

The Red Mole

for
solidarity strikes



Black the Coal!



Smash
the
7% norm!

FULL ANALYSIS OF THE STRIKE REPRESSION IN SPAIN
INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL MILITANTS LSE OCCUPATION
OCCUPATIONS AT FISHER-BENDIX AND MOLD CEYLON
STUDENTS v THE STATE RACIST EDUCATION

The Red Mole

For roughly twenty years the NUM has collaborated with successive governments and with the Coal Board. The result has been the loss of 400,000 jobs in twelve years. As for pay, the facts in the latest issue of *The Miner* speak for themselves. Fork lift drivers in the Derbyshire field taking home £12.70 a week. 88,000 men who earn under £20 a week. These figures are the real answer to anybody who believes that class collaboration is the answer to anything. The miners are being forced to rediscover what was understood only too well in the Twenties—that in the jungle of capitalism it is only strength and the willingness to fight that get you anything.

The key to the miners strike is, as always, solidarity. Any defeat for the miners is a decisive victory for capitalism and a severe setback for the working class. Millions of workers are discovering in their lower real standard of living that the failure of the trade unions to support the post office workers encouraged the employers and government to take a tough line with everybody. The Government's ceiling on rises of 7% represents peanuts compared to the rate at which the cost of living is shooting up. Already hospital and local government workers have been forced to accept the 7%. If the miners too are forced to accept the Government's ceiling then millions of other workers will feel the pinch.

The forces to give the support that will enable the miners to win are all there. The power workers and the engineers have pay claims in the pipeline. Co-ordinated action would defeat the Government without a doubt. Picketing of power stations by miners is all right so far as it goes. But it is not the real answer. What is needed is to shut the power stations from the inside by joint actions of the power men and the miners. *Too many people in the present strike make a comparison with the miners' defeat of 1926. There is another and more glorious tradition. It is that of "Red Friday", 1925. Then the mere threat of united action by transport workers railwaymen and miners forced mine-owners and government to abandon plans for a miners wage cut. The lesson is clear. In 1925 the miners were united with the rest of the working class and a great victory was won. In 1926 the miners were left to fight alone and a defeat was suffered that demoralised the working class for at least ten years. Now, as then, it is united struggle which will win.*

For a real answer to the government the policy is simple. The power men should immediately give their fullest support to the miners and take joint action. The engineers should reverse their decision to take no national

strike action and also link their struggle to that of the miners. Not only would such action stop the Tories' attack on the standard of living of the working class in its tracks, but it would be a great political victory as well. Next month the sections of the Industrial Relations Act which refer to cooling off periods and solidarity strikes come into effect. Just let the government try a cooling off period or fines against a united action of Power Workers, Miners, and Engineers! They would never dare in the face of real united action. The Industrial Relations Act would be made a mockery of. The Tories' calculated attack on the miners would turn into the biggest political defeat they had suffered for half a century. It is not very difficult to think of what it is necessary to do in support of the miners. The real problem is to find men capable of carrying the policy out.

If the TUC and the NUM executive will not build real unity for struggle, then a long hard struggle for unity at the rank and file level will have to be started. One thing is clear. A real movement of support for the miners is not just a generous gesture. It is an immediate necessity for every trade unionist and worker in Britain.

Tory Strategy And The Miners

When the present government came to power the entire British economy was in a total mess. When Labour had been in office it had tried to increase the rate of growth of the economy from around 2½% up to around 4%. Its basic strategy for doing this had been to promote monopolies and 'rationalisations'. Its weapons for dealing with the working class had been incomes policy, productivity deals and eventually the "In Place of Strife" anti-union laws. All this had been just tinkering with the system and had failed completely. The rate of growth fell to around 1½-2%. The competitive position of British capitalism got worse. A far more decisive attack on the working class than for. Labour had been prepared to mount was called for. Labour tried to show that it was prepared to face up to the need for tougher measures by its decision to try to enter the Common Market and by "In Place of Strife", but it was too late off the mark. The Tories were elected with instructions from the ruling class to weaken permanently the power of the trade unions and improve the position of the economy.

In their plans for an attack on the strength and living standards of the working class, the government had two long and medium term measures. The first was to enter the Common Market. Membership of Europe would create a large market for British goods, would weed out the weak businesses, and higher food prices could be expected to reduce the standard of living of the working class. However, competition in the Common Market would be

tough and the attack on the standard of living might lead to a revolt by the working class. To prevent that, the organisations of the working class had to be weakened so that any fight back would be ineffective. The weapon for doing this was the Industrial Relations Bill. However the IRB would take time to have an effect. No-one but a madman would think that the way to use it was to fine every unofficial striker in sight. That might have led to a revolt against the IRB on the scale of the half million strong demonstrations in Australia against the imprisonment of a trade union leader. The IRB would have to be used gradually so as to build up a suitable atmosphere of fear. If, however, neither the Common Market nor the IRB could be seen as short term solutions to capitalism's problem, then a more immediate weapon had to be found.

The first weapon used by the government was unemployment. This had gone soaring under Labour and was traditionally regarded as an excellent weapon for cooling of militancy. The fear of the dole queue was believed to be a perfect persuader for preventing worries about a declining standard of living. The economic theory of the time was that a level of unemployment of about 600,000 should be enough to put a stop to high wage increases. The government sat and waited as the dole queues reached 700,000, 800,000, 900,000 and moved steadily on towards a million. The policy was not having the expected effect. The working class was not cowering in fear. At the same time the employers, particularly in engineering, were becoming more and more frantic. A stagnant economy was sending profits tumbling and preventing the rate of investment in new plant necessary to maintain a long term competitive position. What is more, unemployment was not doing the job it was supposed to do. During the winter of 1970-71 strikes and wage increases soared. A stagnant economy was bearable if it taught the workers their place. If it did not achieve this, then it was worse than useless. If unemployment was really to bite it needed sending up to a figure around a million and a half at least. For the present the government decided that the risk was too great. Grudgingly and reluctantly Barber began to give some stimulus to the economy. Now however, a real dilemma was faced. High unemployment might not have cooled wage militancy, but in an economy that was expanding

even slowly the bargaining position of the trade unions would improve. The economy might be hit by a real round of wage rises. The government and the employers were desperate to find some way of preventing this.

