

Workers' ACTION

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IRAN: Holy War against the Left

Save the Iranian Trotskyists



Hamid Shahrabi, Mustafa Gorgzadeh, Kambiz Lajejardi: three of the 14 Iranian Trotskyists jailed and in danger of death in Ahwaz



An army tank guards the road into Paveh

THE KHOMEINI-Bazargan government in Iran has declared war against the Kurds. The Kurds' largest party has been outlawed and its leaders are hunted by the army and the Islamic Guards.

The government has also banned 22 papers, demanded the handing in of all arms, and banned all demonstrations unless they have express permission.

Demonstrations protesting against these moves come under attack from pro-Khomeini gangs, strikes are broken and newspaper offices ransacked by Islamic Guards, and headquarters of left-wing political parties are besieged by reactionaries supporting the government.

In Ahwaz, 14 Trotskyists,

members of the Socialist Workers' Party of Iran, are to be hauled before Islamic tribunals on Thursday 23rd and may be executed soon after.

This is a decisive time in Iran. The open attack against the left and the national minorities paves the way for an all-out attack on the organisations of the working class which as yet are too strong to be confronted head-on.

The government's aim is to break the radical social momentum of the movement which overthrew the Shah, leaving only the reactionary banner of 'return to Islam'.

It is trying to restore the instruments of bourgeois order, above all the army, which since the Shah's

downfall has been disintegrating as a reliable force. Khomeini is trying to rally the army against the Kurds, sending them to the border town of Paveh and the provincial capital of Sanandaj to 'crush the Kurds in 24 hours'.

Khomeini claims that the Kurds attacked the Sanandaj garrison. This is a lie. Troops at the Sanandaj garrison were ordered to Paveh to 'restore order' there, but refused, realising that they were being asked to join the reactionaries in an attack on the local population. The soldiers then handed their arms over to the Kurdish militants in Sanandaj.

In Paveh, fighting broke out when a group of pro-Khomeini Guards who had

been fighting on the side of landlords and the right wing against the peasants and Kurdish militants in Merivan recently tried to set up a base in the town. This could only mean an attempt to reinstall landlords and kick peasants off the land. The inhabitants at Paveh therefore tried to throw out the

Guards.

Kurdistan will surely see the beginning of a long guerilla war against the Iranian government. For the Left, this is a decisive stage of counterrevolution. For the workers' movement, it means the beginning of a fight in which the legal existence of all its organisations is threat-

ened.

The government is strangling democracy in Iran in order to strangle the prospect of socialism. Every socialist in Britain must support the Iranian left, the Kurds and the other oppressed minorities in Iran, and the workers' movement there.

JAMES DAVIES

FUND DRIVE

Previous total £59.52
Cardiff £13
East London £15
Total to date £87.52
Needed to reach our £200 monthly target £112.48

Workers' Action will not appear next week because our staff will be working on the September Socialist Organiser. That gives us more time to reach our monthly target. We are making a special appeal for bankers' orders giving a regular monthly contribution to the fund. There is a form on p.8.

Send money to Fund, WA, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. Cheques etc payable to Workers' Action.

INSIDE

MAGAZINE SECTION: Kautsky on the necessary conditions for mass strikes pages 6-7

Iran: Six months of the Khomeini regime pages 4-5

The 'respected' CP member who is a hatchetman for the bosses page 3

September 29: March against racism page 2

Shipyard workers fight the axe

ON FRIDAY 17th August more than 14,000 workers from Govan and Scotstoun shipyards went on a half day protest strike. They have now banned overtime working and have promised 'no ship will move. No ship will be launched. No ship will go on trial', in the words of Sam Gilmore, Govan convenor.

On Monday 20th, 4,000 workers at Sunderland Shipbuilders also struck. They decided to ban overtime, as did the Yarrow and Rob Caledon (Dundee) yards. Scottish shipbuilding shop stewards will meet before the Thursday (23rd) meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, and may push for a national ban on delivery of completed ships.

The reason for this action is the announcement by British Shipbuilders of 10,000 threatened redundancies

in the merchant sector, including the closure of four yards in Scotland and one in Sunderland. The yards that BS want to close are: Scots-toun, Cartdyke, Bowling, and Robb Caledon in Scotland, and North Sands in Sunderland.

The closure threat for the Scottish yards has rocked the workers' confidence in BS. They had just worked their summer holidays and relaxed working practices in an effort to complete the Polish order which hit the news a few months ago.

The closure of these yards is only part of BS's cuts, which also include 1,000 at Cammell Lairds in Merseyside.

Obviously other yards around the country will be affected, and BS is now looking at plans to cut more than 6,000 jobs from the repair yards, that is, on top of the 10,000 in merchant ship-

building.

So far BS have had it all their own way, with no real struggle against job cuts. This has mainly been because of the attitude of the Confed leaders, who accept BS's arguments about profitability versus jobs, with jobs losing every time. The union leaders are still not opposed to this 'rationalisation', but they want it to be carried out through natural wastage and voluntary redundancy as opposed to enforced redundancy.

They fail, in their role as junior assistants to the bosses, to see their members who are already on the dole and in need of more employment not less. Whichever way these jobs go, they are still jobs lost. We cannot let ourselves be tied down by arguments of profitability.

There are ways to save our jobs. On Merseyside, the Workers' Action Lairds Bull-

etin of 21st August said,

"We must have mass meetings as soon as possible to decide on how we are going to fight this attack.

"The main demand must be 'cut the hours, not the jobs'...

"The work that exists in the yards should be shared out among the workers by reducing the hours with no loss of pay. Management won't give us [this], it involves a struggle to achieve control in this yard and throughout the country".

We should not accept the redundancies, but fight them by any means at our disposal, including occupation of the yards. It is up to the unions to take control of the workplaces to stop redundancies. It is up to the rank and file to make sure it happens.

The redundancies must not go through.

LOL DUFFY

Anti-racist demo set for Sep. 29

A COALITION of organisations of the black communities is calling a demonstration for September 29th, round three issues:

- racist murders
- the trial of 342 people arrested in the huge police operation to defend a National Front meeting in Southall on April 23rd;
- and the Tory Government's plans for yet more curbs on immigration.

Over the last two months there have been three racist killings. Kayumarz Anklesaria was murdered at Bromley-le-Bow underground station on August 10th. Another Asian, Mr. Khan, was killed in Birmingham last week, and Mr. Mazumdar was struck down in the street in Woolwich two months ago.

Also, on the same day as the Bow killing, a Bangladeshi youth was stabbed at Chalk Farm underground station and very seriously injured.

The demonstration organisers see Tory government

policy as encouraging racist violence. 'Racism is now much more legitimised', said Bhajan Chatterjee of the 29th September Committee. 'The NF politics have been taken up by the Tories', he told *Workers' Action*.

New curbs on immigrants are due to come before Parliament in October, taking away the right for husbands to join their wives in Britain.

The 29th September demonstration will start from Hyde Park and march to Downing Street. The Newham Defence Committee initiated it, and support is expected from all the Indian Workers' associations, the Steering Committee of Pakistani Organisations, the Southall Youth Movement, and the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee. The organisers also hope for trade union backing.

Bhajan Chatterjee told *Workers' Action* that he hoped the demonstration organisers could link up with

Underground workers who struck last Friday and Saturday (Aug. 17/18th) against attacks on workers and passengers. Besides the killing at Bow and the stabbing at Chalk Farm, a worker at Clapham North station and two 16-year old passengers at Elephant & Castle had also been attacked in the previous week. One of the youths was critically injured.

However, Mr. Chatterjee said he did not agree with the NUR's demand for more police on the Underground. 'We are against it from our own experience. We saw what happened in Brick Lane'.

The September 29th committee can be contacted c/o 247 Mare Street, E8. Another protest at the racist murders will take place on Saturday 25th August, with a meeting of the Steering Committee against Racial Attacks (6pm) at the Labour Party Hall, 241 High Street, London E12).

In Southall, the local Act-



On May 14th last year 7,000 protested at the racist killing of Altab Ali. Now, with an aggressively racist Tory government, there is blood on the streets again.

ion Committee is organising a conference in support of the April 23rd defendants, also on Saturday 25th (11am to 4pm) at the AUEW Hall,

Lady Margaret Road, Southall. And on Monday 10th September, Barnet Court House will be picketed to support the defendants.

POLICE VET THE JURY IN ANARCHISTS' TRIAL

THE JURY in the 'Persons Unknown' trial is to be politically vetted. This was approved by Judge Gibbens at the Old Bailey on August 10th, at the request of the prosecution.

Jury vetting and the existence of guidelines for this purpose were first revealed in the Aubrey-Berry-Campbell official secrets trial in the autumn of 1978. The guidelines had been formulated in August 1975 by Sam Silkin, the Labour Attorney General. In 1978, he said he was only regularising a practice which had been 'going on at least since 1948'.

The guidelines state that in 'certain exceptional types of case of public importance' the principle of random selection of juries 'may properly be departed from'. These cases are 'serious offences where strong political motives were involved' and those involving gangs of professional criminals.

'It is emphasised that a juror's political convictions are wholly irrelevant unless they are of so extreme a character as to make it reasonably likely that they will prevent the juror from trying a case fairly'. The vetting is carried out through checks with the Criminal Record Office, Special Branch records, and CID.

Jury vetting has become important since 1972, when the property qualification for jurors was removed. In the same period the right of the defence to challenge jurors has been restricted: by limiting the right to question jurors, by removing information on jurors' occupations, and by cutting the number of jurors which the defence can challenge without giving definite reasons to three.

