

The Red Mole

DEFEAT

BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN IRELAND



**An open letter to the official Republicans
The Ballyshannon Incidents**

WHAT NEXT FOR THE ENGINEERS

**Thailand - Italy - Students - Womens Liberation
Ernest Mandel The Monetary Crisis**

The Red Mole

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The Washington Conference Has Not Solved The Monetary Crisis

The family photo showed them beaming, those Finance ministers of the world's 10 richest imperialist nations; after four months of monetary disorder and of uncertainty over the future of the international money system, the capitalist world economy had finally been reconstituted, with new exchange rates between all the imperialist currencies.

So great had been the panic in the cabinets and ministries that the principals involved appeared to be happy even with the miserable compromise reached in Washington. But the fact was that, notwithstanding a reshuffle of exchange rates, not one of the fundamental causes of the crisis had been removed.

A compromise reflecting the change in power relationships
On August 15, 1971, had come the Nixon ultimatum; on December 18 a compromise was reached after laborious negotiations. "Neither winners nor losers", Nixon said. The compromise reflected the shifts of force in the imperialist world over the preceding decade.

American capital secured a general revaluation of all the imperialist currencies against the dollar. Though some were large—15.5 percent in the case of the yen and 12.5 percent for the deutschmark—they were generally below what the Nixon administration had hoped for. They will help exports of American goods, and reduce exports of American capital, and above all they will encourage the export of European and Japanese capital to the U.S.

Nevertheless, despite all Nixon's promises and boasting, the dollar emerges well and truly devalued, against gold and against all the currencies which are not following it in devaluing. This devaluation will reduce the already shaken confidence of the bankers of the world in the stability of the dollar. (Several East European governments will suffer a loss because they had unwisely converted their reserves into dollars. In the same way, the Chinese government made a loss in putting its reserves into French francs before that currency was devalued.) For those semi-colonial countries who will likewise devalue their money, the dollar devaluation will more or less increase the price of imports of raw materials and of the products of light industry which they sell abroad.

The Monetary Crisis is still with us
The international monetary system remains in crisis. The two main causes of this crisis are by no means eliminated. The dollar is still not convertible compared with gold. If the capitalist central banks continue to avoid the dollar as a reserve currency—and how can they not, after such

a devaluation—the international capitalist economy will continue to be without an international currency.

Secondly, American inflation continues to roar ahead, largely because the Nixon administration wants at all costs to stop the recession from deteriorating into a grave economic crisis. The American balance of payments deficit will also persist, if slightly eased.

In this regard it must be made clear that the 10% import surcharge imposed by Nixon on August 15, has proved a lightweight in slowing down the flow of imports attracted into the US by the high domestic liquidity. It has produced a rise in prices touched off by the rise in import costs. Also, certain imports, notably in the machines field, cannot be replaced on the domestic market as the American industry does not produce parts for equipment made in Germany or Japan.

The most rational way out of the impasse, for the capitalists, would be to back up gold with an international reserve money which would be totally independent of any country's national economy; a money of the central banks, administered by a central bank of the central banks according to strictly objective rules. But that needs a global utopia. Such a scheme would need the precondition of a world capitalist government, independent of the great imperialist powers; that is to say, competition among the imperialists would have to disappear. Instead, this very competition has intensified since the start of the crisis in the world money system.

Failing a global solution, all the imperialist powers can hope for is a slow growth in the role of special drawing rights (the "paper gold" distributed proportionally according to the morale that the richest countries get the most). The imperialist states of the Common Market reinforced by Britain—which has not ceased to align itself with them during the crisis—will meanwhile seek to create a common money which, all other things being equal, could join the dollar as a reserve currency, or even take over from it. But that is not for tomorrow, or even for the day after tomorrow.

Monetary Crisis and Economic recession

The capitalists of Europe and Japan did not dare cut off the branch on which they crouched. To respond to the Nixon ultimatum with massive reciprocal measures would have been to run the risk of touching off a chain reaction which, by its effects on world trade and aggravation of the American recession, would have ended by smashing their own markets.

Today, with the compromise reached in Washington, they put on a brave face for a bad job. With the exception, that is, of the German industrialists, for whom it all means their third revaluation in a short space of time. They fear a massive invasion by cheap American goods and a relative decline in German exports.

France Soir had the triumphant headline "Crisis and unemployment avoided". The demagoguery even from a paper of that sort, astonishes one. Far from having been avoided, unemployment in France has reached a 20-year record level, and this even before the recession has struck. The recession (which is to say the crisis) threatens France not only as a consequence of the money crisis but as a consequence of the West German recession, which is mounting. There was not the slightest sign, the day after December 18, of a turning point in the West German recession. On the contrary, there was every sign that it would continue through the winter and next spring.

The fact is that the international economic situation is not a result of the monetary crisis, but preceded it and to some extent speeded up the monetary slowdown. The causes of the current recession go deeper: a slowdown in technological innovation, surplus capacity in key industries such as metals, cars, petrochemicals and synthetic textiles, shipyards and no doubt electronics; the fall in profit levels and the slowdown in investments which follows; the growing gulf between productive capacity and purchasing power, which is worsened by the growing indebtedness of managements and firms.

In short, we are seeing all the classic contradictions of capitalism, whose immediate manifestations may be in some measure controlled by monetary and financial manipulations but which cannot be thereby eliminated or, in the long term, averted. In these conditions, the two prophecies made after August 15, remain valid.

Firstly, the international bourgeoisie would attempt to see that the workers footed the bill. The offensive against jobs and real salaries is becoming more generalised. The vigorous riposte of the West German metal workers demonstrates that this offensive is by no means assured of certain success.

Secondly, international competition of intensifying and sapping the basis of any agreement, including monetary. The Bretton Woods system lasted 25 years, five of them agonising. The system born in Washington will not last a decade. Its break-up will be at stake the moment there is a recession or social upheaval in a major imperialist country.

—Ernest Mandel
20.12.71

editorial note

The article on Engineering on pages 6 & 7 of this issue makes a critical analysis of the AUEW policy on the two issues that will be fought out in the engineering industry during the early part of 1972. The first of these is the current wage claim lodged by the Confederation of Shipbuilding & Engineering Unions (CSEU) whose policy is determined by the AEUW, the largest of the 18 unions under its umbrella. Because of the specific effects that a severe economic recession has on the engineering industry, traditional piece-rate bargaining is no longer adequate to the task of pushing up earnings, the upward drift of which levelled out at the end of 1970. This article disputes the tactic that the bureaucracy of the AUEW have adopted—of sticking to the traditional pattern of 'two-tier' bargaining, explained below. The upward push of earnings of the most militant and best organised workers in Britain has come to a halt and the present CSEU claim does not seriously confront this problem. But there is

a second, and probably more explosive, issue. The unions have finally withdrawn from the 50 year old York Procedure Agreements, and from January onward there will be no agreed procedure in firms federated to the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF)—the vast majority of British engineering concerns. This is in line with the policy of reinforcing the shop floor power, which pushed up piece-rate earnings, by attempting to gain adequate domestic bargaining structures which the York Agreement was designed to exclude. The bureaucracy of the AUEW has now told its members to negotiate these new structures locally, i.e. with individual firms. But here again, the same specific effects of the recession on the industry have worked to strengthen the employers' hand in relation to their workers to a degree unknown since before the War, and for this reason the AUEW tactic is far less effective than a national action would have been. Indeed it is a positively dangerous tactic for present conditions have enabled the

EEF to speed up their own strategic 'line of march'. This certainly includes the creation of domestic bargaining structures—but on their own terms.

The open-ended situation prevailing from January onwards, may well provide the occasion for the newly-strengthened employers to achieve these terms and the Industrial Relations Act may well provide what the EEF needs to define them. New domestic structures on the EEF's terms could in turn provide the instrument for achieving their strategic objective—the elimination of piece-work as a precondition for further capital investment in the event of economic upturn.

If this article appears to reach alarmist conclusions this is because it pursues the logic of the present situation. The clash may well be headed off by hasty compromise, but for reasons argued this may prove impossible.



SOLIDARITY WITH THE MANGROVE NINE

VERDICT: All comrades not guilty on riot charges, 4 comrades found guilty of 'lesser' offences and given suspended sentences.

The verdict at the Old Bailey was both a victory for the Mangrove Nine and the black organisations supporting them. It was also a terrible indictment of the lack of support shown to the black brothers and sisters by the Left generally.

It was a victory for the Mangrove Nine not because of the verdict. It was a victory because they consistently fought the case on a political level and refused to back down from this position. They refused to confine themselves to the mere 'facts' of the frame-up, but consciously sought to show the all-embracing nature of racism and harassment towards blacks within the system. Police harassment is nothing new for blacks. What is new is the way the comrades here fought it. This contrasts markedly with the way the defence was run at the Purdie/Prescott trial. Here the 'defence'(!) lawyers were allowed to print Jake as a figure of pathos.

POLITICS IN COMMAND

The taking of a principled and militant political position by the Mangrove 9 had an effect on both the judge—Clark—and on the jury. The effect on Clark is shown by the fact that whereas at the beginning of the trial he felt strong enough to be openly hostile (for instance, his blatant refusal to allow a particular black worker to sit on the jury) yet by the time of his summing up he was deliberately far more restrained. The effect on the jury was shown both by their verdicts and also in the long discussions various of the jurymen had with the defendants after the trial. Clark would have dropped dead (hopefully) if he had heard a trade unionist on the jury invite one of the black brothers to address his local trade union branch on racism.

Finally the principled position taken by the comrades will inevitably have a profound effect on the black community itself—a community which has seen black brothers and sisters standing up and fighting back. They were helped in this by the activity of the Black People's Information Centre who each week prepared a summary of the trial and distributed it not only around Nottingham but also abroad. Such propaganda is vital in a political case like this to counteract the the distorting role of the bourgeois press. This role began the day after the demonstration which provoked the frame-up. Here the unfree press came out with headlines such as 'Black Mob Runs Wild' (at one point in the trial Clark admitted that he thought this was the case). Again the distorting role of the press was seen during the trial itself when although much coverage was given to the prosecution evidence yet the main body of the defence case was virtually ignored. Finally the bourgeois press was seen in its true light when the main evidence for the prosecution was provided by the *Daily Mirror* photographer on the demonstration who handed over his photographs to the Department of Public Prosecutions.

THEY ARE MARKED MEN & WOMEN!

However though it can be said that the Mangrove 9, collectively and individually and with the support of other black comrades, gained a victory by taking a principled political position yet it would be fatally wrong to assume that they left the court 'free' men and women. On the contrary they left as marked men and women. Thus the suspended sentences given by Clark were not a total concession. Instead their purpose is to terrorise those who received them into remaining passive, in future. What this means is shown by the arrest of Rhodan Gordon 24 hours later charged with assaulting a policeman.

Back Row: Rhodan Gordon, Godfrey Millet, Rupert Boyce
L-R: Frank Critchlow, Roddy Kentish.
Middle: Radford Howe.
L-R: Althea Lecointe,
L-R: Barbara Beese



The point is that revolutionaries cannot really gain 'victories' inside bourgeois courts themselves. Victories can only be gained on the streets—in order to force the bourgeoisie into retreating before revolutionary forces. To think that revolutionaries isolated in the courts can wage anything but the most limited defensive struggle is to spread mystification about bourgeois 'justice' and 'legality'. There is no question of ever gaining 'justice' in these courts—all we can do is expose them and we can only successfully do this through showing strength outside the courts as well as inside them.

LACK OF SOLIDARITY

The tragedy about the Mangrove Nine is that outside the black groups, the comrades received hardly any support of any sort from the organised Left. To say that only the IMG of all the left groups came out in solidarity both

in our press and elsewhere is not to make a sectarian debating point. We only wish it was different.

This passivity in face of black repression is merely a further reflection of the passivity of the left in face of bourgeois repression generally. The reverse side of this is the utter reluctance of the left to even consider challenging bourgeois norms of legality. We suspect this is why no other group outside the IMG is prepared to support the IRA—they can't even support vicariously the idea of fighting back. In fact the question now poses itself in Britain whether we can continue to struggle here in support of the Irish militants confronting large-scale repression by the bourgeois state: the answer to that would be to discuss political methods of resisting it rather than watering down our solidarity.

S.C.

All out February 10th at Marylebone Magistrates Court in support of Rhodan Gordon

RED MOLE TELEPHONE:

This is to inform readers that our telephone number 01-837 6954 is now back in action. All telephone calls to the Mole should be made at this number.

Women workers, unemployment and low pay

The first figures published for the New Earnings Survey, 1971, by the DEP, show that "percentage increases in the period (April 1970-71) were much higher for women than for men, particularly among manual women. This reflects the effect of movements towards equal pay."

This only goes to show that you can prove whatever you want to, with any given set of figures. Percentages do not buy fuel and meat, and women are worse off where it counts—money in their pay packet. As we approach December 1975—the date for implementation of the so-called Equal Pay Act—employers, trade unions, male workers, and even many women workers seem determined to put women in the position they were in at the beginning of the century, when women workers were literally starving on the wages they earned for 50 hours a week or more. Women have put up with disgusting wages since the beginning of the industrial revolution, and a few more years will not hurt them. They should remember the firms to whom they have been donating such a large slice of their surplus labour over the years and when, "unless patience is exercised by the women who will qualify for equal pay", as the Engineering Employers' Federation so gallantly puts it, will not be able to withstand the additional cost burden of implementing equal pay. . . ."

The facts are that women start so far below the male rate that millions of them could get 200% greater pay rises than men and still be worse off than them. A recent survey showed that 75 out of 90 industries examined were narrowing the percentage differential between man and women's wages, but when we look at the figures, we can see why the statisticians prefer to stick to percentages—they are so much more optimistic and misleading. The table below shows the true picture.

