti-American guerilla movement in Nicaragua. Support for it grew amongst the peasants and workers who had in some areas taken full control of the farms and factories. Under the leadership of Sandino, a Nicaraguan ex-army officer and petty trader, the guerilla movement aided by international pressure forced the withdrawal of the US Marines in 1931.

The withdrawal did not mean an end to American control, it merely forced America to change its strategy. Already in 1927, anticipating the forced withdrawals of its troops, the American army had created a Nicaraguan National Guard. The main purpose of the National Guard was to bring to power a dictatorial regime and to provide the main mechanism for American control. This plan was not confined to Nicaragua but had become America's strategy towards Latin America as a whole.

In order to maintain severe exploitation of labour and access to cheap extraction of the raw materials and wealth, as well as to restrict resistance and pressure from the impoverished masses, the US government was forced to create strong dictatorial governments backed by a US controlled army. These dictatorial governments were set up in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic.

1936 saw the materialisation of the purpose for which the National Guard had been set up in 1927. A dictatorship was established in Nicaragua under the auspices of the chief of the National Guard, Samoza, and was to last for 54 years. It ushered in half a century of the most severe exploitation and oppression for the benefit of the predatory American economy.

However, it was not only the military might of the USA which ushered in great hardship for the Nicaraguan workers and peasants but, importantly, the fact that the petty-bourgeois led guerilla movement capitulated militarily and politically to the Nicaraguan government in a bid to settle the future of their war-torn country. As a signal warning of the betrayal of the interests of the workers and peasants who had courageously driven the Americans out, Sandino was assassinated, many of the guerillas were murdered and workers and peasants were brutally repressed. With the peasants' and workers' opposition to American imperialism smashed, the path was cleared for Samoza, in collusion with sections of his family and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, to amass great wealth.

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN NICARAGUA

In the 1950's and 1960's Nicaragua became a fully-fledged but weak capitalist country. This was made possible by the expropriation of the land and large-scale proletarianisation of peasants. The revolts which accompanied these developments were crushed by the National Guard. The main areas of capitalist growth were in light industry, textiles, chemicals, metal and food processing. Cotton became the main export overtaking coffee, livestock and sugar. Nicaragua remained essentially an extractive economy controlled by foreign companies and by the local bourgeoisie. This legacy from her pre-capitalist days made Nicaragua dependent on loans from the World Bank to prop up her lop-sided economic development, and all the evils of a backward economy were visited upon her with the onset of the world economic crisis in the early 70's. Between 1969 and 1974 37% of the Nicaraguan factories closed. Foreign debt rose from 225 million to a 1000 million dollars. Foreign investment took flight. Nicaraguan economy was in a severe crises.

Resistance to the Samoza government grew as the economic crises saw wages plummet and unemployment soar. The local

bourgeoisie was also forced into an anti-Somoza stance because the dictatorship could not ensure stable conditions for exploitation. The Somoza family was openly corrupt. It appropriated earth-quake relief funds to invest in their own companies. The stage was set for another wave of popular resistance.

THE NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE TAKES THE LEAD IN THE STRUGGLE

By 1973 disenchantment with the Somoza regime expressed itself in the fact that the National Guard was the only support for the American backed dictator and the meaning of this loyalty became abundantly clear when they summoned all forces to force workers participating in the National General Strike, called by the bourgeoisie, to go back to work.

But the progressiveness of the bourgeoisie was short-lived as events that followed exposed their class allegiances. Panic overtook them as workers and peasants took to open combat in the streets to defend themselves against the National Guard. They turned away from the workers and peasants and appealed to their one time enemy, America, to get rid of Somoza. America did not respond because it had met with resounding defeat in Vietnam and public opinion was intensely opposed to American intervention in other countries. The bourgeoisie lost support decisively to the petty-bourgeoisie led FSLN when they called off the strike and opened the factories and the farms. Carter's hesitancy to support Somoza or to maintain American control by supporting the opposition bourgeoisie allowed the FSLN to consolidate and build support for a more far-reaching change and intensification of the struggle.

THE HISTORY OF THE FSLN AND THE OVERTHROW OF THE SAMOZA DICTATORSHIP

The FSLN had no mass support up to the early seventies, its composition dominated by intellectuals who hotly debated the issue of the nature of the Nicaraguan struggle. By 1978, their position had defined itself much more clearly with 2 major expulsions from their ranks. The first was a proletarian tendency which eschewed military adventurism and urged solid roots to be sunk in the working class. The second was a tendency which argued that the Nicaraguan revolution should unfold like Vietnam.