In every known case jury vetting has been a matter of checking for jurors thought to be sympathetic to left-wing defendants. A former SAS man got through the vetting for the Aubrey-Berry-Campbell trial jury, and was kept on it even after the defence lawyers protested. Only after a journalist blew the gaff was that jury discharged.

In the 'Persons Unknown' trial, six anarchists are due to appear on September 17th at the Old Bailey: Ronan Bennett, Iris Mills, Dafydd Ladd, Vince Stevenson, Stewart Carr, and Trevor Dalton. They were arrested last summer and held in Brixton as top-security prisoners.

The initial charges of 'conspiracy to cause explosions with persons known and unknown' were dropped last November in favour of 'conspiracy



Taff Ladd [top] and Ronan Bennett: 9 and 15 months, respectively, in prison before they got bail, and now a police-vetted jury

to rob' charges, which still carry a sentence of life imprisonment. They also face individual charges of possessing stolen property and firearms.

Bail was granted to five of the defendants only after considerable delay (ranging from three months to 8 months) and with stringent conditions. Ronan Bennett was granted bail on August 16th after 15 months on remand with sureties of £20,000. He is still waiting for a surety to return from holiday in order to be released.

During the remand hearings at Lambeth Magistrates court last summer, armed police were present both inside and outside the court. The support group were harassed, arrested, and subjected to police surveillance, giving an indication of what is likely to happen at the Old Bailey.

There is a public meeting on Saturday September 15th (3pm) at the Conway Hall, (Red Lion Sq.), and a protest picket on Monday September 17th, the first day of the trial. LAWRENCE WELCH

Made in the SPG's image

A REPORT published on Monday 13th by State Research gives details of the 24 SPG-type squads now operating in the UK. Little centralised information is publicly available about the police, so the State Research figures are partial and some are out of date. But they give a clear picture of a wide spread of strong paramilitary forces, trained in anti-protest and anti-'terrorist' operations.

The largest force is the Royal Ulster Constabulary's Special Patrol Group, 368 strong, followed by the Metropolitan Police's 204. The average number is around 75.

The first to be formed was the Metropolitan Police SPG, in 1965. By 1972 nine such units existed under various names. The Tory government at that time rejected the formation of a national paramilitary force like the French CRS riot police in favour of local squads. Nearly all the units are used in strikes, demonstrations, and football matches: some are trained in 'anti-terrorist' work, and some specialise (Nottinghamshire's Special Operations Unit, in harassing and arresting football fans and alleged prostitutes; Hertfordshire's Tactical Patrol Group, in stop and search operations).

Greater Manchester's Tactical Aid Group, formed in 1976, is armed with sub-machine guns and ArmaLite

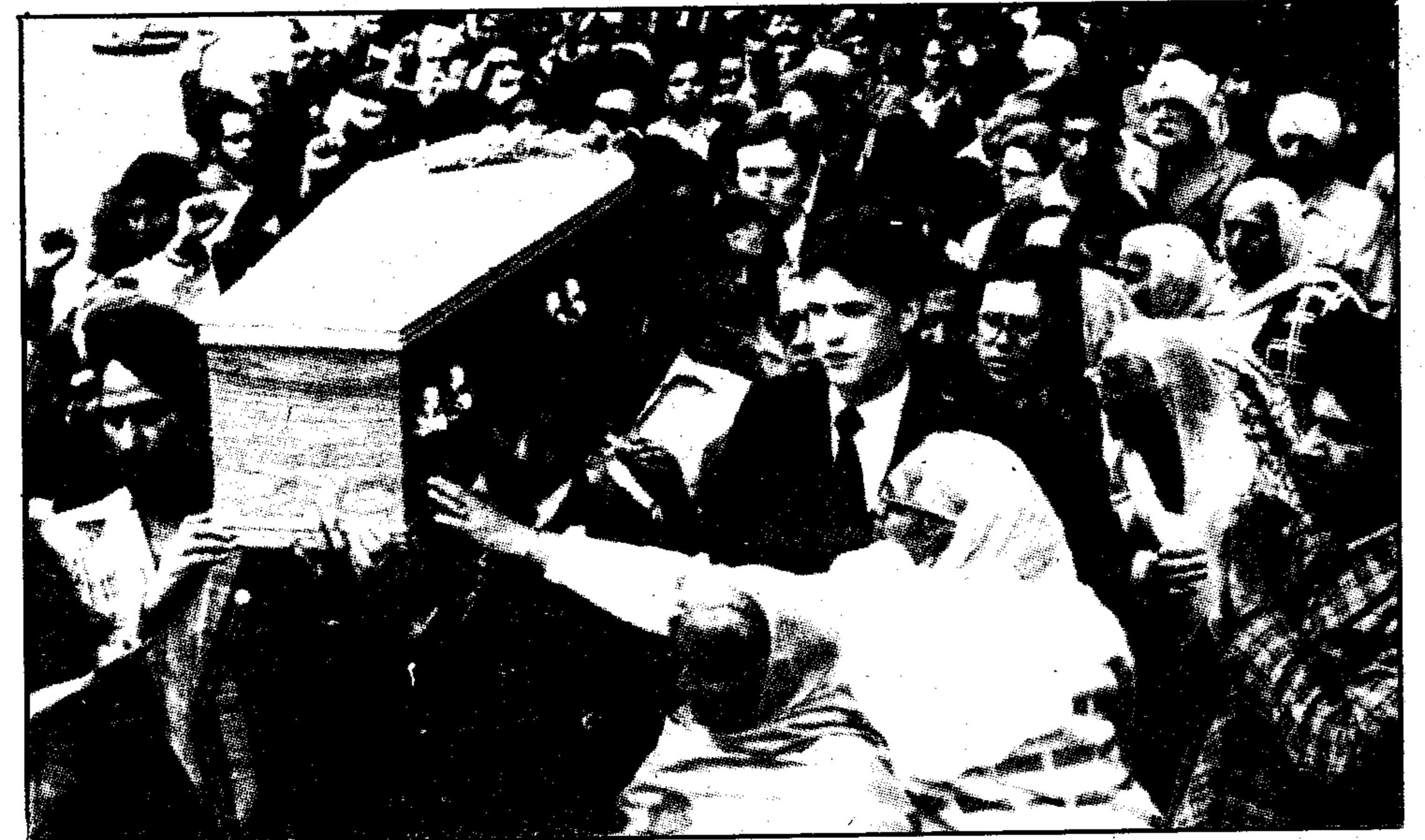
rifles for its 'anti-terrorist' work. In 1977 it took part in a 500-man joint exercise with the army, sealing off an area of Manchester in a mock-siege, and stopping and searching the public.

Lambeth's Labour council is running its own inquiry into the SPG's provocative raids and 'saturation policing' there last year, and there are growing demands for the disband-

ing of the SPG since Blair Peach was beaten to death at Southall in April. In June this year, a Strathclyde Support Unit officer was acquitted of the culpable homicide of a man who died of a ruptured liver in police custody: a colleague who witnessed the beating and death left the force in disgust. Meanwhile, although four SPG officers have been transferred and the van driver

at the scene of Blair Peach's death suspended, and a lead-filled cosh (such as killed Peach) has been found in SPG lockers, the inquiry by Scotland Yard's Complaints Bureau has still not reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

MANDY WILLIAMS
State Research bulletin,
50p including postage from
9 Poland St, W1.



The funeral of Blair Peach, a victim of London's SPG. Similar squads operate in 23 other areas.

RHODESIA Regime massacres Sithole's people

REPORTS are emerging from Zimbabwe-Rhodesia of the deliberate massacre of black auxiliaries in the Gokwe district in the north-west of the country. Muzorewa has described the death of 183 auxiliaries at the hands of white troops as a 'regrettable affair'.

Auxiliaries from the private armies of politicians are being absorbed into the regular army as Security Force auxiliaries. The official account is that these auxiliaries, who were poorly

disciplined, were gathered for retraining with new equipment by Regular Army instructors. They refused to obey orders, threatened their instructors, and shooting broke out.

However, survivors describe how, under the pretext of retraining, they were grouped together in a clearing and persuaded to lay down their arms as aircraft approached 'so as not to make the pilots nervous'.

Aircraft, helicopters, and surrounding troops then opened fire.

Supporters of opposition politician Rev. Sithole, from whose forces the auxiliaries came, claim at least 300 were killed, and are calling for the dismissal of the supreme military commander, Lt-Gen Peter Wallas. But white minority control of the armed power of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia state will not be changed by the bleating of sell-out politicians.

CLEARING OUT THE NAZIS

ABOUT half a dozen Merseyside Nazis gained a portion of their just rewards on Saturday August 18th when they were summarily driven out of Church St precinct by antifascists. However, the victory was short-lived because about half an hour later a separate group of Nazis appeared with their literature and adequate police defence this time.

The previous Saturday, a group of British Movement fascists had been busy peddling NF News for some time until people arriving from the Caribbean carnival encouraged their departure.

In response to the Nazi presence, a mass leafletting has been called by the ANL for this Saturday, 25th, starting at 1pm. This activity will also be important to make sure that the police do not use last Saturday's events as an excuse for harassing left-wing paper sellers. K.F.

LAMBETH FIGHT NOW OR PAY LATER

RUSH HOUR traffic around Kennington was brought to a standstill last Tuesday morning, (August 21st) by Lambeth dustmen protesting against the cuts. Up to 50 dustcarts, vans, skip motors, gully machines and other vehicles from the Shakespeare Road, Romany Road and Kennington Lane depots created havoc and traffic jams.

