

RED WEEKLY

SOLIDARITY WITH THE
PORTUGUESE
WORKING CLASS

National conference—13 March

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THE OTHER MERCENARY

Fourteen British mercenaries have been reported shot dead in Angola. This should come as no surprise to anyone. For centuries the British ruling class has been sending gangs of hired killers half way round the world. The only difference is that normally they are dressed in fancy clothes and called 'the British army'. The other difference is that it was normally they who were killing 'the natives' instead of being shot themselves.

The trouble for the British capitalist class is that 'the natives' have learnt to fight back. The MPLA and the Cubans have licked the FNLA and its American allies in Northern Angola. Now they will smash UNITA and the white 'master race' of South Africans who have invaded the South of Angola.

It is only now, when they're losing, that the British capitalists discover their conscience. Shooting, pillaging, raping, looting is fine provided it's *our* side that's doing it. Where were the hysterical press reports, the tear-filled news programmes when 'our boys' were beheading guerillas in Malaya, torturing women in front of their husbands in Cyprus, slaughtering whole families in India and Kenya? Where is the condemnation today when British troops torture, blind and kill in the North of Ireland?

Make no mistake about who those mercenaries really represent. Even the mac colonel who is reported to have had them shot is a product of the British army in its proven testing ground of the North of Ireland -- in fact he was a member of the infamous First Parachute regiment which shot down thirteen unarmed civilian demonstrators in Derry in January 1972. The scum who comprise the rest of the mercenaries are products of such institutions as the Special Air Service, the Paratroop Regiment, the Commandoes and other true blue British regiments. Recent revelations show many were *still* members of the army when they became mercenaries.

The MPLA in Angola who are fighting the British mercenaries are fighting *our* enemy. Every blow they strike weakens not only their imperialist oppressor but the exploiters of the British working class. Every unknown MPLA soldier who fights the British troops in Angola fights not only for himself and his oppressed nation but also for us, just as every IRA soldier strikes at our enemy when he shoots a British soldier.

Our task is not to weep over the possible death of the murdering scum who come from these shores. Our task is to aid the fighters of the MPLA. Every mercenary who is stopped from going, every drop of aid to the imperialist stooges in Angola which is prevented, every move to recognise the MPLA government aids not only the Angolans but *us*.

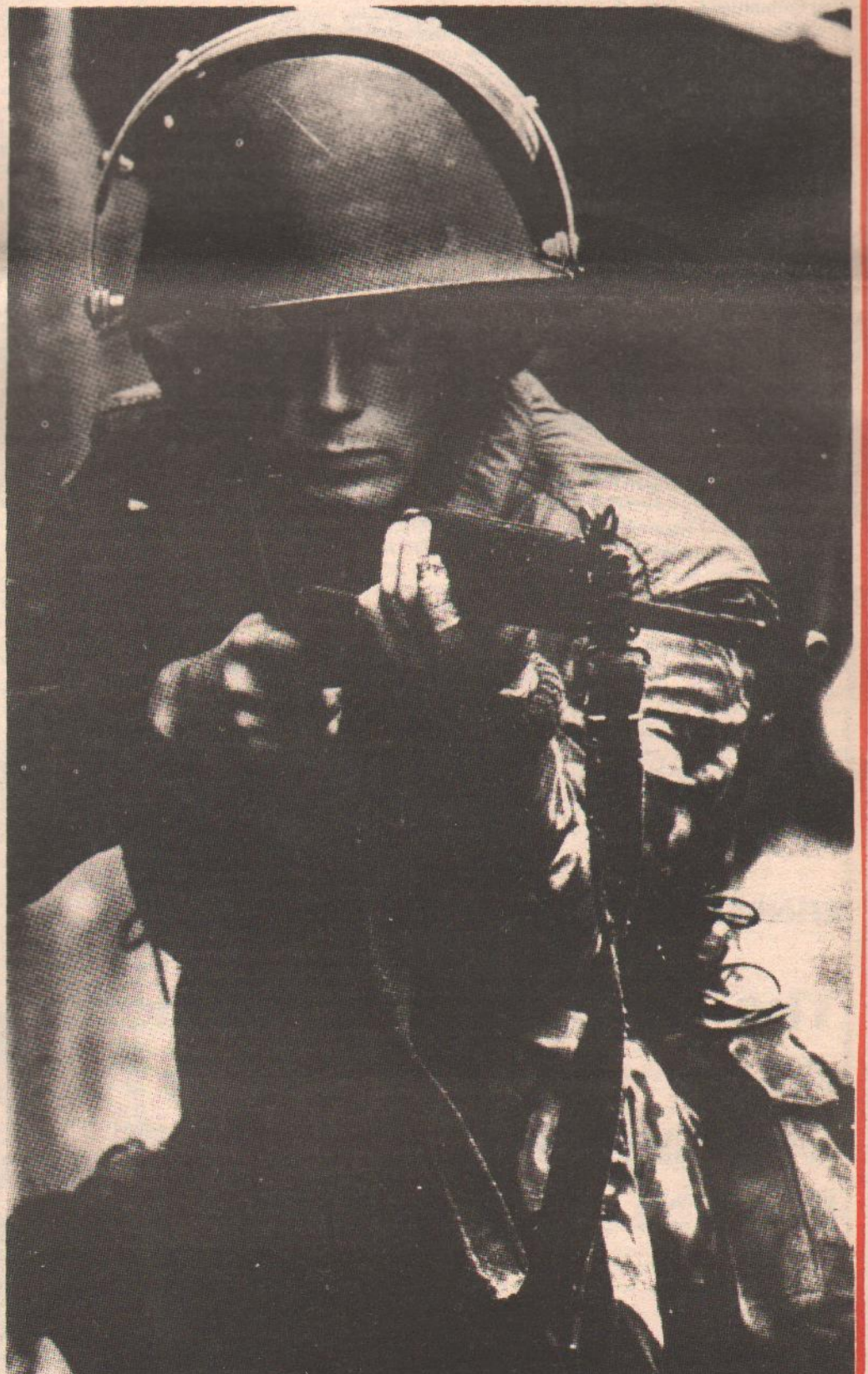
- * End all aid to the FNLA and UNITA!
- * Stop all arms supplies and mercenaries to Angola!
- * Labour must recognise the MPLA government now!



FRANK STAGG is dying. The British Government is letting him die. They refuse his request for a transfer to Northern Ireland. They say that he is not entitled to it because his home is not in Ireland. But even if it was, they would still refuse his request.

What is at stake is not where Frank Stagg rots, but the fact that a transfer would give him the status of a political prisoner. This would destroy the Labour Government's claim that the IRA are gangsters and that the army act as policemen. They are policemen—but the policemen of a foreign power in a foreign country. The Labour Government will never admit this unless it is forced to.

The pickets who gathered outside Jenkins' house were not there for his benefit, but to demonstrate their solidarity. We endorse their demands. Grant political status—save Frank Stagg's life.



RECOGNISE THE MPLA

United fight for jobs needed

This sort of tactic is used by the Murrays and Joneses of this world in order to abstain from a political debate. The IS's Right to Work March must be used to mobilise support for a fight at the base and draw attention to the Assembly.

The Communist Party's witch-hunting is a clear warning of the sectarian role they see for the Assembly - now supported by more than 40 Labour MPs. Far from presenting 'new policies', they will be putting forward the same old worn-out ideas, which subordinate the independent interests of the working class to a strategy of unity with the 'left' Labour and trade union bureaucrats.

The IS lay themselves open to this attack by bragging of a 'Right to Work Campaign' and a 'Rank & File Organising Committee' which in reality represent no-one but the IS themselves. Equally their programme to beat unemployment, by failing to place workers control at its centre, provides no effective alternative to the call by Lomas for 'new policies'.

Workers control

Only policies based firmly on the fight for workers control of production can provide that alternative. *Red Weekly* calls on all its readers to support both initiatives on the basis of:

- * Opening of the books of all companies threatening redundancy.
- * For a policy of work-sharing with no loss of pay.
- * For nationalisation under workers control of all firms unable to meet this basic right to work.
- * For a crash programme of public works - to meet social need and employ the jobless.
- * For a sliding scale of social expenditure to compensate automatically for inflation.
- * For a sliding scale of wages and a minimum wage of £40 per week.

The Right to Work March begins in Manchester on 28 February and ends with a rally in the Albert Hall on 20 March. Details can be obtained from: Rank & File Organising Committee, 46 Prince George Road, London N.16.

The Labour Movement Assembly takes place in Westminster's Central Hall on 27 March. Details from: 'Assembly', No. 8 Confederation District Secretary, 28 Denmark Street, London WC2H 8NJ.

number of unemployed must support the Assembly and not let anything divert them from this.'

Carried through logically, this would mean that any workers' struggle which set itself goals outside those of the Assembly would objectively be acting as a diversion. The other implication is that the IS deliberately devised the whole idea of the Right to Work March in order to divert attention away from the Assembly. This is rubbish. The Right to Work March was called long before the Communist Party initiated the drive for the Assembly through the No. 8 District Committee of the CSEU and the London Co-op.

Militants who really do put the interests of the working class first should bitterly oppose the CP's attempt to cut off support for the Right to Work March in the labour movement.

In a divisive and hypocritical attack, the Communist Party newspaper, the *Morning Star*, has seen fit to counterpose the Labour Movement Assembly on unemployment to the Right to Work March initiated by the Rank & File Organising Committee (a body dominated by the International Socialists).

Alf Lomas, Secretary of the London Co-op Political Committee, is quoted by the paper as saying: 'If the International Socialists want to have their rally and long march for their members, that is their business and they are fully entitled to organise this. But to have it a week before the Assembly can only be harmful to mobilising for the Assembly. All those who are genuinely aiming for new policies to reduce the

Aerospace Strike

One hundred thousand workers at aerospace factories all over the country staged protest strikes last Friday to hold mass meetings and demonstrations against the threat of unemployment. The programme put forward by the National Aerospace Shop Stewards Liaison Committee, which called the action, demanded:

- * A halt to closures and redundancies.
- * Government action to expand the industry.
- * More industrial democracy and participation.

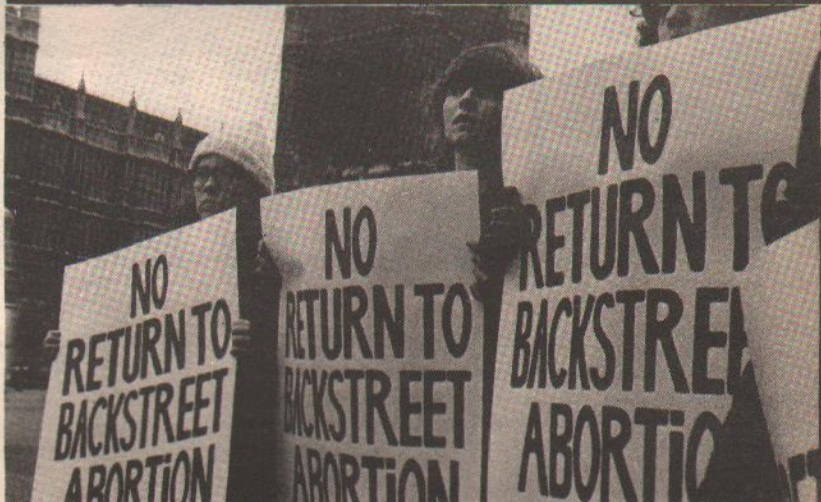
This action accompanies the progress through parliamentary committees of the Aircraft Nationalisation Bill, and the threat of widespread closures in the industry. Already two Rolls Royce factories, at Dundonald in Northern Ireland and Blantyre in Scotland, are due to be closed.

The programme put forward by the Shop Stewards Committee was explained by Phil Higgs, its secretary. On television he stated that the shop floor should have a say in the industry, adding: 'By harnessing their views jointly with that of the Government, a viable and product-

ive industry can go ahead.'

This is the opposite of workers control of the industry. The forms of organisation being put forward are like the joint management committees in British Leyland, which certainly do not constitute a step forward for Leyland workers. Their aim is not to provide full information to the workforce in order that workers can better fight to veto management or government decisions which run contrary to their interests; on the contrary, they have been established to muzzle the independent voice of the shop stewards movement and to incorporate them in implementing management policy.

Mass action of the sort taken last Friday is the best arena where a real strategy can be hammered out for the aerospace industry - starting with the opening of the books, to establish the bosses' and Government's plans and work out an industry-wide system of work-sharing with no loss of pay which can provide a fighting alternative to the Blantyre and Dundonald closures and all threatened sackings.



Despite the NAC lobby of Parliament last Monday reminding Labour MPs of the pro-abortion position adopted by the Labour Party and TUC conferences, many used the excuse of their 'consciences' to vote for the reconvening of the anti-abortion Select Committee. This means that the campaign will have to be stepped up to bring these MPs to account before the working class people they claim to represent.

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

£15,000 FUND DRIVE

The Political Committee of the IMG has discussed the progress of the £15,000 Fund Drive, which had an initial deadline of 31 January. So far (by 4 February) we have raised £6,546.

The Political Committee felt that although we had not achieved our target by the required time, an enormous amount of experience and knowledge had been gained by the IMG, putting us in a firm position to stabilise and extend the activities of the organisation. Neverthe-

less, if we fail to make our target, the work of building the IMG will be very gravely hampered. The PC, in extending the January deadline to 5 March, issued an urgent appeal to the membership and supporters of the IMG: 'Keep the money pouring in!'

For the first time, however, we have organised a Fund Drive in which every comrade of the organisation has been involved. We have conducted a campaign among our sympathisers and in the working class as a whole to convince them

that Trotskyist politics have to be fought for, not merely through propaganda, but by organisation and agitation.

To do this requires money. This campaign has stamped out a certain petty-bourgeois attitude towards finance in our own ranks and those of our sympathisers. Where previously the question of funds has been considered a certain necessary embarrassment in the course of our political work, we are now beginning to see the fight for finances as being an absolutely necessary part

of the fight to build a revolutionary party in the British and world working class.

Because of these old bad attitudes, the fight to correct them has obviously taken time and involved mistakes. The leadership of the IMG did not sufficiently prepare the organisation politically to carry through the fight, given the inexperience of our comrades in this work. In the branches, a certain conservatism was experienced; the old adage of 'having to spend money to make money' was not fully observed.