The FSLN majority known as the Tercerista tendency based their understanding of struggle on the 2 stage theory. The first stage being the completion of bourgeois democracy via the national liberation struggle. This struggle should be led by an alliance of all classes, and not by the bourgeoisie as in the classical two stage theory because they were too weak politically and were far too tied to

merely become junior partners in the world capitalist system.

This led the FSLN majority to adopt the populist strategy of struggle which in reality is in fact a 2 stage struggle led by the middle class. The FSLN's strategy involved an alliance of all classes in Nicaragua. These classes via their organisations would join together to form a people's alliance, where no particular class dominates, but where the alliance attempts to represent the interests of all classes. Via the people's struggle for national liberation the first stage could be completed.

The second stage, the socialist stage was not defined by the FSLN. It was merely stated as being a long term goal. This tendency's strategy therefore combined commando-type action and urban guerilla activities as well as mobilizing support amongst all classes, but more especially the working class and peasantry who were the largest and potentially the most militant. The FSLN's immediate goal was to organise an alliance of all classes in preparation for a national uprising.

The FSLN's majority motto was ironically "Only the workers and peasants will go all the way. Only their organising force will achieve victory". Certainly, the FSLN realized that the people's revolution could only succeed by the use of the combined strength of the workers and peasants. These classes were mobilized and organised into defence committees on the eve of the revolution and became the main forces in the revolution. Yet the political programme of the FSLN and later the United Peoples Movement (led by the FSLN) was not guided by an understanding of the signal importance of the working class in leading the struggle against American exploitation and oppression. In no way could the FSLN consistently represent and fight in the interest of the working class and peasantry as this would alienate the other classes, thus undermining the basis of the FSLN's struggle. This was directly reflected in the FSLN's programme.

The FSLN insists up until today that their political programme is a Nicaraguan one that grew out of the conditions of struggle in Nicaragua. The basis of the struggle being anti-imperialist, anti-dictatorial and popular. Their programme involved mobilizing the masses on the basis of strong nationalist feelings against Samoza and the United States. Taking advantage of the broad range of opposition to Samoza they incorporated into their programme general democratic demands around which all classes - capitalists, middle class, peasants and workers - could rally.

The FSLN stretched its net even wider in the wake of the

organisations under its banner in the United Peoples Movement. This Movement even included the anti-Samoza bourgeoisie whose Broad Opposition Front had split apart leaving the class divided and politically weak. Having drawn together all anti-American forces into one multi class conglomerate the United Peoples Movement had only to come to power to give realisation to its populist programme. After a brutal struggle the United Peoples Movement overthrew Samoza in 1979 and established the government of National Reconstruction.

THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

The Government of National Reconstruction, or Junta, led by the FSLN dominated United Peoples Movement, set itself the task of rebuilding Nicaragua economically, politically and socially. The political form of its rule was to be "popular democracy", or "people's" power, and pluralism (the right of all political parties to exist irrespective of their class base). The Junta, in which local capitalists, the church, the trade unions, student organisations and the FSLN had representation embarked on the first stage of national reconstruction - the completion of capitalist development under the guidance of "peoples" power.

Setting out its objectives a spokesman for the Junta stated, "It is a question of bringing together wage workers with small producers and artisans, with professionals and technicians in a single unbreakable project of National Unity. It also means integrating the patriotic businessmen and offering these people the support of the government necessary to reactivate their sector of the economy in order to achieve the goals in production which this plan has set for the private sector." Rather than base itself on the power of the exploited, "The government of National Unity expresses the common interests of her nation of Nicaragua in the face of external and internal limitations imposed by our history and our plan. Accordingly we recognise the differences that exist in our society as well as the right of the government to harmonise these differences between various interest groups, through its leadership and in alliance with others, in order to attain a system of unity, liberty and social justice." The Junta believed that alongside exploitation and the private ownership of the productive forces a 'peoples' democracy could be achieved if the interests of the different classes could be harmonised and directed to benefit the Nicaraguan revolution.

The Junta has succeeded in bringing about massive economic, social and political changes. For example thousands of people have been housed and educated - the illiteracy rate was lowered from 50,3% to 12,9%. Rents, transport fares, food prices have all been drastically lowered. Medical facilities have improved in quantity and quality and

suffered the worst under Somoza are enjoying a relatively high quality of life. Basic democratic rights have been extended; the right to join trade unions and other organisations, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, women's rights etc..