The vehicles carried placards against the Tory cuts — 'No cuts in Lambeth', and '1½ million unemployed, no more!'

Brother Dennis O'Sullivan, NUPE steward at Kennington Lane depot, told *Workers' Action*: 'We had a mass meeting on fighting the cuts this morning at Kennington. Drivers from Romany and Shakespeare left their vehicles in Kennington Lane in threes and fours. By the time the police got here, the depot was empty and our vehicles were on the road two abreast going around Vauxhall one way system at five miles an hour. They were too late to try and stop us, and had to divert all traffic crossing the river.'

The action taken coincided with the morning's meeting of over 100 shop stewards representing all Lambeth Council employees. The meeting decided to set up a committee and elected sister Betty Humphries, G&MWU branch secretary and secretary of Joint Works, to chair the committee.

She told *Workers' Action*: 'We've set up a committee representing all the unions to fight the cuts. You know, these cuts are already being carried out. We hope to cooperate together with the Trades Council and will send representatives to their meeting on the 29th August.'

'We've got to make sure the ratepayers know about the cuts, how it will affect the services like home helps. We're fighting for both our jobs and their amenities.'

'We've got more actions planned, but we're keeping them as surprises for now.'

Meanwhile, *The Guardian* (Thurs.16th) has suggested that the government may bring in new laws to curb councils which fight the cuts.

Lambeth councillor Bill Bowring told *Workers' Action*: 'This indicates the line of attack that the Tories will take up. However they already have a heavy legislative programme for the next parliamentary session, repealing the Rent Act and Housing Acts, and they may not be able to push these measures through.'

It is more likely that the Tories will use their control of the Rate Support Grant to curb councils like Lambeth; for instance they don't need extra legislation to tie subsidies to rent rises next year. This just shows that our perspective of fighting right now is correct.'

CHEUNG SIU MING

STOP THE CUTS NOW!

COVENTRY

ON WEDNESDAY 15th, Coventry City Council Labour group decided to oppose Tory government cuts of 5%, due to be introduced by next April.

Since replacing the Tories in May, the Labour council has continued to implement cuts decided by the Labour government. But the leader of the Labour group, Arthur Waugh Snr, has stated categorically that enough is enough. No more reductions can be made without drastic effects.

At the moment the council apparently intend to organise a deputation to Environment Minister Michael Heseltine to persuade him to allow Coventry to spend more, and in the meantime to avoid cuts by increasing rates heavily,

MERSEYSIDE

ABOUT 50 delegates from local Labour Parties and trade unions [mostly in the public sector] attended a meeting called by the Liverpool District Labour Party on Monday August 20th in order to help develop the fight against the cuts on Merseyside.

The meeting agreed it was necessary to attempt to unify the various bodies which have sprung up in the movement locally around the cuts issue.

An important step forward was taken when the Trades Council's representative, Alex Doswell, agreed that the next meeting of the Trades Coun-

cil's cuts committee, on August 29th, would be open to delegates from any interested labour movement body. A spokesperson from another cuts committee, based on the local government unions, also supported a united campaign.

The meeting discussed a plan of action for a united campaign, including factory gate meetings, a broadsheet, a large delegate conference, and a demonstration.

Included in the motion that was passed was a section which correctly rejected rate rises as a way to save public services.

K.F.

HOW TO BE RICHER ON THE SAME MONEY.

THE GOVERNMENT is out to show that you're not as badly off as you think. They have published a new 'Tax and Price Index', which shows a rise of only 13.2% over the last 12 months, as against the Retail Price Index rise of 15.6%.

The TPI is supposed to measure the increase in gross pay necessary to maintain buying power. It thus includes the benefit of income tax cuts from the first Tory Budget, which the RPI does not.

Most of the time, the TPI would show a bigger rise than the RPI, because tax takes a bigger proportion of bigger money incomes. No wonder, then, that the government has only just discovered it! On top of that, it is a fake even now.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies is compiling an index based on the same principle as the TPI: their index went up 4.9% in July while the government's did not go up at all. The Institute commented that the government was fudging the figures to show the maximum possible benefit from the Budget tax cuts.

According to the government, their index shows that the Budget income tax cuts completely offset both the VAT increases and inflation since the Budget. But Michael Meacher has shown in *Tribune* (June 22nd) that for all but the highest-paid the income tax cuts did not even offset the VAT increases, let alone inflation. The government's figures are reached by taking an average including huge tax cuts for the better-off, and also by averaging out all the tax cuts (even those introduced by Denis Healey in April) over only 9 months (July 1979-April 1980), thus making them appear bigger than they really are.

By the way it handles tax rebates, the TPI gives an inaccurate measure of the effect of inflation on the average pay packet. It excludes child benefits (and corresponding tax allowances are excluded from the reconstructed figures

for previous years) — though price rises erode child benefits and tax cuts do not raise them.

Non-taxpayers — the unemployed, pensioners, students, etc. — are excluded. So are the very richest taxpayers. The net effect is to exclude about 7 million 'tax units' (single people or married couples) at the bottom end of the economic scale and one million at the top — so the remaining population is biased towards the better-off.

Further, the index takes no account of the cuts in public services which were announced by the Government together with the cuts in income tax.

Even if the average figures shown by the TPI were correct, they would not mean much. A lot of low-paid workers face a very steep rate of tax on any wage increase (sometimes over 100% if loss of means-tested benefits is taken into account as a tax), and need more than an average percentage rise even to mark time at their present low-pay level.

The TUC has said it will stick to the Retail Price Index. That is not much better. According to Chris Pond of the Low Pay Unit, it is calculated according to a pattern of consumption typical of the better-off. It gives insufficient weight to items like food and fares, which are a bigger part of the budget of the poor and which rise in price faster than average. (Food prices have risen 130% since 1974, the retail price index only 120%).

The Low Pay Unit, together with the civil service workers' union CSU and CPSA, produces a price index weighted towards low-paid workers' expenditure. It generally runs higher than the official index, as do cost-of-living indices produced by trade unions in other countries, like France.

It's about time the trade union movement organised workers and housewives to calculate a true working-class cost of living index — and demanded inflation-protection for wages in line with that index.

COLIN FOSTER

An open letter to the CPGB

Why is 'respected Party member' the boss's hatchet man?

UNTIL recently, Bernard Rawlins was the secretary of the Basingstoke branch of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He has since resigned from the party.

Dear comrades,
Some months ago, Boiler-makers' union member and *Workers' Action* supporter Martin Timmins was sacked for supposed bad time-keeping by Lansing Bagnalls, Basingstoke. Without the benefit of union representation, Timmins fought and won the case at an Industrial Tribunal. On the management side, a large role was played in this sacking by Pat Farrelly, Employee Relations

Manager and one-time long-serving full-time official of the AUEW.

Soon after the sacking, I was asked by WA supporters and a CP member to check out a story that Farrelly was still a member of the Communist Party. By telephone we were told that Farrelly was a 'respected member of the Reading branch', and anyway Timmins was a Trotskyist. Farrelly was or still is also on the South Midlands district committee of the CP. Later, a letter from Jack Harrap, the Hants. & Dorset district secretary of the party, 'informed' us that Timmins had worked

regularly with Conservatives and members of the NF. He also stated that any person re-raising this issue inside the party should be ruled out of order.

The Lansing Bagnalls management clearly had no case against Timmins and almost certainly wanted him out in an attempt to stop the circulation of the WA factory bulletin in Lansing Bagnalls. Farrelly presumably would say that his job puts him in a better position to protect the workers. If this is so, then why did he remain quiet during this thinly veiled political sacking?

If the CPGB is supposed to

stand as a party of socialism and the working class, then why does it not only refuse to take action against Farrelly but support him and attempt with crude slanders to suppress any further discussion of the question.

This is a bureaucratic and frightened response in defence of a man who has clearly crossed class lines in his allegiances and can only be using the CP as an arena in which to gain information on the labour movement which will make him of greater value to his new masters, the bosses of Lansing Bagnalls.

BERNARD RAWLINS

Women's Voice tries a purge

MOSS SIDE *Women's Voice* was set up in July, including supporters of the IMG, SWP, *Workers' Action*, and several members of the Labour Party. We were all confident that in a working-class area like Moss Side there was real potential for building a healthy branch.

After two organising meetings and one public meeting, SWP supporters informed the rest of us that we could not join *Women's Voice*, on the basis that we did not support the politics of the SWP.

This was the first we had heard of such a condition for membership, although our political affiliations had been known from the start. In fact, the SWP supporters were initially keen to start working with us (it was a *Workers' Action* initiative to start the branch), although they soon began to manoeuvre against us when their political domination was threatened.

Astonishing arguments were given for excluding us. Firstly, those of us active in the Labour Party (including *Workers' Action* supporters) were branded as 'reform-

ists'. They wanted only to work with revolutionary women, and claimed that 'it was up to the SWP to decide what was revolutionary and what wasn't'.

Secondly, they felt that as some of us differed with the SWP over the nature of the Soviet Union and on how to build a rank and file movement, it would be impossible for them to work with us. Such political differences would, they claimed, turn *Women's Voice* into a 'talking shop'. Democratic rights for tendencies could only aggravate this.

SWP women in Moss Side see the function of *Women's Voice* as that of a periphery organisation for SWP members and sympathisers. We believe that WV should include reformist working-class women, many of whom could organise militantly around a broad programme of 'fighting for women's rights and socialism', and that revolutionary women should fight for their politics within the organisation. We maintain that unless WV becomes a genuinely democratic broad-based organisa-

tion, it will be unable to take the struggle for a working class women's movement any further.