Nevertheless, we are already getting very material benefits from the money we have received so far. *Red Weekly* has been able to purchase a new type-setting machine and a headliner. The IMG has been able to service another campaigns organiser. This comrade has travelled up and down the country organising the work of the IMG in the fight against unemployment and the cuts.

The success of the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee demonstration in which the IMG played a leading role, has also confirmed the position of our organisation as a leading force in solidarity with the struggle of the Irish people against British imperialism. This would not have been possible if we had not been able to take on an extra organiser for this campaign.

One of the major attacks faced by the working class today will be stepped up in the imminent White Paper on Government Expenditure, which will try to deal a smashing blow to the social services won by the working class through decades of struggle. The IMG has taken on an organiser over the last few months to spearhead our campaign here, especially the fight to defend

and extend the NHS against the attacks of the Labour Government.

The Political Committee has decided to extend the Fund Drive for one month only to meet the rest of our projects. These include:

- * A tour of a leading comrade from the LCI (Portuguese sympathising organisation of the Fourth International) to report to all the comrades of the IMG on the results of the recent LCI Congress and to address a series of public meetings.
- * Stabilising our theoretical journal *International* and transforming the magazine into the English language journal of the FI.
- * The immediate securing of a lease for our Scottish centre and the purchase of the necessary office material.
- * The production of a series of pamphlets: Pierre Frank on the history of the FI; the debate in the FI on Portugal; on the struggle in Spain; and one on unemployment and the cuts.
- * Taking on a further trade union organiser to meet the growing challenge to step up our work, as the introduction of a new tougher pay limit and the prospect of two million unemployed grow even closer.
- * Taking the first steps towards a 16 page paper, by moving to justified typesetting and strengthening the editorial staff.

The Political Committee appealed to all sympathisers of the IMG to make a pledge to the building of the Fourth International in Britain, and to send in money immediately so that we can reach our target by 5 March. We have time to spare in our favour. Let's turn it to the best advantage! Send all monies (cheques/POs made out to 'The Week') to: Jo-Ann, 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1.

RALLY

ERNEST MANDEL Speaking on

The European Revolution And Building the Fourth International

Also:

'Fighting for Workers Power in Portugal' - the REPUBLICA film

Red Star Folk Music Society singing workers' songs from Co. Durham & elsewhere

'Gaitas Gallegas'

- Playing traditional pipe music from Spain



7.30, Friday March 5th
St. Pancras Assembly Rooms
Bidborough St. near Kings X tube
Admission 50p

IN FOCUS

The Chrysler Linwood Strike

Many workers at Chrysler's Linwood plant may well be contemplating the lessons of the 'Three Little Pigs' this week. Readers will doubtless recall that the third of that particular trinity finally discovered that however much a wolf may huff and puff, it can't blow down a house made out of brick. And last week Linwood workers built their own brick house.

They resolutely refused to cave into Varley's threats about their solid strike endangering the Government's £162 million 'rescue' deal. They demanded that the 50 packers transferred to Linwood from a small factory in St. Johnstone be paid an extra pound to bring them up to the Linwood rate. And following the traditional 19 hours of talks, they won hands down. Wilson's protestations in front of an audience of Birmingham businessmen that 'the Government is not in the business of subsidising industrial disruption leading to permanent loss-making' was the hot air of a somewhat deflated wolf.

The tragedy of Linwood and other Chrysler workers is that this lesson has been learnt too late to save many of their own skins. Chrysler is only 1,000 short of getting the 6,000 'voluntary' redundancies that were demanded as the first stage of the rescue scheme. Now it has been revealed that despite government subsidies of £50 million this year, Chrysler may still withdraw from the UK if its annual losses rise above £60 million.

Varley has emphasised that the Government will not go beyond £50 million. The documents signed by the Government and Chrysler reveal that there is no specific agreement to cover losses above £60 million. And there has been an ominous silence on this part of the deal since it was signed in December. It was only broken when Gwain Gillespie, executive vice-president of Chrysler Europe, told the Commons committee of enquiry into the Chrysler affair last week that if losses rose above the £60 million level Chrysler would have to take another look at the deal.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT

A clear lesson emerges from this. There is no future in attempting to save jobs in collaboration with the bosses and the Labour Government, which is spearheading the attack on the right to work. Any money put into a company by the Government is intended to finance redundancies through speed-up and productivity increases. If the Government is not satisfied that this is being achieved, it is as willing to withhold investment as any capitalist firm — in fact, investment money for British Leyland is already being withheld.

What flows from this is that militant independent class action is the only way to defend the interests of working people. A pound a week may not seem much. But this struggle shows that if Chrysler's senior stewards had been willing to give a lead in the fight for the right to work, by campaigning for the opening of Chrysler's books and demanding nationalisation under workers control, then militant action would have followed. As it was, the report on the real cause of Chrysler's crisis produced by research workers at the Whitley plant was simply a negotiating counter — not the basis of a programme of action to save all jobs. That report concluded by calling for nationalisation under workers control.

Last week Linwood workers scored a small but significant victory. It is possible to fight the Wilson Government. It is still possible to resist implementation of the Chrysler-Government deal. All workers should absorb this lesson and those of the earlier Chrysler fiasco as a necessary part of taking forward the fight back against unemployment.

The Thorpe Affair

Over the past week the capitalist press has barely been able to contain its glee over the allegations made about a homosexual relationship involving Jeremy Thorpe, the leader of the Liberal Party. Of course, it is quite irrelevant for us whether or not Thorpe had a sexual relationship with Norman Scott. If he had, we would defend his right to have such a relationship. Our objection to Thorpe is based on his position as an outright enemy of the working class, not on whom he may or may not have slept with in the early 1960s.

But why has it taken so long for these allegations to surface publicly? After all, the South African security services have been gunning for 'bomber' Thorpe ever since his famous speech calling for the bombing of railway lines in Rhodesia after UDI. And a front-page report in the Daily Mirror claimed that South African agents were onto the story several years ago.

More interestingly, one account suggests that the Tories paid Scott £2,500 in 1974 for evidence of Thorpe's sexual behaviour. Although Tory Central Office is threatening writs, there is a file on Thorpe at Tory headquarters, and £2,500 did miraculously appear in Scott's bank account just before the February 1974 election. But fear of libel charges meant that these allegations could not be published until Norman Scott was able to claim legal immunity by laking them in a court of law.

The story does not come out of the blue, though. We should not forget that a ludicrous charge of bank robbery is now hanging over Young Liberal leader Peter Hain, nor that the conviction of Hain's brother for a minor shop lifting was given front page headline treatment in the London Evening News. And the Tories certainly stand to gain a great deal from the discrediting of Thorpe, Hain and the Liberals through gossip and scandal-mongering.

The 1974 elections revealed that maintaining a number of different political parties to express the interests of varying sections of the ruling class is becoming a bit of a luxury for British capitalism. The chosen party of capital, the Conservatives, were smashed in Scotland; and the rise in the Liberal vote at the Tories' expense made it impossible to keep Labour out of office given the rise in working class militancy.

The Wilson Government may confuse and disorient the working class through its pro-capitalist policies. But it cannot do what Heath failed to do in both 1972 and 1974 — defeat the working class head-on. That is still necessary, and the ruling class is clearing the decks. A strong Tory Party must be reconstructed from the rubble of 1974. Margaret Thatcher becomes the Iron Maiden and uses Cold War rhetoric to rally the middle class. The decimation of the Liberal Party is essential to the emergence of a strong unopposed Tory Party.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Over 300 young people marched through Birmingham on Saturday 7 February to protest against youth unemployment. The demonstration was organised by Birmingham Trades Council Youth Advisory Committee, and had the support of the Trades Council, Birmingham AUEW East District Committee, Rover Solihull Shop Stewards Committee, the National Society of Metal Mechanics, Birmingham National Union of Teachers and several political organisations.

Speaking for the Youth Advisory Committee, IMG member John Graham demanded the recall of all trade union officials and Labour leaders who refused to carry out policies in the interests of the working class. This was attacked by a Communist Party speaker as bringing 'personalities' into politics.

But their real reasons for saying this were revealed when the CP claimed that the demands for opening the books, nationalisation under workers control and work-sharing with no loss of pay — the only measures capable of defending the right to work — were calling for socialism now. Instead the Government had to be pressurised to change its policies. And presumably leopards asked to change their spots.

No doubt these conflicting ideas will find expression in the bulletin which is being launched by the Youth Advisory Committee as a forum of debate in the labour movement on how to fight unemployment and the specific problems facing youth.

STEEL - Build Action Committees

After accepting 'voluntary' redundancies and demonstrating their complete inability to fight the British Steel Corporation's rationalisation plans, the leadership of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation came up last week with an even quainter idea on how to defend steel workers' interests.

In Corby, a town heavily dependent on steel for jobs, the BSC wants to reduce its workforce by 1,200 to 11,000 — sooner rather than later, even according to ISTC officials. The response of John Cowling, ISTC executive member, was not that these redundancies should be resisted. Oh no, his members will simply refuse to cover the work of those that leave — unless they get extra pay.

But Mr Cowling does not stop at encouraging his members to act like Judas. If such an increase runs counter to the Government's present £6 limit policy, then he would settle for a promise of a productivity award under the next stage of the policy. The thirty pieces of silver would be on tick.

Rationalisation

Thus the ISTC executive has not only accepted the BSC's rationalisation policy in general, it will actually fight for the implementation of productivity schemes — something which must bring tears to the eyes of Harold Wilson, fresh from denouncing car workers for not working hard enough because they are allegedly being 'feather-bedded' by Government money.

The steel unions' acceptance of voluntary redundancies has left local plants isolated to face BSC's national onslaught. ROY MORGAN, convenor of the EEPTU (electricians' union) at BSC's Whiteheads plant in Newport, described to Red

Weekly the steps being taken to try and build a united response in the South Wales area.

This is an urgent task for steel workers throughout the country if isolation and defeat is to be avoided. Tens of thousands of jobs are at stake. To defend them, action committees are needed in every plant to link craft and production workers

and plant with plant, and so overcome the splitting role of their own union leaderships. On that basis a fight can be launched for the extension of the guaranteed working week to give 100 per cent protection to jobs and living standards, and for the opening of BSC's books to prepare a workers plan which defends jobs.



● How will BSC's proposals affect the Newport area?

As far as redundancies are concerned, there are two aspects: recessionary over-manning and in-built over-manning. The first involves redundancies to meet present needs, the second is the ten year strategy. In the Newport area immediately there will be roughly 100 redundancies at Panteg works, about 2,000 at Llanwern, and 250 at Whiteheads.

The real problem is that Sirs and Co. have handed over on a silver platter what was asked for on the 'night of the long vigil'. The differences are only cosmetic. Redundancies are still there.

The Corporation's idea is that the manning will be reduced after 13 weeks by compulsory redundancies.

● What do you think of the acceptance of voluntary redundancies by the union leadership?

The policy of my union leadership is to reduce the manning to the levels required — hence voluntary redundancies, a sell-out. We must oppose all redundancies as a matter of policy. What is difficult is getting it over to a lad with a huge cheque in his hands that voluntary redundancies mean a job gone and everyone else working twice as fast.

● How do you see the fight back developing after recent events?

The BSC are very clever. Instead of having a national struggle on their hands, they have channelled the discontent to the local plant. BSC management are united, organised and have a line — it's in the

Benson Report and other recent documents. They know where they want to go. But the union leadership don't have any idea of fighting. So the danger is demoralisation and isolation.

What's more, the issues are confused on the local level. Some plants see week-end working as being the main issue, others the guaranteed week, and others redundancies. The union officials' caveat is responsible for this situation, therefore the fight back and the clearing up of this mess lies with the rank and file.

The problem is to forge the unity of all the workers around certain demands. The need for unity has always been there — the BSC management has been united for years! The IMG pamphlet written in 1972 shows this.

● What steps have been taken locally to get this unity?

Well, the Whiteheads workers don't know what's happening at Llanwern. But workers are beginning to see the need for unity in the South Wales region. There have been moves by the AEU at Llanwern to establish regional committees of the stewards. These should be extended to include other unions. The need has never been greater or more urgent.

Steelworkers are fighting for the right to work of all workers. For a start, productivity schemes and demanning are being discussed and implemented in the Post Office, cars, railways and so on. They have picked on us first. We are the first on the chopping block, but it will be the turn of other workers tomorrow. The need for a united fight back should be obvious.



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

STUDENTS: How to stop the right

Over 1,000 students packed into a Manchester University Students Union meeting on 4 February to debate whether or not they should leave the National Union of Students. The result was 546 in favour of staying in and 547 in favour of getting out.

To the delight of the people inside and outside the NUS who want to discredit mass meetings open to all students, it was decided to have a referendum on the issue.

Meanwhile, the same week saw mass meetings at St Davids Lampeter, Keele University, and Portsmouth Polytechnic which all voted to stay in the NUS; while Oxford University voted to reject elections by ballot. The pages of the *Telegraph* and *The Times* carried no headlines on these decisions!

It would be wrong to believe that the mass of ordinary students have suddenly and spontaneously risen up against their unrepresentative 'communist' leadership. The debate that is occurring at the moment in the student movement, as in the trade union movement, is part of

a concerted campaign by the right wing to emasculate trade unions and student unions as fighting organisations capable of defending their members' interests.

In the NUS the campaign consists of a hotch potch of groupings, ranging from so-called 'anarchists' at Manchester, through the Union of Liberal Students and the Federation of Conservative Students, to the Monday Club and NF supporters in 'ANUS' at Oxford and Cambridge.

'ADEQUATE'

These groupings were united at the last NUS conference in calling for a postal ballot to replace elections of the executive at conference. The response of the Broad Left leadership of the NUS to such proposals and to the disaffiliation debates has been to defend the existing structures as adequate, while suggesting that perhaps better communication is needed. Their arguments have been based primarily on the expense of postal ballots and the supposed impracticability of such a procedure.

With such a 'defence' of the present structures of the NUS, it is hardly surprising that many students have begun to waver in defending the NUS. Many student union executives simply appoint their delegates to conference, and fail to campaign for mandates through mass meetings on all major issues. In Scotland, where the Broad Left is particularly strong, SRCs often decide policy and elect delegates to conference without even bothering to campaign for mass meetings open to all students.