THE TACTIC OF CONFRONTATION

Faced with a danger of a strong trade union movement in a period when the economy was expanding, the employers began to look around for drastic measures. The Engineering Employers Federation circulated a secret document with a plan to smash DATA. The lock-out returned to fashion. GEC launched a generalized attack on its workers. However, for the main attack, the employers looked unhesitatingly to the State. Only the State machine had the resources in terms of finance, publicity etc. really to weaken the power of the unions. The State was only too willing to oblige. It embarked on a series of clashes with the unions.

The first attempt at a showdown came with the local government workers in Autumn 1970. Here the government got a bloody nose. Tremendous support and obvious complete working class solidarity won the strike. The government however learned a great deal from that strike. In particular it learnt that it must control working class opinion more directly through the press and television. Things were therefore more carefully controlled for the power workers. A carefully managed campaign of hate was built up. The newspapers and television, including people such as David Frost, responded magnificently. Every trivial expression of hostility to the power workers was built up until, to judge from the reports, you would have thought that lynch mobs were roaming the country looking for power workers to murder. This careful campaign worked and the power workers were dealt with. However, it was a rather messy operation and more suitable victims were needed. They were found in the Post Office Workers. Every government resource was used to grind the UPW into the dust. After a heroic six weeks strike the union was defeated. The Tory plan of beating a section of the working class into the dust by careful use of human hardship and misery was successful.

If things were going reasonably well for the government on the public sector workers side,

however, all was not so clear in private industry. In the case of the public sector workers the government had the great advantage that it did not care how much money the strike cost because it could always get it back from the working class in the form of increased charges and taxes anyway. The situation in private industry was more complex. A prolonged strike here could cost millions. Firms were therefore not exactly queuing up to be the guinea pig for the Tory policy. When therefore a big strike did blow up in Fords the outcome was not nearly as decisive as the government would have hoped. Jones and Scanlon intervened to stop the strike but by then the company had been engaged in a far longer strike than it had ever expected. It was by no means seen by the majority of the working class as a clear cut defeat for the Ford workers. The government therefore found itself in a position of stalemate. In the public sector it had won. In heavy industry, which is where it really counts, it had by no means been successful. Certainly the government had seized the offensive—the number of strikes last year was down by nearly a half compared to 1970—but it was by no means clear that it would be able to maintain the initiative once industry started picking up. What the State needed was to pick on some section of workers and beat them so completely that the rest of the working class would be demoralised and believe it impossible to win wage settlements over the level set by the government. If this could be achieved the government could expand the economy, profits and share prices would boom, the increase in the cost of living caused by entry into the Common Market would occur, the standard of living of the working class would be cut, and the trade unions would be too scared to resist. This is what the government's toughness throughout the coal industry negotiations has meant. It is determined to inflict a decisive defeat on the working class that will allow the problems of British capitalism for the next two or three years to be solved with practically no resistance from the working class. It is for this very direct and immediate reason that in the case of miners, even more than most groups of workers, the ensuring of victory in the strike is something that affects the whole working class.

A. Jones

STRIKE INTERVIEWS



Yorkshire

How long do you think it will take for the effects of the strike to spread?

All this they are saying about the stocks being high and that the strike won't have any effect for weeks is wrong. The British Steel Corporation were saying this but already two sections of Rotherham works have closed down and they are talking about a complete closure in a week or so. River Don's going to close down at the end of next week too. And there will be power cuts a lot quicker than they are saying as well.

Can you tell me a little about the background to the strike?

Eleven years ago miners were in fact getting more money a shift than they are getting now. With the introduction of the National Power Loading Agreement all local bargaining powers have been taken away—you can't bargain about conditions as you could before. If they tell you to do a job that is it, you have to do it. Just after the NPLA was brought in, I remember there was a pit which didn't come under the agreement and they were getting £2 a shift more than the other pits. They praise Robens but all he's done is close pits down, speed up productivity and give a third of the men the sack. He promised that those who were kept on would get big increases in money and better conditions!

How do you see the strike developing?

It's difficult to say because our pit is one of the most conservative. They say that if our pit is on strike then it must be right.... A lot of miners are saying it's going to be a long one—anything up to six months, but I'm worried it may be over in a few weeks with not much gained. I haven't got much confidence in the Executive and they have been talking about productivity deals and extra holidays. Even if we went back in a few weeks it would take so long to get back to full production that we wouldn't qualify for the productivity increases—and the NUM Executive know this. They are supposed to be offering five days extra holiday but you can't choose to have them when you want them. The Executive know all this but I think a lot of the men could be got into accepting it if there was some flat rate increase too.

Coventry

—What is the feeling amongst the men in the Coventry area?

The men were certainly ready to take militant action. A broad section of the men feel that for far too long we have just accepted anything, and when they start to compare their conditions of work and the wages they take home, which are very much worse than in ordinary factory work, then there is the feeling that some desperate action is required to try and alter this.

—Could you say something about the effect of the Power Loading Agreement locally?

Well apart from its other effects, for my own part the most important feature in the PLA has been a very cunning phrasing of the whole agreement which weights it very heavily in favour of management. If you take clause after clause they say "the men shall do this, shall comply with that", and when it refers to management, it says simply "the management may"; and it gives almost complete autonomy to management to select what they think are suitable workmen, suitable face-teams, suitable development teams, and this militates very badly against the more progressive, outspoken type of worker.

—Would you say there has been a loss of control by the workers to the management?

Most certainly. In fact in my own pit, there are very few men on the Union Committee left to operate on the forward production points. In fact, the election of a militant to a position on the branch committee is usually the signal for his very cunning persecution and isolation and this is a deliberate process on the part of the Board. It is done by in some cases offering them better jobs, or a more convenient shift to work on the change-round; whatever the way, I understand it's happening on quite a wide scale.

—What kind of organisation do you have in the pits? I believe you don't have a shop-stewards organisation there?

No we don't. The organisation is from a branch committee, and this takes a very loose form. In the big branches there's a committee of twelve, and sometimes it's a non-representative type of branch committee, maybe the twelve most popular chaps in the pit, and they may not have anything to do with the key sections of the pit.

—Does this mean that there's no immediate union representation at the point of production?

Yes, it's a very bad situation for us, and more and more, I think, the lads are beginning to realise that, until we have this sort of representation at the coal faces, at the point of production, it weakens their whole aim.

—What position have the NUM leadership adopted to this sort of thing?