We have since been informed by the SWP women that they could not confirm our exclusion from membership, and that this was now a national *Women's Voice* decision. Although after two weeks this national decision is still not forthcoming, they are persisting in excluding us from their activities.

It is likely that this whole matter will be debated at the forthcoming *Women's Voice* conference. We ask women to pass resolutions in their *Women's Voice* branches for the conference calling for such democratic rights as:

- provision of a regular internal newsletter,
- guaranteed political rights for tendencies,
- the magazine to express different political viewpoints.

Similar letters have been sent to *Socialist Challenge*, *Socialist Worker*, and *Women's Voice*. Further information c/o 39 Mallowdale Cl., Hulme, Manchester 15.

ANNA TWENTYMAN

Throughout the six months of the Khomeini-Bazargan regime there have been attacks on democratic rights. The brunt has been borne by women, by the left, by the national minorities and the press. The government has been at pains to stamp out all remains of that revolutionary mobilisation which brought the Shah down.

Now the government is stepping up attempts to eliminate the elements of dual power in the situation and return to an Iran dominated securely by capitalism. That's why it has banned street demonstrations [unless with official permission], ordered the collection of guns, and banned the Kurdish Democratic Party and 22 newspapers.

AT THE beginning of the year, the Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerillas addressed an open letter to ayatollah Khomeini, then still in exile in France. It praised his firmness against the Shah, calling him 'Esteemed Militant and Great Leader of the Shi'ites', but added a warning note:

"If... the purpose", it said, "of appealing to Islam and its teachings is the repression of all oppositional thought... the revival of the slogan of 'only one party' and the muffling of every freedom-seeking voice under the pretext of defending the Koran and the Shari'a, we are certain that every liberationist patriot will condemn it. And we believe that the people will rise to expose and fight this device, because they see it as a ploy in the hands of imperialism".

The letter was written after a Fedayeen demonstration had been attacked by right-wingers supporting Khomeini and chanting, 'Death to the atheists! Death to the communists!'

The Fedayeen's worst fears have been realised. Throughout the period since the Shah's fall, the slogan of the Islamic Republic has been the battlecry of those trying to break the radical socialist spontaneous development of the mass movement, isolate the Left and break it and crush the national revolt in some of the country's provinces.

Last week, ayatollah Khomeini, addressing a crowd gathered to celebrate Jerusalem Day in the holy city of Qom, made clear his programme of political repression. "We made a mistake", he declared. "If we had banned all these parties and fronts, broken all their pens set up gallows in the main squares, and cut down all these corrupt people and plotters, we would not be facing all these problems".

It wasn't all talk, either. The same day, Khomeini called for the banning of all Iran's 'anti-Islamic' newspapers and the trial of those who run them. He ordered troops to the Kurdish town of Paveh and to Sanandaj, the capital of the province of Kurdistan, with instructions to crush the Kurds' rebellion within 24 hours. He

Why Khomeini wants gallows in the streets



Workers in Khuzestan protest against arrests of militants

has since also banned the middle-of-the-road Kurdish Democratic Party, and called on the population to help the security forces in "hunting down the officials of the outlawed KDP".

This reactionary stance is reflected in many spheres, including internationally. There is, for example, no doubt that the Iranian government is giving more than merely moral support to the US-backed Muslim counter-revolution directed against the Teraki regime in Afghanistan and the Shi'ite movement in revolt against the Iraqi government.

The anti-Shah movement was a mass movement

Khomeini, in one of his speeches, declared that what brought down the Shah "was Islam, not the people. It was neither you nor I, but our creed". This mystical-religious gibberish will not exorcise the spirit of the movement that brought the Shah down. It was a mass movement — with millions on the streets, with mobilisations of workers, peasants, rank and file soldiers: the whole mass of the poor.

There were several waves of revolt during the course of Shah Reza Pahlavi's rule. Each was bloodily suppressed. The last wave, finally tearing the statues of the Pahlavis off their pedestals, began in Qom in January 1978. Troops fired on a demonstration which was protesting against anti-Khomeini

insults in the government press.

The movement that began in Qom spread and deepened. Despite the most brutal terror organised by the Shah's regime, that movement refused to be beaten back. Although it started round the name of Khomeini, the leader of Iran's majority Shi'ite Muslims, the movement clung to that name not because of the ayatollah's religious authority, but because it wanted to smash the Shah and all his regime stood for and Khomeini was almost alone among the senior Shi'ite leaders to refuse compromise with the Shah or any of his appointees.

The decisive force in this mobilisation was the Iranian working class — in particular the oil industry workers. In late October they struck in Abadan. The 24% rise they had received the previous March had not been enough to compensate for inflation.

Within three days, the management caved in. Work resumed, but at a slow pace and constantly interrupted by workers' meetings. Despite the concessions, the Abadan workers came out again within days, now putting forward political demands: abolition of martial law, liberation of political prisoners, elimination of corruption, disbanding of SAVAK, expulsion of American advisors and condemnation of those who had committed crimes against the people.

A further wage increase was offered but the workers refused to end the strike. Finally, the government was only able to get a return to work at gun-point after

arresting over a hundred militants.

By the time the Shah decided to pack his bags, there were strikes in the oil and gas industries, in electricity supply, in the hospitals, the newspaper offices, in the telecommunications industry and in the Central Bank. Even civil servants at the ministries of Justice, Commerce, Labour, Planning and Finance were on strike. And again, the merchants of the bazaars, the section of



Hamid Shahrabi, one of the 14 militants of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party who face the death sentence

the bourgeoisie most closely identified with Khomeini, had closed their shops. It was not Islam that won the day, but mass mobilisation; it was not Islam either that provided the inspiration for that mobilisation, but rage at the conditions of poverty and repression that surrounded the Peacock Throne. And it is not Islam that will now feed, clothe, shelter and provide for the masses, but only socialism — that is why Khomeini must now

suppress the movement that has given him power.

Indeed, the decisive battle, the Tehran insurrection, was a fight between the ill-armed masses of Tehran and the Royalist Guard. The military leaders cynically awaited the outcome. Only when they saw that the Shah's 'immortals' had lost did they decide to dump Bakhtiar and accept Khomeini. The decisive factor again was the mobilisation of the poor.

Neighbourhood committees, factory committees, people's courts, rank and file committees within the armed forces — these were the products of the struggle. They combined vigorous independent organisation with real, democratic discussion. The bank workers' union's statement after Khomeini's return announced that tellers' windows would be open every other day, "the day in between being reserved for discussion among striking workers" on "the political situation and the future of the revolution".

A demonstration in Tehran on February 16 called for freedom of the press and freedom of speech in the army, the right of soldiers to organise in independent committees, their right to vote and join political parties, and, most radical of all, the disbanding of the Shah's army and police and the setting up of a people's army. There were also calls for the immediate arrest of SAVAK personnel and army leaders and their arraignment for crimes against the people.

Khomeini's task was to snuff out these organisations that the masses had built.

It is idle to speculate to what degree he also wanted to curb open discussion, a free press and political life, but such democratic life and these newly thrown-up organisations hinting at a future proletarian counter-power were blood and flesh of the same child, born out of the mass struggle.

Khomeini deals with the workers

On the eve of the Shah's fall, Mehdi Bazargan, today Khomeini's hand-picked prime minister, was busy in Ahwaz, using his and the Imam's influence to try to get the workers to end their strike. A strike coordinating committee was set up by Khomeini's supporters in a successful effort to destroy the existing more radical strike committee, which had welcomed students, teachers and socialists to its meetings and had discussed opening the books of the industry.

On February 1st, a week before the Tehran insurrection, Mohammed Javad Khatemi, the first representative of the strike committee of Ahwaz, resigned in protest against efforts by what he called "non-progressive religious leaders" to impose policy decisions on the oil workers. Attacking Bazargan's mediation on behalf of Khomeini, he said then that "those who think the struggle has come to an end are wrong. They have not understood the character of US imperialism..."

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international campaign for their release. The jails of Ahwaz are also full of workers' leaders, and there have been protests in the oil and steel industries against the detentions.

Pastaran have also been sent to Gonbad-e Kavus in the north east of Iran to put down a rising by Turcomans. The Baluchis in the south east have also been victims of the repression of the Islamic Guards.

Of all the national 'minorities' — there is no national 'majority' — the Kurds have developed the broadest and most determined fight. In Kurdistan there have been peasant struggles, workers' struggles centred on the brickworkers, and a series of struggles against attempts by the central government to impose its will. Tanks, armoured cars, helicopter gunships — they have all been used to try to suppress the Kurds.

There the national struggle — for autonomy — interacts with a profound social struggle. Most cities are not under the control of the central government. Troops are sent in because locally-based troops have proved useless. Numerous anti-government militias control large areas, and the masses are profoundly anti-Khomeini.

Again, it is the Revolutionary Guards who have proved the most stubborn enemies of the autonomy struggles. When recently battle flared up between the Guards and Kurdish militiamen in Merivan, the basic condition laid down by the Kurds' leader for the return of the town's inhabitants to their homes was not removal of the army, it was removal of the Guards.

The Guards that have been sent to Sanandaj and have been at the centre of much of the fighting there are no ordinary Pastaran. They are members of an organisation called Al-Amel, a group of Lebanese Shi'ites led by Moussa Sadr and Mustafa Chamran that fought in the Lebanese civil war on the side of... the right-wing, anti Palestinian and anti-Muslim Phalangists.

But the Guards do not act in isolation. They interact with reactionary religious groups like the Makteba Koran, the School of the Koran, with Kurdish feudalists and with members of the Geyadeh Moveghat, the Iran-based followers of the Barzani-led Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq.