Revolutionaries must fight in the colleges to show that mass meeting democracy is a question of principle that must apply in all situations, against the attempts of the right to place the illusion of 'freedom of choice' in the way of students expressing their opinions continually in collective forums.

Decisions made in this way will be acted upon, whereas the ballot, referendum and elitist SRCs encourage students to leave both decisions and activity 'to those who know about the issues involved'. Universities like Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Manchester, where mass meetings are scorned by the majority on the local leaderships, prove more than ever that the 'democracy' of the ballot places the shadow of passivity and non-participation on the lives of the mass of students.

It is no accident that such a debate occurs at a time of major economic crisis, in which students themselves and as teachers and graduates are affected both by the massive cutbacks in public expenditure — through college closures, course and staff cutbacks etc. — and the very real prospect of unemployment.

ATTACKS

The right wing want students to accept the bulk of the Government's attacks on the living standards and conditions of the working class, and defend students as a privileged sector of society. Revolutionary students must confront these arguments head-on, and fight for policies in the NUS that can really begin to mobilise students in defence of their living standards alongside the working class.

This means fighting for students to support calls for crash programmes of public works; the opening of the books of the LEAs and college authorities, so that students and workers together can prepare to fight back against the cuts; and fighting for £1 billion to be injected into the social services tied to a sliding scale of expenditure. It means supporting all struggles of workers in defence of democratic rights and in defence of their living standards.

In short, this means waging a fight to win students to the side of the workers movement, as opposed to the attempts of the right to line up students with the ruling class. IMG students are organising a Revolutionary Students Rally open to all students who see the need for real debate on the tasks of revolutionary students today in the face of the onslaught of the right. We see this as one step in the fight to win students to the side of the workers movement both in Britain and internationally.

SOCIALIST PRESS SHOWS NEED FOR COWLEY ENQUIRY

New evidence of the suppression of trade union rights at the Cowley car plant was given at a press conference in London last week, where the editor of *Socialist Press* (paper of the Workers Socialist League) appealed to the rest of the left press to take up a campaign for workers democracy in the trade unions.

The press conference took place as the results of new T & GWU elections for posts on the General Executive, Regional Committee and National Committee were being announced. According to editor John Lister, a circular signed by 'left' T & G regional secretary Brian Mathers has been issued to workers in the Cowley plant saying that any questioning of the validity of the ballot would result in T & G members being arraigned on charges of bringing the union into disrepute.

High votes

A news brief issued by *Socialist Press* explained how the re-balloting for the posts had come about:

'At the beginning of January two out of the three major T & GWU branches in the Oxford District called for an enquiry into these elections as soon as the overall results were declared. In the third, the branch whose figures were being questioned, a substantial number of people began asking what had produced the high votes for right-wing candidates (from the Oxford District) and calling on the branch (5/60 T & GWU) to declare publicly its own returns. This was refused — and hence from this branch the details of the case began to emerge.'

Impossible

Socialist Press claims that examination of the figures demands 'that the Cowley Body plant turned out nearly 6,000 votes for the Oxford District slate. This is impossible. There were only two ballot boxes, in canteens away from the shop floor, and only a handful of people, a few hundred, voted.'

'Knowing they had no answers, the Body Plant leadership refused to divulge the branch voting figures when requested to do so, despite the fact that T & GWU rule 13 obliges them to declare the result.'

'Region 5 Committee on receiving the complaints decided to hold a preliminary investigation. The 'investigation' consisted simply of calling the two Body Plant scrutineers (who are two out of four of the branch officers, while a third is a candidate!) to an interview at Regional Office. NOBODY ELSE FROM THE PLANTS — NOBODY WHO HAD LODGED A COMPLAINT — WAS INTERVIEWED!'

'As a result of this 'investigation', the Regional Committee decided that a 'minor technical infringement' had taken place, and that the ballot would have to be re-run. This was to enable them still to avoid declaring the result in the Body Plant.'

'The 'infringement' was the destruction of the ballot papers after one month instead of the three months asked for in a circular from the Regional Committee. Timing of this means that the evidence of the ballot was destroyed after complaints and calls for an enquiry had been lodged.'

The *Socialist Press* brief goes on to explain the significance it attaches to these events:

'What does it mean, if, just by calling such an election null and void, and running a re-ballot, the bureaucracy can evade calls for an enquiry into such an obviously dubious election?'

Campaign

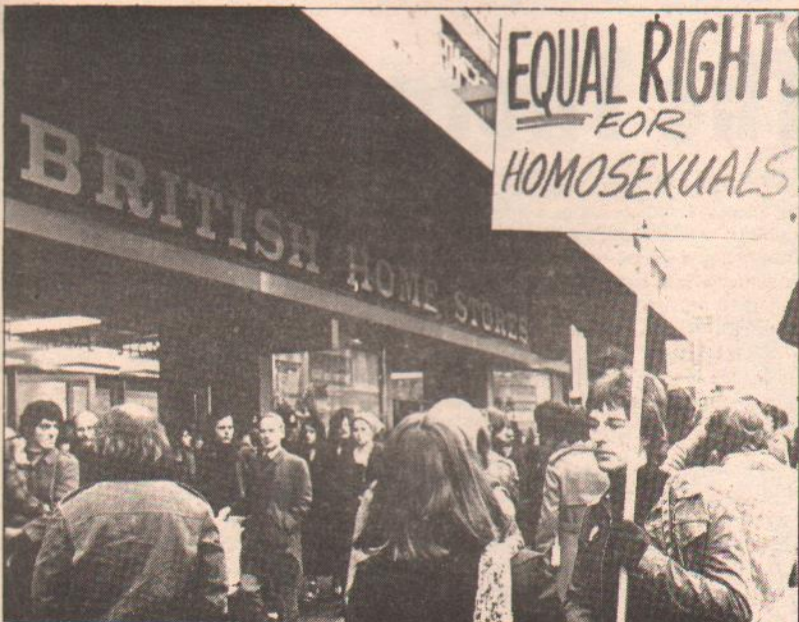
John Lister, concluding the press conference, called for a broad and general campaign around these issues throughout the unions, taking up the question of workers democracy, opening the procedure of ballots to the inspection of rank and file members — and beginning a campaign to end ballot voting itself, which has been exposed recently as the ideal forum for intervention by the capitalist mass media.

If the allegations made by *Socialist Press* can be substantiated, there is a burning need to use this example to show the whole working class the extent to which the trade union bureaucracy will go in order to prevent a fight back by their membership against the vicious attacks on their living standards and democratic rights.

The position of *Red Weekly* on union democracy is absolutely clear — for election of all full-time posts by show of hands at union branch meetings held in working hours.

The fight to replace the bankrupt leadership of the working class throughout the whole labour movement has to be accompanied by a campaign to ensure the fullest workers democracy in the mass organisations of the working class.

GAY VICTIMISED BY BHS



Supporters of Tony Whitehead picketing the Oxford Street store last Saturday

A 22-year-old gay militant, Tony Whitehead, has been sacked from his job with the Worthing branch of British Home Stores. The victimisation occurred after Tony had appeared on a Southern TV programme about homosexuality. He was hauled up to London for a grilling by three BHS representatives, denied representation, and given a simple choice — transfer to another branch and a low profile, or the sack. Tony stood on his democratic right to self-expression and was accordingly booted out.

A picket of BHS's Brighton store was held last Saturday, attended by over a hundred people — including Brighton Campaign for Homosexual Equality, Brighton IMG and some supporters of the International Socialists. The need for a fight back becomes doubly obvious

when it is realised that BHS is a determinedly anti-union firm. Tony Whitehead himself was already discussing union membership with other workers at BHS when he was sacked.

Tony told *Red Weekly* that he thought this had not been the main issue in his victimisation. Nevertheless, the lessons for the labour movement are obvious. Attacks on gays and appeals to sexist prejudice make it that much easier for managements to resist even the most elementary demands of their workers. If those same prejudices prevent the local labour movement from taking up this case, it will not only have disgraced itself but actually sabotaged its own direct interests.

Janice Mills

Photo: MIKE TOMLINSON (IFL)



REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT RALLY

Speakers include: Tariq Ali, Robin Blackburn, John Ross, representatives of the Portuguese and Irish sections of the Fourth International

Discussions on *Labour Government* • *Spain and Portugal* • *Ireland* • *Eastern Europe*

Saturday 28 February, the Assembly Hall, Institute of Education, Malet Street, London WC1. 10.30am—6.30pm. Organised by IMG Student Commission. Tickets 60p from 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.



'If you want to change policies you have to change the people who put forward policies you disagree with.'

As far as Ireland goes, I'd put my record against O'Halloran's any time. O'Halloran has now been a Labour MP for seven years, but he hasn't made a squeak in the House of Commons about Ireland. He didn't vote against internment, he supported the bi-partisan policy under the Tories, he didn't vote against the Prevention of Terrorism Act. O'Halloran is interested in defending the Irish Catholic Church in North Islington, he doesn't give a damn about the struggle in Ireland. My own position on Ireland is that I support the Republican Movement and I'm for the unconditional withdrawal of British troops. I am for the self-determination of the Irish people.

Q How important do you think it is to make the elected representatives of the labour movement accountable to it?

A It is absolutely a key point. You can't elect somebody and then just say, 'get on with the job'. I think the whole conception about the 'inviolability' of MPs is reactionary. It is an 18th century conception which has nothing to do with the needs of working people in the 20th century.

If you select somebody then obviously you have to have the right to 'unselect' somebody. If you want to change policies you have to change the people who put forward the policies you disagree with. That's why I think one of the very first steps in the struggle for a socialist alternative is really the accountability of the people you select.

Q What is your attitude to the Tribunes, who say that although they oppose the policies of Wilson and Healey they won't fight for their removal because that's bringing personalities into politics?

A It's not just the Tribunes. There's a large number of people who call themselves Marxists, like the 'Militant' group, who hold these sort of views. The struggle for socialist policies is inseparable from the struggle for a new leadership. Without that struggle to build a new leadership in the labour movement, a leadership that is going to be committed to taking power, even the finest policies - demands for nationalisation and workers control and all the other demands of a socialist programme - can't mean anything. They become just gibberish, a blind alley, unless there is a struggle at the same time to replace and change those people who refuse to carry out these policies.

It's true that you can argue about the socialist programme, and as you were saying there are a large number of groups which have a lily-white programme - with arguments about taking over the banks and insurance companies, disband the Tory Party, wind up the stock exchange - all this is fine, all marvellous stuff, the real question is how?

How on earth do they intend doing these things? Without a struggle against the existing leadership in the Labour Party you won't take the very first step along that road - and that is really the crucial question.

Q You are being victimised as an individual but what is your attitude to bans and proscriptions, and the rights of tendencies to organise inside the Labour Party?

A First of all, certain groups and tendencies do organise inside the Labour Party: the Parliamentary Labour Party spends most of its time organising against the rest of us - and that is a very tightly knit, politically motivated group of people. I've never attempted to take away their right to organise. All I'm arguing is that this should be extended to everyone else.

As far as the left-wing groups go, I'm against any sort of bans and proscriptions. The acid test in the Labour Party is sim-

ply that groups should be working class organisations. On this basis they should be allowed to affiliate to the Labour Party in the same way as the Fabians and the Co-op.

Q Given that it is the Wilson Government which is orchestrating the attack on jobs and the social services, how do you see local Labour Parties and Labour Councils playing a role in throwing back these attacks?

A The fact that the cuts are effectively made merely gives us the basis for a big struggle against the present set-up. The Labour Party's role should be to provide the political leadership of this, to co-ordinate and organise the fight, to organise local trade unionists and tenants in the fight back against unemployment.

This is really the biggest criticism you could make of O'Halloran and his gang. They haven't made the slightest peep, yet the Government has decided to cut its allocation to Islington Council for rehabilitation of the property it has acquired - this is the Section 105 money.

Islington Council asked for £24 million. The Government's cut that to £11 million. This is a massive cut which is going to result in thousands of houses lying empty and thousands of people being left on the waiting list, with hundreds of building workers' jobs being put at risk and the direct labour force not being expanded.

In this situation you need an MP who is going to get up and fight and fight like mad, argue, put pressure on the Government, organise the people of Islington and campaign. I suspect that O'Halloran doesn't even know what Section 105 is, he doesn't care, he's not interested.

Q Is Clay Cross the model to be followed?

A The problem of Clay Cross was that it was isolated and defeated. For example, Clay Cross has 200 council workers, Isling-

ton has 3,000. And Islington has 10,000 council properties; in two years' time it will have 20,000. Tens of thousands rely on the Council for jobs and services.

Now if these people were organised, if their trade unions, tenants groups etc. were organised into a big fighting campaign, the impact would be tremendous.

I believe that a major stand by the Council against all cuts, a fight against the Government by a major London borough, would have incalculable consequences. It would be the starting point of a real fight against the present policies of the Government.

Q Do you think that the local Council has called a meeting on the housing cuts simply because it is scared of these 'incalculable consequences'?

A This is fundamentally true of all the Labour leaders, more particularly in many cases of the left. They are actually frightened of taking on the vested interests.

Many councillors will agree with you that the cuts are diabolical, bad, we shouldn't make them and all the rest of it - but then they turn round to you and say there is no choice, we have to carry them out. And it's true that if you accept the rules of the game at the moment, that is what you have to do: you have to argue whether it's going to be social services, housing, or recreation which will be hammered.

But I've never accepted that these are the rules of the game - they are certainly not our rules, we didn't write them, and there is absolutely no reason why we should abide by them. I think that what we've got to do is not a question of either struggling in the Council and Parliament or struggling outside - it's a question of doing both. These people are actually elected representatives. They should use their positions to rally support, to mobilise action against the Government's policies.

KEITH VENESS is a council estate caretaker and a leading militant in North Islington Labour Party. Or at least he was, until he was expelled last month for 'bringing the party into disrepute'.

The ostensible reason for his expulsion was an interview with a local 'underground' paper, the *Islington Gutter Press*, in which he took to pieces the local Labour MP, Michael O'Halloran, and the right-wing Catholic Church grouping which controls local Labour Party politics. 'I couldn't do anything as disreputable to the Labour Party as the MP and his supporters have done in North Islington if I try from now until doomsday', Veness told *Red Weekly*.