	Increases in weekly earnings (non-manual)		Increases in hourly earning (manual)	
	men	women	men	women
	£	£	np	np
Oct.69-Oct.70	4.1	2.5	8.0	5.1
Oct.70-April 71	3.0	0.2	0.8	1.2
Total increase	7.1	2.7	8.8	6.3
Av. earnings April 71	39.1	19.8	62.2	38.1

EQUAL PAY?

The problem cannot be solved through the introduction of equal pay. Theoretically, teachers get equal pay, but in April 1971 the gross weekly earnings of male and female teachers were £36.2 and £29.3 respectively. This reflects the different jobs in teaching held by men and women, with women teaching the younger children and having fewer positions of responsibility. Men get the majority of higher-paid jobs—only because of their greater ability and charm, of course—including those positions from where they have a say in who should get the better jobs, which is nice and handy.

Why do women put up with inequality to the extent they do—an extent which can be gauged by the fact that whilst 87% of manual women workers earn below £20, 87% of their male fellow-workers earn £20 or more. Similar figures apply to non-manual workers. Women workers are handicapped in many ways, but two in particular seem to me to have a bearing on why they are not up in arms about the situation (apart from the fact that many are not aware of the extent of pay differentials).

FEARS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

First, women are afraid of unemployment. Although only 135,000 women (including school-leavers) were registered as unemployed on Oct. 11th 1971, a total of over 234,000 women's

jobs 'disappeared' between June 1970 and Sept. 1971 in manufacturing industries alone. Women have learnt from bitter experience that male trade-unionists think them as expendable as the employers do, and that 'jobs for the boys' applies at every level in our cut-throat society. Given equal pay, women know that employers who prefer men, where they are available (it is, of course, an illusion to believe that all women workers could be dispensed with—they constitute nearly 40% of the labour force) even when men are less good at the job—as has been proved in the past, in many cases—mainly through prejudice. But of course, it is not quite so simple as that. Because the second reason why women are less than militant most of the time is their family responsibilities, which is the rationale for employers' prejudice. Just as they cannot rely on men's support in the work-place when it comes to fighting for equal pay and equal work and against unemployment, so the women cannot rely on them to share the domestic responsibilities equally. If a child is ill, if extra shopping has to be done, it's the women who have to take time off work, thus acquiring a reputation for unreliability.

MALE CHAUVINISM IN THE T.U.'S

The demands of women workers get pushed to the back of the agenda all the time. The strength of the unions is in their male craftsmen and the best of the agreements go to them, with the rest getting whatever is left over. The employers like nothing better than to see workers in competition with each other and the well-propagated myth of the "battle of the sexes" helps to blunt the impact of the class war. It is not for nothing that all union correspondence is addressed to 'Dear Sir and Brother'—it reflects accurately thinking within the trade union movement. Even if someone realises what it signifies, they will patronisingly say that women don't mind—(men always know what women think!) Well, women are beginning to think all sorts of rebellious and

unsettling things. They are fed up with being betrayed, of being in a weaker position, from which it is that much harder to move forward, and being helped very little by men. Whilst women are moving regardless of the wishes or assistance of the men, this will be a testing time for male militants. To continue to betray women is to betray the working-class. We are not prepared to wait till after the revolution for our problems to be taken up. To act on these problems NOW is to advance the revolution and any male worker or revolutionary who holds us back will be holding back the revolution. Don't let it happen to you!

Leonora Lloyd

SOCIALIST WOMEN GROUPS

exist in different parts of the country. If you would like to be put in touch with socialist women in your area, fill in the form below and post it to SOCIALIST WOMAN, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

OCCUPATION:.....

Students: Unions for the struggle, Unions against the State!

Last term saw the movement of students in a mass way for the first time in two years. Ever since the 'files' issue, there has been a relative quiescence in the colleges. The Thatcher proposals hoped to take advantage of this situation of calm. In essence, these proposals were meant to render harmless an instrument, student unions, which militant students have increasingly been able to use to their advantage since the upsurge of '67-'69.

At the same time it was intended to alter the political climate in the colleges so that the *de jure* powers of the authorities over the most important aspects of student unions—constitutions, finances and buildings—could again be invoked to emasculate any attempt by students to respond to the continuing technocratic reorientation of higher education or to intervene in workers or anti-imperialist struggles in a mass way. In other words, the situation where students unions had been wrenched away from and begun to be used in the struggle against the State, was to be turned back to the time of the collaboration of students and their Unions with the State. This political formula of collaboration is accepted in essentials by the present leadership of NUS.

Mindless Militancy

The scenario which the NUS has painted and around which it has led the massive mobilisations for far, is that of a financial attack. Inasmuch as it will allow that there is a political element to this attack, it appears in the extremely abstract attestation to the nasty 'Tory subversion' of all so called democratic forces. What the majority of students are invited to accept, however, is the necessity to preserve the present system of financing of their clubs and societies. The sort of response required is consequently of such a nature as to disregard the political issues involved. Indeed the insistence on unity at any price demands the suppression of any political viewpoints and leads naturally to the spontaneously generated slogan of 'Left and Right, Unite and Fight'. The noise engendered by the mindless militancy which characterise the campaign so far is meant to bring round 'public opinion'—in particular the various arms of the State such as college authorities and LEA's—to the NUS view that the whole process is completely unnecessary, the majority of NUS members being quite nice people and easily capable of dealing with the few 'disrupters' in their own ranks. Insofar as NUS has been successful in this it has mystified and confused the form of the attack with its underlying thrust, and in so doing has set up straw men, the destruction of which it will attempt to treat as a victory.

Victories or Straw Men?

The Central Action Group set up by NUS conference to lead the day to day actions against the Thatcher proposals narrowly accepted at its meeting of December 15 a formula

whereby NUS can now negotiate—against conference decisions—with the government. It is clear what the outcome of such negotiations will be. In the first place, it is absolutely certain that clubs and societies will not only continue to receive finance, but that SU's will continue to administer them and make financial allocation as practised in the past. At the same time the 'representative' role which both NUS and local SU's have enjoyed in the past will not only continue but will be reinforced inasmuch as it will be formalised and invested with certain well defined procedures. This or some such formula will be the basis for a triumphal return by the NUS leadership to the next conference at Easter, and the promise of it will get them ratification for their negotiations at the special NUS conference to be convened at the end of January. But this second concession is very far from any acceptable notion of political autonomy. On the contrary, the already agreed concession to so called 'public accountability', will guarantee that actions to which the State objects will be suppressed.

No Accountability: Against the Bourgeois State

The State is not only to be seen in the form of the Tory government. Indeed, not only does it include for our purposes the various administrative bodies such as the DES, but also the LEAs and, very importantly, the college authorities. These latter are nationally organised, coordinating their activities through such bodies as the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals. This last not only meets regularly to plan its tactics but provided the evidence upon which the Thatcher proposals are based. It is the universities who have borne the brunt of the student struggles so far and who have, therefore, the most immediate interest in emasculating any possibilities for independent student action. The recent rejection by the CVCP of the Thatcher proposals in no way invalidates this, because this is an objection merely to the form of the attack. They think that the Government's intentions could be satisfied better within the existing framework given 'a clearer designation of activities which could be properly supported from public funds: and improved accountability for such spending' (*Guardian* 21.12.71). But this is the essence of the matter. Accountability means at the very least collaboration with the State and more probably, domination. The 'public' to whom we are meant to make our accounts is and can be no other than the (bourgeois) State. In their monstrous capitulation on this question the NUS leadership (i.e. the CP) is offering up the independence of students for a few concessions and a cosy future. But more important than this, they are ensuring that it will be all that and more difficult politically to begin the struggle against the College authorities when 'public accountability' begins to be used as the axe to chop developing militant actions in the colleges. College authorities are no more prepared than the government to countenance an organised student body in oppos-

ition to capitalism either in educational 'reforms', on the workers' side of the class struggle or in support of anti-imperialist movements. In other words, a struggle against the State does not amount to the occasional demonstration against the government. In this context, a nationally coordinated struggle against all aspects of State intervention and, in particular, college authorities is the only way to even pose the possibility of success.

Against State Controlled Unions

The fight for political autonomy can in no sense be waged in collaboration with the State. Of course, any contradictions between various arms of the State must be played upon. But this is not an invitation to substitute any of its various branches—whether this be LEA's or college authorities—for the independent struggle of students; nor to narrow the perspectives of struggle to that of the Vice Chancellors committee. The college authorities don't want another administrative department to deal with sports clubs and the various societies but they do want tame students who will 'represent' student interests and bring them to the acceptance of an educational system geared to the needs of capitalism. NUS is willing to furnish both these things. The present tactics and strategy in no way defend the present gains of students nor pose the necessity for the extension of Union autonomy. The question is not simply a matter of more militancy within the same framework but a break from that collaboration of the Union with the State which is characteristic of NUS and which the present "Communist" leadership wish to continue. Only the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Students Unions has the possibility even to begin this. It is the only body at the moment which can focus the struggle for student unions free from the encroachments of the State, precisely because it was set up on a clear understanding of what the present attack amounts to. All militants can accept the demands of the LCDSU (reprinted below) as a minimum basis around which they can organise for Students Unions free to intervene in the class struggle. For their implementation, however, these will need nationally coordinated action. The next national conference of the LCDSU will be held at Aston on 15 January. For further details contact the Students Union, North London Poly (01-607 6767).

Total Political Independence
Rejection of Financial Accountability
No collaboration with college authorities
Extension of Union autonomy
Student-Worker solidarity

—J.R. Clynes

Swansea Occupation defeated by NUS inactivity

The occupation of Swansea College of Education ended on Tuesday, 21 December, just less than four weeks after it started. On paper it achieved nothing. Mike Pany, the student whose political victimisation provoked the occupation, has not been reinstated. The students' demand for an independent inquiry into the whole affair has been rejected. The further demands arising from the occupation itself—no victimisations and no deduction of lectures missed from students' attendance records—have been ignored. There is even a very real danger now that there will be further victimisations following the ending of the occupation.

But to assess the results of the occupation in this formal manner—as is undoubtedly in danger of happening—would be to ignore the dynamic of the struggle both specifically and generally. Apart from the fact that the struggle at Swansea will continue—an action committee will function during the vacation and there will be further action next term—the significance and lessons of the struggle so far have been very important both for the Swansea students and for student militants in general.

The major features of the Swansea occupation

were firstly, that it took place in a sector of higher education which has previously not been noted for its militancy, and secondly, that NUS proved totally incapable of generalising or even publicising the struggle, despite the fact that the colleges of education have traditionally been an important base for executives past and present. We must be clear that much of the responsibility for what must be acknowledged as at least a temporary defeat in the struggle lies at the door of the NUS Executive and nowhere else.

It was not until nearly three weeks after the occupation had begun that Digby Jacks, NUS President, deigned to forsake his comfortable office in London for the rigours of Swansea College of Education—and then only under pressure from student unions all over the country. Having arrived in Swansea, he negotiated with the chairman of the board of governors, advised the students to proceed on the basis that the procedure for expulsions had been violated (not on the basis that it was a political victimisation) and then returned post-haste to London, stressing the importance of the bureaucratic tasks that awaited him—despite a unanimous request for him to remain. He did,

however, promise to return the following morning—a promise, needless to say, which he broke as soon as he was once again ensconced in his office. He also indicated that NUS would take out a writ against the authorities restraining them from expelling Mike Pany until the question of procedure had been clarified; but this matter was still 'under discussion' a week later when the occupation ended. Meanwhile the vast majority of student unions, let alone students, were still largely unaware of the struggle—information was included in the NUS Main Mailing but 'technical difficulties' prevented this from being sent out before the end of term.

The occupation at Swansea only had a chance of succeeding if it was generalised at an early stage. In fact, only the barest details ever penetrated outside Wales. It was kept going for so long only through the determination of the students involved and in particular through the concrete support they were able to obtain from the Labour movement in Swansea. No help at all came from NUS, which in this struggle showed more clearly than ever before that with its present policies and leadership, it is totally

incapable of defending even the most basic interests of its members. Only the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Student Unions was able, belatedly, to mobilise some outside support for the Swansea students. Militants who are still wavering between the NUS and the LCDSU should learn the lessons from this struggle. The LCDSU does not pose itself as a separate organisation outside and against the NUS; what it does stress is that the present policies and leadership of NUS will hinder rather than develop student struggles, and that there is an absolute need for a body which will not only fight for a change inside NUS, but will also take its own independent initiatives as the struggle demands—as the struggle at Swansea has already demanded.

Swansea was defeated, if only temporarily. But there will be more Swanses and they must not be allowed to be picked off in turn. A defeat for one is a defeat for all. Only if its lessons are understood, if the need to build the Liaison Committee as a body which can generalise such struggles is recognised, will that defeat not have been in vain.

—Martin Meteyard

MOLE HILLS

Piers Corbyn victimised

Piers Corbyn, well-known student militant, is once more threatened with expulsion from Imperial College, London—only three months after defeating a previous attempt at victimisation over the summer. On that occasion the college authorities claimed that Piers' work level was too low—despite the fact that it is notoriously difficult to assess the work level of post-graduate students—but were forced to climb down by combined pressure from ASTMS (of which Piers is a member) I.C. students union and NUS plus the threat of mass action by IC students once term had begun. In climbing down they admitted that Piers had done 'just enough work' to stay on but warned him as to his future work level.

Since then Piers has in fact worked much harder, despite considerable personal and financial problems, and has produced research results which even his supervisors admit should be followed up. But he has also continued to be involved in revolutionary politics, and in particular as a leading spokesman for the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Students Unions—which, unlike NUS, states quite clearly that student interests are opposed to those of the college authorities. So it is not particularly surprising that Piers should have received his marching orders once again.