Announcing his war against the Kurds, Khomeini stunned many by referring to the moderate Kurdish Democratic Party as "a nest of saboteurs in the pay of others. It is impossible to continue to allow it to agitate freely. Its sole aim is to fight the revolution. So this party must be banned, and Sheikh Hosseini and Mr Ghassem-lou must be punished".

This is only the latest outburst in a consistent campaign of slander against the parties, personalities and programme of the Kurdish movement, which Khomeini and his government claims is 'separatist' though none of the parties are for anything but autonomy within Iran.

Khomeini and the men with arms

After the Tehran insurrection the main body of the army went over to the side of Khomeini — some loyal to the Shah fled and a few others were captured by the various militias and brought to trial. Khomeini's problem was that the various army chiefs could not organise



Islamic Revolutionary Guards, the government's bludgeon against the opposition, in Khorramshahr.

speedy conquests of the national minorities. Nor were they ready to act reliably against those who had made the revolution, the workers, the poor, and the Left.

The reason can be seen in the attitude of the rank and file soldiers. According to Eric Rouleau, "Unit after unit, regiment after regiment, has ignored the order to go to the troubled regions of Kurdistan and Khuzestan. 'Never again', said an officer, 'will we serve as gendarmes. Our role is exclusively to protect our frontiers'. A group of sixty volunteers recruited from his unit has just left for Ahwaz, but only on the express condition that they would not be asked to 'shoot on the people'."

A number of units have elected councils of soldiers, sailors, and airmen. And certain units have elected their own leaders and refuse to obey those appointed by the generals who often end up endorsing the men's choice. On the eve of the great pro-Khomeini demonstration on July 17, several units stationed in Tehran challenged a direct order from above and refused to participate in the demonstration, telling their superiors that "the days of the Shah are over".

In order to make peace with the army leaders, Khomeini and Bazargan have set a time limit beyond which no-one can bring accusations against members of the armed forces for crimes committed under the Shah. People making unsubstantiated allegations will be severely punished.

Besides the army, Khomeini and Bazargan rely on the Revolutionary Guards, the Pastaran. These are usually Farsi-speaking men drawn from the lower middle class or the urban poor — often from the holy cities like Qom, Mashad, Shiraz

and others. Sometimes they come from among the must-azefin, the poor who have benefited from Khomeini's turning over speculative property to house the needy.

They usually combine a religious fanaticism with a strong Persian nationalism, and therefore hostility to the 'minorities' and to non-Shi'ites. There are also many sons of bazaar merchants among the Pastaran.

This plebeian army of reaction is a paid militia — double pay for being in Khorramshahr — and is increasingly highly trained, their units usually being officered by ex-SAVAK or Imperial Army commanders. Towards the beginning of May, some of the powerful circle of non-clerics around Khomeini, Yazdi and Ghotbzade, sponsored the amalgamation of 12 small Islamic militias into the new Revolutionary Islamic Mojahedeen, which, according to the journal Middle East, "is playing an increasingly important role policing the left, guarding key figures and offices and fighting the national minorities. Moreover the 'committees' now seem answerable to this group".

The one repressive arm that the regime does not seem interested in developing is the Revolutionary Islamic Courts. Their leader, ayatollah Khalkhali, is out of favour, perhaps because of the crude brutality of his methods (is that why Khomeini has sent him to Kurdistan now?). The brutality, striking down many members of the Iranian ruling class alongside other victims, caused Iran trouble internationally and threatened to widen the gap between Khomeini and the religious leaders on the one hand and government and the bourgeoisie on the other.

In July a Bill was drafted by the ayatollahs themselves scrapping the

Revolutionary Islamic Courts.

The press and the media

One of Khomeini's closest aides is Ahmad Ghotbzade, now head of Iran's broadcasting network. On several occasions campaigns against the left and the national minorities have been launched through its channels. And leftists, women and those not prepared to kow-tow to Islamic reaction can find no place in the broadcasting media.

One example was the broadcast that followed the women's rights demonstration on March 8, which the media denounced (along with the WRP in this country, of course) as a CIA-backed affair. The next day even more women marched in protest.

The Khomeini-Bazargan regime launched a new offensive against freedom of speech and the press on May 10, when it closed down the office of the paper Ayandegan. On May 1, ayatollah Morteza Motahari, a close friend of Khomeini, was assassinated. The assassination was claimed by the ultra-right group Forghan, but people like Khalkhali blamed the left and used the event to step up an anti-communist witch-hunt. It was Ayandegan's clear documentation of the rightist nature of the assassination that incurred Khomeini's wrath.

On May 11, Ayandegan and two other papers were attacked on Iranian national radio as 'counter-revolutionaries'. In response rightist gangs attacked the paper's offices. In another paper, printers locked out left-wing journalists and Khomeini made clear his support for the action. When Ayandegan

later reopened, its circulation had risen.

But that was not the last of Ayandegan's problems. After criticising the procedure in Iran's Consultative Assembly elections, the paper was shut down by the government, its assets seized and its editors arrested. The seizure of the printworks forced the closure of two other papers which had been printed there.

Again the anti-democratic campaign is stoked by Khomeini's own slanders. He claimed that Ayandegan was owned by the imperialist and Zionist secret services. What he didn't say was that the present Ayandegan company came about with the overthrow of those owners in the course of the revolution and the establishment of a new company.

Now Khomeini has banned 22 papers — including the paper of the Tudeh (Moscow-line 'Communist') party, which supported the closure of Ayandegan. Marches protesting this attack on democracy were set on by Muslim reactionaries.

Socialism and the fight for democracy

The slogan of the Constituent Assembly put forward by revolutionary socialists and consistent democrats in Iran called for a struggle to enlarge democracy and promote the strongest mass organisations. They called for an Assembly elected by the widest suffrage to freely discuss the institutions of the Iranian state. The discussion would take place not just between 'experts' or even between elected delegates, but in the press and the broadcasting media and above all in every mass organisation.

Backtracking on this demand, Khomeini offered first a farcical referendum on the Islamic Republic (or the Shah back), and then the Consultative Constitutional Assembly, much smaller and more limited than a full Constituent Assembly.

The referendum was boycotted by the Kurds and the Consultative Assembly was boycotted by the mass of the Kurds, the National Democratic Front and even the National Front. Ayatollah Shariat Madari's call for a boycott among the 10 million Azeris of northern Iran was probably followed by the vast majority there, though ballot rigging prevents an accurate count.

As the Consultative Constitutional Assembly gets to work, voted in after massive abstentions and a flood of accusations of irregularities in the ballot, the Khomeini-Bazargan group is in the middle of its most concerted drive to eliminate democracy in Iran.

With the workers and peasants aroused to fight for a better life, free discussion and free organisation lead logically to socialist conclusions and the beginnings of workers' power. The demagogic slogan of the Islamic Republic, while it did not rouse the movement, has permitted the government to conceal its lack of a social programme that can answer the needs of the masses.

The nationalisations that have taken place have not been used to increase the power of the masses, but to save the capitalists from ruin, sometimes even at the request of the capitalists though of course some sections are worried.

The bazaar merchants and their religious representative, Shariat Madari, have been particularly vocal in criticism of the government's economic measures. Indeed there is widespread speculation that they, backed by the army, will try to stage a 'palace revolt', forcing the removal of pro-Khomeini people and replacing them with figures supported by the National Front. What especially stirred this speculation was the sudden decision of Shariat Madari and the National Front to boycott the election for the Consultative Constituent Assembly immediately after the screening of a programme on French television in which Shahpur Bakhtiari, the Shah's last prime minister, denounced the Khomeini government.

If the Khomeini government survives, it may vex the capitalists, but it will not be socialist. At most, it could



Shariat Madari: a bridge to the West?

move in a state capitalist direction as in neighbouring Iraq or Syria, though this would not sit well with the strengthening of Islamic orthodoxy which is already worrying some of the bourgeoisie and technocrats.

Whatever road the government chooses, it is clear that it will not choose socialism — the only road capable of satisfying the needs of the masses and really breaking Iran from the grip of imperialism. Had socialism been the choice, the government would not be breaking the mass organisations, but building on them.

Andrew Hornung



Oil workers celebrate a victory with pictures of Khomeini

From Kautsky to Eurocommunism: Always waiting for a better time to fight

INTRODUCTION

by Bruce Robinson

IN THE FINAL PARTS of "A New Strategy", Kautsky fully develops his own conception of the mass strike and gives a renewed justification of the 'strategy of attrition'. He rests his arguments on the conceptions developed before: the sharp separation of the political mass strike from other types of strike and a view of such a mass strike as the final battle between the classes, if the ruling class chooses to resist a Social Democratic majority in the Reichstag.

Kautsky develops at length a scenario of how a mass strike could occur; its effects on the state machinery and the conditions for its success. For Kautsky, before a mass strike can be successful — and thus before one should be considered at all — the overwhelming majority of the proletariat must be united and ready for battle. He therefore postpones the mass strike until social democratic organisations and economic development have together created those preconditions for success: "The conditions for such a strike are however increasingly present, partly because of economic development, partly because of our activity, and thus the prospect of victory in the mass strike is increasingly improving".

For Kautsky, the conditions which make possible the mass strike are precisely those that create the general preconditions for socialism. This is not surprising, given his general conception of the mass strike as either a desperate defensive measure forced on the working class by the bourgeoisie, or the means to overcome residual bourgeois resistance once the general preconditions for socialism exist.