Veness's expulsion is far from being a parochial issue. With a right-wing counter-attack opening in Newham North East Labour Party, the struggle against the right-wing leaders at both a local and national level is being thrown to the fore again. Mick Gosling asked Veness - who is appealing to the National Executive Committee for re-instatement - how he saw the fight to remove the right wing being carried forward.

'If you select somebody then obviously you have the right to 'unselect' them.'

Q How did O'Halloran come to be the MP for this area?

A To answer that, one would have to go back to 1968/69. The Labour Party at that time was really at its lowest ebb - losing council elections and by-elections all over the country. In many areas ward parties stopped meeting because they couldn't get enough people to attend. Party membership dropped dramatically.

The MP here was Gerry Reynolds, who was immediately under Dennis Healey in the Labour Government. He was only 41 years of age and widely tipped for a cabinet post - then he suddenly dropped dead.

Now O'Halloran had been a local councillor for about a year before that. He had only joined the Labour Party in 1966. He was really the outsider, and his selection came as a surprise to everyone.

One of the reasons he was chosen was the presence at the General Management Committee selection meeting of a large number of Irish Catholic delegates who had never been to any Labour Party meetings. Subsequently the *Sunday Times* Insight Team did an investigation in which they said fraud had definitely been committed.

Q Since the *Gutter Press* interview O'Halloran has accused you of being anti-Irish. What are your respective records on the question of Ireland?

A By 'anti-Irish' O'Halloran actually means anti-Catholic. And as I have said previously, I am anti-Catholic. I'm against the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, the Freemasons, the Zionists or anyone else organising on the basis of their religion, on a sectarian basis, to infiltrate and take over the Labour Party.

STOP CASTLE'S CLOSURE OF EGA!

A decision is expected soon by Barbara Castle as to whether the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in North London is to be closed. Of the three hospitals in Britain which service women only, one has already been closed, and the EGA is now threatened with extinction as part of the cutbacks in social expenditure being implemented by the Labour Government. These attacks on working class living standards, which are hitting women particularly hard, must be fought on all levels by a united campaign of the labour movement.

Camden Working Women's Charter, supported by many other local organisations, is calling a 24-hour vigil of Barbara Castle's house against the closure of the EGA. Support for this initiative is requested by joining the picket for a couple of hours (hot soup and coffee provided) between 1 p.m. Friday 13 February and 1 p.m. Saturday 14 February at 19 John Spencer Square, Islington (nearest tube Highbury and Islington) [the ad-

dress previously advertised in *Red Weekly* was incorrect].

STOP THE CLOSURE OF THE EGA!
GIVE TWO HOURS OF YOUR TIME!

WOMEN AND THE CUTS

LONDON CONFERENCE
ON
SAT 28 FEBRUARY

Sponsorship and donations are being sought from all labour movement and women's organisations. For further information contact 39 Parkholme Road, London E.8. 01-249-3072.

CONFERENCE CALLED BY THE
WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER



On 3 February nearly a hundred demonstrators marched on the Civic Centre, Newcastle in support of the Newcastle Nursery Action Group's demand for more pre-school nurseries. The marchers presented a petition of 1,000 signatures to the chairman of the city's Education Committee, who stated that the NAG's figures were 'misleading', and that no cuts in nurseries were planned. But as Linda Hinton, one of the Group's organisers, pointed out: 'They say they are not cutting services. They can hardly cut what doesn't exist'.

The march was supported by the Working Women's Charter Campaign, local students, and the Tyneside Action Committee Against the Cuts - which is organising a series of activities to highlight the cuts that are taking place in the sphere of education, transport, housing and social services on Tyneside. The cut in nursery provision on Tyneside is especially important as it is part of an overall round of cuts in the social services. Also, along with the restrictions that women face in the field of abortion and limited contraception, it is a further attempt by the authorities to throw the burden of responsibility for child care back on to the mother and the family. And this will pave the way for further cuts in the NHS.

After the demonstration, Labour councillor Jeremy Beecham (leader of the Social Services Committee) said that he 'fully sympathised with the demands'. We should insist that he turns his fine words into action, voting against any cuts in the social services this year and fighting instead for an extension of the budget.

In the present period, all our forces must be turned toward open mass work in order to carry out the tasks described above. The main direction of our work today is toward the mass organs of the working class. It is here that we must implant ourselves; in implanting ourselves here we will advance in the construction of the revolutionary workers party.

Make the workers commissions the backbone of dual power

In the present conjuncture all our mass work must respond to the necessity of stimulating and strengthening a response to the attempt of the Government and the employers to extend the success they achieved on 25 November to the social sphere.

Our work in the workers commissions and the trade unions in the present phase must be oriented primarily in this direction. To assure the maintenance and revitalisation of the workers commissions so that they fully and as rapidly as possible again assume their function as embryonic organs of dual power in the context of a new workers' upsurge, it is necessary that the workers commissions take on concrete functions in the daily struggle to defend the conquests of the workers.

To the extent that they accomplish this function, they will be able to assert their role as the backbone of the emergence of a situation of dual power. Thus, today we must carry out mass work aimed at developing the response to the austerity plan, lending the workers commissions a decisive role in this counter-attack. This is the basis of the link between our trade union work and our activity in the autonomous organs.

In this perspective, the establishment of a situation of dual power and even the strengthening, extension and independence of the autonomous organs of the workers vis-a-

Stimulate, extend, and centralize the workers commissions

Because of the grave crisis of Portuguese capitalism, the very development of struggles for their demands on the part of the workers gave rise to the emergence of commissions that most often went beyond the tasks of mere committees to lead given struggles and took on tasks of permanent workers control. The development of the workers commissions was a factor of fundamental importance for the Portuguese revolution. These commissions paved the way for overcoming the divisions introduced by the craft unions and for endowing the workers with effective instruments for their struggle.

Our intervention must aim at pushing forward the workers commissions as the organised product of mass struggles in the factories, with the following essential functions:

- to exercise workers control in the enterprises (prices, raw materials, lay-offs), to combat sabotage, to plan the economy;
- to organise self-defence, to struggle against capitalist reaction;
- to fight against the isolation of exemplary struggles and to fight for their generalisation to even broader sectors of workers;
- to lead the struggle for better working conditions, to struggle against restrictions on the democratic rights of the workers.

It is nonetheless necessary not to push the workers commissions forward in a vacuum, without the workers understanding what they are and what their purpose is, because in that event the workers commissions wind up as forms for administering and controlling the workers. This is especially true in the north and centre of the country, where the role and importance of the workers commissions have been less understood.

In the case of the workers commissions in which we have some influence, all opportunities must be

vis the bourgeois state apparatus requires that priority be placed on the struggle for the development, generalisation and expansion of the workers commissions.

The strengthening of the workers commissions means the effective strengthening of the independent organisation of the class, the development of workers control, the raising of the consciousness of the proletariat; this implies the development of conditions for proletarian hegemony in the local coordinating bodies of the workers commissions, neighbourhood commissions, etc. — in all the organs that permit the alliance of the proletariat with intermediary layers of the population and that prefigure soviets.

The strengthening of workers control through the workers commissions enables the workers to broach the economic problems with the perspective of their being resolved by the working class itself through the coordination of the workers commissions at the local branch level and through the coordination of the workers commissions with the neighbourhood commissions.

Thus we can say that the strategic objective of our intervention in the factories is the stimulation, centralisation and extension of the workers commissions and the combination of this work with intervention in the trade unions.

seized to pose the problems of sectoral and intersectoral coordination, especially in the sectors in crisis, where the demand for credits for the reconversion of raw materials, for example, enables the workers more easily to understand the necessity of coordinating the workers commissions with other commissions of the same branch or of other sectors.

It is here that the proposals for congresses of the workers commissions in industrial sectors or in complementary sectors takes on particular importance; we must take advantage of all opportunities to propel them forward.

But such a centralisation must be able to be based on all the already existing experiences and to struggle for their fusion, which is the only way to broaden the mass base of the workers commissions and to guarantee proletarian democracy within them. It is in this direction that we must orient the Provisional Secretariat of Workers Commissions of the Lisbon Industrial Belt (SPSTCIL), demanding that this body hold local and sectoral congresses to begin preparation of a National Congress of Workers Commissions.

Such proposals are intimately linked to the struggle for the formation of a tendency in the SPCTCIL, which must be the prime objective of our intervention, given the fundamental weight of the layers of workers led by the SPCTCIL. At the same time, in order to broaden the mass base of the workers commissions, it is necessary to struggle not only for the broadest democracy in the election and functioning of the commissions, for the right of the various currents of the workers movement to express themselves within the commissions, but also for the presentation by the workers commissions of clear projects to defend the interests of the workers and of overall solutions to the

PORTUGAL: THIRD CONGRESS OF THE LCI

Last month the Portuguese sympathising organisation of the Fourth International, the Internationalist Communist League (LCI), held its third (extraordinary) congress to draw up a balance sheet on recent developments and chart a way forward in the changed situation after 25 November.

After a broad democratic discussion throughout the organisation, the congress adopted a set of theses which were immediately published in pamphlet form. The major axes of the theses may be summarised as follows:

- priority to the development of a response to the Government's austerity plan;
- for the elaboration and centralisation of the workers' response: a

national congress of workers commissions all the trade unions;

- the release of the soldiers and workers
- for a workers and peasants government

congress of workers commissions and unions.

Below we print an extract from the theses of the LCI. Next week we will be publishing an extract concerning its previous political orientation.

crisis of the system.

Concurrently, the formation of a secretariat of the workers commissions of other basic industrial regions would be of major importance in preparing a National Congress of Workers Commissions.

The present tactic of the Communist Party is to demobilise the class and paralyse the bodies that it leads, doing this through its policy of government compromise, its propaganda around the imminence of the fascist danger in order to justify its alliances, and its manipulation of the coordinating bodies that already exist, using them as instruments for pressuring and collaborating with bourgeois institutions.

Against this, on the one hand we must stress the importance of

the unity in action of revolutionaries in order to increase their weight in launching mass actions for demands and in the coordinating bodies, and, concretely, in order to strengthen their initiatives towards creating genuinely representative regional secretariats.

On the other hand we must insist on the necessity for the independence and broadest democracy within the autonomous organs, consolidating the united class front within them and adopting the most appropriate forms of representativity (right of recall, control by plenary sessions, election of delegates to the workers commissions from each sector or workshop so that the commissions will apply the programme decided on by the majority).

Avoid the isolation of workers commissions; take action in the factories

It is on the basis of understanding the priority of intervention in the factories and the workers commissions that we must measure our trade union intervention at the present time. Given the lack of centralisation of the workers commissions and the fact that there are many factories in which they do not exist, and given the lack of a



LESS

and a democratic congress of
 ers imprisoned after 25 November;
 ent responsible to a national
 democratic congress of all the trade

esses dealing with the mass work
 ng a self-criticism by the LCI
 on.

n of the workers de-union work

consolidated trade union bureau-
 cracy, many trade union comm-
 issions may be able to be used:

First, as instruments of the
 workers commissions in the more
 backward factories;

Second, to enable the vanguard
 workers commissions in this tran-
 sition phase of the pre-revolutionary
 situation in Portugal to make their
 weight felt throughout the entire
 working class, deepening struggles
 for workers' demands and partici-
 pating in the debates going on in
 the unions;

Third, in the backward sectors,
 the emergence of factory trade
 union commissions through the
 development of trade union strug-
 gles can serve as a springboard for
 the emergence of workers commissions
 with a mass base.

Some comrades frequently com-
 plain that it is difficult to distin-
 guish between workers commissions
 and trade union commissions. This
 mixture of functions during the
 present period — during which the
 trade unions, even those led by the
 reformists, are most often unable
 to restrict themselves to mere
 economic demands and are com-
 pelled by the deep crisis of Portu-
 guese capitalism to put forward
 overall proposals — must be
 utilised:

1. To develop, on the national lev-
 el, the general problems of workers
 control and to introduce this same
 discussion among the more back-
 ward layers of the proletariat;

2. To avoid the isolation of the
 workers commissions;

3. To combine the struggle for
 immediate demands with the struggle
 for transitional slogans (workers
 control, sliding scale of wages and
 hours).

On this basis, not only can the
 work in the workers commissions
 serve as an important point of de-
 parture for the struggle for a trade
 union organised on a branch basis,
 but also revolutionary work in the



trade unions can contribute signifi-
 cantly to the development of the
 workers commissions, especially in
 factories with combative trade
 union commissions, to the central-
 isation of their struggle on a nation-
 al level, and to the development of
 the factory structures on which
 they can base themselves. This re-
 quires a determined struggle for
 trade union democracy, for de-
 centralisation of the discussion of
 forms of struggle at the factory and
 branch level.

On this basis the trade unions
 will be able to be in a position to
 convoke congresses of industrial
 sectors based on elected structures
 in the factories in order to discuss
 the concrete problems of each
 sector, thus playing an important
 role in the coordination of the
 workers commissions.


It is in this sense that our trade
 union work, centred primarily on
 the sectors of workers in which a
 more rapid radicalisation can be
 expected because of the economic
 crisis, is axised around objectives
 of struggle complementary to those
 we attribute to the workers com-
 missions. It is also for these reasons
 that the LCI insists on the absolute
 necessity of combining both sorts
 of work, utilising its overall weight
 at the level of factory work.

Moreover, the close combination
 of the two sorts of work leads to-
 wards placing on the agenda the
 slogans of the National Congress of
 Workers Commissions and the Dem-
 ocratic Congress of all the trade
 unions around the axes mentioned
 above in relation to the work in the
 workers commissions.

Not only are such slogans suffi-
 ciently concrete to be understood
 by broad sectors of workers, but
 they also appear as increasingly
 corresponding to the requirements

of a workers' response, to the objec-
 tive needs of the working masses,
 and to the level of consciousness
 of the workers, which does not yet
 permit the immediate formation of
 a structure of centralisation of all
 the autonomous organs.