Some of them don't seem to realise this happens, they refuse to believe that this is something quite deliberate, they seem to accept that it's all the luck of the draw. But you don't have to be very bright to realise that the management are doing this.

—Gormley has spoken of £3 as being reasonable for a settlement...

I think Joe Gormley has caused a bit of concern by the statements which he has made in relation to this, and he hasn't been very factual about it. What he has said is that there is not a big gap—and this needs a lot of explaining—between £2 a week and £9 a week and this is the difference between the demand and the offer. Then again, he said that a little cash was not forthcoming and therefore the strike took place. He seemed to be more sorry that the strike was taking place rather than that the money was not forthcoming—at least, he gave me that impression.

—Gormley also seems prepared to concede a further rise in productivity tied to the £3 increase. Are you opposed to this?

Most certainly, the mining industry has reached the pinnacle of production under modern mining techniques. The management don't accept this, but let me elaborate on this one. One of the reasons why the NCB said they couldn't up their first offer was because of the fact that they couldn't, even with optimism, look forward to a rise in productivity of more than 1½ cwt. per man-shift; and yet now the wage rise was to be tied to a 3 cwt. target, and 2 cwt. of this had to be offset to pay for the original no-strings offer.

—What do you think of the TUC's statements about solidarity actions?

Disgusting, and that just about sums up the general feeling. And the question that must be asked here is just how long we're going to tolerate an organisation which up to now hasn't in any shape or form come up to expectations with regard to organising and assisting unions to organise and get assistance. Everyone knows that had the TUC moved into action the Post Office workers would never have been allowed to go down.

—How do you see the prospects for the strike?

I'm very confident. There's a vast amount of capital tied up in this industry and if the cards are played correctly the Coal Board are very soon going to have to say to the Government, if they haven't said so already, that they're going to have to take the responsibility for this, because some pits stand to lose as much as £2 million in capital equipment within a period of two to three weeks. And I would say that this is our main weapon. We must ensure that there is no assistance given to the Coal Board in maintaining it. Responsibility lies with the Board and the Government to settle the dispute quickly in order to save an enormous amount of public capital.

—If the strike goes on for some time, do you think we will see the Tories trying to use the Industrial Relations Act against the miners?

I would welcome this, very much I would welcome it, because I don't think the Tories have ever been faced with a strike of this nature. They'd have to withdraw troops from the various parts of their small empire to cope with the situation if they ever dare to use the IRA.

—How do you think we can defeat the Tories?

By united action. That is why I say, if only the Government would move against the miners' union, even if this just meant imposing a cooling off period. It would probably be the very thing we require in order to get to grips, because it's easier to defeat an opponent when you can get to grips with him than when he's always taking a step backwards and you can't land a telling blow on him. I think this is the thing that would really worry them—a real solid strike in a key industry and the others coming in behind.

Prospects For The Strike



When Joe Gormley, NUM President, says that "neither side wants a strike", he's wrong—the mood of the miners nationally is the most militant in decades, and even those areas which voted against strike action in the national ballot are solidly behind the stoppage. The reasons for this militancy are quite simple. From being top wage-earners in the country in the early 50's, the miners have sunk to being about thirteenth in the league at present. Coal face workers need a £7 a week rise to restore the purchasing power they had in 1965—and around 20 per cent of miners would find that living on supplementary benefits would make no more than a £2 week difference to their income. At the same time, the rundown and capitalist 'nationalisation' of the coal industry has meant massive redundancies and pit closures over the past two decades. In 15 years, manpower has been cut by

halt, while productivity even since 1963 has increased from an output of 33.4 cwt. per manshift to 44.2 cwt. in 1970.

The result has been hardship for the miners and hefty profits for the Coal Board—profits transformed into losses after interest payments to the former mine-owners are taken into account. In 1970 for example, the industry made an operating surplus of £34.1 million, which ended up as a profit of £0.5 million after interest payments. This gives NCB the excuse to turn round and claim they 'can't afford' to grant wage increases.

These factors have always been present, of course, but new factors such as unemployment have entered the situation. Whereas previously miners in the Midlands and the south of England regarded redundancies and closures with something approaching indifference, since there were always plenty of alternative jobs going in other industries in the area, the high level of unemployment nationally means that even in these areas redundancy can mean permanent or long-term employment. The crucial split between militant and conservative coal fields, which has always been played upon by the NUM bureaucracy (in the 1970 sell-out for example) has begun to heal. The 7 percent Tory wage rise ceiling has forced the greatest solidarity between all coal fields for decades.

SOME WEAKNESSES

The miners are entering this crucial battle with a position, it has to be admitted, less strong than last year. They will be receiving no strike pay, and single miners especially will have to fight the Social Security very hard to receive anything at all. There is talk of hardship payments to single strikers from the NUM, and the special pre-strike issue of *The Miner* printed a brief guide to Social Security payments for strikers. But what is required is the organisation of strikers to squeeze everything they can get from the SS—and the NUM so far has shown no willingness to see that this happens. It is important that militants with experience of Claimants Unions link up with local miners to set up strikers claimants committees.

The real millstone round the neck of the miners in this fight, however, is undoubtedly the NUM 'leadership'. By consciously working within the framework of a capitalist nationalised coal industry, they have been consistent accomplices of the NCB and successive governments (Labour or otherwise) in running down the industry and throwing thousands of miners on the scrapheap in the interests of 'profitability', 'nationalisation', and, of course, the 'national interest'. These people will find it extremely difficult to fight the Tories after years of collaboration.

LEADERSHIP DOESN'T WANT A FIGHT

This is what Gormley means when he says that "neither side wants a strike". The NUM right wing want to continue their cosy relationship with the coal board, accepting all the closures, redundancies and productivity deals which British capitalism wants for the industry, in return for reasonably high wages for the few miners left in the pits. That way, they could keep both the bourgeoisie and their rapidly declining membership happy.

Unfortunately for the NUM bureaucracy, however, the Tories won't play ball—this isn't just a miners strike, but the latest round in a bitter struggle with the working class.

During (and after) the strike, therefore, militants in the coal industry are faced with the problem of fighting the bureaucracy. It won't be an easy fight—for a start, NUM officials are elected for life. But given the changing mood in the pits, local initiatives can build up a firm base of militancy from which the struggle can continue, whatever the outcome of this strike.