Kautsky argues that once the general preconditions for a mass strike exist, it is nonsense for social democrats to try to bring it about. It will arise spontaneously, and is "possible only under the pressure of a tremendous event". More succinctly, Kautsky says: "The unexpected, the sudden, the elemental character of the mass strike is one of the conditions of its success". "The point in time of its arrival does not depend on us, but... its victory does".

At first sight, it appears odd that Kautsky should be arguing this conception against Rosa Luxemburg, so often described as a partisan of working class spontaneity. Yet in reality Kautsky's conception of the role of the socialist party gives far less importance to leadership of class struggle than Luxemburg's. For Kautsky, the SPD's role is general socialist education and propaganda, consolidating the unity of the proletariat, and general opposition to the existing state. Naturally this conception gives electoral activity a far greater importance than strikes, as it allows the SPD to put its socialist ideas across. As long as this party activity continued and economic development continued, steady progress would be made up to the point when the revolution would come about more or less spontaneously, even if the mass strike might be necessary as a final blow to the capitalists' futile resistance. In Kautsky's famous words: "We are a revolutionary, not a revolution-making party".

Of course, if Kautsky's idea of how a revolution occurred had been correct, the "strategy of attrition" would have made sense. It would be right not "to be

provoked into a decisive battle as long as we are the weaker party". In reality, however, as Luxemburg understood, victory against capitalism cannot be guaranteed; it needs the active struggles of the working class to develop a revolutionary consciousness. A refusal to fight can have far worse consequences than an honourable defeat of the working class in a real struggle. This was to become clear when in 1914 the SPD collapsed under the pressure of an imperialist war, justifying capitulation to their own bourgeoisie with the excuse that the only alternative was a working class defeat and the destruction of the workers' organisations.

Kautsky justifies the "strategy of attrition" by claiming that it had determined the SPD's tactics since the late 1860s. In reality, the SPD had come to concentrate more and more on routine parliamentary, trade union and propagandist activity. The overthrow of capitalism had become increasingly identified with a majority in Parliament. Yet opportunities had existed after the repeal of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1890 for the SPD to mobilise the working class and to go on to the offensive. Luxemburg argued for the SPD to take the opportunity offered in the struggle for suffrage in Prussia, while Kautsky argued that the time had not yet come to go over to a "strategy of overthrow", and that it was necessary to wait. In reality, for such people the time is never right for the "strategy of overthrow" — the struggle always involves too many risks, and the time to attack capitalism is pushed further and further into the future.

Karl Kautsky: A NEW STRATEGY

6. Conditions for the political mass strike

THE VIEW which I here develop is not some product of the need to apply the brakes, which comrade Luxemburg discovers and censures me for. I developed this view more than six years ago in the *Neue Zeit* in a series of articles entitled "Revolutionary Miscellanea", of which the third article was specially concerned with the mass strike (XXII, 1, p. 685f.). The starting point of the article at that time was a polemic with a Polish comrade who reproached me for my "timidity", for my "applying the brakes" in the question of the armed uprising. Only my opponent of that period belonged to the PPS (*1). It does not seem to me to be superfluous to retrace the chain of thought of that article and to stress those points, and to expand them with a few remarks which are relevant to our present discussion.

Even then, I was narrow minded and pedantic enough to differentiate between the various types of strikes and to examine the various conditions for their success. I showed that the conditions of the economic strike are completely different from those of the political strike: "All economic factors which favour the success of the workers diminish in a mass strike the more it becomes a widespread, a general strike" (p. 688).

Nothing is wronger than the opinion that the mass strike achieves its effect by starving out the capitalists. They do indeed live from the labour of the proletariat. But they are not the only ones. The proletarians themselves live from it as well. And when it comes to starving, that hits those of little means earlier than those of means.

Starving out the exploiters cannot lead the mass strike to victory: only disruption of the government's power by the proletarian organisation can do that. It is the last and the highest form of the struggle between the voluntary organisation of the proletariat which rests on the discipline of selfless enthusiasm, and the organisation of compulsion of the state, which rests on the discipline of terror. It becomes the decisive test of strength between the two.

The mass strike takes effect by forcing the state to use its power to an extraordinary extent, and at the same time by paralysing its means of power as much as possible. It achieves this because the masses are involved. It is all the more effective the more the wage-earners enter into it; not merely in the large towns and the industrial districts, but also in the out-of-the-way factory-towns. It would be particularly effective if the farmworkers on the large estates were also to enter into it.

The large towns will certainly always have to be the starting point — but it is one of the conditions of its success that it proceeds from such a general agitation in the people and that it intensifies this mood to such an extent that a few days of the strike are enough also to allow it to leap forward in the out-of-the-way districts.

As the strike becomes more general, the large property-owners — the masters of the state and government — fear

increasingly for their property and life, and call more and more vehemently for military protection. Now suddenly every mansion, every town, every factory, every telegraph line, every stretch of railway has to be militarily guarded. For this the army is not sufficient. The soldiers can never stop anywhere, they are sent from one point to another, sent everywhere dangerous gatherings are taking place; they are soon exhausted without having taken part in any great struggle and victory which might inspire them, for wherever they arrive the crowd breaks up and meets elsewhere, where the troops have not arrived or have just been and gone.

Even before the strike makes itself felt on the soldiers it will make itself felt on many workers for the town and state authorities who have the closest of connections to the mass of proletarians, come from their midst, live among them, know them, are related to them and friends with them. The more shaky the power of the government appears, the more its terrorism loses its capacity to instil fear. Gas and electricity works cease to function, street trams cease to run. Finally even the post and the railways are gripped by the strike fever; at first the workers in various workplaces strike, then the younger officials and inspectors also, whilst at least passive resistance takes root amongst the others.

The state power attempts to help itself by calling up reservists, but that is a double-edged sword, for thereby it incorporates into the body of the army those elements which are the least reliable against the enemy within, elements which are already in the grip of the strike fever and now bring it into the barracks.

There they meet soldiers who are exhausted as a result of the never-ending sentry duty, and are rushed to and fro by contradictory orders, all of which embitters them just as much as it reduces their respect for authority. The relaxation of discipline takes place all the more easily as the situation increasingly prevents large bodies of troops from working together, the more it necessitates scattering the troops in the smallest of detachments for the purpose of guarding all the infinite number of threatened points; detachments which for hours, even days on end, do not get to see a higher officer but on the other hand are always surrounded by peaceful fellow citizens who can work on them in the most diverse ways.

If in these situations the government and its higher representatives lose their heads, then they are lost. And how easily that stage is now reached! On the one hand, its supporters fearfully beg it to give way, to make concessions to the people in order to pacify them and to prevent the worst; on the other hand they beg it to gun down the dogs and to drown the uprising in blood. Pulled one day in one direction, the next day in the opposite direction, exposed to the whims and moods of those above, who change violently in step with the changing news, it can today add fuel to the fire by massacring people who are harmless and who have come on to the streets out of curiosity, in order tomorrow to collapse at the news that this or that regiment is beginning to become troublesome, that soldiers are fraternising here and there with the strikers, that the railway workers are striking, that angry farmworkers have stormed this or that castle which was not to be reached by military protection.

The old regime becomes untenable and a new one emerges in its place.

This was how, even before the Russian revolution imagined the form which a mass strike would have to take if it was to help the proletariat to victory under the conditions of a modern centralised military state.

Such a strike is no simple matter, and demands a whole series of prerequisites. Comrade Luxemburg says in her pamphlet about the Prussian suffrage struggle, page 10: "The world cannot exist twenty-four hours if the workers once fold their arms" (long and stormy applause).

It is indeed inspiring to be the bearer of the world, but that should not deceive us into believing that nothing more is needed for the success of a mass strike than merely "folding one's arms".

The conditions for such a strike are however increasingly present, partly because of economic development, partly because of our activity, and thus the prospects of victory in the mass strike is increasingly improving.

Economic development increases the number of proletarians and concentrates them. Our activity in the party organisations, in the trade unions, in the press, the legislative bodies, and the civic authorities organises the workers, provides them with discipline and an awareness of their strength, but also with political education and an insight into the organisation of our opponents.

During a mass strike, it will not simply be a matter of folding one's arms, but of maintaining the organisational unity of the proletariat across the whole empire. We must be prepared for the fact that at the beginning of such a strike all our representatives are arrested and our newspapers suppressed. The so-called "non-commissioned officers" will then have to lead the struggle. They must ensure that the individual groups remain in contact and act in a unified manner; that the masses do not allow themselves to be provoked into street fighting but are also not intimidated by the acts of violence which will nonetheless occur. They must know exactly what our demands are, must not sound the retreat before they are fulfilled, and they must however also make sure that the struggle does not dissolve into separate struggles about local grievances.

All that presupposes in the masses a wealth of self-discipline, of political understanding, of unity of thought and action, which can only be achieved in long political and trade union activity.

On the other hand, the success of the mass strike presupposes that the confusion among the masses on which the government is based is already fairly advanced. This does not need to express itself in open mutinies, as was the case in France. Military terrorism can suppress such expressions of discontent. The more deeply discontent sets in, the more military obedience becomes a hypocrisy which is dispensed with all the quicker and more amazingly once the power of those commanding seems threatened.

For the young man who has grown up in the peasant patriarchal family or in the lack of rights and the helplessness of the farmworker, military obedience may become part of his flesh and blood as it appears as something natural. The young people of the big towns, particularly the industrial workers, have become accustomed to a completely different freedom of life-style when they enter the army. Blind obedience is only unwillingly tolerated by them, even if they themselves are too clever to protest openly about it so long as it is of no use to do so.

A mass strike, however, offers a wealth of opportunities to do this.