Finally, given the differences in
 radicalisation of the working class,
 it is an objective of struggle that
 takes account of the development
 of the workers commissions and
 the trade unions, aiming at the
 unification of the class. By placing
 the emphasis on the unions and not
 on the Intersindical, it permits the
 mass base of the congress to be
 broadened by addressing the unions
 controlled by the CP and permits
 the unmasking of the divisive poli-
 cies of the reformist or sectarian
 leaderships. In sum, it is a question
 of an intermediary objective that
 better corresponds to the present
 degree of extension and centralisa-
 tion of the workers commissions.



**A REVOLUÇÃO
 PORTUGUESA NUMA
 ENCRUZILHADA**

TESES APROVADAS NO
 III CONGRESSO
 (EXTRAORDINÁRIO) DA LIGA
 COMUNISTA
 INTERNACIONALISTA
 (organização simpatizante
 da IV INTERNACIONAL)

Shape of things to come

During the past three weeks two
 important workers' struggles have
 occurred in Portugal. One, at the
 textile factory of Manuel Goncalves,
 represented a setback for the work-
 ing class; the other, at the multi-
 national firm of Timex, shows the
 likely future development of strug-
 gles in Portugal.

On 4 February the Government
 decided to hand back the factory of
 Manuel Goncalves to its owner of the
 same name. This is the first time that a
 company previously taken over by the
 state has been returned to private
 ownership.

The bourgeoisie, both in Portugal and
 internationally, hope that this move will
 be the first of many. The latter are con-
 cerned not because their interests have
 been taken over in the past, but because
 a systematic attempt to de-nationalise
 the economy can only be carried through
 in a situation of political stability where
 the working class has suffered a decisive
 defeat.

It is quite obvious that the present
 militancy of the workers movement will
 not permit the generalisation of such
 moves. Indeed, the Azevedo Government
 has been forced to insist that no workers
 can be sacked for attempting to oust
 Goncalves. He had wanted to purge 17
 of those responsible for his removal.

Goncalves was kicked out of the
 factory last August for 'financial
 malpractices'. From abroad he con-
 ducted a campaign to get back, and
 eventually managed to win the backing
 of over half the workforce.

Using the cover of the sectarian
 campaign of the Socialist Party leader-
 ship over the summer months against
 the Communist Party and the revolution-
 ary left, right-wing parties like the PPD
 (Popular Democratic Party) and the
 CDS (Social Democratic Centre) began
 to encourage the more politically back-
 ward workers to engage in violent attacks
 against the left. In the town of Villa
 Nova de Famalicao those supporting
 the purging of the Goncalves management
 were attacked. Since 25 November the
 right has intensified this policy of
 intimidation.

STATEMENT

These provocations provoked the
 Villa Nova Socialist Party to issue the
 following statement:

'Taking account of recent events which
 have occurred at the textile factory of
 Manuel Goncalves and elsewhere, the
 Socialist Party:

(1) Denounces the climate of intimi-
 dation existing in various factories —
 physical threats, some carried out, and
 black lists which precede nothing other
 than a fascist process, which brings back
 sad memories.

(2) Supports the struggles by workers
 threatened by political victimisation
 which are taking place in numerous
 factories. We will struggle against mass
 redundancies by all means at our disposal.

(3) Reaffirms, to all the workers, that
 the real solution to their problems will
 come through the destruction of cap-
 italist society and the construction of a
 classless society.'

Statements like this show the clear
 possibility of building a united front of
 the whole working class against the
 advance of economic and political
 reaction. They also indicate the tensions
 within the Socialist Party, where since
 the events of November a left current
 has emerged led by the minister of agricul-
 ture, Lopes Cardoso. He now ranks
 alongside CP leader Cunhal as the person
 the northern small farmers, egged on by
 the CDS and the fascist ELP, would
 most like to hang.

'CO-ORDINATION'

A recent national plenum of the
 trade union federation Intersindical also
 came out strongly against divisions within
 the working class. This meeting was
 attended by members of both the SP
 and CP. It also agreed the following
 motion:

'To study the possibilities of co-
 ordinating the struggles for the recon-
 version of sectors, the application of

workers control, and the fixing of the
 hours of work, with a perspective of the
 necessity to establish a national working
 day.'

It is within this framework that a
 number of recent struggles have broken
 out, the most notable being that at the
 multinational Timex factory. Timex
 announced 700 redundancies and a
 three day week for a further 500. After
 protests the bosses generously offered
 an alternative — 610 redundancies and
 half pay for the rest, or 1,200 lost jobs
 and full pay for the lucky few.

When the workers — who have a
 history of struggle since the days before
 25 April 1974 — still refused, the Timex
 management locked them out. Some-
 thing which was made illegal after 25
 April! Preparations are now being made
 to occupy the plant, with the support
 of the local trade unions.

When Timex built their factory in
 Caparica in 1971 it was as part of a gen-
 eral pattern of multinational investment.
 Their new plants in Scotland, France and
 Portugal gave them access to the EEC,
 EFTA and Brazilian markets. In Portugal
 they had a workforce of mainly women
 — unqualified, young, badly paid, and
 working a nine hour day with an unpaid
 45 minute break.

RECONVERSION

None of the Timex factories in Europe
 produce and assemble complete watches.
 For example, in Portugal they merely
 assemble the parts. Clearly that makes it
 difficult for the workers to 'do a Lip' —
 that is, use the factory to produce watch-
 es to finance their own struggle.

Instead, as has been demanded in
 other industries — for example, the
 Lisnave and Setenave ship yards — they
 are calling for the reconversion of the
 whole sector. As they say themselves:

'Portugal spends a fortune in currency
 to import precision pieces. We know that
 we can reconvert the machinery in the
 Timex factory in Portugal to produce
 such instruments.'

Demands like this are increasingly
 being raised in Portugal today, simply
 because the generalised world recession
 has hit hardest at its weakest capitalist
 link — the Portuguese economy. Large
 sectors of the economy are working
 under capacity; unemployment stands
 at 17 per cent of the labour force; and
 the multinationals are still refusing
 credit and spare parts (for example,
 fifty buses stand idle in Lisbon garages
 due to the failure of British Leyland to
 dispatch spares).

The only solution for the working
 class lies with the reconversion of
 sectors of the economy; the development
 of generalised workers control and the
 elaboration of a workers plan to solve
 the crisis. To do this will mean extending
 the tentative steps so far taken towards
 the coordination of the workers com-
 missions.

CONFERENCE

The Timex workers have called for
 the coordination of workers employed
 by the multinationals; Fiat, Havas,
 General Electric, and General Motors
 have replied favourably. Already Plessey
 and ITT workers have joined forces
 against their respective multinational
 bosses.

British workers can play their part in
 the Portuguese revolution by taking up
 the role of the multinationals and the
 Labour Government in sabotaging the
 Portuguese struggle. Almost all the British
 firms involved have been engaged in this.
 To give just one example, all stocks from
 the Portuguese Timex subsidiary have
 now been moved to the Dundee factory.

Previously the Scottish workers sent a
 message of support to their Portuguese
 counterparts when they went on strike.
 Similar acts of solidarity are now called
 for. The conference on 13 March being
 organised by the Solidarity Campaign
 with the Portuguese Working Class is a
 crucial part of this solidarity campaign
 in aiding the socialist revolution in
 Portugal. From it a real, broad-based
 campaign of solidarity can be launched.

Details of the conference from:
 SCPWC, 12 Little Newport Street,
 London W.C.2.

RIC SISSONS

The WSL and the fight for UNITY IN ACTION

At the beginning of January six members of the International Marxist Group, supporters of the tendency known as the 'Trotskyist Opposition', resigned from the IMG to join the Workers Socialist League. As Socialist Press, the paper of the WSL, printed the letter of resignation in full and without comment, we assume that they agree with it — as would appear likely from their general press — and we therefore take it to represent the views of the WSL as well. Below we take up some of the issues it raises.

One of the main indictments which the 'Trotskyist Opposition' and the WSL bring against the IMG is 'propagandism' — a refusal to fight for transitional demands inside the working class, relegating this to propaganda while in practice 'liquidating' oneself into 'left blocs'. This does not refer to specific errors, of which of course every organisation, including the IMG, is guilty, but refers to the whole question of participating in organisations such as the Medical Committee Against Private Practice (MCAPP), the Troops Out Movement (TOM), the National Abortion Campaign (NAC), etc.

Instead of these organisations, the 'Trotskyist Opposition' and the WSL recommend the establishment of 'definite organisational methods which can actually impose them [transitional demands]. (Socialist Press, 14 January). These 'definite methods' are apparently to be strictly counterposed to 'liquidationist left blocs'. Such a counterposition, however, is liable to fall into all the traps of the sectarian method of the Workers Revolutionary Party — the organisation run by Gerry Healy, from which the WSL emerged as the result of bureaucratic expulsions.

Take first the question of workers control demands, on which the WSL correctly lay considerable stress. Such demands have to be fought through developing the consciousness of the working class to an understanding that, in order to meet their practical needs, bodies to impose workers control are necessary. In practice the WSL know what this means and how a campaign for it must be started.

Part of a Process

In the Cowley car plant, an Open the Books committee has been established. This has been won as the result of a principled struggle in which IMG and WSL members have fought against the implications of the Ryder report for workers in the car industry. As a result of this fight it has been possible to establish the Open the Books committee as a sub-committee of the shop stewards committee. The Open the Books committee, through presenting an alternative to the collaborationist joint management committees, has won a considerable section of the workforce and the stewards to opposition to the management's phoney participation. However, this step — substantial as it is — is only part of the process of moving towards the imposition of workers control in the Cowley factory.

Moreover, the relationship of forces in other car plants is not as favourable as in the Cowley plant. It is therefore necessary to establish organisational forms which represent a minority position in the plants, which will initially be a grouping of vanguard

workers. This was the burning need in the recent events at Chrysler, which was partially met by the production of the report by workers in the Whitley design plant, 'Chrysler's Crisis — a Workers' Answer'. This report, whatever its weaknesses, based itself firmly on the need to reveal the company secrets in order to prepare a workers' solution to fight that of the Labour Government and Chrysler. Such developments are not to be counterposed and certainly not confused with mass factory committees and workers control but are a step towards them.

Initiatives

The revolutionary organisation has to fight for initiatives in action which can draw sections of the working class into struggle with its reformist leadership on all fronts. This necessarily, as Trotsky points out, involves forcing the reformist leaders of the working class to involve themselves in specific actions in which the revolutionaries engage in united action with them. This was precisely Trotsky's method:

'Does the united front extend only to the working masses, or does it also include the opportunist leaders? The very posing of the question is a product of a misunderstanding. If we were able simply to unite the working class around our own banner, or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the question of the united front would not exist in its present form.

'The question arises from this, that certain very important sections of the working class belong to reformist organisations or support them. Their present experience is still insufficient to enable them to break with the reformist organisations and join us. It may be precisely after involvement in these mass initiatives... that a major change will occur in that direction. This is just what we are striving for. But that is not how things stand at the moment' (First Five Years of the Communist International, Vol. 1 p. 92).

Healy is very clear about the relevance of this approach recommended by Trotsky: these conditions do not apply today. No united front is possible given the weakness of the revolutionary forces. United action between reformists and revolutionaries merely gives cover to the reformists, establishing 'left blocs' which are obstacles to clearly exposing the role of reformist leaders. Hence it is that Healy's theoretical position is never ever to participate in united action with other forces. All that is possible today is to

IMG: WHY WE HAVE RESIGNED

The world wide offensive of the working class puts to the test all those organisations which claim to be 'revolutionary'. The central tasks which face the working class in carrying through this offensive to the end, to the revolutionary seizure of power, is blocked in the main not by the strength of the capitalist class, but by the feebleness of the counter-revolutionary labour bureaucracy, both Stalinist and social democratic.

Membership is a necessary precondition, for a generalised successful defence and counter-attack" (emphasis added). So the 'realist' Mandel informs the thousands of workers who have taken action against the policies of the Labour government that their struggles will only be successful if Bern, and the other 'left' bureaucrats replace Wilson.

This falls into line with the positions that have been developed by comrade Clynes in his 'Perspectives' document that appeared at the National Committee meetings in September and November. This document spells out the nature of the "class struggle left wing" that it is claimed is going to resolve the crisis of leadership.

or articles in newspapers; definite organisational methods have to be put forward which can actually impose them.

WHICH CLASS?

Each of these demands poses the question of which class will rule. But for the IMG and Ernest Mandel such questions are only for the "transitional programme in its totality" not for the action programme! We are told "the idea of generalised workers control over the whole economy, of workers councils of challenging bourgeois state institutions" (page E VIII of USFI document) is to be kept back for propaganda only.

Thus for the IMG the 'Action Programme', far from being a series of transitional demands, is merely souped-up reformism.

At the beginning of December, the Second Conference of the Trotskyist Opposition of the IMG took place, at which there was

Every revolutionary organisation has to be able to put forward a programme which can combine the taking forward of the struggle against capitalism and at the same time resolve the crisis of leadership through the building of the revolutionary party.

In Portugal the revolution has been put in danger precisely because the Stalinists and Socialist Party refuse to break from the bourgeois Armed Forces Movement and lead independent action of the working class. In Spain the Stalinists offer "national reconciliation" to the bourgeoisie, in Italy they plead for a "historical compromise" with the bosses, and in Britain it is the Labour government ably aided by all sections of the Trade Union bureaucracy which leads the attack on the working class.

DEMobilISE

The role of these Stalinists and labour fakers is their desperate attempt to demobilise the offensive of the working class which poses a threat not only to capitalism but to these bureaucrats as well.

The task of the Trotskyist movement is to outline and take

SPELT OUT

The Red Weekly has spelt out the forces of such a 'formation', as the Communist Party and the Tribune group, as well as militant workers bodies such as the



IMG National Secretary Pennington with Tariq Ali.

National Abortion Campaign and unanimity that the Workers

Socialist Press, 14 January 1976

'build the party', until a position is reached where the strength of the party can force united action onto the reformists.

The WRP has a totally wrong estimate of the relation of forces which the new rise of the world revolution has created in Britain. It is possible today to force the reformist leaders into action. But this is only possible if the pressure of all those breaking with the reformist leaders is brought to bear in action. Such a vanguard cannot be simply equated with those inside the revolutionary organisation. It is from this fact that the need for such bodies as the TOM, NAC, and MCAPP flows.