—Jim Murphy



OCCUPATION

Fisher Bendix Occupied

On Wednesday, 5 January, a mass meeting of almost 800 workers at Fisher Bendix in Kirkby voted unanimously to take over the factory in face of threatened redundancies. Thorn Electrical Industries, who took over the factory from Parkinson-Cowan last year, had made it clear that they intended to close the works by May 1972, and the only offer they were prepared to make during talks before the occupation was a stay of execution for 28 days. By occupying, the workers now have on their side the tremendous bargaining power of over £2 million worth of plant and stock.

In the article below we look at Fisher Bendix as an example of 'rationalisation', interview two of the workers leading the struggle, and assess the significance of factory occupations in the struggle against redundancies.

'RATIONALISATION' AND UNEMPLOYMENT

It is possible to divide the types of unemployment in Britain in three broad ways. The unemployment of a depressed area tends to relate to the declining antique industries there. More advanced industries are using the chance to rationalise or 'shake out' excess manpower prior to entry of the EEC. An industry like Steel is contracting because of continual under-investment, low pricing (to keep costs low for private capital), and the international financial downturn. Thorn industries performance speaks for itself.

Total profits in 1961 were £4 million, by 1970 they had risen to £60.02 million. In 1971 their turnover had reached £342,581,000, while from 1962-68 they received £6,588,420 in investment grants. Thorn annexed the Parkinson-Cowan Company, which owned the Fisher Bendix factory in Kirkby, in May last year for £4 million. The object in Fisher Bendix was to close the factory—and take the profitable lines elsewhere (they own 70 major factories in Britain and eight overseas with over 300 subsidiaries). A breakdown of profits for 1969-70 shows that sales of durable consumer goods (of the sort made by Fisher Bendix) accounted for 67 per cent of the total. Despite this, and despite a rise in share prices from 62p in 1961 to 268p in 1970, despite a steady rise in dividends (now 15 per cent) Thorn are capable of cutting costs even further. They plan to move Fisher Bendix production to CARSA (near Madrid) in Spain, and to Newcastle—where labour is cheaper. In negotiations the Chairman for Thorn was quoted as saying, "the reason for taking our work to Newcastle was the moral obligation to the people in a depressed area".

This case study in rationalisation combined with other factors to produce an explosive situation. Kirkby is part of a depressed region. Unemployment wavers between 10-11 per cent. More than 2,000 are on the dole. Nearly 800 men and women's jobs are threatened by the closure—and they have no possible alternative employment. Fisher Bendix is seen as the focal point of local anger. Thorn management took on the workers at Fisher Bendix in a struggle over redundancies lasting 9 weeks only last June. The pressures of keeping a high investment rating has forced Thorn to take them on again.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OCCUPATIONS

The present rash of factory occupations has great significance. And there is some evidence to suppose that at least in one important respect Fisher Bendix is well aware of this. The various workers spoken to realised clearly that they were engaged in a fight against the government. They knew that the key element in such a fight was to extend the struggle both inside Thorn Industries and outside. Workers control has no meaning inside one factory! While it is obvious that *The Red Mole* gives as full support to the occupation as possible, it is important to point out the problems. What these boil down to is the idea that despite the action being directed against the government, and despite the felt need to extend the strike, the action is essentially economic only. Factory occupation is a sharper weapon against the bosses economic attack. A General Strike is proposed for the same ends. But without the new industrial front being linked by militants to a new political strategy, posing a revolutionary alternative, it will fail. It will fail because these industrial actions create a political vacuum which will be filled by the Labour Party. Thus Wedgwood-Benn can make the U.C.S. a platform for his politics, and Fisher Bendix is also being used by Merseyside Labour party MP's, diverting it from the issue of who owns and controls our society to a springboard for their election. The pattern is being set for the most advanced workers to continue the see-saw between total reliance on industrial action (syndicalism) and political reliance on the Labour Party. The only alternative, however small, is the revolutionary left.

—Brian Heron

This interview took place in the administration block of the Fisher Bendix Factory, with Jack Spriggs, A.U.E.W., Factory Convenor; and Stan Ely, shop steward, A.U.E.W.

— What Unions are involved?

J.S. There are 6 Unions, the A.U.E.W., the E. T. U., the T. & G. engineering section, the C.A.W.U., the A.S.T.M.S., and the E.E.P.T.U. All of the membership of these unions support the strike-in. The strike committee members are formed out of all the Unions in the plant. There is complete unity in the factory between the staff unions and the production workers over this question, of the fight against redundancies and the right to work.

— What other Union support have you got?

J.S. Well, so far we have had meetings with the dockers to get goods blacked, and have got the support of the National Docks Shop Stewards Cmt. The Merseyside District Branch of the Amalgamated Engineers have moved in to support the take over with a decision to call for a one day stoppage of all Merseyside members. We've held two mass meetings so far; one in London and the other in a conference of Trade Unionists in Newcastle where the response was very favourable. We've even had resolutions of support for our actions from Trade Unionists in Paris. We intend holding meetings up and down the country. At the moment the Executive Councils of the Staff Unions concerned are discussing the payment of dispute benefit. We don't think there will be any problem over that.

S.E. There is also a meeting today of the joint Shop Stewards Committee of Kirkby Industrial Estate . . . to discuss action over the strike in.

—Any support from Thorn workers nationally?

S.E. Although we're the newest addition to the Thorn industries we have tried to set up a Joint Shop Stewards Committee, representing 25% of the 75,000 work force. The last meeting passed this resolution, that "determined to resist unemployment, the Committee will not allow any

movement of plant or machinery out of any factories within the Thorn group, unless sanctioned by their Committee." We are now calling for another emergency meeting of this body through Jack Spriggs—one of the joint chairmen of the Committee. We have had hundreds of resolutions and letters of support.

—What is support like in the factory?

J.S. Unanimous support at the mass meeting with growing enthusiasm by the workers. They come in on a rota basis to the factory. We haven't decided whether to run 8 or 12 hour shifts yet. We have some administrative problems but we are overcoming them.

— What about the reaction of the management?

J.S. So far not much reaction. They have made no offer except to say that they will pay us half a week's money if we leave the factory. They have since said that they are considering ways of protecting their interests. We are ready to meet any legal attack. Any attempt to move us will meet a mass picket mounted at these gates by our supporters on Merseyside and in Kirkby. The door will always be open to sensible negotiations, however, to talk about jobs for people—we will maintain the machinery in good condition until such talks.