Surprising or not, though, it is a decision which must be fought all the way. The college authorities have not made this easy by expelling Piers as from December 31st and insisting that the appeal be heard during the vacation. Nevertheless certain actions can be taken now, with the threat of more to follow if the appeal is lost. NUS, for one, must be forced to put up a fight on this issue. Support must be won from the various staff unions at a local and national level. Action must be taken wherever Piers' liberal stooge Professors, Matthews and Coles, appear. And mass action by students, particularly at Imperials College but also elsewhere, must be considered once term begins.

It is clear that once again college authorities are attempting to defuse growing student struggles by picking off individual militants; and very success will only give them added confidence to extend the process. That is why the attempted victimisation of Piers Corbyn, like that of Mike Pany at Swansea, must not be fought in isolation. Only if the fight against victimisations is generalised can it be won.

FI militants in W. Bengal slam Indian rulers

The following declaration was issued by the West Bengal State Committee of the Socialist Workers Party of India (Section of the 4th Communist International) on 18 December 1971. The statement is in marked contrast to the chauvinism displayed by the CPI(M) and the CPI who supported the actions of the Indian bourgeoisie:

We congratulate and extend our unconditional support to the Mukti Bahini on their heroic struggle in Bangladesh. We fervently hope that they will not cease fighting simply because of the defeat of the Pakistan Army, but will continue uninterrupted the struggle for a Socialist or Red Bangladesh. The real emancipation of the people cannot be achieved by substituting one capitalist regime for another.

Our old friend, Carter

The previous issue of *The Red Mole* reported the campaign to force the resignation of Mr. Carter, acting headmaster of Bradford's Usher Street Immigrant Centre. Carter is not taking matters lying down and is busily defending both his academic reputation and self-proclaimed non-racialism. In an interview with the local *Telegraph and Argus* he bluntly admits: 'I wasn't too sure who Angela Davis was, but I did know she was some sort of rabble rouser in America.' Obviously, that is the statement of an objective man without prejudices against blacks and militants. Although one could say he is just a little inclined to make snap judgements.

Mr. Carter also likes to please. Perhaps that explains his statement: 'I assumed the letter had student origins and in view of what the Education Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, had said the day before about misused student funds I replied with a cutting letter.' Touching devotion to one's superiors has furthered many a career in capitalist society and no doubt some bureaucrat will note Carter's alacrity in implementing what he assumes to be Thatcher's policies.

A touching defence of Mr. Carter has also appeared in the letter column of the paper. Rejecting allegations that Carter is racist the correspondent points out that he is going to Nigeria for his Christmas holidays and that: 'His home is full of curios and souvenirs of the many Eastern and African countries he has lived in or visited.' The British Museum is also full of 'souvenirs' and 'curios' collected by British Imperialism as a result of its visits to Eastern and African countries! Mrs. Curtis, who wrote to the letter, and coincidentally lives next door to our headmaster reminds us that Carter 'has fought with the Ghurkas.' This *no doubt* makes him an officer and a gentleman, but in view of the Ghurkas' role as the paid assassins of white imperialism it is not exactly the best advert for Carter's non-racialism.

Carter's latest statements have confirmed the correctness of the demand made by the West Indian and Afro Brotherhood and the Leeds IMG for his resignation. Representatives from various organisations met in Bradford before Xmas and decided to campaign not only on that issue but also to demand an inquiry into the education of immigrant children to be carried out by the representatives of the immigrant community. A public meeting will be held in Bradford in the New Year.



Pentonville Tales

Certain prisoners in Pentonville Prison have been sent complimentary copies of *The Red Mole*. But so far they have remained unread, thanks to the regulations. The prisoners are made to sign for the parcel and it then goes into storage to wait until the day the prisoner is released.

Of course, *The Red Mole* is not "banned" inside Her Majesty's prisons (only pornography is!) and for a short time one comrade in Pentonville did manage to obtain his copy. But when a large number of back issues arrived at the prison, this appeared to be taking things a bit too far as far as the authorities were concerned and from that moment all copies of the *Mole*, including individual subscriptions were stopped. (Perhaps the Governor of Durham Goal who forwarded a subscription for a prisoner could give some help here). The comrades have protested to the Home Office and the results of this have yet to be seen. But it is quite clear to all those concerned that when certain cons begin to become politically aware and begin to question the society that resulted in their being in prison, the authorities begin to act. Physical violence inside prisons as a result of the conditions etc., is one thing, but when prisoners begin to agitate around political demands that is something that the authorities find difficult to contain and will never tolerate. *The Red Mole* expresses its solidarity to all comrades in Her Majesty's goals (some of whom went in as political prisoners but many more of whom will come out as such) and we hope in a later issue to publish an article not only on the conditions in prisons in Britain but on the developing awareness of prisoners.

"We don't support the IRA, constable"

'Mersey police close SLL Ulster meeting' reads 15 December edition of the *Workers Press*. The meeting which should have taken place in Chad's Parish Hall, Kirkby, was stopped by the Liverpool police at the request of the local vicar. A Liverpool City Councillor and Protestant Party member, Roy Hughes had rung the vicar and told him SLL leaflets for the meeting 'declared support for the IRA.'

Dismissing the outrageous allegation that the SLL could do anything as revolutionary and principled as support the IRA, the organisers indignantly complained that 'the leaflet did not contain any such statements'. Even after showing him their leaflet the SLL report that 'he remains unmoved.'

So you see, even when you deny that you are doing anything as unpatriotic as giving support to the men who are fighting British troops the bourgeois state and its church remain unmoved.

Despite our differences with the SLL and our utter opposition to its reformist politics we nevertheless urge all socialists and militants to unconditionally defend their rights to hold meetings on Ireland without interference from the police and other reactionary forces.



International Marxist Group

British Section of the Fourth International

If you would like to be put in touch with IMG militants in your area, please fill in the form below and send it to the IMG, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

Name

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ment than a capitalist one to exist in Dacca. In these circumstances a new government in Bangladesh will have to serve Marwari-Bhatia or Bengali capitalists instead of West Pakistan capital. She will gradually side with the Anglo-American blocs.

The left parties in India have played a frustrating and disappointing role. They have been totally swept away by the current of cheap nationalism and chauvinism. They failed to seize the opportunities offered by the two capitalist powers in conflict. They completely forgot that mass slaughters of political workers are continuing unabated before and after 25 March 1971, in West Bengal. The recent mass murder of political workers in Alipore central jail in Calcutta is only one such example. We urge all left parties to abandon their chauvinism and return to the road of revolutionary socialism.

We hope that the Mukti Bahini, remembering the mirth and jubilation of the people during 14 August 1947 (partitioned independence of the sub-continent) and the grim aftermath, will march forward to a Red Bangladesh. This will immediately pave the way for a United Socialist Bengal culminating into a Socialist Revolution in the entire Indian sub-continent.

—SWPI (W. Bengal State Committee) 18.12.1971

The Nature of the Engineering Industry
The magnitude and strategic importance of the engineering industry should be borne in mind throughout this article. Some 2½ million workers are employed in the industry. It has often been pointed out that it is less an industry than a constellation of industries, encompassing firms in the manufacture of all types of metal goods: machinery, components, electrical equipment, shipbuilding, aircraft, automobiles.¹ Most of the largest firms in Britain fall within this category: G.K.N., Hawker, G.E.C./A.E.I., Plessey, Thorn, I.C.L., Vickers, B.S.A., British Leyland, Vauxhall, Lucas, etc. etc. Its size alone makes it the most decisive group of industries for the overall performance of British capitalism. Covering the majority of these firms is the Engineering Employers Federation. The EEF, as an institution, has a vast impact on the political and economic policies of the State. Politically and economically, this group, even leaving aside its vast financial operations and inter-connections, is the backbone of the manufacturing section of the capitalist class. On the union side, the largest and most important union in the CSEU is the AUEW, followed by the T & GWU. Both the industry and the unions are therefore pivotal to the strength of the two respective sides of the class struggle.

A More Sophisticated Approach

Unlike the industries in the public sector which suffered big defeats last winter, wage bargaining in the engineering industry follows a two-tier pattern. The C.S.E.U. negotiates at national level to fix minimum rates. These are not even time rates, but simple national minima beneath which the wages of no worker in the industry must fall. The actual wage packet, for all but a very small percentage of workers, is largely made up of time rates, piece-rates, overtime and bonus system, all of which are negotiated locally, on a plant or company basis. Hence vast differentials result between different groups of workers. The best paid are skilled men on piece rates, the worst paid are unskilled men who benefit only indirectly from the high wages of the skilled piece-rate men.

Only the least skilled and least well organised have a great deal to gain from gradual rises on minimum rates. For the skilled men, however, actual earnings are determined by the power of the shop floor to negotiate a high rate for a given job, and the national dealings are of secondary interest. (By comparison, for workers in those industries which have a single tier structure, everything stands or falls by the annual wage claim. These workers are relatively easy game for a determined State machine—e.g. the postal workers, municipal workers, etc.) Because overall earnings are determined by the balance of bargaining power on the shop floor and around the job in hand, rather than by the ability of the union to sustain an all out once and for all confrontation, the employers and Government will look to more sophisticated methods than those employed against any other group of workers.

Conflict over the Function of the Claim

The claim includes many features which the EEF and CSEU will no doubt bargain over for a long time into the future. But one component of the present package breaks this picture. This is a demand for a 'substantial increase'. This has been rejected by the EEF. This warrants some attention because it takes us into the relationship between the internal politics of the AUEW and the economic pressures on the rank and file. There were strong moves at the AUEW conference in April for the claim to consist of a demand for a straight-forward across-the-board £6 a week increase. Some militants wished this to replace bargaining on minimum rates, others to supplement it. Militants felt that in view of the rising cost of living this was the only guarantee they had of maintaining their living standards. It was Hugh Scanlon himself, however, who defended the traditional pattern, warned the conference that the EEF would refuse such a demand and that for delegates to back it would lead to a serious fight (!) Scanlon repeated the arguments which constitute his left wing political platform in the AUEW: National bargaining helps close differentials and protects the poorly paid unskilled men in the industry, whilst it is bargaining at plant level which actually puts the flesh on the bone'. The def-

the dispute was being processed. This demand for the status quo is clearly a very important step forward (but it must not be forgotten that the CSEU were prepared to accept status quo in relation to their own side—i.e. workers could take action on an issue while it was being processed, albeit through a shortened procedure).

Some argue that the unions' withdrawal from York is a threat to force the employers to yield on the claim. However, withdrawal en masse and extension of shop floor power was the key, and this policy of power to the shop floor was enshrined in the programme of the AUEW since his accession to power. The vote was swung against an across the board increase by the force of Scanlon's prestige. A demand for a 'substantial increase' was included as a compromise measure while the traditional structure of the claim was to continue.

The Balance of Bargaining Power

If we examine the current economic situation in the industry and the economy as a whole, it can be seen, and was undoubtedly felt by the militants at the conference, that Scanlon's position corresponds to a state of affairs which no longer prevails. The arrival of a period of first stagnant and then falling output in the industry, combined with rampant price inflation in the economy as a whole leaves the engineering workers in a position which is far from the straightforward one it was before 1970.

Engineering workers can gain real increases in earnings only by pushing up the piece-rate in individual plants on individual jobs (using all the methods of comparability etc.). However, stagnant output in the economy results in seriously falling output in the engineering industry. There are exceptions to this generalization of course. Automobiles for example, are experiencing a mini-boom at present, but fall, properly speaking, in the category of consumer goods. But the main body of the engineering industry—from machine tools to all types of machinery—is constituted by capital goods. Clearly any stagnation in the overall output of the economy produces a much deeper and longer trough on the order-graphs of engineering firms, as consumer goods industries cut or suspend their investment programmes drastically. This is seen to have its most drastic effect on the machine tool industry where orders during any month of 1971 have been at least 40% lower than any equivalent month in 1970.² This has coincided with a marked decline in orders from overseas.

The effects this type of situation has on the shop-floor is to set in reverse the relationship of bargaining forces which existed previous to 1970. Rising output created a situation in which employers could not risk a strike (delivery dates are all important in capital goods industries for obvious reasons) and where piece-rates could be forced up. The reversal is particularly vicious. Firstly, the decline in the volume of work automatically cuts earnings by loss of overtime bonuses, etc., and short time working despite rises in the rate. But the ability to force the rates up is now weakened by two further factors. The employers, once a certain point of stagnation is reached are prepared to risk strikes since their order books are low and the consequent savings on the wage bill as a result of being temporarily closed down are welcome to the employer. This ability to take a strike is demonstrated by the recent re-appearance of lock outs in the engineering industry. Secondly the level of unemployment has a direct effect on bargaining power over rates. It must be remembered that historically, piece-rates have not resulted from any particular technical factors but from conscious imposition by the employers during the period of high unemployment in the twenties. If you didn't like the rate, plenty were at the gate who would take it. Correspondingly, workers who had fixed wage packets had some protection and would fight standing battles before their earnings were cut (e.g. the miners). The period of boom and full employment since the last War exactly reversed this relationship so that engineers are now among the highest paid group of workers in the country. The re-appearance of severe unemployment however enables the employers to go over to the offensive again in this respect. The re-appearance of unemployment in Coventry engineering firms for example for the first time since the War, provided the signal for the employers current offensive in that

WHAT NEXT FOR THE

by Dave Bailey

area; the struggle over the Coventry Tool-room Agreement, in which lock-outs were used, is only the beginning here.