However, the WRP's estimate of the relation of forces has a further consequence. If it is true that the relation of forces prevents the building of united fronts, then the Transitional Programme cannot play any role in mobilising the mass of the working class in struggle unless it is thought that the class can simply 'jump over' their reformist leaders.

Maximum programme

The Transitional Programme becomes purely an instrument of 'exposure' for 'building the party'. The demands of the Transitional Programme are presented in the form of an ultimatum to the working class: 'Break with your reformist leaders and join with us in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat.' The Transitional Programme in Healy's hands is reduced to a maximum programme, and the struggle with the reformist leaders is confined to the pages of Workers Press, rather than to precise actions where the reformists' claims to leadership can be tested in front of the forces that they lead.

A break with the sectarian methods of the WRP therefore involves not only a fight for demands that can mobilise the class, but also break with the Healyite conception of the impossibility of building united fronts in this period.

If the WSL considers that the tactics of organisations like the NAC and TOM in fighting for such united fronts are incorrect or that their political basis is inadequate, then its first duty should be to fight for a correct line of march — both through and outside these organisations. The first principle for which the revolutionary Marxists fight in united actions is complete freedom of agitation and propaganda. None of the organisations at which the WSL aims its fire seek to bind the political tendencies to limiting themselves to raising one particular line on any question. But because of an incorrect understanding of the role of the revolutionary organisation, Healyite deviations continue to poke their nose through WSL practice.

This expresses itself on the one hand through their tailism and sectarianism, and on the other through an accommodation to the spontaneous consciousness of the working class. The WSL, in its castigation of the united front tactics of the IMG, ignores Trotsky's advice on this score:

'The Communists, as has been said, must not oppose such actions [united actions with the reformists], but on the contrary must assume the initiative for them, precisely for the reason that the greater is the mass drawn into the movement, the higher its self-confidence rises, all the more self-confident will the mass movement be and all the more resolutely will it be capable of marching forward, however modest may be the initial slogans of struggle. And this

means that the growth of the mass aspects of the movement tends to radicalise it, and creates much more favourable conditions for the slogans, methods of struggle and in general the leading role of the Communist Party' (ibid — our emphasis).

The alternative presented by the WSL mirrors that of Healy, in counterposing the independent activity of the revolutionary organisation to united action. The most unfortunate way in which this is projected is revealed when the 'Trotskyist Opposition' says: 'Whereas the IMG liquidated itself into propaganda blocs such as the TOM and the NAC, the WSL fought openly in the unions for the transitional programme.'

On much of its work in the unions we have no wish to disparage the WSL. It is perfectly true that comrade Thornett of the WSL has on a whole range of issues in the Cowley factory a good position which we support; the same comrade made an excellent intervention at the TGWU conference; and the WSL as a whole advances a more or less correct position on workers control, with which we have little disagreement. But the reality is that in fighting for the issues and slogans of the Transitional Programme, the so-called 'liquidationist propaganda blocs' in which the IMG indulges have done far more to bring these questions to a wider audience than the WSL by its methods.

It was the MCAPP, not the WSL, which assembled over 300 labour movement delegates to adopt a programme on taking up such questions as the opening of the books and a sliding scale of public expenditure; it was the forces assembled round the TOM, not the WSL, which got 2,000 out on Bloody Sunday to demand 'Troops Out of Ireland'; it was NAC which brought 30,000 onto the streets against the James White Amendment Bill, and which played a leading role in getting the TUC and Labour Party conferences to adopt the demand for 'Free Abortion on Request'.

The reality is that the WSL, through its attitude to 'liquidationist propaganda blocs', was in the tail and not the vanguard of most of these actions. The WSL has followed the initiatives set in motion by the IMG and others. If the method of the IMG is 'liquidationism' then all that can be said is that the WSL is the rearguard of the liquidators.

Two paths

But there is more involved than this. If an organisation operates according to the view that no initiatives can be taken because of the relation of forces, this means that those issues which go against the spontaneous consciousness of the working class are either not acted on — and theories are developed to justify this — or else they are relegated to propaganda in one's press and sectarian jamborees. This is most obviously true on Ireland, abortion and anti-racism, where this has been precisely the practice of Healy. The WSL still hangs suspended between the method of Trotsky and that learnt from the WRP — and it will find itself ground between the two.

Before the WSL lie only two paths. The first leads back to the WRP. The second leads to Trotskyism and to principled fusion with the Fourth International. It is a choice the WSL may seek to avoid in a 'third alternative' at present, but the iron logic of politics is stronger than all subjective intentions.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Next Week: The way forward in Britain



MCAPP Conference—WSL welcomed it, but failed to draw any general conclusions



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Bloody Sunday Demo - important step forward

The 1 February demonstration organised by the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Committee represented an important step forward for the building of a mass movement for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. It was the first national demonstration in support of the Irish struggle since May 1974, and attracted roughly 2,000 people. Despite the freezing weather conditions the demonstrators were enthusiastic and united in demanding 'Troops Out Now'.

Despite the success of the Labour Movement Conference organised by the Troops Out Movement in May 1975, nine months passed before any substantial public display of opposition to imperialist aggression in Ireland. In those nine months Westminster has stepped up its attack against the oppressed Catholic community through increased political support to the Loyalist fanatics, widespread intimidation and imprisonment of Catholics, and more recently the state of siege against the Republican population of South Armagh.

In line with this the Labour leadership has resorted to further attacks on free speech in Britain in order to silence anyone prepared to speak out against the repressive policies. Over 1,200 people have been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), which is now being made permanent legislation. Dozens of people have been imprisoned for life as part of the general anti-Irish witch-hunt, and supporters of the BWNIC campaign have been hounded and harassed under the infamous conspiracy laws.

Part of this legalised state harassment was a direct attack on the Bloody Sunday Commemoration campaign itself. For instance, the December rally organised in London

by BRIAN LYONS

by the BSCC (with Bernadette McAliskey as the featured speaker) was branded by the press as 'provocative' in direct association with the Balcombe Street siege. Some Tory MPs, encouraged by the PTA, even went so far as to question the legality of the BSCC.

In the same mould, the post-demonstration rally planned by the Troops Out Movement was consistently blocked by hall and cinema proprietors refusing to provide their facilities, so that eventually it had to be held in freezing weather in an obscure field in West London. This denial of facilities for the right to assembly and free speech on Ireland is part of the concerted attack which first began with the ban on Trafalgar Square.

HYSTERIA

It is in this context that we should judge the attack on the demonstration by the thugs of the National Front. Although the police prevented the NF from engaging in a direct attack, the inspiration for these fascist-minded forces comes from the anti-Irish hysteria created by the Labour Government under the PTA, which provides them with a measure of

legal and political support. Thus the *Daily Telegraph* report the following day described the vicious attackers simply as 'anti-IRA demonstrators', something which is perfectly acceptable under the provisions of the PTA outlawing Republican organisations.

In this situation the Bloody Sunday demonstration represented an important step forward. The campaign itself succeeded in revitalising the movement for 'Troops Out' and attracted fresh forces for ongoing activity in the future.

REAL GAINS

As the main leaders of the campaign, the International Marxist Group never viewed the demonstration as an end in itself but as part of the process of building a more powerful movement. In this sense the demonstration registered some real gains. It became a rallying point for activity by the local branches of the TOM and many others concerned with the Irish struggle. Thousands of people were reached with the ideas of the campaign, and although not all attended the demonstration they may do so in the future when the situation changes and the need for action becomes clearer.

There is a long way to go before we can build a movement which is powerful enough to get the troops out, and there are many problems to be overcome. But the Bloody Sunday demonstration was a step in the right direction.

7 DAYS in the 6 COUNTIES

JOHN MAGEE reports from Belfast

Convention farce resumes

The politicians trooped back into the debating chamber at Stormont last Tuesday afternoon at the opening of the Constitutional Convention (Phase II). The Convention has been recalled for a period of four weeks, apparently in the hope that its 78 members will somehow magically reach agreement on the future character of government in the north of Ireland.

Such a development is out of the question. Inside the Convention itself it will simply be a question of going through the motions — and, as the *Irish Times* (31 January) poignantly commented on the eve of the recall, 'not many motions at that'.

Although inter-party talks have started with the resumption of the Convention, their limits have been rigidly defined by the Loyalists. United Ulster Unionist Council leader Ernest Baird explained their position: 'The renewal of inter-party talks demonstrates that we are prepared to explore all avenues which might lead to the restoration of democratic majority rule in the province, but we will not be led up the garden path towards a return to the Republican-Unionist power-sharing Executive.'

In other words, the Loyalist coalition is prepared to discuss the mechanics of the SDLP's surrender on the power-sharing issue — and nothing else.

Of course, one of the main questions at this time is whether the SDLP is in a position to concede on this point. Certainly there are those within the party who favour such a course, and have consequently been very eager to dissociate themselves from its stance on the 'law and order' debate. They argue that the SDLP must first give full support to the 'security forces' before it can realistically expect any share of portfolios in a new administration.

Wire Cages

A measure of the ground held by this current is the party's current press campaign in Loyalist papers assuring the Loyalists that the SDLP gives 'full support to the police in the impartial enforcement of law and order'. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are still huge obstacles in the way of the SDLP abandoning its existing policy: that full support cannot be given to the Royal Ulster Constabulary outside a power-sharing administration.

The absence of mass activity against repression during the period of the ceasefire did allow the SDLP some room for manoeuvre in order to increase its

accommodation to Loyalism. But the intransigence of the UUUC, the heightening toll of the Loyalist assassination squads, and the consistent if low-level repression carried out by the British Army have basically eaten up all the room that remained.

Confused and disoriented as the anti-Unionist working class is at present, it is still far from buying any British 'solution' to the conflict here. There are still some 1,300 political prisoners from the nationalist districts of the Six Counties behind bars and inside wire cages.

The RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment, far from being reformed (an impossible task), remain firmly under Loyalist control. In a period of three years, during which 300 Catholics were murdered, only 13 Loyalists were arrested and brought before the courts on murder charges — and even fewer were convicted.

Armaments

It is the British Labour Government which has guaranteed this situation through the presence of 15,000 British soldiers. It is the British Labour Government which has guaranteed this situation by investing £30 million in re-equipping the RUC with heavy type armaments prior to 1969, so that it was better equipped than even the Army itself. There can be no British 'solution'.

The nationalist working class in the north of Ireland is not defeated. It is a working class searching for leadership. There is no solution to be found in Conventions, inter-party talks or any other bourgeois talking shop. As Red Weekly has pointed out many times, the future of the working class in the North of Ireland — and with it, that of British imperialism — will be decided outside, not inside the Convention.

The 3,000-strong march in Derry on the fourth anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the protests in solidarity with Frank Stagg and other political prisoners — limited as they have been — are evidence that the anti-Unionist working class is ready to respond to a clear, united and strong lead from anti-imperialist organisations.

The failure to recognise the value of unity on issues of agreement between anti-imperialist groups, and of building a united, broad-based anti-repression movement, is a weakness which has long dogged the Irish struggle. Uniting in street demonstrations and protests against the British Army presence, and in opposition to any concessions to Loyalism, would be the first steps in overcoming this fundamental weakness.

NICRA-decline and fall

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association has further refined its political line. Not only are its leaflets now headed by a new slogan — 'Civil Rights not Civil War' — but it has also changed its demand on the British troops. This no longer just reads 'withdrawal to barracks' but adds 'with their use only to be sanctioned to prevent sectarian murders and bombings'.

Comment is almost superfluous. The demand is couched in the language, almost the same words, of Jenkins and Rees. It ignores the well-known collusion between the British Army and the Orange gangs. It ignores the self-evident truth that appeals for British Army action against sectarianism will only result in renewed attacks on the Republican minority in the Six Counties. To pretend otherwise is to ignore the entire history of the last six years.

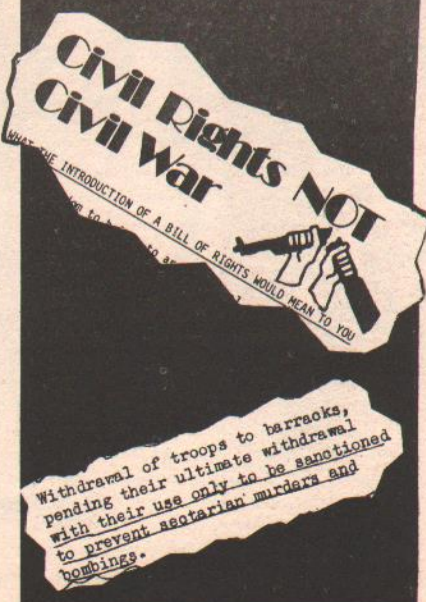
There will be no end to the troubles in the Six Counties while the Northern statelet continues to exist. No amount of Bills of Rights will change that. It is unlikely to say the least that the Loyal-

ist businessmen and politicians will not resist the dismantling of their power. And while they still retain it, the British Army will back them up to the hilt.

The entire history of the Orange statelet indicates that even the most minimal civil rights are unlikely to be obtained peacefully. It is perhaps unfortunate, but it is certainly true, that civil rights are unlikely without a civil war. It is British imperialism and the Orange ascendancy which is responsible for this state of affairs. Yet NICRA seems to want to put the boot on the other foot and actually solicit the aid of this same British imperialism to smash the armed resistance of the Catholic community in a forlorn attempt to get a democratic tidying up of the mess.

NICRA has followed its participation on Northern Ireland local councils with this, the final sell-out. The road of compromise is a road to failure. NICRA has finally shown that it is of no use at all to the minority in the Six Counties.

MARTIN O'LEARY



SPAIN WHAT KIND OF SOLIDARITY?

What would the delegates to this Saturday's 'Conference in Solidarity with the Spanish Working Class' think if they arrived to find representatives of the Tory and Liberal parties sitting on the platform? They might already find themselves a little uneasy at the fact that one of the keynote speakers is Micael Foot, top minister in a Labour Government that has given important diplomatic support to the Spanish dictatorship (for example, sending its official representative to join General Pinochet of Chile at the funeral of Franco). But to have open spokesmen of the capitalists at a workers movement conference on international solidarity — surely this would be going too far?