— We understand you visited U.C.S. and Plesseys in preparation for this occupation, what did you learn?

J.S. We decided that U.C.S. type operation of a work-in was impractical for us. Plesseys was more effective. A work-in involves problems of supply to keep production going, sales of products and payment of workers. At Plesseys a strike-in is tying up the movement of machinery, breaking the company's contracts and causing wide spread disruption—it is a more effective weapon.

— The struggle against unemployment includes the struggle against productivity deals and measured day work—what's the situation at Fisher Bendix?

S.E. The factory was always under a productivity deal. This made the fight against unemployment more difficult. It reduces the power of the shop steward on the shop floor. We are stuck to nationally negotiated agreements—but there are many differences in wages for the same job throughout the industry. That is why it is important to strengthen the National Combine Committee.

Interviewers: Patrick Hickey
Willy Cook
Brian Heron

SOLIDARITY FROM KIRKBY ESTATE STEWARDS

The Kirkby Industrial Estate Shop Stewards Committee met and passed the following resolution:

"That we call on Merseyside Trades Council to organise a mass demonstration on Wednesday, 19 January, in Liverpool in support of the Fisher Bendix struggle and the right to work. That all workers be called to leave their factories on that date to participate in the demo. That we demand of the T.U. leaders of MINERS and ENGINEERS to unite workers in struggle on wages, the right to work, and the defence of Unions into one movement of industrial action to bring down the Tory Government".

There is little doubt that this resolution will be passed by the Trades Council. The meeting also set up an Action Committee: Harry Shult, its secretary, said his aim was "to involve the Estate in sympathy strike action and build a general strike against unemployment throughout Merseyside".

OCCUPATION AT ALISS-CHALMERS

One hundred and twenty workers have now been occupying the Aliss-Chalmers factory in Mold, North Wales, since January 3rd.

Like the other occupations so far they took this action in face of a threat of immediate and wholesale redundancies; and as at Plesseys and Fisher Bendix the tactic of a 'work-in' was rejected. As Hugh Hughes, AUEW Convenor at the plant, pointed out to us, "By working in we would be subsidising the company, whereas the best way is to hit them in the pocket where it hurts, by occupying"

The firm of Aliss-Chalmers is an important subsidiary of a large American corporation which manufactures agricultural machinery. The plant manufactures 36 machines a week and exports to such countries as Japan. In the period leading up to the present dispute the work-force was reduced from 230 workers to the present 120. Now the workers are faced with a complete shut-down of the factory.

The original argument for the closure put forward by the management was that it was an inevitable result of a decline in the demand for agricultural machinery. On 4th October, however, the workers were then told that an agreement had been signed subcontracting the manufacture of the machinery made in the plant to a firm in Uttoxeter; by doing this they anticipated raising production to 180 machines a week. On hearing this, the workers immediately demanded discussions between the management and union officials, and held a protest march which had 100 per cent union support as well as a great deal of local support. On December 31st, they were given notice to quit—and it was only on the following day that the union were at last notified of a date for a meeting with the management.

In the words of Hugh Hughes, the meeting on 2nd January, "was a farce". Management hadn't been briefed on the situation, nor did they have any power to take decisions. Instead they told the workers, who were still carrying on as usual, to dismantle the factory machines for transportation to the Uttoxeter plant. It was at this point that the workers decided to occupy immediately. Just to strike would have allowed the management simply to lock the plant gates for the remainder of the notice to quit. And by occupying they are also in control not only of the machinery which was to have been transported to Uttoxeter, but also of the supplies of spare parts for both home and abroad.

The factory is a 100 per cent unionised plant, all the workers being members of the AUEW, and the occupation demonstrates once again the necessity for strong union organisation. Here the union was so well organised that it was able to act immediately when faced with a threatened closure. This position contrasts very strongly with that in the other Aliss-Chalmers plant at Essendene in Lincolnshire, which is only a partly unionised plant and so is unable or unwilling to carry out industrial action in support of their fellow workers. The Mold workers have arranged a three hourly shift system which operates 24 hours a day, so that there are always a number of workers in the plant and all the workers are involved. They have taken the initiative and set up a fighting fund, and have organised collection sheets with the help of the Welsh Nationalist Party (Plaid Cymru). Further donations should be sent to: A.C.G.B. Campaign Fund, c/o AUEW Office, Ash Grove Shotton, Deeside.

The workers at Aliss-Chalmers are in a strong position. It is clear that the management want to get production going again and keep up their profit margins, but there is the strength of organised labour to resist their manipulation. Workers at Aliss-Chalmers are demanding the

right to work on *their* terms; a demand which is attracting increasing militant support from other sections of the labour movement. In this lies its chief significance.

J. Karl
Sue Lindsay
Thomas Meehan

THE STRIKE AT ROLLS ROYCE ENDS

The strike by 6,800 manual workers at Rolls-Royce, Bristol, ended on Monday, 3 January after nine weeks of struggle. The strike had been over a £5 cost of living pay claim. Management had offered £1.50 with strings which included: productivity clauses, an offset clause which would discount 50p of the claim against any national award, and a no claims for 12 months clause. The settlement recommended by AUEW area executive member Bill John was accepted by a mass meeting last week. The settlement accepted was a £1.50 a week cost of living increase backdated to October. Although John guaranteed that the 50p would not be offset, in fact the settlement states that negotiations will start on the offsetting of the 50p as soon as work is resumed. The other strings have been dropped.

Although the R-R strikers have not got the £5 they came out for, they made the company drop the conditions they had insisted on. R-R central management working very closely with the Government were determined to defeat this claim. However a solid strike for nine weeks that has cost a £6 million loss of output along with rusted up machinery forced them to change their minds. For the first time, it was the company who asked for the talks which settled the strike. If the trade union officials had not been in such a hurry to settle the strike, a much larger award was well on the way.

The question of the offset clause is important. It is the intention both of the company and the EEF to force offset clauses on all local wage claims to prevent leap frogging pay claims. And this is one of the reasons why management refused to negotiate seriously with the strike committee until late December. It had other reasons for sticking so hard to its original offer—Rolls-Royce Bristol is the only Rolls-Royce factory without a productivity deal and it hoped that, with strong government backing, it could defeat the workers and then move in quickly with its productivity deal, with all the redundancies that would mean.