The more industrial development advances, the smaller becomes the number of those drawn from the agricultural sector of the economy, i.e. those recruits who are to some extent reliable for fighting the enemy within. In the article I have already mentioned, of February 1904, I referred to a set of statistics from 1902 which showed amongst others the following figures:

ARMY CORPS	Fit for active service	Those fit for active service who work in agriculture.	
		Total	Expressed as %age
Bavarian (Upper Bavaria, Lower Bavaria, Swabia)	11,041	4,560	41.5%
Prussian (Westphalia, the Rhine provinces)	34,959	5,810	16.6%
Saxon (Liepzig, Chemnitz, Zwickau)	11,884	1,847	15.5%

One can see how much, in many army corps, the non-agricultural population is already a massive majority.

Other causes contribute to increasing the dissatisfaction of the state employees. Their very lack of freedom is felt by them ever more oppressively. They would perhaps feel compensated for this if their economic position were to improve. But that stumbles upon more and more difficulties as the financial situation becomes more acute and the state-owned industries are driven to carry out 'economy measures' and as many of them, such as the railways, the post and mining are expected to cover the deficit by increasing their profits. The military discipline itself, which stifles criticism from below at birth, renders at the same time the whole massive complex of the state industries ever more impossible to supervise, ever more open to corruption which reduces their profitability and again forces those in the higher echelons to regain what is lost through the fault of the system by an increased pressure on those below and by increased exploitation.

Thus dissatisfaction grows among state employees and it only needs a sudden paralysis of the terror from above to let this dissatisfaction clearly flare up. Yet how confusion, instability and lack of understanding can grow at the same time in the upper echelons is shown amply by the history of the last few years. And this growth is no chance phenomenon. Contradictions within states as well as between states become increasingly sharp, armaments increase and the finances enter an increasingly desperate situation. On the other hand the increase of capitalist exploitation does not merely raise the standard of living of the great state exploiters who want to stand on the same footing as the great capitalists where pleasures and luxury are concerned. The courtiers' and junkers' claims on the state grow simultaneously with the armaments and reduce the state more and more to a desperate financial situation. A statesman of intelligence and character would have to start by cursing the whole state parasitism and demanding from the wealthy classes large sacrifices in order to place the state on a healthy footing again. But the task which is today given to a statesman by the masters of the state is exactly that of opening up new sources of wealth to this state parasitism, and on the other

hand overcoming all resistance to this. No statesman of intelligence and character will be party to this; more and more, only careerists lacking any conscience are to be had for this: either careerists who are indifferent to the future of the state if the appearance of success can be achieved just for the present, or simpletons who have no idea of the difficulties of the situation, or thoughtless lackeys who obediently carry out every errand they are allotted. The less is the respect of the population and of the apparatus of officials for the government, the greater the prospect that a mass strike finds in the government such elements who are in no way up to the situation and immediately lose their heads. Such people always do the wrong things, both when they attempt to use measures of repression and measures of pacification.

All the conditions for a successful mass strike are increasingly turning in favour of the proletariat in the course of development and in the course of social-democratic and trade union organisational and educational activity and practical work of reforms. If however a mass strike is to lead to victory in the Prussian situation then it is above all necessary for it to start with an overwhelming impetus right from the outset, involving a weight of numbers and an enthusiasm which drags everything along in its wake, seizes hold of the whole working population and fills it with the most savage fury and deepest scorn for the present government.

Nothing is more misleading than the view that the mass strike will only be possible when the whole proletariat is organised. That would mean acknowledging its practical impossibility, for we hardly ever get as far as the organising of all layers of the proletariat. But the mass strike only becomes possible when the mass of the proletariat arises as one, in order to use everything for the purpose of paralysing and disorganising the present regime.

If the totality of the proletariat is not organised, then such a unified uprising by the proletariat in the whole Empire, in North and South, town and country, becomes possible only under the pressure of a tremendous event which suddenly fills the proletariat with the deepest bitterness and forces upon it as a necessity of life the overthrow of the present regime. It must be a storm which above all sweeps away any resistance in its own camp.

Comrade Luxemburg puts forward for discussion the question of whether the situation is ripe for a mass strike. But the mere fact that it is being discussed would show that the situation has not yet reached such a level of maturity. If it is still possible to argue and discuss about whether the mass strike is due or not, then the proletariat as a whole is not yet filled by that measure of bitterness and awareness of its strength which are necessary if the mass strike is to take place. If the necessary mood for it had been in existence in March then a warning voice like mine could not have avoided being stifled by a protest of raging indignation. I know of no successful mass strike which was begun by a discussion in a newspaper as to whether it was due. The unexpected, the sudden, the elemental character of the mass strike is one of the conditions of its success.

But if that is the case, then what is the purpose of discussing the mass strike, the appearance of which does not after all depend on us?

Certainly the point in time of its arrival does not depend on us, but equally certainly, once it has broken out its victory does. Victory becomes possible only when a strong, organised, proletarian force is in existence which knows what is involved and what it wants, which cuts a channel for the tempestuous current of popular anger which breaks loose of its own accord, and directs it to where it can have a fruitful political effect; otherwise this current would be dispersed among the sandbanks after repeated setbacks and without having achieved anything.

The more the organised proletarians are acquainted with the idea of the mass strike, the more they have considered how it can have the most powerful effect and in what direct-

ion they have to guide its force, then the earlier can we expect that they will show themselves equal to the tremendous demands on their intelligence, their understanding of the situation, their unity, their perseverance, their self discipline, and their boldness which such an unheard of situation places upon them.

The theoretical discussion is in this case all the more necessary because the political mass strike as the most extreme and final method of conducting the class struggle is not one which can easily be repeated. Learning from practice means in this case paying too high a price for the lessons. Here it is a matter of gaining the necessary knowledge through theoretical work as much as possible.

It is necessary to discuss the idea of the mass strike from yet another standpoint. The policies of the masses, and also of our opponents, become completely different when both the latter and the former know that the proletariat does not stand defenceless in the face of any act of violence; that today too, just as before, the power of tyranny has a limit. The idea of the mass strike provides the proletariat with a heightened awareness of its strength and can dampen the presumptuousness of its opponents, indeed in given conditions it can also increase their fear and nervousness. If concessions are to wrung out of them peacefully, then this will happen quickest where the idea of the mass strike is alive in the proletariat.

For many different reasons discussion of the idea of the mass strike is very useful, indeed indispensable, if the proletarian class struggle is to acquire its full strength and clarity in the present stage of development. But it seems to me to be quite wrong to want to find out when a mass strike will occur by a theoretical discussion in the press. That high level of enthusiasm and bitterness which alone can help a mass strike to a victorious conclusion is hardly something that can be kept on ice. It does not bear being preserved for even a week; it would have melted away long before the discussion even got under way.

This is the point of view which I developed six years ago. If I today still champion it then this is so because I have not become acquainted with any facts or arguments in the meantime which contradict it, but certainly very many which confirm it. In no way did I put it forward because some whim had hold of me at that time which suggested that I put the brakes on for a change. It seems to comrade Luxemburg to be a perverted lust if a Marxist ever applies the brakes. She for her part praises the whip.

But apart from the fact that it will not be considered necessary by even the most extreme radical to whip on comrade Luxemburg — to function as the whip of the whip — I must admit that I am accustomed to advocating my convictions without bothering as to whether their effect at that particular time is that of a brake or a whip.

I have already once referred to the fact that advocacy of my standpoint in the question of the mass strike at the time of the Russian revolution brought me into conflict with Eisner and Stampfer. (2) If I now come into conflict about it with a comrade with whom I have fought many a common struggle, then that is completely undesired on my part. But I cannot change my opinions for that reason. *Amicus Plato, magis amica veritas.* [Plato is dear to me but the truth is dearer.] The issue is superior to the person.

1. The PPS: the Polish Socialist Party. Rosa Luxemburg was a founder. The rival Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania which was set up in opposition to the PPS's attitude to Polish nationalism.
2. In 1905 Kautsky had argued against Friedrich Stampfer and Kurt Eisner, who were then on the right wing of the SPD but who supported the use of the political mass strike because it appeared as a peaceful weapon which could take the place of fighting on the barricades.

NORMA RAE ORGANISING THE UNION, REORGANISING HER LIFE

MARTIN Ritt's film *Norma Rae*, set for widespread network distribution, is about a woman who organises her Deep South textile mill and reorganises her own life. That in itself is an unusual cinema bonus. The film is, like its heroine, 'not perfect'. But it is still good, probably as good as we're likely to get from a Hollywood company like 20th Century Fox.

Norma Rae, her father, her mother and all her friends work in the small town mill. It's a place of lousy pay and multiple health hazards, but it's the only job going. She

has the makings of a militant — 'the biggest mouth in the mill' and an irreverent, pent-up anger — but there is no union tradition. Under the roof and possessive eye of her father she raises her two kids in a sloppy but not uncaring fashion, and slips out when she can for a hotel-room screw with a hunk of man who tells her: 'You're here to make me feel good'.

Then Reuben arrives in town. He's a lot of things Norma has never met before: a Jew, a middle class New Yorker who likes opera and Dylan Thomas, a non-

sexist man — and a union organiser. After a fair bit of angling, he hooks 'the big fish I wanted', and Norma Rae joins the union and becomes his No.1 aide. Meanwhile, she has married a nice ordinary decent sort of fellow who'll 'stay home and hand over my pay check every week' (unlike her first husband who died in a drunken brawl); but though he's no pig, he's still typically and inevitably male chauvinist in his expectations of wifely services at the cooker, the washing machine and the ironing board.