And yet that is exactly what the delegates to the 14 February Conference will find awaiting them. Sitting alongside Jack Jones, Michael Foot and Spanish workers' leader Marcello Camacho will be a star-studded crew of Tories and Liberals — not British Tories and Liberals, but those who share their political views in Spain.

This is what the decision to invite representatives from the two opposition groups, the Junta Democrática (Democratic Council) and the Plataforma de Convergencia Democrática (Platform of Democratic Agreement) amounts to. For while each of these bodies is led by one of the main workers parties (the Democratic Council by the Communist Party, and the Democratic Platform by the Socialist Party), both include representatives of capitalist political groupings.

More importantly, both these bodies are openly dedicated to drawing in representatives of the capitalists and uniting the working class with the capitalist class in order to establish 'democracy' in Spain.

HOW?

Of course, we are 100 per cent in favour of the present struggle for democratic rights in Spain. We recognise that it is important for the Spanish workers to win things like the right to have free trade unions and their own political parties, free elections, the right to free speech, free assembly and the right of self-determination for the oppressed nationalities; and we understand that the Spanish workers must conquer gains like these if they are to carry forward the struggle in defence of their class interests.

But the question is — how can they conquer these gains? And what sort of 'democracy' should the international workers movement be support-

ing in Spain?

The class collaborationist views put forward by the Communist and Socialist Parties of Spain, and embodied in the Democratic Council and the Democratic Platform, assume that the working class and important sections of the capitalist class share a common standpoint, and that the road to 'democracy' lies in uniting these different forces in order to ensure a 'peaceful transition' from dictatorship to democracy.

SUPPORT

This viewpoint 'overlooks' the fact that the present dictatorship has, for the past thirty years, rested on the support of the Spanish capitalists. At various times there have been disagreements between the politicians running the regime and the representatives of big capital.

But all this has produced is bitter factional struggles within the dictatorship, not a rejection of the dictatorship by the capitalists.

For example, in the late 1950s the most important groups of Spanish capitalists, aided by international capital, put up a fight to get the regime to open up the country to foreign investment and expand Spain's relations with foreign capitalism. They won this fight; and spokesmen of big capital, organised in the Catholic society 'Opus Dei', replaced members of the fascist-type state party, the Falange, in key government posts. This drew the capitalists closer to the regime than ever before, and opened up a phase of economic development in Spain. But it did not produce any move from dictatorship to democracy.

True, a brief phase of phoney 'liberalisation' opened up. But the regime, despite its new outlook, rapidly scrapped it and turned back to its traditional repressive methods as soon as the Spanish workers began to take advantage of the paltry rights that had been granted to them.

PUPPETS

Today the Spanish regime is trying to carry out the same operation — to alter some aspects of the dictatorship to meet the interests of the main capitalist groups, but without opening the door to massive working class struggles, or losing those instruments of the dictatorship which are so valuable in keeping the workers down. Thus the real spokesmen of the Spanish capitalists are not the pathetic puppets who provide window-dressing for the Democratic Council and the Democratic Platform, but the same men who did the job in the 1960s — politicians like Manuel Fraga Iribarne and Jesus Maria de Areilza, key ministers in the present Spanish Government.

A brief look at the set-up of Spanish capitalism makes the reasons for this quite clear. The growth of Spanish capitalism since the war has depended on massive state support and massive foreign investment. This is obvious if we look at

the top 25 Spanish companies: of these, 14 involve important foreign capitalist interests and nine are supported by the state industrial corporation INI. Only two top Spanish companies are independent of both the Francoist state and foreign capital — and they are involved in economic activities (petroleum and shipbuilding) where international connections are very important.

It is certainly the case that some of these big capitalist interests — basically financial and industrial groups tied up with foreign capital and the exporting of Spanish goods abroad — are dissatisfied with the regime's recent record, which has fuelled rather than suppressed labour discontent at home, and blocked Spain's efforts to get an economic deal with the Common Market abroad. They thus support the current moves to 'liberalise' the regime in order to obtain a better image overseas and undercut political opposition in Europe to Spanish membership of the EEC.

However, this group of capitalists is just as wedded to the dictatorship as the group directly dependent on state assistance. For membership of the Common Market will do them no good unless Spanish industry can out-compete its rivals



in other European countries. Given the lower level of development of Spanish capitalism there is only one way this can be done — by preserving the low wages and bad conditions of the Spanish workers compared with their brothers and sisters in 'democratic' Europe. And that in turn requires the continuing back-up of the repressive machinery of the Francoist dictatorship.

MISLEAD

Thus it is that neither the Democratic Council nor the Platform, despite their desperate wooing, have been able to win the support of any important section of the capitalists. All that they do is mislead the Spanish workers into thinking that the road to democracy lies in waiting for the capitalists to do the job for them, and limiting their methods of struggle to those acceptable to these 'shy' capitalists.

This was made clear by the leader of the Spanish Communists, Santiago Carillo, in a recent speech to workers' leaders. He warned them firmly, 'never occupy factories or companies'. This, he said, would threaten to 'split this democratic front which is developing'. Thus Carillo advises the Spanish working class to fight the dictatorship with one hand tied behind its back, in order that its ranks, tens of millions strong, should not be 'isolated' from the tiny handful of Spanish capitalists!

In actual fact the Spanish working class is not likely to follow the Democratic Council and Democratic Platform up the dead-end of class collaborationist methods of struggle against the dictatorship. The experience of the most militant sections of the working class, like those in Euzkadi (the Basque country), has already taught them that only the struggles and organisations of the working class can be



Demonstrators mill through the streets last Sunday in Barcelona's biggest demonstration since the Civil War

imprecor
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WITCHHUNT IN WEST GERMANY



Latest issue contains articles on the witch-hunt in West Germany; repercussions of the Angolan civil war; Liga Comunista declaration on Spain; report and documents from LCI congress in Portugal; USFI declaration plus article on Timor; behind the South Moluccans' revolt; death sentences in Sri Lanka; workers mobilisation in Mexico; Indian prisoners campaign in Britain. All essential reading and unbeatable value at only 30p (plus 8p p&p) from Red Books, 97 Caledonian Rd, London N1. Or why not take out a subscription—£7 to Red Books will bring you every issue for a year.



ation still holds great dangers for the struggle in Spain. For, faced with the intransigent resistance of the die-hard right-wingers firmly ensconced in the dictatorship on the one side, and the upsurge of the working class on the other, the leading capitalists may decide that it is necessary to make the desperate gamble of scrapping the dictatorship and introducing extensive democratic reforms before the masses do the job themselves.

WHAT SORT

Under those circumstances, the question will be posed — what sort of democracy will be granted in Spain? A limited democracy that will leave intact, or even strengthen, the main props of capitalist rule; or a thoroughgoing conquest of democratic rights that will strengthen the power of the workers movement to control its destiny?

The capitalists clearly want the first. And the programmes of the Democratic Council and Democratic Platform, based as they are on unity with these capitalists, offer to limit the working class struggle for democracy to those changes which are acceptable to the capitalists.

For example, they would give the capitalists time to organise their political parties and manipulate the electorate; they would leave the police and army of the dictatorship substantially intact; and they would leave reactionaries in key political posts. Such a 'democracy' would not meet the needs of the Spanish workers, and it would leave the capitalists with enough power both to defend their class interests and to plot a new defeat of the working class which would open the door to a counter-revolutionary return to dictatorship (as the capitalists in Portugal are busy trying to do today).

NEXT WEEK

Next week we will look at these points in greater detail, examining the programmes of the Democratic Council and the Democratic Platform, and taking up the question — 'what sort of democracy for Spain?'

relied on in the fight for democratic rights. The experience of workers in the rest of Spain will rapidly teach them the same lesson.

CLASS WEAPONS

Thus the Spanish working class is already adopting its own class weapons of struggle — mass strikes, mass assemblies and democratic strike committees, self-defence of workers' demonstrations — and not holding back as Carillo would have them do. In contrast to the class collaborationists, the revolutionary militants of the Fourth International in Spain are basing themselves on these class weapons of struggle and fighting to unite the workers' struggles into a general strike which could bring down the dictatorship and conquer the democratic rights which the Spanish workers so desperately want need.

But the policy of class collabor-

with friends like these....

Among the leaders of the Democratic Council and the Democratic Platform who could be sitting on the platform of the 14 February conference are Rafael Calvo Serer from the Council and Ruiz Jimenez from the Platform. The Labour and TUC bureaucrats would then find themselves in strange company indeed.

Jack Jones, who served in the International Brigade during the Civil War, might find something familiar about Calvo Serer. For the latter spent much of the war in Albacete, the main training centre of the International Brigade: he was there as a 'fifth columnist' spying for Franco!

Before the war he had been president of one of the main fascist student organisations, and during the Second World War he edited *El Escorial*, a fascist newspaper notable for its pro-Nazi views.

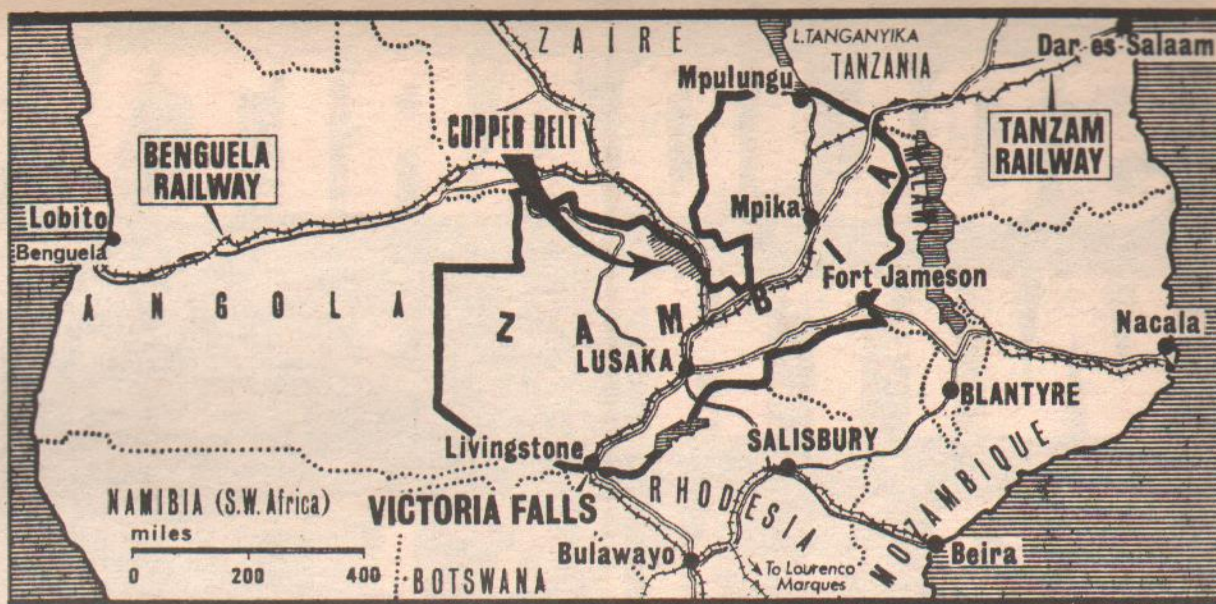
Today Calvo Serer is a 'liberal monarchist'. The Communist Party think him a worthy ally of the working class, but there is no reason to believe that this veteran enemy of the Spanish workers has changed sides in the class war.

Another of the 'stars' who may pop up on 14 February is Joaquin Ruiz Jimenez, leader of the 'left' Christian Democratic Platform.

A former President of Perkins Hispania, subsidiary of the Massey Ferguson multinational, he is a capitalist with wide-spread financial interests. During the 1930s he was a leader of the Catholic far-right and was one of the first Catholic students to join the fascist Falange after the Popular Front won the elections in 1936. During the Civil War he served as an officer in Franco's forces under the pro-Nazi General Munoz Grandes.

After the fall of Madrid, Ruiz Jimenez became a senior official in some of the 'legal' bodies concerned with carrying out Franco's repression of the working class. He was also involved in the column of veteran fascists that escorted the remains of Falange founder Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera to Madrid, reportedly carrying out executions of political prisoners en route 'in honour of Jose Antonio'.

Whatever his political affiliations are today, we can be sure that they are motivated by the desire to protect his financial interests, and Spanish capital as a whole, from the working class.



This map shows Zambia's vulnerable position in the face of the changing relationship of forces in southern Africa which is emerging out of the Angolan war. With the MPLA on the verge of recapturing completely Kaunda's copper export lifeline—the Benguela Railway—his prospects have taken a further turn for the worse.

The Repression in Zambia

Special report for Red Weekly by T. NKOLE

On Saturday 31 January, Lionel Cliffe, Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Zambia, was taken by police from his house on the campus and placed in detention. The 28 day order allows the detainee to be held without charge or trial while 'investigations' are carried out and it is decided whether a further long term order will be made.

Cliffe's wife Doris was quoted by the *Sunday Times* of Zambia on 1 February as stating that the house had been searched for 'any literature on Angola'. That such arrests were likely to take place had been obvious from events over the past week. The previous Sunday, 25 January, President Kaunda had addressed a demonstration of Lusaka secondary school students who marched to his residence at State House 'to demonstrate their support for Zambia's stand on Angola'.

There Kaunda declared that there was a big campaign afoot 'to change the course of our revolution. The people involved want to upset the revolution. I know the big powers behind this campaign. We are going to reveal them very soon.' He said that 'counter-revolutionaries have infiltrated a number of institutions and companies to cause confusion'.

On the same day a member of the Central Committee of the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP), Frank Chitambala, told a similar demonstration in Ndola that some 'misguided Marxist lecturers' at the University of Zambia were inciting students there to oppose the Government's stand on Angola.

Demonstration

Later in the same speech he made the first ever reference to appear in the Zambian media to a demonstration which took place on 15 January on the University campus. The latter was occupied for the entire day by students demanding that Zambia change its position on the Angolan war and render full support to the MPLA. The entire campus was ringed by police, and traffic was diverted in order that travellers would be unaware of the posters which decorated the gates declaring solidarity with the MPLA.