This strategy shows the hollowness of all the Government's talk about nationalising Rolls-Royce to 'prevent hardship'. It also shows the futility of any union policy based on co-operation with the management. The struggle at Rolls-Royce is to organise rank and file opposition to both company and government policy. The coming shop stewards elections will be vital in this respect.

—Andy Metcalf

COOPERATIVE WORKERS STRIKE

At the moment workers at the Co-Operative Insurance Society in Manchester, all members of ASTMS, are engaged in a wages struggle; negotiations were broken off last Monday, January 10th, after discussions between Clive Jenkins, Ian Mikardo and the management had failed to get an increased offer.

ASTMS are demanding 15 per cent which will simply gain parity for CIS workers with those in other insurance firms, while the management has refused to increase its offer beyond 9 per cent on the wages bill, i.e. some sections may only get 1 per cent rise while others may get 13 per cent, which eventually averages out at 9 per cent.

From Monday the Union began to bring out selected offices to join the 44 workers already on strike, as a result of the management's attempt to force the workers to either sign a clause giving them the right to lay off anyone made idle by the strike, or else be sacked. All 1800 workers at CIS now regard themselves as officially sacked but are still going in to work, while maintaining a 'black' on all work normally done by the strikers.

The next issue of The Red Mole will carry a fuller report of this strike examining its implications for workers elsewhere.

CWMBRAN WORKERS ORGANISE AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT

Nothing could show up the absurdities of the capitalist system better than the development of the so-called 'new towns'. These were originally claim to be a way of providing better housing and jobs for hundreds of thousands. Now, like most of the attempts to 'improve' capitalism, they are turning out merely to create the conditions for worse oppression. An example of this is occurring in the new town of Cwmbran.

Like most new towns Cwmbran was built around a relatively small number of firms looking for a workforce which would be more docile and 'co-operative' than in the old industrial centres. In Cwmbran the situation was slightly different in that the firm of Guest Keen and Nettlefold have been established since the early nineteenth century, and have always been the centre of the old town's industry. In 1971 they had three foundries there producing cylinder blocks for heavy trucks, camshafts, and soft iron motor components, employing some 1,500 men.

On September 18 without any prior warning or consultation the management distributed notices that GKN-Cwmbran would be "ceasing to trade" on December 31. They said that losses sustained in past working and the collapse of the heavy truck market forced the closure. Yet the GKN group reported a profit of £42 million last year.

This was the last straw for the workers of Cwmbran. An action committee was established by the shop stewards to fight the closure. This committee brought together the stewards, union officials, the Trades Council, Cwmbran Council, and the New Town Development Corporation, and all the councils of the Valley. GKN carried out a campaign of threats and intimidation. Sir Raymond Brooks, chairman of the GKN combine declared that if the closure at Cwmbran was contested there "may be repercussions in other plants in the South Wales area". Eventually the redundancies were forced through. Thirteen hundred men were sacked. Unemployment jumped to 15 per cent of the workforce.

To try to prevent similar redundancies and to fight a political battle against unemployment the stewards of the sacked workers have now turned to organising the sacked men and the other 1,500 on the dole. By ensuring the solidarity of unemployed and employed workers a more effective struggle can be waged against unemployment. Despite a severe defeat the workers of Cwmbran show that the struggle against unemployment can go on even in a town being systematically murdered by the workings of the capitalist system. Similar actions must be launched in other areas, not with the aim simply of organising the unemployed for securing their maximum benefits from the Social Security but for waging a political campaign to prevent redundancy in the first place.

SCABBING IN COLCHESTER

The 142 power stations in England and Wales that depend on coal to generate electricity have by now dug very deeply into the mountains of coal that were carefully built up in their yards over the summer. The supplies for industry are in a similar state. Based on average consumption needs, things would appear fairly satisfactory for the NCB at least for the next six or seven weeks. In reality, the situation is made far worse than this by the uneven distribution of stocks. We can expect therefore, a concerted effort by the whole of British industry to effect the movement of coal by employing scab labour not subject to union discipline.

It is thus hardly surprising to hear of attempts to use the East Anglian coastline, and Essex in particular, an area not far from the major European ports and well-known for its general lack of unionisation and industrial militancy. Moreover, a whole series of very small docks in the area employ only casual labour which makes them rather more flexible in terms of the cargoes which they handle.

Last Friday, a ship from Rotterdam, turned away by dockers at Dagenham in Greater London, soon found its way to Rowhedge, one such small, non-unionized quay near Colchester. Socialists in the area were quick to react. A united front in defence of the miners' strike was formed involving members of IMG, IS, the Spartacus League, the CP, and Colchester Claimants and Unemployed Workers Union, in an attempt to mobilise people in the area—workers, the unemployed, students—to stop the movement of coal. The NUM, at the request of the united front, sent four representatives from Barnsley with the promise of a 'flying squad' of a hundred more at five hours' notice should the need arise for a mass picket. This is almost certain to be the case—already further evidence has been uncovered of coal movements up the coast at Mistley. And it doesn't end there: Ipswich Power Station, it seems, is fed with coal direct from the ships' by conveyor belt. More information is being assembled everyday by the united front which plans meetings in the town, at the university and at the technical college. Contact should be made via: Defence of the Miners' Strike, 16 Church Hill, Rowhedge, Colchester CO5 7ED (Tel: 026-28-308).

Jonathan Silberman
Tim Hall.

STUDENTS BACK MINERS

Following a recommendation from the Liaison Committee Conference, at least two students unions have voted money to the miners as 'expenses' for a speaker. York University students union voted £250 and Norwich students voted £100 at union meetings on Monday night. In both cases it was posed clearly as a challenge to the Government's attempt to muffle such political activity by students.

Students at the University of Kent, Canterbury have been helping with picketing at Dover. Transport from the University is being provided by the NUM.

STUDENTS



The movement of opposition to the government's proposals on student unions, has evoked the largest student response to any issue since 1968. Nevertheless since the great days of May 1968, apart from often isolated outbursts, the international student struggle has undergone a tremendous decline. Now, when there are apparent signs of a limited revival, it is necessary to assess the record of the past years and to try to understand the developments of the future.

THE STUDENTS AND THE WORKING CLASS—FIRST STAGE.