The EEF and the Claim

In this type of situation, the militants begin to look beyond the piece-rate for some improvement in their economic position. This is the root meaning of the incident at the April conference described earlier. The compromise however throws them back on their resources at a time when the basis of their power is being eroded, and the employers are taking advantage of this to launch an offensive. The strategy the EEF will employ is clear. On the one hand, the negotiations over minimum national wage levels will be spun out indefinitely. The first offer made by the EEF was of a £1.50 a week on the minimum rates from next July! Equal pay for women of course will be postponed for ever. But the question of the 'substantial increase' has to be resolved. If the CSEU is forceful about this component of the deal—and it will be difficult for them to face next year's conferences if they are not—then the EEF will suggest that this is bargained on a plant basis. For the reasons outlined above, the EEF have little to fear from this since the general balance of bargaining forces in the plants is now turning in their favour. Moreover, they demonstrated this to their own satisfaction earlier this year in the case of the DATA wage claim. DATA placed a claim for a £9 a week across-the-board for its white collar staff in the engineering industry. The EEF's offer of £2-£3 was rejected and plant bargaining initiated. The result was that in hardly a single case did the settlements rise above this level. The economic situation is now worse than when DATA put their claim, and at least the DATA claim had a figure attached to it. However, if the CSEU and EEF do go for plant bargaining on this issue, it will be complicated by a further factor. From now on there will be no procedure in the industry. Indeed it is around the York Procedure Agreements that the central struggle may well take place irrespective of what happens to the pay claim.

What are the York Agreements?

The 1922 Agreement establishes a procedure through which both local disputes and local claims are processed. Under this procedure,³ negotiations take place on an ad hoc basis on particular issues arising. In many industries there are standing Joint Industrial Councils which often meet at several levels and on which both unions and employers are represented. In engineering however, this is not the case. If disputes are not settled between the worker/steward and the Foreman or Shop Manager than they pass on to Works Conference. Beyond this scanty domestic structure there are Local and Central Conferences. These consist of panels of employers judging the merits of trade union claims, and acting as judge and jury on their own cases. If no settlement is reached then the question is passed on to York where it is dealt with at national level. It takes an average of 13 weeks for a dispute to get to York, and in 1966 for example, of the 519 cases heard, only 55 were settled. More than a 'cooling-off' device, this farcical procedure gives the employers a free hand to initiate changes of all kinds while disputes are shunted off to one side. Money claims, for instance can be passed back and forth, saving thousands of pounds.

Negotiations to obtain fuller domestic procedures, and the substitution of Joint Industrial Councils for the lengthy and one-sided external stages of procedure, broke down in the spring. The main point of difference has been on the 'status quo'. The operation of the status quo would mean that employers would no longer have the right to go ahead with any changes in 'material, means or methods' which had been disputed, while

is pretty irrevocable. Moreover, the AUEW have now sent out instructions to all groups of shop stewards to go ahead and attempt to negotiate a local disputes procedure, plant by plant. The danger of this view however is that it assumes the EEF really want the York Agreement to stay as they are. They don't. They too want a revised procedure—but on a rather different basis as we shall see.

What Are the Bosses After?

The disadvantages to the employer of lengthy external and scant internal procedures have been pointed out in the Donovan Report and many subsequent papers by employers associations. Where groups of workers are strong enough to carry out almost spontaneous strike action, the existence of a disputes procedure that was originally designed by the employers as a cooling off device, further encourages workers to vote with their feet. In April 1970, the CBI published the findings of a CBI Study Group. It made the point by saying that lengthy procedures undermine local authority'. They also pointed out that where employers were now seeking to tie wages to productivity, the existence of a domestic dispute procedure was essential. Without this it was impossible to carry through daily decisions with speed and deal with disputes quickly and 'safely'. Moreover the sophistication of this type of bargaining demands that many questions be settled on the spot by experts (e.g. on work study) who are resident on the shop floor and not called in only at Local Conference level or beyond to pass judgement at several removes from concrete reality. One of the complaints of the EEF against the unions has been that the acceptance in 1968 by the CSEU of productivity agreements got no further than an acceptance in principle. When it came to the shop floor, the workers were hostile. The employers then found themselves with no established and 'credible' machinery for putting across any detailed proposals or carrying out the constant negotiations by stick and carrot that normally accompany a transition to a system of productivity based earnings and/or measured daywork.

The Study Group also makes the point that the main reason for a firm joining an employers association is to gain access to its procedure machinery with the unions. In recent years many firms have left the EEF—Chrysler, for example,—to conclude their own agreements. Finally, the Group laid heavy emphasis on the need for a procedure which the men could be brought to see as 'credible'.

All these points were made by the Donovan Report. According to Donovan, lack of credible procedure resulted in a lack of management policy in the plant, absence of successful productivity bargaining (hence a failure of incomes policy) absence of a coherent wage structure, a loss of management control and a general failure to develop management expertise. Donovan saw the practices of the EEF as doing nothing to reduce the number of 'wildcat' and 'unconstitutional' strikes in Britain, most of which fell under its jurisdiction. 'Adequate' domestic procedures would therefore help reassert management control over the productive process and union control over the militants.

The EEF State their Demands

The response of the EEF to Donovan is outlined in the pamphlet: "The Donovan Report: An Assessment by the EEF,"⁴

"Throughout its Report, the Commission displays a good deal of optimism as to the effect which an extension of factory agreements is likely to have in improving industrial relations. While the Federation appreciates that improved procedures..... could help to reduce the number of strikes

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due to misunderstandings, this greater 'orderliness' in the factories is no guarantee that the agreements will not continue to be flouted." (p. 18)

"The Federation's greatest criticism of the Commission's Report is that it has largely discounted the present-day realities of union power at workshop and district levels". (p. 30)

For the EEF, full employment is the "principal cause of the disorder in the system which the Commission describes" (p. 13), compounded by "unregulated trade union activity at plant level" (p.10).

The EEF demands that unions discipline their members in the plants, and steps should be taken, both by the unions and the law, to break the district committees of shop stewards which are so powerful in the industry. These committees, while having no formal negotiating powers, act as co-ordinating bodies in local disputes, organising solidarity, finance for 'unconstitutional' strikes, etc. Further the EEF demands some help in solving the 'problem' of multi-unionism in one plant, by which unions compete for members on the basis of their militancy.

The EEF admits local bargaining and local agreements would be favourable to it—but only if the EEF are given the weapons to break the combativity and confidence of the shop floor as well. Without that there would be no guarantee, in the view of the EEF, that a move towards local structures would not serve to re-inforce militancy. The EEF is reluctant to abandon the York Agreements until these weapons are available. A far more comprehensive legal framework than that advocated by Donovan "will eventually have to be provided" (p.30).

The Tory Response—The Bill and the AUEW
The sophistication of the Industrial Relations Bill is in large measure an attempt by the Tory Party to satisfy the demands of the EEF. Many of its features are undoubtedly aimed specifically at the engineering unions.

Take the question of sole bargaining agents for instance. The institution of sole bargaining agents is aimed directly at the situation in engineering where various groups of shop stewards and various groups of shop stewards from different unions, are active in one plant, and who are supplemented in turn by the district committees of stewards. A sole bargaining unit would effectively make activity by other bodies inside or outside the plant, illegal. The definition of the bargaining unit by the Court of Industrial Relations, would bring together in a single, legally definable, unit, selected and 'approved' representatives from any plant or company. In many cases, where reference to the Court had been made, smaller unions could be placed outside the bargaining system altogether; in other cases, the most powerful union could have its representatives brushed aside for those of a weaker one. Militants would also be 'frozen out' through the selection of 'approved' representatives. This bargaining unit would of course entail the simultaneous creation of a procedure. But it would be a procedure which in many cases was approved by the Court, was legally enforceable, and excluded all extra-procedural action from the area. This, combined with tough legal measures in the Act against 'unofficial' action in general (see 'The Industrial Relations Bill, A Declaration of War', Peter Hampton, IMG publications, for a fuller outline) would be far more effective to the EEF than the optimism of Donovan, which advocated a good measure of voluntary effort and hope, in those areas that the EEF defines as being at the heart of the problem.

The assertion that the Industrial Relations Act is aimed primarily at the engineering unions, should be taken seriously. It is no accident that Hugh Scanlon is the only important

member of the TUC advocating a 'tough' line on the non-registration policy. The strategic position of both the engineering unions and the engineering industry must also be borne in mind. A shift to the right on the part of Scanlon for instance would make the TUC far more amenable to Government pressure than it is already, and would temporarily demoralise the working class as a whole. The industry itself, controlled by the largest and most reactionary employers association in the country, includes a big proportion of the largest corporations whose interests the Labour Party had at heart during the period of merger, rationalisation and capital investment in the sixties, and which forms a vital part of the future of British capitalism in the EEC. It also includes a host of small employers who form the power base for the Powellite wing of the Tory Party. Nor is it just the fact that the greatest number of 'unofficial' strikes occur in this industry; the industry is also confronted with a system of wage-payment which is a barrier to capital investment in the sense that it inhibits total management control over the work process.

SCANLON

This analysis enables us, before going on to discuss the possible course of events, to take a brief look at Scanlon. Obviously, for the variety of reasons we have discussed, the position on the shop floor is significantly different to that of other sectors of industry. Elsewhere, whilst the status quo provision is not necessarily written into procedures, a much larger measure of it actually prevails than is the case in engineering. The reason why relations cannot be 'normalised' in the industry from the EEF's point of view is because normalisation can only occur after or simultaneously with the smashing of an abnormally powerful shop floor. In other industries for example, where the work force is more passive and the union less militant management is, on the whole, quite able to accommodate 'adequate' consultation on disputes arising from say changes in working methods following from a productivity deal. The reason for this is that success for the employer in this type of operation has little to do with the number of times workers are allowed to complain about changes in working methods, but on the contrary on how prepared the men are to walk out when they discover that the changes have resulted in worsening of conditions, in redundancy, etc.

Scanlon's advocacy of 'workers control' is in fact little more in practice than advocacy of the 'normalisation' of plant relations in an industry where relations are decidedly abnormal!

Similarly, his platform in the AEUW of—to paraphrase it—"power to the shop stewards" is again a demand for formal recognition and ratification of the existing reality in the engineering industry which the EEF has refused in the past to accept. With the break-up of the Carron clique in the mid-sixties, Scanlon's left wing position stands out in greater relief.

The Big Showdown?

Given this analysis of the question of procedures and shop floor power, the point that is being made should by now be obvious. Whilst any future decision to negotiate the 'substantial increase' plant by plant, and the decision already taken to instruct shop stewards to negotiate a dispute procedure plant by plant, flow quite logically from Scanlon's ideology, they do not necessarily represent the best course of action in present economic and political conditions. Indeed, the policy of individual groups of workers fighting to acquire a disputes procedure on terms which have been rejected nationally is fraught with dangers. From all that has been said it should be clear that the Government would almost certainly take the decision to allow groups of engineering employers to have recourse to the Industrial Relations Court. The Court is now established. Many members of the EEF will see this as a now-or-never situation—a million unemployed, a backward TUC which cannot even co-ordinate a non-registration policy, the employers willing and able to fight. Many would see this as the opportunity to solve their problems in one blow. A procedure imposed by the Court has to be between precisely defined parties. Hence the imposition of 'sole bargaining units' is inevitably entailed by Court imposed procedures. It is also reasonable to suppose that the EEF have been weakening the AUEW financially before the winter. The EEF had such a policy in relation to DATA earlier in the year.

It circularized its members to provoke confrontations expensive to the unions as a preliminary to suggesting to DATA that the negotiations on its claim should take place on a plant by plant basis.

Moreover, in its economic report for 1971, the EEF openly calls for the use of legal measures against 'certain groups of workers'. The Tories have more than satisfied its demand for 'effective' legal machinery to be set up.

Even were none of this to occur immediately, the simultaneous demands by groups of workers for both a wage increase and a procedure—assuming this to be possible and that it becomes CSEU policy—would result in many plants in one demand being swapped for another. Not very favourable to the workers! Alternatively a national strike over the York Agreements could not result in the Agreement being re-imposed in the same shape or form—the terms of the present Act in regard to procedures do not cover agreements between unions and employers associations. Hence the behaviour of the AUEW and the CSEU is strange. No threats or preparations to use the whole power of the union in a unified and coordinated way have been made on either of the two issues. Instead the isolated powers of isolated workers are to be used when the rank and file are under extreme attack. This is not a useful strategy to employ. Moreover the course of the whole war could be decisively affected by the outcome of the engineering battle. Thus for example, if the Court is invoked (registration or non-registration is not the issue here) in a local battle, Scanlon and the left bureaucracy are faced with a choice. Either they live up to their word and call an all out strike where previously their policy has been to avoid one, or else they back down. This would constitute a massive defeat in the eyes of the trade union movement who are still looking to the engineers for a lead on this and other questions.

By calling no action when talks on York broke down and agreeing to follow procedure (!) for cancellation, the unions have given the employers time to prepare, to exhaust the union funds further, and have insured that the battle be staged in conditions less favourable than previously, and with less effective weapons at its disposal. Scanlon's policies on the questions in hand are essentially the product not of any attachment to rank and file struggle but of a fear of upsetting the balance of power inside the TUC which would freeze Scanlon out. In this closed world of timidity, the basic determinant of policy is the 'confidence' of investors. An effective policy moreover for killing the York agreements would make even non-registration under the Act a rather more dangerous game for the other bureaucracies in the TUC. The pressure of capitalist ideology, which pretends to deduce unemployment from high wages, moreover, makes even the existing AUEW package appear to the TUC as an obstacle to the future agreement on an incomes policy.

Consequences of a Defeat—The Bourgeoisie, Labour, the Unions and the Left.