Then on 28 January, Kaunda went on radio and TV to declare a 'full state of emergency' with immediate effect. Since the country has been under a 'partial' state of emergency since Rhodesian UDI in 1965, it was difficult immediately to assess the actual legal implications of the move. But the total eradication of Part III of the Constitution effectively suspends civil liberties, allowing the authorities to enter any premises, search any persons, ban the circulation of any literature, etc.

Once again the University was indirectly referred to in the statement: 'We have saboteurs and subversive elements sowing seeds of discord. These

are foreigners or Zambians either working separately or in collaboration to infiltrate institutions some of our institutions of learning have been infiltrated. Some student groups are like an orchestra with an invisible conductor on the pay roll of a social imperialist power' (incidentally the first recorded use by Kaunda of the Chinese characterisation of the Soviet Union, which has recently become a stock element in the vocabulary of FNLA leader Holden Roberto and Zairean President Mobutu).

Anti-detente

Despite the fact that Kaunda's speech also contained references to various economic crimes, involving hoarding of scarce commodities to the detriment of the consumer, it was apparent that the venom of the state was about to be directed against that tiny section of the population which has openly expressed opposition to the whole trend of Zambia's detente policies in southern Africa for the past two years. These have involved a more and more open collaboration with the apartheid regime in South Africa both economically and politically, and have been expressed most clearly in Zambia's attitude towards the struggles in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and in Angola.

In the former Kaunda has supported

the efforts of the leader of the tiny petty-bourgeois section of Rhodesia's African population, Nkomo, to reach a constitutional settlement with Smith which cannot conceivably embrace the central nationalist demand for 'one man, one vote'. In Angola there has been a systematic policy of first ignoring and now playing down the involvement of South Africa and US-backed Zaire in that war. Instead ever increasing attacks are made on the support given to the MPLA by the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Nor is Lionel Cliffe the first victim of the consequent purge of foreigners resident in Zambia. Even foreign journalists of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Financial Times* were held in Lusaka under the same emergency regulations.

Lionel Cliffe has a record going back over the past fifteen years of principled support for the liberation of Africa from colonial rule, and was in particular a leading activist in the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea in Britain. The urgency of a massive international campaign for freedom for all political prisoners in Zambia is underlined by the sinister implications contained in the following words from Kaunda's 28 January speech: 'If you engage in diabolical activities against the state, spoiling and corrupting Zambians then I pledge to deal with you very firmly and absolutely without mercy. Deportation will only be part of the firm action.'

-WHAT'S ON-

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER Campaign national conference, 10/11 April in Coventry. Open to all bodies supporting the campaign. Discussion of perspectives, amendments to Charter, structures. Credentials from 49 Lowther Hill, London SE23 1PZ.

YS DAY SCHOOL on Portugal: 11am-6pm, Saturday 14 Feb, at North London Poly Students Union film theatre, Holloway Rd, London N7. Films and speakers from PWCC, ASC, Socialist Charter, Workers Action, and LPYS London Region Cttee. Admission 20p, all welcome.

BROADSIDE Mobile Workers Theatre need versatile actor, and administrator with trade union experience. Committed socialists with long-term perspective. Write 58 Holbein House, Holbein Place, London SW1W 8NJ or phone 01-730 5396.

PEOPLES NEWS SERVICE has recently celebrated its 100th issue with a bumper edition—we are now again producing a fortnightly bulletin covering peoples struggles in Britain, Ireland and the world. We include material on strikes, factory occupations, community campaigns, women's movement, sexual politics and liberation movements. PNS is affiliated to no particular political organisation, has no paid staff, and keeps costs to a minimum. Send 22p for sample copy or £1.50 for 10-issue sub. If you are involved in a struggle, send a report for publication, to: PNS, 197 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1 (01-837 0182).

LONDON SOCIALIST FORUM: 'Namibia—the struggle for freedom'. Speaker: Peter Katjavivi (SWAPO). Tues 17 Feb, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq.

'STOP CUTS—Save Jobs': demo organised by West Midlands TUC, Sat 21 Feb. Assemble 10am Digbeth Civic Hall, march to Birmingham Town Hall for meeting at 12. Speakers: Alan Fisher (INUPE), Ken Gill (TASS), Eric Heffer MP.

BIRMINGHAM IMG public meeting on the 'Lebanese War'. Thurs 19 Feb, 7.30pm, Birmingham Univ.

ENGINEERING VOICE dance, Fri 13 Feb, 8pm, the Golden Eagle, Hill St, Birmingham.

ENGINEERING VOICE meeting, Weds 25 Feb, at the Australian Bar, Birmingham, 7.30pm.

GAY WORKERS CONFERENCE: 14/15 Feb at Leeds Poly. Details from Gay Information Centre, 153A Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2.

AGAINST HEALTH CUTS—For a Socialist Health Service. Socialist Medical Association conference, Sat 14 Feb, 2-5pm, AEU Hall, Holloway Circus, Birmingham 1.

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BENGALI FRIENDS in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and 'Srani-Dal-Biplab' (Fourth International paper) contact: Bengali, c/o Internationalen, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO Work badges—17p including postage from: Jo-Ann, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1. Bulk rates on enquiry (01-278 9526).

GLASGOW Socialist Forums—every Thursday in the Iona Community Centre, 7.30pm.

UAPS CATALOGUE of alternative papers, 1st section (Argentina, Australia, Austria). Send 17p in stamps to UAPS, 22 Dane Road, Margate, Kent CT9 2AA.

CRITIQUE SEMINAR: Alix Holt on 'The Bolsheviks and the Women's Question, 1903-23'. Tues 17 Feb, 7.30pm, London School of Economics, St Clements Building, Room S-418.

OXFORD IMG Red Circle: 'Peaceful Coexistence or Socialist Revolution'. Mon 16 Feb, 8pm, Cape of Good Hope pub, The Plain. With national speaker.

RED BOOKS comprehensive list of titles now available—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mandel, Lukacs, Novack, Cannon, Deutscher, etc. Send s.a.e. for copy to: Red Books, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

RED WEEKLY PARTY organised by Birmingham IMG, Sat 21 Feb, 8pm onwards. Free beer and food and 'Belt + Braces' band. Norton Hall, Ralph Road, Salfrey—tickets £1. Build the Red Weekly Fund Drive!

WORKERS ACTION readers' meeting: 'Spain after Franco—what course for the working class'. Speaker: Stuart King. Sun 15 Feb, 7.45pm at the 'Florence' pub, Florence St, off Upper Street, London N1.

CAMPAIGN To Repeal The Immigration Act—meeting to organise 11 April demo, Fri 13 Feb, 7.30, at the Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Rd.

as conference organisers invite capitalist spokesmen

SOLIDARITY WITH SPANISH WORKERS

The organisers of this Saturday's Spanish Conference decided to entitle this gathering a 'Conference in Solidarity with the Spanish Working Class'. But they have not taken their own words seriously. Their decision to invite representatives of the Democratic Council and Democratic Platform to attend the conference means that they are extending an invitation to self-designated spokesmen of the Spanish capitalists.

There are, of course, big differences inside the workers movement about collaboration between working class and capitalist political organisations. The most important working class parties in Spain — the Communist and Socialist Parties — argue that this is the best way to win democracy. Revolutionary socialists, and many working class militants, reject this view.

This is a crucial question, for the future of the working class depends upon the rejection of all forms of class collaboration. It would therefore be totally wrong for the opponents of class collaborationist policies to 'bury their differences' here.

UNITY

But it is possible for those who disagree even on this crucial question to unite for the carrying out of tasks they do agree on. It should not be a condition of unity for solidarity with the Spanish struggle that one or another view about the best course of the struggle is accepted; support to those fighting in Spain should not be dependent upon their accepting one particular view.

Everyone in the British workers movement should be able to unite to support all struggles and independent organisations of the Spanish working class: both those who support the



'Left' Christian Democrat, Joaquin Ruiz Jimenez, a leader of the Democratic Platform—will he be at conference?

current policies of the Socialist and Communist Parties, and those who oppose them.

It is this principle which the delegates to the conference must base themselves on, not the sectarian and splitting course taken by the organisers. This means fighting for the conference to adopt practical measures for building

mass solidarity with the Spanish workers:

- Solidarity with all struggles against the Spanish dictatorship.
- Political and material support for all independent organisations of the Spanish workers fighting for free trade unions.
- Boycott the dictatorship: force the Labour Government to break all links, and fight for and organise blacking of all trade and communications.
- Organise solidarity actions against the multi-nationals that exploit workers in both Britain and Spain.
- Popularise the cause of Spanish political prisoners throughout the labour movement.
- Organise a mass national solidarity demonstration.

Delegates to the conference should work for a clear statement embodying these policies, calling on the TUC, the Labour Party, and trade union executives to follow them, and proposing local labour movement conferences that can take reports-back and begin to mobilise the ranks of the British working class to carry out these tasks.

What kind of solidarity?—pages 10&11

Solidarity with the workers of Spain! Keep Areilza out of Britain! Boycott the dictatorship!

Spain's foreign minister is touring Europe to whip up support for the dictatorship. Will he come to Britain? Make sure he doesn't.

Picket Downing Street, Sat 14 Feb, noon to 2pm

Supported by IMG, IS, ICL, AGARIS, SSC

A Welcome Start

A welcome start to this month's Fighting Fund with a total of £75.25 in at the end of the first week. What's more, most of this came from IMG branches. Let's hope this reflects a belated New Year's resolution to make up for past lapses, by campaigning all-out for the necessary resources to make *Red Weekly* a real weapon for revolutionary politics in the workers movement.

Our thanks to: Leeds IMG £33; West London IMG £18; Bristol IMG £6.50; Cambridge IMG £6; Cardiff IMG £5; C. Pocock £3; Edinburgh IMG £2; York IMG £1.25; Brighton IMG 50p. But remember: £500 is the monthly target for our Fighting Fund. So there's still a long way to go. Send your contributions now to: Red Weekly, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.



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RED WEEKLY

DEFEND THE IRANIAN 21

Twenty-one Iranian students are due to go on trial in London on Monday, 16 February. Their 'crime' is to have brought about the displeasure of His Imperial Majesty Shahanshah Aryamehr (King of Kings, Light of the Aryans).

The 21 were arrested last April after peacefully occupying the Iranian Embassy in London as part of an international campaign of protest launched by the Confederation of Iranian Students following the death of nine prominent Iranian political prisoners believed to have been tortured to death. They were charged with 'conspiracy to trespass', a serious charge which could result in their being imprisoned in this country or deported to Iran where they would face long term imprisonment and torture.

The murders which sparked off the protest were not an isolated example of extreme repression in Iran. This type of repression has been going on ever since the Shah was brought back to power by the CIA in 1953.

The only trade union organisations which are allowed are those run by the state, and as in fascist states their task is not to defend the workers' interests but to keep a close watch on them. Nevertheless there has been a growing number of strikes recently, most of which have been brutally repressed. A large number of workers have been killed by the army and police during these strikes.

Torture

The secret police SAVAK is notorious for its use of torture. Not only does it use the most barbaric methods of physical torture against political prisoners, but it also resorts to torture or rape of prisoners' wives or children in front of them to get 'confessions' or information.

According to Amnesty International, Iran has the highest rate of political executions in the world. Summary trials and execution conducted in secret by military tribunals are a common occurrence. In the last month alone twenty-one oppositionists have been killed in Iran.

Apologists for the Iranian dictatorship claim that although the regime may be authoritarian, it is using the oil revenues to develop the country to the benefit of the majority of the population. The false nature of this argument is clearly shown by the fact that opposition to the regime and general mass discontent have not been declining but increasing. Strikes have increased in number in spite of repression, student unrest has reached such a scale that most of the universities are almost constantly closed, and the armed movements — although still small — have withstood all attempts by the regime to crush them.

The Labour Government fully supports this corrupt and repressive regime. Even Mario Soares, the right-wing leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party, couldn't accept the recent executions in silence and signed a protest together with other leading European social democrats. Yet the Labour Government has remained completely silent about them.

Nowhere does the Labour Government's commitment to the maintenance of the imperialist system become so obvious as in its relationship with regimes such as the one in Iran. Under heavy pressure the Labour Government may make gestures of protest about repression in Chile and Spain, but whenever possible it does the reverse.

Key role

The Iranian regime is very important to the imperialist system. Militarily it has been heavily armed to fill the gap left in the Arab-Persian Gulf after the withdrawal of British troops, and to act as the protector of huge imperialist interests in the Gulf region. It has clearly shown this reactionary role by its involvement alongside Britain in the war against the liberation movement in Oman.

Huge oil revenues and a cheap labour force guaranteed at gun-point by the regime make Iran a paradise for quick super-profits and contracts for British capitalists. So the Labour Government is only too anxious to have good relations with the Shah and help maintain his regime. Britain is Iran's second largest supplier of arms, and the Labour Government is so anxious to extend its links with the dictatorship that a succession of Labour ministers have been visiting Iran over the last year. One of the latest of these honoured guests of the Shah was Tony Benn.

But the Labour's collaboration with the Shah does not stop at selling arms and trade links. The Labour Government is even willing to help the Shah repress his opponents in this country. The SAVAK is allowed to operate in this country, and intimidate and spy on Iranian students and residents. By allowing the arrest of the 21 the Labour Government has gone one step further and is effectively doing the Shah's dirty work.

Implications

The trial of the 21 also has important implications for democratic rights in this country in that it involves another use of the conspiracy laws, which were used to jail the Shrewsbury pickets and against the BWNIC 14. The victory of the BWNIC defence campaign was an important blow against the conspiracy laws. But the threat of their further use is still there and must be fought now.

Attempts are also being made by the ruling class at the moment to strengthen the law against trespass. An alternative to the introduction of criminal trespass laws would be the extension of the use of the charge of 'conspiracy to trespass'. This would be a serious weapon of the state against squatters, factory occupations in defence of jobs, and student occupations.

To overseas students and foreign nationals in this country the trial of the 21 represents an attack on their right to engage in political activities without facing the threat of deportation or other legal actions.

What is at stake in the trial of 21 is not simply getting the 21 acquitted and ensuring that they do not get deported. A victory in the Iranian 21 defence campaign would not only ensure this but would also be a blow against the Labour Government's policy of support for the Iranian dictatorship and its use of the conspiracy laws. Above all it would be an important step in building up a long-term campaign against repression in Iran.



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)