The real strength of the student movement of 1966-69 was its relatively high political level. This was determined by the whole way it developed. Cold war ideology had been built on a mutual understanding between Stalinism and capitalism. Both agreed, for their own reasons, that Eastern Europe and the USSR represented Socialism. This suited the Stalinists because it allowed them to posture before the working class of the world as the enemies of capitalism, and it suited the bourgeoisie because it allowed them to point to the oppressive regime of the USSR and thereby discredit the whole idea of socialism. It was the colonial revolution, particularly in its victorious form in Cuba and in the continuing possibilities in Latin America and Vietnam that shattered the whole cosy set-up. It meant that new possibilities other than those of senile stalinism or ineffectual liberalism were opened up. The old consensus was shattered for ever. This whole process of the rebirth of a revolutionary movement however occurred in a way that no-one predicted.

In the 1950's every revolutionary had a very comfortable picture of the world. It was assumed that any rebirth of revolutionary struggle would be led by the working class. It was clear and obvious. Every Marxist knew that the working class was the only truly revolutionary class in society and therefore any movements must of necessity be led by it. The whole world was a rosy picture of certainty. Reality was to dictate otherwise for several reasons.

Firstly. The way in which capitalism decayed after World War Two, meant that the organised working class gained proportionately more than anyone else out of the boom. Capitalism could grant wage claims. It could not however solve the problems of social expenditure such as housing, education, health, etc. For this reason the most continually increasing oppression was felt initially not amongst the mass of the working class but amongst groups such as immigrants, racial and national groups, etc. Thus for example in the United States, oppression began to build up far more rapidly the black ghetto than it did in the white working class.

Secondly. One of the ways in which the inability of capitalism to solve the problems of social expenditure showed itself was in the failure to be able to finance higher education in the old lavish fashion. This was particularly unfortunate for capitalism as it co-incided with a period when the need to expand the highly skilled sections of the labour force increased epormously. Tens of thousands of new students were crammed into universities which had nothing like the ability to cope with their numbers. The increase in numbers can be seen from the fact that before the second world war only 2.7 per cent of the suitable age group were in higher education, this had only risen to 5.6 per cent by 1956, but had

bounded to 15.7 per cent in 1968 and is projected to reach 33 per cent by 1980 (Brosan et. al., *Patterns and policies in higher education*, p.23).

Thirdly. The whole process of the increasingly obvious inability of capitalism to solve the problems of poverty, housing, education and every conceivable form of necessary social expenditure, the ever more obvious nature of imperialism, the fact that the increase in the number of students meant that higher education was no longer a clear ticket for membership of the ruling class, all acted together to create an acute crisis of bourgeois ideology. The poverty marchers of the Southern States of America, the civil rights workers, the 'rediscovery' of poverty were all the forerunners of a state of complete discrediting of all the rubbish which the ruling class refers to as 'academic truth'. The period of the glorious 'freak out' was entered. The era of the 'course-critique' was upon us.

Fourthly. The depopulation of the mass proletarian organisations over a period of 20 years meant that a layer of young workers had come into existence who were well outside the control or influence of the Labour Party or the Trade Union bureaucracy. Although fragmented, this group would be sucked in behind any real political movement that developed.

The focus which united briefly these tremendous confused layers of society was the issue of the Vietnam war. On October 27th 1968, a hundred thousand people marched through the streets of London claiming to be moving against the Vietnam war but in fact hoping that somehow, from somewhere, the revolution was going to happen. Vietnam had become merely the focus for the greatest display of militant political opposition to capitalism since 1945. But by October 1968 the whole world had changed. In May of that year the French working class had shattered the entire picture of the world built by the bourgeoisie. The students had reintroduced the barricades to Paris and the workers had reintroduced the mass occupation strike, to politics. In one week the entire political situation of Europe was transformed.

It has never returned to the old state since. In Britain in the period after 1969 the largest struggles since 1926 occurred. In Italy fifteen million workers took part in the biggest strikes in history. The old days of euphoric 'its all happening man' politics had disappeared. The very highest point of the student movement, the night of the barricades in Paris, had under-

mined the very conditions for the existence of the old student movement. Before 1968 the students had been not only the politically most advanced section of the population, they had also had good claim to be the bearers of the most advanced forms of struggle and in a certain sense therefore the physical leaders of the class struggle. After 1968 that was no longer true. The organisational relation of forces between students and the working class is roughly equivalent to that between the single ship of the Royal Monaco navy and the American Seventh fleet. To find their feet in this new role, the student militants needed to re-think their relation to the entire political situation.

THE STUDENTS AND THE WORKING CLASS—SECOND STAGE.

The first instinctive reaction of student militants to the new political reality was to join one of the contending revolutionary groups. This was based on the absolutely correct idea that the immediate need was to relate in some way to the upsurge of the working class, and that this could not be done directly by the student 'movement' but only via a revolutionary organisation which embraced both students and workers and had global understanding of the political situation. This however in itself fails to solve the problem of the political relation between students and the working class. This is far too complex a question to be reduced to the simple formula of selling newspapers outside factory gates. Let us examine the various ways in which a relation to the working class can be shown in practice. We will work from one extreme to the other.

At the most simple level, is the steady propaganda work which student militants of all revolutionary organisations carry out amongst worker militants. This ranges from everything from selling newspapers to running political campaigns on every conceivable subject.

At another level there is the organising of students as such for specific acts of solidarity. The collection of funds for UCS, the voting of student union money to the postal workers, the organising of student participation in pickets is of this type.

At a more complex level is the use of student action to help groups of workers in struggle. The occupation of Lancaster University in support of cleaners was a case of this. At a yet more complex level there is the mobilisation of students to create the initial base for a campaign aimed at the working class. For example, in France this occurred over the question of the Burgos trials. The Ligue Communiste was able to utilise a base amongst students in conjunction with its base inside the working class to inaugurate a series of demonstrations on Burgos, which brought the issue into the centre of political attention in France and forced all the workers organisations, including ultimately the French Communist Party, to take action on this issue. This campaign greatly increased the prestige of the revolutionary organisations in the eyes of the French working class and paved the way for the support of sections of the trade unions for the May 1st, 1971 demonstrations of revolutionary organisations. A political campaign run amongst students on the question of Ireland would be an example of this type of tactic.