If this analysis is broadly correct, then two consequences could follow if the Government allowed the new Act to be used and the employers conducted a massive attack. Firstly, the most powerfully organised and highly conscious sections of workers would continue to fight ferocious local battles, attacking both the employers and the recalcitrant union bureaucracy in separate defensive battles. On the other hand, the mass of workers, inside and outside engineering, would reach the half-conscious conclusion that the battle on the trade union front was lost and the time had come to attempt to solve their problems on the political front—i.e. it would accelerate the drift back into the Labour Party. For syndicalist currents on the Left, the first type of occurrence would be welcomed uncritically. These tendencies in characteristic fashion confuse the concepts of bureaucracy and centralisation. That is they fail to understand that centralised command and co-ordinated action in a trade union is vital to winning those battles, the outcome of which change the general relationship of forces. The obstacle to this of course is the lack of an adequate political leadership in the union. But to attempt to throw out a politically bankrupt bureaucracy by throwing out centralisation is to throw out the baby with the bathwater. The point

is of course to change the political forces inside of the union, not to 'solve' the problem by attempting to 'bypass' the question of the bureaucracy altogether, thereby leaving it in absolute command. To retain and strengthen the centralised co-ordination of the union however requires the prior creation of layer upon layer of highly conscious workers who are strong enough not to be thrown back when the existing leadership is bankrupt and who have sufficient influence to wield the power of the whole union behind alternative policies.

Accompanying this would be an acceleration of a general drift back into the Labour Party as a political focus. Neither must it be too easily assumed that the Labour Party is dead. The post-war character of the Labour Party—a party with bourgeois policies and a mass working class base—has been made possible by a divergence of interests between the manufacturing and financial wings of the British bourgeoisie, the former seeking expansionist policies, high levels of domestic investment coupled with protectionist demands, the latter seeking deflationary and restrictionist policies in the interests of sterling and its own position as international banker.

At the moment, the Labour Party has lost its dual programme because the Tory Party has been able to gain the allegiance of both wings—deflation and a trade balance combined with massive assaults on the trade unions. Entry into the EEC is also popular with both sectors.

The extent to which the Labour Party is dead or dying depends not on whether or not reformist gains are or are not possible in the present period, (a policy of reversing Tory decisions is adequate in this respect) but on whether the conditions inside the bourgeoisie enable the Labour Party to base part of its programme on this cleavage, hence sustaining its dual programme. This depends on very large questions beyond the scope of this article—for instance how resolvable is this divergence of interests in the long term—bearing in mind the contraction of the sterling area, the greater integration of banks with corporations since the last war, and the greater integration of British and European imperialism in the EEC. But clearly a defeat for the engineers would provide the preconditions for more rapid investment in the backbone of British manufacturing at the same time as it signalled the retreat of the wage offensive thus paving the way for more expansionist policies. These consequences following this type of defeat, might begin to loosen the political hold of the Tory Party over the corporations which it has acquired with the IRB and EEC policies. This might provide a basis for the Labour Party to rebuild the traditional alliance, advocating re-expansion of the economy—a better deal for the corporations inside the EEC ('renegotiate the terms' and get tough with the Eurocrats) bringing simultaneously to the corporations an incomes policy from the unions and proposals for massive public expenditure on the economic infrastructure ('public works' solution to unemployment). At the present moment in time, the Labour Party cannot move in either direction without losing the possibility of regaining its former character. But again, a defeat for the engineers would accelerate the pressure from the working class base for a radical posture by the Labour Party, e.g. on unemployment and the repeal of the anti-union laws (if the Act is used substantially on the engineers then the Labour Party will promise to reform it—after it has done its work).

If a revival of the Labour Party is again on the cards, then a defeat for the engineers will not only accelerate it, but it will contribute to undermining the essential prerequisite for the working class in these conditions: a trade union movement strong enough to take independent initiatives.

NOTES

1 Peter Smith, *The Engineering Settlement*, Trade Union Register 1969.

2 *Financial Times*, 8.5.1971

3 Many of the details that follow are taken from Michael Somerton 'The Proposal for changes in the Engineering Procedural Agreements'—T.U. Register 1970.

4 The Donovan Report. *An Assessment by the EEF* Jan. 1969. Published by the EEF.

5 For further details see *Financial Times*, 4.5.71 and 21.7.71.

Thailand: An extension of the struggle



The renewed bombing of North Vietnam by the Nixon regime gives us an indication of what is in store for the Thai masses as the struggle escalates. The possibility exists that Nixon will propose a deal to Peking whereby American troops could withdraw from Vietnam, but stay in Thailand. This new Yalta must be bitterly resisted by the Left in Europe and N. America in solidarity with the Thai struggle.

A RARE COMBINATION

Bangkok has had a rare combination of guests in the past few months. Sir Robert Thompson, Britain's very own contribution to counter-insurgency, was hired for four weeks to provide advice on how to check the advance of the Thai people's war. His chief suggestion seems to have been to operate small-scale, long-term operations at the village level, not huge sweep and destroy operations.

A much less notorious guest was Dr. Victor Ionescu. South East Asia already swarms with investors from the USA, Japan, the UK and other metropolitan countries. Now it seems likely that Rumania is to join them. Thailand and Rumania have been trading partners for a number of years, exchanging silk, kenaf, tapioca chips, kapok, rubber and gunny bags for textile products, chemicals and machinery. At the end of a recent visit by a Rumanian trade delegation led by Ionescu, it was revealed that their government will submit to the Thais a multi-million baht joint-venture plan for the establishment of a petro-chemical plant. They also wish to invest in a new lorry-making factory. Furthermore, Rumanian experts in North East Thailand (with the South the chief centre of guerilla activity) say that there are sufficient supplies of rock salt there to warrant setting up a factory. The Rumanians are prepared to do this, if necessary as a joint venture with Thai businessmen!

North & South

No-one could accuse the Thai press of in-depth reporting. In spite of this some insight into the Thai insurgency can be gathered by piecing together the published fragments. Extensions of the highway system continue to be a chief objective in ambushes. The new roads are seen as bringing in soldiers to control the liberated areas and officials to tax them. An occasional attack which blows up equipment, kills military defenders and contracting personnel soon turns the road into a cul-de-sac. An example is the Mae-Sod-Umphang strategic highway where attacks ended construction for one year. Two weeks after it had been resumed a survey aircraft was hit by ground fire from the Meo guerrillas and two security personnel were killed. Work promptly stopped. Almost weekly a police station in the rural area is burned down. In at least one recent case four policemen were captured, given political instruction for one day in the objects and methods of the revolution, and then released unharmed. The authorities saw this as a particularly insidious form of warfare.

The American presence at airbases like Korat, Ubon, Udorn and Sattahip is felt in Korat incidents. A Sattahip bar girl is slashed to death and a GI goes on trial. A US Army truck overturns in Korat and scatters live bombs in front of the provincial hospital. (It wasn't even Christmas!) Again at Korat (VD is so widespread that the provincial Governor threatens to drive all the brothels out of town. Close them down? Ah! now that would be too severe!

Ambushes and government operations have been particularly frequent in the past few months along the Thai-Malay border. It is reported that the Malayan Communist Party under the legendary Chin Peng are successfully recruiting from Thai-Chinese working on the rubber plantations and in the tin mines. A recent interview with Reuters, Lieutenant-Colonel Othman Harun, commanding the 15th Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment, made some useful comments. He described how one Communist can effectively tie up a platoon of Malaysian troops by firing a shot at a border camp while clearly visible but out of killing range. "We even hit one once but he managed to get across the border where he waved back at us", the Colonel related. But the Communists rarely leave their dead—at least not in recognisable condition, Col. Othman added. "You seldom find blood trails—they are very clever—they carry gunny sacks to wrap up their dead". To make pursuit more difficult the Malayan Communists fight an afternoon war here, launching attacks only after 2 p.m. so that they can escape in darkness.

According to intelligence reports from across the border a guerrilla war party will distribute its wounded among Thai villages, never taking them into towns for medical treatment.

From time to time the courage and gallantry of the Thai army in South Vietnam is reported. Recently it was let slip that those who return are used to lead the counter-insurgency platoons and battalions against their own countrymen, particularly in the North and North East. Chiang Rai, the most northerly of the Thai provinces, is reported to be 'a sea of insurgency'.

At times the Thai Army exhibits more enterprise than one thought possible. At Khao Sone there are said to be rich deposits of wolfram for which Siamerican Mining Enterprise Company have prospecting rights. Villagers there digging for wolfram were recently expelled by police and army bosses who promptly set their own men to work the soil. Meanwhile back in Bangkok the bar-owners and the Chinese who run the big hotels are delighted to hear that in

the period October 1971-January 1972, Hong-Kong, Sidney, Taipei and Honolulu are due to close as Rest and Recreation centres leaving only one city open to the GI's—Bangkok. The United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) continues its good work in trying to set up the whole area to be plundered by the US-British-French-Japanese oil companies. Since 1949 ECAFE's official centre has always been Shanghai, which for obvious reasons they vacated in a hurry in that very year. Bangkok has been the temporary seat until Chiang Kai-shek regained the mainland. That was until last year when Shanghai was regrettably abandoned and Bangkok made into the permanent base. Not a year too soon. But ECAFE, like the Thai ruling class, shows certain flexibility. Already projects on Taiwan are being shelved, until further notice.

The Struggle Extends

A turning point in the civil war in Thailand may have been reached, according to reports from the North of the country (Far Eastern Economic Review, September 18). So far the popular forces have been conducting their struggle in the mountainous borders of Thailand in areas largely inhabited by hill tribesmen. This meant not only that coordination was difficult but that they were excluded from the plains where most of the Thai people themselves live. This has allowed the government to play up race, religion and loyalty to the throne in an attempt to isolate the struggle from the bulk of the people.

Hence the significance of reports of guerrilla activity in Chon Daen, a town only 175 miles north of Bangkok. On the edge of the plain, Chon Daen offers the possibility of links with established guerrilla bases in both the North and the North East, while itself providing a bridgehead for extending the struggle into the heart of Thailand. The reported nature of the guerrillas' activities confirm that this is indeed no isolated sortie but the possible beginnings of a new base area. The emphasis appears to have been on agitation and propaganda among the 50,000 people of the area, mainly poor and middle peasants. Military action has been restricted so far to sabotaging the police training program and gathering ammunition.

Local businessmen when questioned about these developments admitted quite freely that it was 'the little people, the ones who are poor and unhappy and haven't got much to lose anyway—they're the weak spots in the system—Thai or not!' It is these last three words that have Bangkok worried. Hence official attempts to deny that there has been any guerrilla activity in Chon Daen, and to silence any local people tempted to talk to journalists about it.

The Coup

What factors brought about the November coup and the abrogation of the constitution? Why did the military so abruptly smash the country's democratic facade?

The strengthening of the guerrilla movement in the North, North East and South. The extension of the front. The beginnings of urban labour agitation and trade union organising. The brutal increase in rape, robbery and murder in the capital. The scandals revealed by internal fights within the Government's 'United Thai People's Party'. The admission of China to the UN. The catastrophic military situation for the right in Cambodia. A pretty unhealthy list for strong-man Prapass Charusathira, the Deputy Prime Minister!

For the immediate future we can look forward to a protracted struggle, an increase in political organising by the Thai People's Liberation Arm amongst the peasantry in the great rice-growing areas, and increasing polarisation in the towns. Time is on the side of revolution.

—Frank Pais

REAPING WHAT THEY SOW: The problems of the Yugoslav bureaucracy

The response of the leadership of the Yugoslav League of Communists (LOC) to the massive student strikes in Zagreb—over 40,000 students took part—has been a major shake-up in the LOC leadership in Croatia. Four political leaders were removed and scores of students arrested.

In spite of the fact that almost the entire student body participated in these strikes, and that some measure of worker-student unity was achieved, they were of a generally reactionary character, the direct result of measures taken by the bureaucracy itself.

NATIONALISMS

Ever since the setting up of the Yugoslav state at the end of the first World War, there have been two nationalist elements present in Yugoslav life—a Yugoslav nationalism and a republican nationalism. The Yugoslav CP's support came from the first, both before and during the war and the country's existence depends on it, because of the great disparity between regions involves the

transfer of resources on a large scale from the rich republics to the poor republics. In the early post war years this was occurring with little evidence of resentment from the population of the Republics.

DECENTRALISATION

However, after the break with Stalin, the Yugoslav leadership found itself in a dilemma. Stalinist bureaucratic methods were discredited, but full workers' control of the economy would have largely replaced the bureaucracy itself. The result was an increasing turn to the market and to economic decentralisation so that by the late 50's the gap between the rich and poor republics began to grow again.

The social consequences of this extensive decentralisation via the market has been a resurgence of the second variety of nationalism at the expense of the first, so that the Federal bureaucracy, as the students correctly identify it, has come to play a balancing act, trying to regulate the demands from the poor republics for assistance in economic development and the

disillusionment of young people are being expressed in a religious revival.

This is the setting of the strikes, which have demanded reductions in the amount of money taken away from Croatia by the Federal bureaucracy. They are thus fundamentally reactionary in character, but are the inevitable result of the policies of the LOC leadership. They reveal a very grave situation in the country (which is analysed in greater detail in *International No. 7 Jan-Feb 1972*). Probably the personal pre-demands from the wealthier republics to retain 'their own' resources.

BACKGROUND TO PRESENT CRISIS

The Croations have a powerful and reactionary local nationalist tradition compounded by great hostility to 'great Serbian chauvinism'. It expressed itself in the Ustashe fascist movement during the Second World War. This nationalism has been linked to reactionary catholicism, and has re-emerged once more as a result of the economic 'reforms', so that pro-fascist slogans once more have appeared in Zagreb and the

stige of Tito (himself a Croat) has played a big part in enabling the bureaucracy to control the outbreak. The political bankruptcy of the LOC leadership has certainly created the conditions which could replace the bureaucracy with a system of democratically centralised planning based on workers' councils. But it has also unleashed forces which could destroy the Yugoslav revolution. There is no doubt that among the Croatian student strikers there were many left as well as right-wing elements. It is also clear that the repression will be used to suppress the developing revolutionary left movement, more viciously than the right. The linking of these groups with their counterparts in the other republics on the basis of developing the programs advanced by the Belgrade students in 1968 is urgent necessity. In this way the worker-student unity emerging for the first time in the Croatia strikes could be turned in a positive direction.