Certainly on a social benefit or welfare level the Junta has ensured that the peasants and workers benefit, even at the expense of the middle and capitalist class. However the relations of production appear, after nearly 4 years, to be capitalist. The capitalists in Nicaragua own about 80% of the agriculture, 75% of the industry and 75% of the other production processes, with the state owning and nationalizing approximately 25% in each sector.

The policy towards the bourgeoisie remains one of conciliation and restricted development. They still exploit supposedly "under the most democratic form". They still own and control most of the wealth in Nicaragua "in the interest of the Nicaraguan revolution". Jaime Wheelock, a present government member, spells out the role of the bourgeoisie, "there exists the possibility that the bourgeoisie only produce without power, that it limit itself as a class to a productive role, that is, that it limit itself to exploiting it's means of production and that it utilize those means of production to live, not as instruments of power, of imposition."

Simply what the people's government is saying is that the bourgeoisie must develop to it's fullest potential, must continue to exploit the large working class. This the people's government will only allow if the bourgeoisie does not undermine or attempt to sabotage the aims of the revolution. To prevent them from doing this the bourgeoisie is not allowed to wield any political power. If they do not produce and exploit the workers "well", in accordance with the conditions set by the people's government the capitalist's factories or farms are immediately nationalised by the peoples government. This policy has kept many of the remaining bourgeoisie in check. As far as the exploited are concerned the Junta claims that "the working class must be truly converted into a working class with its specific interest." According to the first stage of the revolution the working class is to mature as a social force and flex its muscles through its trade unions in preparation for the second or "socialist" stage.

The "socialist" aims of the Junta are however highly questionable. Increasingly reluctant to antagonise the bourgeoisie, one Junta spokesman asserted, "it can be very simple to transform the social structure without always having to resort to the expropriation of the means of production."

Already class conflict is beginning to intensify and the Junta is being forced to straddle more and more contradictions. Unemployment is still a major source of dissatisfaction and there have been an increasing number of strikes especially since the dramatic price increases of late 1983. At the same time the capitalists are strengthening their hold over the economy and foreign companies and banks, although under severe restrictions, are still operating extensively.

As so-called "popular anti-imperialist" struggles in other countries have shown (even on Nicaragua's doorstep) a petit bourgeois led people's government has little chance of long term stability in the epoch of declining capitalism. As is already happening in Nicaragua the economic crisis is driving wedges into the cherished national unity. Workers are being forced more and more to shoulder the burden of rising prices and unemployment "in the name of the revolution." Whatever intentions the FSLN may have to usher in a second "socialist" stage they are effectively cutting the ground from under the feet of the only class that can fulfill that task, the exploited working class. By actively obscuring the independent interests of the working class for the sake of national unity and by nurturing a national bourgeoisie with its imperialist connections it is more likely to give way to bourgeois political rule and a backtracking on the gains of the 1979 revolutions than to usher in any second stage. This defeat is less likely to simply unfold organically than to be thrust forcefully onto Nicaragua through a Granada-style American invasion.

The Nicaraguan working class must look beyond the leadership of the Junta government and must begin to exert its independent class strength through the ATC (Rural Workers Association) and the trade unions. Against the growing strength of the bourgeoisie the working class must struggle to defend and extend the gains of the revolution and take it beyond the bounds offered by the populist middle class. Its struggle against American imperialism is not a peculiar Nicaraguan national struggle but a task that can only be carried out through regional and international worker solidarity.

UNITED FRONT SONG (BERTOLT BRECHT)

And because a man is human
He'll want to eat, and thanks a lot
But talk can't take the place of meat
Or fill an empty pot.
So left, two, three
So left, two, three
Comrade, there's a place for you
Take a stand in the workers' united front
For you are a worker too.

And because a man is human
He won't care for a kick in the face.
He doesn't want slaves under him
Or above him a ruling class.
So left, two, three
So left, two, three
Comrade, there's a place for you
Take your stand in the worker's united front
For you are a worker too.

And because a worker's a worker
No one else will bring him liberty.
It's nobody's work but the worker's own
To set the worker free.
So left, two, three,
So left, two, three,
Comrade, there's a place for you.
Take your stand in the worker's united front
For you are a worker too.

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