Norma gets stuck in to union work, slaving over a hot duplicator to the resentment of her neglected husband. Feminists will no doubt say she exchanges the domination of a husband for that of the male union organiser: but she has chosen the union as the way forward for all of them, a first step to control over their lives. Reuben is a part of something that will serve her, though he himself must use her to establish the union.

The union and her work in it are also a step towards her personal liberation. Her hus-

band gets over his jealousy and comes to terms with her as a 'free woman who stood up and fought'. Through militant working class activity she has created a new framework for her personal relationships.

The film avoids some possible Hollywood snares. Though it focuses on its heroine, it manages to end up with a collective triumph for the union in her absence: it's ceased to be a one-woman show. The union organiser, though handsome and likeable, is no Paul Newman: he's big-nosed, toothy, and overcomes a measure of middle class wetness by sheer brazenness.

Credulity is somewhat stretched when Norma spouts bits of New York Yiddish and announces 'I've bought my own Dylan Thomas'. And the innocent naked bathe in a rural water-hole in a break from union rounds was quite beyond belief. But most of it is possible if not altogether probable. And there are other good things, like Norma's bantering, affectionate relationship with her father.

Some may find the emot-

ionalism (or sentimentality, according to taste) is laid on too thick, and in places the dialogue seems just too quotable. More seriously, the film slides round the race question, assuming the virtual elimination of racism among the mill workers unless it is specifically incited by the bosses. The bosses' weak-kneed passivity and acquiescence while the union slaps them in the face with clause after clause of the Federal labour laws is also pretty unreal, and of course limits the politics of the film to utter legality. And the terms of reference of the film as a whole locate the workers' struggle in the most out-of-the-way backwater of capitalism possible, safely away from the mainstream of today's struggles.

These things all lend the film a glossy cosiness that challenges nothing but the sort of anti-union bosses that capitalism can very well live without.

Even so, it's a good and rousing film to see, and even if the fight is toned down, it's on the right side of the battle lines.

SOPHIA CAPLAN



GMWU says: don't join the fight

THE CONFED leaders have been giving all the exemptions they can from the strike action for their pay claim. They have had help from the leaders of the GMWU.

In a circular dated July 24th, National Industrial Officer Frank Cottam instructed members in "a number of BSC plants who follow some or all of the basic conditions set out in the National Engineering Agreement, negotiated between the CSEU and the EEF"

that "they should not participate in the industrial action being taken by the CSEU against the EEF".

The Spun Plants branch of the GMWU at BSC Stanton, meeting on August 19th, passed the following resolution, moved by Workers' Action supporter Pete Radcliff:

"This branch considers its members covered by the CSEU-EEF agreements and entitled to all the benefits

resulting from this year's negotiations.

"We therefore reject the implications of Bro. Cottam's letter to branch stewards and demand... official backing to our full involvement in this year's negotiations and action".

AUEW members at Stanton have been coming out on the one-day strikes, but there is not yet the will among GMWU members to take unofficial action and join them.

WORKERS' ACTION

All out, say Birmingham engineers

1,000 BIRMINGHAM engineering workers at a rally in Digbeth Hall on Monday 20th gave strong support to calls for an all-out strike.

In Liverpool a sizeable minority of 350 workers at a rally at the Pier Head barracked Trades Council

president Barry Williams with all-out strike calls. In Leeds a mass meeting passed a resolution calling on the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions to start an all-out strike.

At the Birmingham meeting several floor speakers

got loud applause when they demanded all-out action. Rover shop steward Pat Hickey was ruled out of order when he tried to move an amendment for an all-out strike, but even the chairman, ASTMS official Don Groves, had to admit

that was the will of the meeting. He said it would be reported to the Confed. nationally.

Before the meeting, two to three thousand workers had marched through Birmingham city centre. Outside Digbeth Hall, about 20 women workers from Lucas (Great King St.) staged a 'back to work' protest heavily publicised by the local press. One of the 'back to work' protesters was allowed to speak in the meeting, and complained that workers had not been given enough information about the Confed claim and the action. But another woman worker from Great King St. spoke denouncing the lack of preparation for the one-day strike — and calling for an all-out strike.

Across the country, the one-day strike, the third in a series organised by the Confed., was solid. There were also rallies or marches in Sheffield, Glasgow, Dundee and Hull.

The Confed. is continuing an overtime ban and has planned a weekly series of two-day strikes, starting on September 3rd. AUEW general secretary John Boyd has announced that the unions are going to the government arbitration service ACAS again. Perhaps they hope to make some sort of

deal before September 3rd on the claim for £80 minimum time rate for skilled workers, £60 for unskilled, a 39 hour week with progress to 35 hours by 1982, two days extra holiday, and a common implementation date on April 1st, 1979.

The Engineering Employers' Federation show no signs of offering any deal at all. The strongest force on the left in the Confed, the Communist Party, is doing nothing to take up the call for an all-out strike or to push the struggle any further than the Confed. leaders' plans. To win, engineering workers must organise to press for an all-out strike, placing no confidence in the Confed. leaders. Mass meetings and flying pickets must be organised. The fight must be linked with the general battle for a shorter working week and for a national minimum wage of at least £60.

FORDS LAYOFFS

1,650 assembly workers on the night shift in the PTA plant at Ford Dagenham have been laid off until further notice.

The lay-off is the bosses' response to a strike by 97 men in the paint shop. The strike is demanding the reinstatement of a worker sacked after allegedly assaulting a policeman.

Talks involving national union officials are planned for Wednesday 22nd.

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

FRIDAY 24-MONDAY 27 AUGUST: Workers' Action weekend school, in London. Sessions on Ireland, Eurocommunism, the General Strike, Gay Liberation, the women's movement. Inquiries to WA, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. Open sessions: • Friday 24th. Workers' Action-IMG debate on Revolutionaries and the Labour Party. 8pm at the Hemingford Arms, Offord Rd, London N1.

• Saturday 25th. Showing of the film 'Harlan County', 7.30pm at the Hemingford Arms, and social. Entrance £1 (to go to WA fund).

• Sunday 26th. Debate on socialists and nuclear power, with speakers from WA, IKL (Austria) and Spartacusbund (W.Germany). 8pm at the Metropolitan, Farringdon Rd/Clerkenwell Rd.

Wednesday 5 September. Lobby the TUC. London coach leaves Euston 7.30am.

Friday 7 September. London Workers' Action meeting: 'Building a labour movement campaign for troops out of Ireland'. 8pm at the Hemingford Arms, Offord Rd, N1.

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Car workers from Longbridge on the march. Photo: Newline.

Talbot strike reaches out for support

TALBOT workers in Coventry, on strike since the end of June at the Ryton plant and since July 10 at Stoke, are sending out delegations in an effort to gain broad support for their struggles.

Strikers from Stoke have been to Newport and Hull docks and to factories in London, Nottingham, Birmingham, and elsewhere. Dockers are being asked for support if Talbot tries to

break the strike by importing cars from the continent.

Commenting on the response, one striker told *Workers' Action*, 'If there was a league table for trade unionism, Stoke would be in the fourth division'.

Pay at the Talbot factories is now seriously below the average for engineering in the West Midlands. The workers are demanding a

25% rise and a 35 hour week, and the bosses have offered 5½%. But the real issue, in the view of some strikers, is that Talbot's new owners, Peugeot-Citroen, want to close the Coventry factories.

The workers have to win the fight on pay in order to prepare for the fight on jobs.

Workers at the Linwood factory, in Scotland, have voted to accept a 10½%

offer including parity money. But all Talbot production is shut down for lack of the engines produced at Stoke.

And the Coventry workers are ready to stick it out.

There was one setback at Stoke when toolroom workers scabbed on the Confed strike of August 13th. By agreement with the strike committee, white collar workers and the toolroom men have

been going in to work through the production workers' strike, but the toolroom came out for August 6th — and were then suspended without pay for two days.

In a similar effort to get their own back on the strike, bosses at Ryton have refused to pay out tax rebates with the excuse that a wages van was stopped at the picket line for 10 minutes.

CPSA members rebuff right wing

AT THE end of the June meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the civil service clerical workers' union CPSA, union president Kate Losinska ruled that the CPSA vice-presidential election for 1979-80 had to be re-run because of technical ballot malfunctions.

The intention of the right wing was to oust junior vice president Peter Coltman. Then they would insist on a re-run of the NEC elections with Coltman added to the candidates' list, and hope to eliminate the Broad Left majority.

Though Coltman had nothing to do with the ballot mix-ups, the right wing tried to slant things. The faithful *News of the World* came out with an almost open accusation that Coltman was to blame, and a quote from Losinska, yet to be denied, gave the same very strong impression to readers who would not know the details.

Despite all this, Coltman was re-elected. According to results issued on Monday

20th August, Len Lever increased his vote by just over 30,000 to 145,602. Peter Coltman dropped about 6,000 votes, to 86,506. The two runners-up were Charlie Elliott, one of the key organisers of the right wing, who increased his vote by 2,754 to 69,924, and 'Spike' Wood. Wood, a Broad Left candidate in the May elections, refused to stand down for the re-run, and his reward was a 40,809 drop in his vote, to 52,886.

Even now no-one is sure there will not be other challenges to the NEC result. Such are the powers of the CPSA President that any excuse will do, and it cannot be challenged under union rules.

The vice-presidential vote shows that we can and must rely on the CPSA members, never on challenging Losinska through the High Court as Militant and Communist Party supporters on the NEC argued at the last NEC meeting.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY (CPSA NEC, in personal capacity).

WORKERS' ACTION

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