—R. Davis

Ireland: An open letter to the Official Republican Movement from Bob Purdie

Dear Comrades,

Fourteen months ago I defended the Official Republicans in a reply to a letter from a leading militant of the People's Democracy, Gerry Ruddy. I particularly condemned the misleading, and distorted version of your policies contained in Gerry's letter. I still think that I was right to attempt to break through the propaganda image of your movement which Gerry presented, and to discuss the real significance of the political differences between PD and the Official Republican Movement. I now find it necessary to write in defence of PD against the much more distorted and misleading article which appeared in the December issue of *The United Irishman* under the heading "PD Ally With Provisionals Against NICRA".

The article concerns the conference at Omagh which set up the "Northern Ireland Resistance Committee". It quotes a statement from the Six County Regional Executive of the Republican Clubs as follows:-

"It is regrettable that certain elements should now decide to attempt once more to subvert and smash the NICRA as they tried and failed to do in the past. We refer to the establishment of the Northern Ireland Resistance Committee, which was formed in Omagh on Sunday by the same people who attempted to take over NICRA in Dungannon several weeks ago. The formation of this rival group can serve no purpose other than to create confusion and disunity at a time when the present successful disobedience campaign is causing such concern to the Stormont regime and is proving itself as the most effective weapon in the anti-internment armoury".

This is a serious political statement, and it needs to be backed up with analysis and facts. Instead the article proceeds to slander Michael Farrell and PD, accusing them of acting consciously in the interests of the Blaney/Haughey wing of Fianna Fail, and in concert with Aidan Corrigan of the Provisionals:-

... Now, it appears, the PD has joined the ranks of those who can be bought by Fianna Fail gold.

The Fianna Fail agents, Corrigan and Farrell, cloaked their sinister activities in a call for broader representation. ...

It further quotes the Six County Executive statement:-

"Now, as in the past Mr. Corrigan's motives are suspect, as also are those of Mr. Michael Farrell and the People's Democracy, who are courting the Provisionals in an attempt to win the political influence for themselves which they failed to do within NICRA.

Why is it necessary to impugn the integrity of PD and Michael Farrell? Corrigan's past is indeed murky, but this does not prove that the PD are acting on behalf of Fianna Fail. Can you show one scrap of evidence to prove that the PD are in receipt of "Fianna Fail gold"? Can you show any reason why PD should now become corrupt? If you were to make a detailed political criticism of the PD, if you were to show inconsistencies and errors in their present policies this would be legitimate; but to use such slanders is a severe blow to the struggle in the North, and ought to be rejected by every Republican who has any respect for the memory of Tone, Pearce and Connolly.

The leadership of the struggle in the North is now faced with a series of extremely difficult problems, which are without precedent in the history of Ireland. These problems are the result of the tremendous sharpening of the crisis since the introduction of internment, and the totally new tasks which are faced. The Catholic minority has opted out of the Northern State, its civil disobedience campaign is exposing

the artificial nature of the Stormont junta, and combined with military action against the British Army, and the Northern State forces it is capable of destroying any further pretence by the Unionists to be able to maintain a stable government. The minority can smash Stormont, but the split at the Dungannon conference of the CRA, which led to the Omagh conference was caused by different answers to this question amongst the participants. By polemicising against PD in such a vicious and slanderous way the Official Republicans cut across any real discussion, and can only add to the kind of confusion and disunity which they purport to deplore.

No answer to this problem is to be found in the pages of the December *United Irishman*. It is not even discussed, nor is it discussed in the preceding November issue. The October issue did put forward a tentative formulation of a "properly democratic autonomous administration" to replace Stormont, but this was left as a formless abstraction. We are entitled to ask: comrades what is your policy? And we are entitled to take seriously the contributions of those who do put forward a policy.



The urgency of the problem mounts with every day that Hume, Fitt and the SDLP maintain the Dungiven "Parliament". Their policy is absolutely clear, and is shown by the make-up of their assembly; the fact that it is composed of councillors and Stormont MPs is no mere whim. The SDLP is trying to retain the old corrupt, street-corner-politician type of political representation for the minority. The fragmentation and despair of the minority had always led them to elect these opportunists, who retained their positions through a combination of patronage, and demagoguery. The Dungiven assembly reflects the former political backwardness of the minority, and their failure to develop a strong political movement. Since the launching of the Civil Disobedience campaign they have demonstrated clearly that they have broken from this political backwardness. Dungiven represents only the past of the Catholic people, it has nothing to offer for their future. But it exists, and is a potential factor in the situation; if the civil disobedience campaign begins to flag, if the military resistance falters there is danger that the minority could turn back to the Fitts and Humes, who would use their support as a bargaining counter for a negotiated sell-out with British Imperialism.

It is necessary not only to maintain the impetus of the resistance, but to give the minority a clear lead, and a viable perspective about the outcome of their struggle, only in this way can they be expected to maintain their present level of militancy and self-sacrifice. It is not sufficient to limit the aims of the civil disobedience campaign to the ending of internment, the repeal of the Special Powers Act, and the withdrawal of troops from the national areas. The demands which revolutionaries pose must be capable of taking the people forward, beyond the present state structure; they must constantly reiterate the fact that there can be no justice under Stormont, and there can be no guarantee of Stormont's destruction without the construction of an alternative state based on the mass of the people.

The Official Republicans should learn from the experience of the civil disobedience movement; before the internment crisis they had emphasised the need to retain Stormont, albeit in a "democratised" form, and had counterposed this to the Provisional's policy of smashing Stormont. In the wake of internment the Official Republicans were behind the mass of the Catholic minority, and had to make

of the six counties. I think that the PD is still bound up with the limitations of a strategy confined to the six county area, and that the burning question for revolutionaries is how the mass of the workers and small farmers in the 26 counties can be drawn into the struggle against their triple enemies British imperialism, the Unionists and the Free State government. But the key factor in our attitude to PD is the role which it is playing now in the struggle. It has plunged into work in the ghettos, attempting to build and knit together the civil resistance committees, street by street, and town by town; they have shed a lot of their former abstract ideas, which led them to counterpose working class "unity" to the actual struggle. I solidarise with their courageous work, in face of repression, and with their contribution to the struggle of the minority.

The Provisionals also have a clear policy, embodied in the work they are doing to build Dail Uladh and Dail Chonnacht, which are an attempt to create an alternative administration to, not only Stormont, but Leinster House, since Dail Uladh involves the three counties of Ulster which are within the Free State; and the creation of Dail Chonnacht for the Province of Connaught, which includes the oppressed Irish speaking minority. The fact that the Provisionals pose these assemblies "from the top", and they provide no clear way of linking them to the mass of the people, does not detract from the fact that the building of local civil resistance committees could create the content which would bring life to the form of Dail Uladh. The backwardness of the leadership of the Provisionals on political questions, and their lack of understanding of what socialism means could hold back developments, but this is all the more reason for those who do have a better understanding to participate in the building of the civil resistance movement.

I would not like to be misunderstood. I think that as a revolutionary in Britain I have to give unconditional support to all who are involved in the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland. British revolutionaries have to continue to support the Official Republicans, and NICRA, whatever disagreements they may have with them. But it is also important to develop a dialogue between British and Irish revolutionaries about the course of the struggle, that is why it is essential to intervene in the dispute over the Omagh conference. My experience of the militants of the Official Republican Movement leads me to expect better of them than the article which I have referred to, that is why I challenge them: substantiate your allegations about PD or withdraw them. Give us some ideas about how you see the struggle developing, in particular what you see as the alternative to Stormont. If you continue with such methods of debate, and continue to give no leadership on these problems the immediate beneficiaries will be the SDLP, and through them British imperialism. We do not need to point out the demoralising effects this would have on the consciousness of the oppressed minority.

Yours for the Irish Revolution,
Bob Purdie.

Glossary:

SDLP: Social Democratic & Labour Party
NICRA: Northern Ireland Civil Rights Assn.
FIANNA FAIL: Governing Bourgeois Party in the South.
STORMONT: Northern Irish Parliament House
LEINSTER HOUSE: Southern Irish " " "
ULADH: Ulster
CHONNACHT: Connaught.

a rapid political turn. By limiting the demands of the civil disobedience campaign they could find themselves behind the people again. The minority have gone through important experiences in the last three years, not the least of which was the period behind the barricades in Derry and Belfast in 1969, when they administered their own communities. To pose an alternative to Stormont is not to go very far beyond what they already understand.

Both the PD and the Provisionals have attempted to put forward a strategy for an alternative to Stormont, and it is this which motivated the Omagh conference. It would have been far better for the *United Irishman* to have discussed these clearly stated policies and to have shown why they are considered to be wrong, than to confuse the issues with foolish slander.

PD's position was stated most clearly in the *Unfree Citizen* of Oct. 8th 1971 in an article entitled "Where We Are Going", which analysed the basis of the crisis, and attempted to sketch in the next stages of the struggle. There is a lot I would disagree with in this analysis, particularly its stress on the impossibility of a united Ireland emerging from the present struggle, and the fact that the PD strategy is for "drastic reform" within the context

Ireland:

Link the struggle, North and South

PRIVATE EYE



A letter from Paul Foot

The Ballyshannon Incidents



For too long the struggle against British imperialism has been confined to the North. The incidents in Ballyshannon where Gardai and Free State troops were used to break up demonstrating crowds after three IRA volunteers were arrested gives an opportunity to develop the fight on a 32 county basis. The lessons of Ballyshannon must be assimilated quickly: Fianna Fail, the Unionist Party, and the Tories, despite episodic differences in the last analysis, represent the same interests, British capital. The legitimate struggle of the Northern Catholic minority threatens British imperialism and as that struggle intensifies these three forces will draw together and work more closely.

Fianna Fail

The people of Ballyshannon have torn the republican mask of Fianna Fail and exposed the face of British imperialism. This new face has emerged not merely because the traditional spirit of Fianna Fail is dying, as Kevin Boland and his friends would have it, but because of profound economic and social changes.

Fianna Fail has existed for many years as a coalition of various interests: the small or national employers, the small farmers, and the rural and urban workers. Most of Fianna Fail's support came from these three sections and it was towards these three sections that initially its policies were directed. On coming to power the new party initiated a three-pronged attack designed to consolidate its base. Firstly in the interests of the national employers (which was its main concern) it adopted a protective policy to shelter weak industry from foreign take-overs and competition. Secondly, as a sop to the small farmers it liquidated the land annuities to Britain (which amounted to £112,000,000) and fought a protracted economic war toward this end. And finally to placate the workers it began a major clean up of the city slums and offered various social securities. In this period De Valera could still evoke the name of Connolly and the respectable press could in turn condemn the 'Jacobin' policies of 'Ireland's Lenin'.

What has happened to change Fianna Fail's role so radically? The answer is that its policy of protection failed miserably. This was officially recognised in the 50's with the repeal of the Manufactures Act. Then after its return to power in 1959 it launched the First Programme for Economic expansion. Thus Fianna Fail embarked on a new policy of direct collaboration

with British imperialism. This economic programme was an open admission that Irish industry could not expand from its own resources and would have to depend on capital injections from Britain. Thus from 1959 to 1969 more than 80% of the £109,000,000 invested in Irish industry came from Britain.

These new developments not unnaturally precipitated a break up of the class coalition upon which Fianna Fail was founded. The new comprador elements under Lemass and his lieutenants Lynch and Colley gained the upper-hand. It is easy to see how under this new leadership the unity of the party would eventually collapse. The comprador faction could progress only through collaboration with British imperialism, which meant the elimination of the small employers, as is happening under the Free Trade Agreement, a running down of the rural sector and various exploitation of the labour force. Not surprisingly the class contradictions within Fianna Fail suddenly sharpened and the first major crack in the monolith appeared after the 'Arms Scandal' with the Amtach Eireann split. The process of disintegration is by no means over and it is no secret that Haughey, far from capitulating to Lynch, is quietly gathering his forces and preparing for an assault at the most opportune moment (which may be soon).

The above outline we hope explains the scab role which Fianna Fail is playing in the present Northern crisis. We also hope that it serves as a warning against any illusions in Boland Blaney or Haughey—they are, when all is said and done, only a chip off the old block.

How to Develop the Struggle

As it stands the struggle in the North is in a political cul-de-sac. The two sections of the community have been polarised and although the plea for unity and reconciliation continue, their hollowness is becoming more apparent. Obviously this slogan as it has been put forward today has had little effect and certainly the tactics flowing from it have had a retarding influence.

The Northern statelet grew out of the direct exploitation and oppression of the Catholic population, and the Protestant toilers, rural and urban have always existed as a privileged layer. This exploitation and privilege has been given a systematic and cohesive form by the Orange Order which holds state power through the Unionist Party. Not until this oppression

and privilege are smashed, will it be possible to break the Protestant workers from its reactionary ideology and support for British imperialism.

This leaves the revolutionary vanguard of the Catholic minority in a dilemma. Obviously the limited forces of the Catholic minority, heroic though they are inadequate for the task of smashing the Orange State machine. The only way to overcome this dilemma is to broaden the struggle and take in the south as well.

The Possibility for Struggle in the South

The incidents in Ballyshannon show that this perspective is not utopian. In fact a proper evaluation of the situation shows that it is the only reasonable perspective.

Economic developments since the Second World War, the emergence of comprador capitalism in the South and the decline of traditional heavy industry in the North has sent the employers and their political agents scurrying cap in hand to Westminster seeking closer unity. The 'Federal Solution', which is now in vogue, is British imperialism's answer and indeed a very acceptable answer as far as Southern capitalism is concerned. The longer the struggle in the North continues, the further away the 'Federal Solution' remains, the more difficulties Southern industry faces. Southern capitalism under the guidance of Fianna Fail has therefore a vested interest in a quick imperialist victory in the North and will seek to aid such a victory, not merely through patrolling the border, but more concretely by introducing internment or at least highly repressive legislation in the South. Such a policy will undoubtedly unleash a degree of anti-imperialist sentiment in the Free State (as indeed it has already done) and if this opportunity is seized progress can be made.

The major element in a programme for the national struggle as far as we in Dublin are concerned therefore must be: SMASH STORMONT! LINK THE STRUGGLE NORTH AND SOUTH. From this all our other slogans and demands will flow.

—Brendan Kelly

Dublin 20.12.71

Dear Red Mole,

My friend and comrade Tariq Ali knows perfectly well what my position is on *Private Eye*. I am not editor, deputy-editor, assistant editor or any other kind of editor. I write the *Footnotes* at the back of the magazine, and I contribute to the *Colour Section* at the beginning. I have never written or edited a word in the middle pages, which contained the offensive article about the IRA, attacked by *The Red Mole* of December 12.

Gery Lawless, a prominent contributor to *The Red Mole*, who has contributed more good material on Ireland to *Private Eye* than anyone else, including myself, also knows all this. He and Tariq know that my views on Ireland and the IRA, expressed many times in writing and in speeches, have nothing in common with the *Eye* article.

I realise that it is getting increasingly difficult for *The Red Mole* to fill the necessary page per issue with attacks on other revolutionaries, but to attack me for an article I did not write and could not have written and over which I had no control is ridiculous.

Yours fraternally,

Paul Foot

The Red Mole replies:

We are pleased that Comrade Foot has written this letter. All we asked for in our comments on the *Private Eye* attack on the Provisional IRA was that he dissociate himself from the lies contained in it. That he has now done this is perfectly satisfactory, but it does raise the whole question of the role which *Private Eye* plays in general. Comrade Foot knows perfectly well that he is responsible for the continuing high circulation of the journal thanks to his excellent journalistic abilities which are displayed fairly regularly in *Footnotes*. Therefore, even though he may not hold any official post, his function and his old friendship with the Editor, make it fairly easy for him to exercise control when he wishes to do so. Thus when *Private Eye* was planning to have a cover 'satirising' Bernadette Devlin's pregnancy, Paul Foot, correctly, prevented them from doing so. Surely it would not be difficult to exercise restraint on issues which are more explicitly political. However, since comrade Foot wrote his letter, the situation has taken an even more sinister turn.

Gerry Lawless, who, as Comrade Foot says, contributed the bulk of the Irish articles in the *Footnotes* section of *Private Eye*, has been fired because of the article which appeared in *The Red Mole*.

As a matter of accuracy, Comrade Lawless was not the author of the article in *The Red Mole*, but that aside, what position does Comrade Foot now take when a subordinate colleague, a fellow socialist, is discharged for having the audacity to disagree with the vicious anti-IRA campaign being carried out by Richard Ingrams, egged on by the Jesus freaks in *Private Eye*.

Which side are you on Comrade Foot?

What will your relations be with anyone who scabs on Comrade Lawless?

The reason we criticised Paul Foot was precisely because his role in *Private Eye* provides that magazine with a left cover and aids to build and boost its circulation, which is slightly different from a member of a socialist group working on an ordinary bourgeois newspaper or journal, where no control is possible. We will, therefore, continue to criticise lapses of this sort whenever they occur as long as Comrade Foot remains on the staff of the magazine, and as long as he does not publicly dissociate himself from the more blatant lies to which his employers often resort.

Feminism or Marxism?

Woman's Estate by Juliet Mitchell; Penguin 1971, 25 p.

In the last few months three books on women's liberation movement have been published in paperback editions which are being widely read in and around the women's liberation movement.¹ Greer and Millett write as radical feminists, seeing the oppression of women as the primary form of oppression; for Millett the problem is that 'the half of the population which is female is controlled by that half which is male', for Greer women are 'the true proletariat'. Millett writes out of her experience in the American movement, Greer's recipe for liberation is of an anarcho-individualistic kind. Having written a book on the repressive upbringing of women, Greer is now writing for the *Woman's page* of the *Sunday Times*. Mitchell's book speaks for and reflects certain trends in the women's movement, outlines a theoretical framework for analyzing women's oppression and discusses its current development. Those of us who have been arguing against Greer and Millett in trying to develop a marxist theory and practice in relation to women's liberation will find her book disappointing. The theoretical outline which Mitchell offers is a re-working of her article *Women—the Longest Revolution*² but the additions and reformulations undermine the more radical framework of the 1966 article.

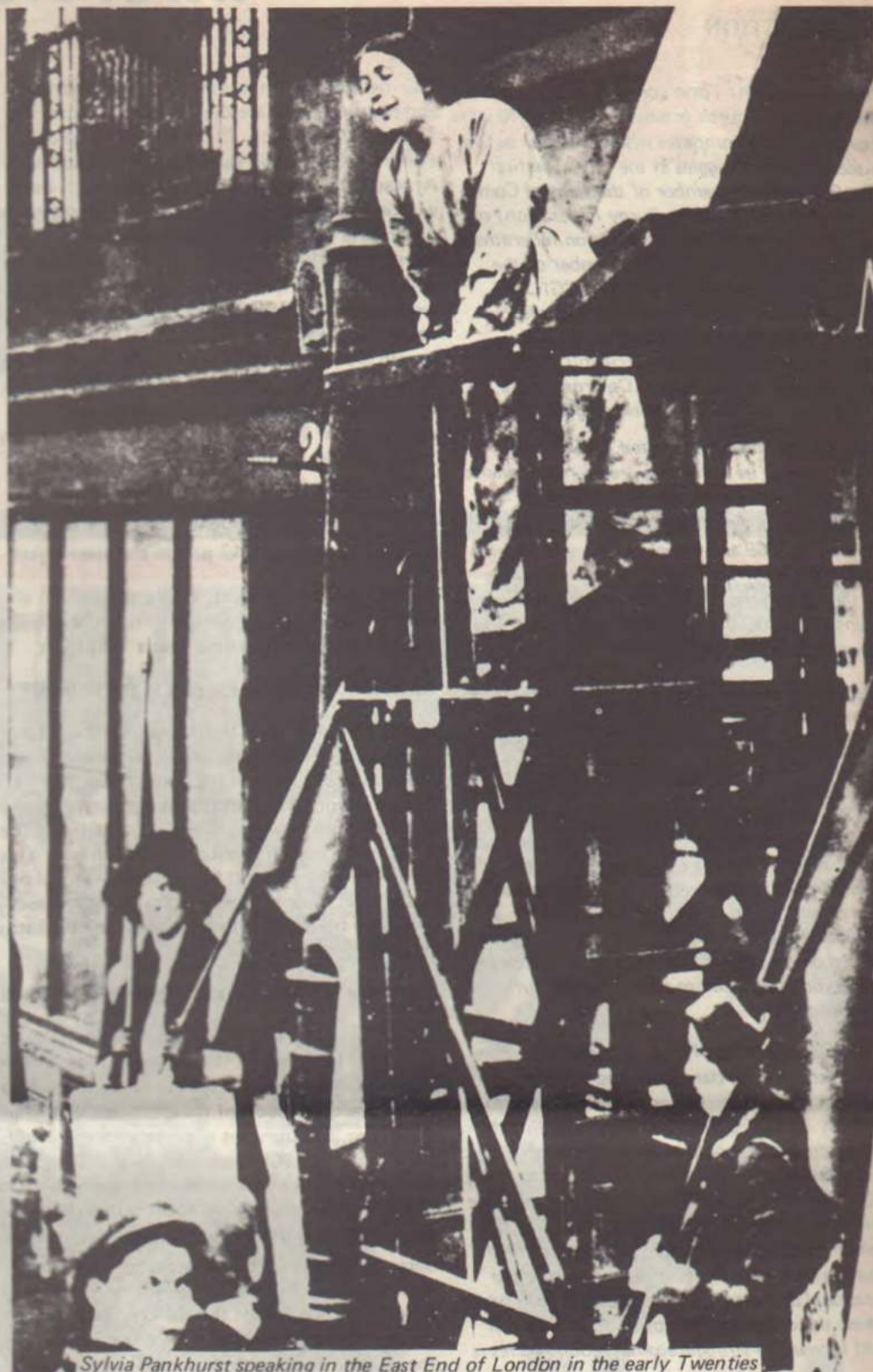
Mitchell considers both radical feminism and socialism as the basis for theory and practice; she tries to look both ways and succeeds in focusing nowhere. Radical feminism is criticized because of its inability to move from the recognition that women have been oppressed throughout history to an understanding of the particular form of oppression in the capitalist society of today. Shulamith Firestone's attempt to 'develop a materialist view of history based on sex itself'³ is criticized for throwing out both historical and dialectical method. On the other hand, Marxist theory has given too inadequate attention to the oppression of women hence a proper Marxist theory of this question remains to be constructed. In addition, the practice of most left wing and revolutionary groups simply reflects the subordination of women in society. So far there is little to disagree with what Mitchell is saying; the problem arises in the next stage in the argument.

The trouble springs from her belief in the way in which a Marxist theory of women's position must be developed: 'We should ask the feminist questions, but try to come up with some Marxist answers' (p.99). But what this leads to is not an integrated theoretical and political analysis but to a watering down of Marxism with a heavy dose of feminism. We are told that, in order to understand the situation of women at any time in history, four elements—production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization of children—must be examined, each having 'its own autonomous reality though each is ultimately determined, but only ultimately, by the economic factor' (p. 101). Her method is to describe the four elements more or less independently but when she comes to examine their fusion we are offered only confused banalities. Her failure at this crucial stage is due to the poverty of her theoretical framework, that is, to a mechanical application of second-hand Althusserian theses. The lynch-pin of the inherent weakness of her discourse is her inability to see each of these 'elements' as a set of social relationships open

to a revolutionary intervention. The point is, of course, that to get Marxist answers you must ask Marxist questions. Thus, for example, she uses the analogy of peasantry to illustrate both the economic nature of woman's work (centered around the family) as well as certain aspects of her ideology that spring from it. Her case for feminism is based on the fact that all women share this. But, using the same analogy, would one therefore, defend and insist upon a need for 'peasantism', a political theory and practice more 'natural' to peasantry of the kind suggested by Narodniks in pre-revolutionary Russia, or should one approach the question of radicalization of peasantry (or women) on the basis of Marxism-Leninism? There is no place for feminism in a scientific analysis of 'woman's estate' nor is it possible, as her book clearly illustrates, to base a revolutionary strategy on the weak terrain of an essentialist ideology.

The position of women at work is examined only in terms of their position as women—whose 'real place', according to social ideology, is in the home. Thus, at work, she argues, 'there is no possibility of comradeship or unity in struggle—the relationship of women workers is simply the counterpart of their loneliness of the home, it is friendliness or its opposite. Because the economic role of women is obscured (its cheapness obscures it) women workers do not have the pre-condition of class consciousness' (p. 139, my italics). Women suffer first, last and always because they are women. The task therefore is to develop feminine consciousness. But Mitchell does not seem to understand that the basic pre-condition for working class consciousness is being a worker, selling one's labour in a capitalist society. Her conclusion above is tendentiously drawn from her empirical investigations, from talking to a number of women. Such an investigation would most likely condemn a great number of male workers as well. Women workers may relate subjectively to their work situation in a different way from male workers but this does not mean that they lack class consciousness, rather, that the logic of development of their consciousness will be different—the fact to which one must relate one's political strategy. Women on strike at Brannon's at Cleator Moor have developed a very high degree of solidarity and militancy in a strike which began on 3rd of June this year, and still continues. The film 'Women and the Bill' made earlier this year illustrates the way in which women workers become conscious both of their position as workers, fighting the Industrial Relations Bill, and of their position as women, struggling to achieve equal pay. History teaches us that women workers have at times been in the vanguard of class struggle.

Actually, the section on women in production which includes Mitchell's contacts with women workers is perhaps the best part of her book mainly because she gives an account of the male-chauvinist ideology not only of male fellow workers but also of shop-stewards and trade-union officials. There is no doubt that the trade-union movement has done next to nothing to unionize women and raise demands on their behalf. There is an element of truth in what Mitchell tries to say: women workers tend to be much more militant as workers if they understand the specific nature of their exploitation. In this respect one can



Sylvia Pankhurst speaking in the East End of London in the early Twenties

argue that the big wave of unionization of women that came around the time of the First World War was directly influenced by the suffragette struggle and their ideology. This poses the women's movement with specific political tasks, a conclusion which Mitchell does not care to derive. In fact, her book is most remarkable for the absence of any concrete suggestions for action—these are replaced by empty rhetoric. Because women's 'primary identification is as maintained persons within the family' due to which they cannot become class-conscious, the task of Marxists in the movement, she argues, is to develop feminist consciousness. 'In the home the social function and psychic identity of women as a group is found. Class differences at work (which anyway never produce class consciousness) are here obliterated for status differences: 'wealthy', 'middle', 'poor'. This is not to underestimate these. But the position of women as women takes precedence: oppressed whatever their particular circumstances. Hence importance of feminist consciousness in any revolution... Hence, *Women's Liberation*' (end of the book).

Readers of *The Red Mole* may be amused by Mitchell's description of the groups to the left of the Communist Party as 'sectarian'. This description does not come, naturally, from any knowledge of the political programmes or activities past and present of these groups—it is a label in the true tradition of sectarian abuse. 'These Trotskyists have "always" been there, because they have never been there. There is a sort of expansive tolerance in their position, a timelessness (one of Mitchell's favourite words) which makes room for everything—except another sect, or an actual revolution'. Maoism is described in even harsher terms—that is, if the accusation of counter-revolution can be surpassed. In fact: 'The grey timelessness of Trotskyism is only matched by eternal chameleonism of Western Maoism.'

One may argue that some of the theoretical difficulties of the women's movement in Britain today (or, rather, its total lack of theory) comes from its inability to deal with the political situation in which the movement is to function. The women's movement has necessarily to be a broad movement of women united against the injustice and discrimination perpetuated by this society. It will therefore be the site of many different political ideologies. But one can predict a hard ideological battle ahead the stake of which is the correct theory necessary for their struggle. Unlike the early years of this century when the suffragette movement represented the radical wing of the British bourgeois intelligentsia and which, by taking to the streets, politically split that intelligentsia, the situation today is quite different. Counterposed to feminism is no longer Fabian socialism but Marxism and, in spite of the complex nature of the ideological battle to come, they will be the two main protagonists. In the time-honoured style of the British labourist intelligentsia which has always been only too eager to marry Marxism off to the first populist ideology that came its way, Mitchell argues that the women's movement has produced a new type of politics, specifically women's politics, an opposite to male politics. It is against such notions that Marxist militants will have to fight tooth and nail inside the women's movement with the aim to politicize women in Leninist principles.

Jenny Linden

FOOTNOTES.

1. Germaine Greer: *The Female Eunuch*; Kate Millett: *Sexual Politics*; Juliet Mitchell: *Woman's Estate*.
2. Juliet Mitchell: 'Women—The Longest Revolution', *New Left Review* 40.
3. Shulamith Firestone: *The Dialectics of Sex*.

WORKERS COUNCILS IN ITALY

Interview with Turin militants

INTRODUCTION

During the recent Turin congress of the Italian Section of the Fourth International, Alain Krivine interviewed two comrades who have been active in the workers' struggles in the city. The first Vito Bisceglia is a member of the Central Committee of the FIOM (Metallurgy Federation) of the CGIL (CP controlled trade union federation). He is a factory delegate and a member of the provincial committee of the FIOM-CGIL in Turin. The comrade works in the Nebiola factory (a machine-tools plant with 1200 workers) where a factory council still exists and publishes its own paper, *Centrosessanta*, which has a regular circulation of 800.

The two interviews conducted by Cde. Krivine enable us to make a preliminary balance sheet both of the workers' councils which were formed during the great struggles which erupted in 1969 and the class struggles which continue today. This is a necessary task since all the indications suggest that a decisive turning point in the social, political and economic situation in Italy has been reached.

The economic crisis continues to deteriorate. In the first four months of 1971, industrial production dropped by 2.3%. This situation is not just the case with backward industries, but affects the heartlands of Italian capitalism: Fiat, Pirelli, Montedison are also experiencing grave difficulties. Of course the workers are the ones really affected by this crisis: Pirelli 'invites' several thousand workers to 'declare themselves redundant', in other car factories in Milan, a reduction in the hours of work and of wages is forced on the workers; in Sanussi, a major electrical goods trust, more than 9000 are suffering unemployment.

The most significant fact is that growing unemployment has not dampened the workers' militancy which continues to express itself in bitterly contested local class struggles, which, owing to the lack of an overall perspective, tend to be ineffective. The chief responsibility for this state of affairs can only be laid at the door of the Communist Party bureaucracy and the union leaderships, who in a period of crisis, make a bloc with the bourgeoisie to save the 'national economy'. Thus the only slogan which these timid and conservative bureaucrats can put forward to struggle against redundancies is one which demands that the bourgeois state subsidises capitalist enterprises in difficulty, of course with the taxes extracted from the workers.

How long has the Factory Council been in existence and how is it organized?

The Council was formed during the struggles in May '69. It expressed the desire of the workers, to take the organization and leadership of the struggle into their own hands, confronted by the bureaucratisation of the unions, which still had

700 members. All the workers, both unionized and non-unionized are organized in work sectors (turners, fitters, etc). Each sector's assembly elects a delegate who can be instantly recalled. At least 10 assemblies are held each year. Every worker has 10 paid hours per year so that he can participate in sector or general assemblies. For instance, in 1971, 12 general assemblies were held which discussed factory problems (wage rates, work speed, grading problems). The workers' council consists of 42 delegates. 504 hours a month are paid for by the employer for the benefit of the Council, which divides the hours among its members as it sees fit. There is an executive committee of 7 members, which is changed every 2 months; its sole function being coordination. The Council edits the paper, delegates militants to negotiate with the boss and organizes struggles.

How many workers take part in the assemblies?

All the workers take part. Political debate is allowed—for example, I have been elected a delegate and all my comrades know I am a Trotskyist.

What role does the Union play in the Council?

In 1969 a minority of the delegates did not belong to the Union, today they are all members. There is no union structure in the factory but the PCI (Italian Communist Party) is attempting to transform the Council into a Union organisation. The Union takes part in negotiations which have a bearing beyond the factory, for example, at local or regional level. The Union is occupied, or at least should be occupied with the coordination of struggles with other factories.

Is this workers' council an exceptional case in 1971?

Yes, it certainly is an exception. We are involved in a political fight against the regional union leadership. Moreover, the council is split between those who accept the orientation of the CGIL leadership and those who, like us, want to preserve the council's autonomy. In 1969 there were over 150 councils of this type in the Metal Industry: today there are only about 30 left with no coordination between them, mostly in the more politicized factories like ours. In most cases the councils have become union sections in the factories with a low participation on the part of the workers, but in each struggle the vanguard militants attempt to lead the struggle democratically, to politicize it and to recreate democratic structures. We should take note of the fact that before 1969 the union had very little implantation in the Metal Industry it was through this deficiency that the workers' committees were created.

How do you explain the decline of the factory committees?

Firstly by the inexperience of most of the young workers and by the fact that the decreasing of the struggle has brought about some depoliticisation.

Also many vanguard left groups have not understood the role and advantages of these committees, because of their spontaneist conceptions which lead them to take the position that the spontaneity of the masses is enough by itself ('We all are delegates'). Thus the union bureaucracies have appeared to many militants to be the only permanent structures. The unification of Union organizations which is being carried out from the top without any right of tendency, will allow this absorption to be carried out in the logic of the bureaucracy. That is the logic of negotiation and not of struggle.

The 2nd comrade interviewed, Raffaele Ivani, is a worker in FIAT, a delegate, and member of the committee of the Metal Federation of the FIM-CISL.

We have heard a lot about the base committees in FIAT. Could you tell us something about them?

During the struggles of 1968-69, spontaneous strikes broke out in the workshops. The vastness of the factory (65,000 workers in Mirafiori) and the militancy of the workers allowed the strike in workshop 32 to spread rapidly in the mechanical construction sector. Demands were raised on the conditions of work (heat, noise, etc.). It was at that time that the need for coordination was realized and a desire to stay in the factories during the strike and go from workshop to workshop to spread the strike arose. This was a new technique of struggle for the FIAT workers. At the very beginning the workers chose their delegates without election simply by taking the most combative of their comrades. At this point the unions, which were very weak in the factory (14,000 workers) began to take alarm. For the 65,000 workers at the factory, the Union appeared in the person of 20 members of the internal commission, who were paid for by the boss on a permanent basis, completely unknown and without credibility at the base. They then tried to "calm" the workers. But a council was created in each workshop with the same organization as at Nebiola. Between 800 and 1000 delegates were elected who met every Saturday afternoon.

Until the end of 1969 the union leadership (internal commission and provincial leadership) did not interfere, since it was unable to do so, simply making left demagogic noises in the workers' assemblies.

Why were the unions able to gain more control over the committees at the end of '69?

The Unions played a part in the meeting of the 800 delegates since only they were able to ensure coordination throughout the whole factory. When the struggle slackened off, they attempted to obstruct these meetings and have assemblies according to shifts or by sector of production, using the old trick of 'divide and rule'. The activity of the spontaneist groups (*Lotta Continua*,

Potere Operaio) has objectively assisted them in this process by denying the role of the delegates. For example, during a meeting between students and 300 delegates in the Architecture Faculty, Sofri the leader of *Lotta Continua* explained that 'delegates' were in infringement of the worker's autonomy, and that unions and bosses were all the same. This led them to bring out a leaflet saying that the strikers were right because they struck against the boss but the non-strikers were also right because they fought against the unions. They would only support spontaneous strikes. Today their influence is negligible among the delegates and workers except in the coachwork sector. The spontaneist's absurdities, the absence of an organized revolutionary force capable of explaining the role of the councils, and the temporary ending of struggle has allowed the union to use the strength of its apparatus and to gather the majority of the delegates to its perspective. The other delegates, very combative but not very politicized have become demoralized. This stresses the necessity of always maintaining political education during the struggle.

What is the situation in the factory now?

All the delegates are union members and new delegates quickly become unionized. Three structures exist. The 650 delegates still elected by the workers by sector or by production belt have most of them, submitted to the repression. Alongside them are 350 official union representatives, 25% of them nominated by the union, the rest elected. On a third level there is an executive committee of 120 semi-permanent members, paid for by the boss, chosen theoretically by the union delegates and other delegates but in practice at the council of union delegates. Thus, the workers' council no longer plays a role. It no longer meets without union authorization and the union has regained control of the whole factory. Only about 20 delegates fight to preserve the old gains and even they are not coordinated.

What political conclusions can be drawn from this experience?

We have seen the necessity to structure the revolutionary tendency in the unions so that the activity of these 20 delegates can be coordinated and to homogenize the vanguard by permanent political propaganda through our factory bulletin, *The Red Mole*.

Our object is to recreate the conditions for struggle. We have seen that autonomous base structures can only be created in periods of combat. When the struggle finishes only the most politicized workers stay ready to lead permanent political action, which poses the problem of the construction of a revolutionary party which alone is capable of ensuring a permanent politicization in the factory. That is what we are in the process of building.

WASFI TALL: A belated, but necessary obituary

The elimination of Wasfi Tall, the Jordanian Prime Minister, by the commandos of the Palestinian 'Black September Group' does not fill us with tears. This mass murderer received the fate he so richly deserved for his pro-imperialist endeavours, and which is due to all his kind. A loyal servant first of British imperialism, and then of its American counterpart, Wasfi Tall was a virulent anti-semitic who depicted everything which upset the status quo (including, in fact especially, the Palestinian Resistance) as the product of a vast international conspiracy of Jewish Bolsheviks (!) And yet, by a seeming paradox, he was Zionist Israel's best protector, to the point where a leading Israeli commentator could say shortly after his death: not with out reason: "He killed more terrorists in one year than we did in ten."

As early as 1952, this wretched counter-revolutionary thug was clamouring for repression of Palestinian opposition to the Jordanian monarchy, and till the end of his life he fought with remarkable consistency against any and all movements which posed a threat to his power and that of his masters, whether in the Yemen, where his unbridled attachment to the anti-Republican cause led Nasser to denounce him as an agent of the CIA, or, more recently, in Jordan itself, where he led the campaign to destroy the Palestinian Resistance and was personally responsible for the liquidation of thousands of fighters and civilians alike.

Our sympathies are fully on the side of the four Palestinian militants who avenged their fallen brothers and sisters and showed that there is no permanent respite for imperialism and its valets, however hard the blows they succeed in dealing to the struggle at various stages. We do not accept the right of the bourgeois press to pronounce moral judgment on this act of revolutionary justice, or the right of the Egyptian regime, which remained silent during the September massacre and is ready to recognise Israel (not to speak of its role in the Sudan), to try the comrades responsible.

Nevertheless, if Tall's assassination is a good index of the desperation to which unflagging repression has reduced many fedayin, acts of this type will not lead the Resistance out of its present impasse. The defeat of September, 1970, and the subsequent throttling of the guerrilla movement by the Jordanian regime, in coordination with U.S. and British imperialism, and with the connivance of all the Arab governments and the Soviet bureaucracy were due essentially to the petty-bourgeois nationalist outlook which dominated the Resistance and particularly Fatah, its largest formation, as expressed in the ridiculous slogan of 'non-interference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries', the refusal to organise and mobilise the mass support they enjoyed in the Arab world, the conception of the struggle as being solely directed at Israel, and the failure to observe and act on the absolute

contradiction between the interests of the established Arab regimes (whether reactionary or 'progressive') and the very existence of a popular armed struggle which, moreover, served as an objective stimulus for revolutionary activity throughout the region.

But activism, however heroic and spectacular, which is unsustained by a systematic critique of past failure and a consequent re-definition of strategy, can lead only to further demoralisation in the ranks of the Palestinian movement, or what remains of it. What is needed at this late hour is a serious reassessment of the fundamental premises of guerrilla action hitherto and an attempt to correct them, in theory and practice, which implies acknowledgement of the primacy of politics over 'the gun' (please note, Maoist comrades), elaboration of an all-Arab strategy by the most advanced elements of the Resistance in conjunction with the revolutionary left groups in the area, and the building of a revolutionary communist party which can hamper the power of imperialism, and its junior partners Zionism and Arab reaction—in the Middle East. This is a long and painful process, but it bears infinitely more chance of success than the illusory chimeras of hijacking and individual terror.

Wasfi Tall is dead. Let us regret that the same cannot yet be said of the class which he so ably represented and whose power remains to be destroyed before the Palestinian and Arab masses are to be truly free.