Finally there is the use of the specific struggle of students to draw out general political lessons which can be understood by and influence the working class. On a small scale the 1970 issue of secret political files on students was an example of this. On a more dramatic level was the use made by the students of the repression carried out inside the French universities and by the French police in the period leading up to May 1968. This political struggle helped to spotlight the whole repressive nature of de Gaulle's regime. If we take the last of these first we can look at it in the light of the current struggle over the issue of students unions.

Firstly, we have to be clear about why the state is worried about the question of the political activities. It is not because the

bourgeoisie is worried about the loss of 'public' money or because it fears the ferocious fighting potential of the average student body. Neither does it believe that it can prevent a significant number of students joining revolutionary organisations. What it does hope it can achieve is to prevent the mass of the student body undertaking political activity. The reason why it fears this can be quite easily understood when the course of a movement like the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign is studied or the logic of the development of a movement on Ireland is understood.

A political campaign on a revolutionary issue such as Ireland or Vietnam will never be started by the reformist leaders of the working class. The mass of the working class however is still dominated by reformist ideology. It too therefore is unlikely to be the initial focus for a political movement on an issue such as this. On the other hand because of the various factors already discussed the contradictions focussing upon the student population are such that any political issue can get directly to this section of the population. The students can therefore provide the initial impetus to get any movement off the ground. This is not to be seen primarily in terms of exemplary actions but in the sheer provision of the enormous amounts of labour necessary for leaflets, pamphlets, public meetings, etc. This could be clearly seen on the Irish demonstration last year. Here two main sections of the population were represented, Irish exiles and students. The key to building a solidarity movement is therefore the ability to utilise this existing base to get ideas across to the mass of the working class. Basically the same pattern applies to a whole range of issues from question such as South Africa to campaigns against racism. If the government could establish a barrier and snap the links between the revolutionary groups and the mass of students, they could destroy one of the most important routes whereby revolutionary ideas are transmitted into the whole of society. One of the ways they hope to do this is by changes on students unions which will allow Conservative and other students to portray the revolutionaries as 'wreckers' preventing the mass of students having the maximum possible facilities in their unions.

It can be seen from this analysis that the ruling class has a far clearer idea of what is important about the political activities of students than do most of the revolutionary organisations. The bourgeoisie knows it has nothing to fear from even a few thousand students 'constructing the alternative leadership' by selling the *Workers Press* or 'building the party' through factory gate leafleting and selling of *Socialist Worker*. The problem of solving the question of revolutionaries gaining a mass base in the working class is far too great for that tactic to work. That could be seen clearly for example on the 21st February demonstration last year. Then 140,000 workers demonstrated because of a mere half-hearted gesture of defiance by the TUC. The revolutionaries impact here was nil. Any belief that the way to change this situation by individual leafleting or recruiting is absolutely ridiculous. The ruling class is not worried in the slightest by all that. What it wants to prevent is the existence of a potential mass of alienated students who are dominated in their struggles by the ideas of the revolutionary groups and who can act as a transmission belt for revolutionary ideas into all of society. This is particularly true at a time when the strategy of the bourgeoisie is to use the political strength of the ruling class to defeat the economic strength of the trade unions. But while relating students to the working class on an individual basis through direct work on industrial struggles, etc. is absolutely vital, it is not the key to a long term change in the relation of forces between the reformists and the revolutionaries within the working class. That relationship will only be changed by the ability of revolutionaries to grasp political issues which will drive a knife through the sophistry of reformist ideas. Nothing could be more unlikely than a revolution in Britain growing organically out of the industrial struggle. What the individual activity of students in relation

THE STATE

to the working class does therefore is to help gain the initial footholds which will be vital when political issues emerge. These can be utilised by revolutionaries to completely transform the relation of forces between themselves and the reformist apparatuses within the working class. In order to drive home this point more fully, it is worth looking at what exactly is meant by the hold of reformism over the working class.

THE BASE OF REFORMISM & BUREAUCRACY WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS.

Fundamentally the student struggle must be looked at from the point of view of the problems facing revolutionaries in the period since 1945. Between 1923 and 1945 the working class suffered defeat after defeat. Fascism conquered in Italy and in Germany. The General Strike in Britain was defeated. The republican forces in Spain were defeated. The workers were defeated in Greece. In France and Italy power was handed to the bourgeoisie by the Communist parties. Whereas the First World War had been followed by a tremendous revolutionary wave, the end of the Second World War found no such upheaval. This is perfectly understandable. The end of World War One came at the end of a period of rising class struggle throughout Europe. The Second World War came at the end of a period of defeats. In the first case the war acted as a stimulus to revolution. In the second, it found a working class weakened and demoralised.

After 1945 a new process set in. The economic boom led to a decline in class struggle throughout Europe. Even the old reformist organisations became shells of their former state. In this situation the working class movement underwent a profound political decline. What had fundamentally occurred was the political loss of at least a generation of working class political militants. It took, for example, forty years, and hundreds of thousands of meetings, books, pamphlets, newspapers, etc. to create the millions of politicised workers in and around the German Social Democratic and Communist Parties. The reign of fascism, the war and the boom resulted in the disintegration of this whole flesh and blood of a potential revolutionary political workers movement. Germany is an extreme case but basically the same process occurred throughout Europe. What it means for the task of revolutionary militants is not the task of regrouping an existing politicised layer within the working class, which is for example the problem that faced the Communist Parties when they were formed out of the old Social Democratic Parties, but of creating a political layer within the working class. The relation of students to revolutionary politics can therefore only be understood in relation to the way in which the organisations of the working class have themselves decayed. This means fundamentally that the organisational conservatism produced within the working class by the very need of organising itself against capitalism exerts an enormous pressure on the political development of the working class. The trade union and Labour Party bureaucracies are not corsets imposed on the working class from outside, but are organic products of the political conditions of the working class under capitalism.

Ultimately of course the politicisation of the working class will not be achieved by the individual actions of revolutionaries. It will be transformed by the process of capitalist crises raising the level of activity of the working class to the point where the old factors working towards bureaucratisation and reformism are overcome. This is not to believe that this will occur automatically, but that it will be the same process of increasing crises of capitalism that will create the conditions for the overcoming of the reformist bureaucracies within the working class that will increase the possibilities of growth of the revolutionary organisations to the point where they will be able to take advantage of the changing situation.

THE REAL RELATION OF STUDENTS AND THE WORKING-CLASS.

It is when the problem of recreating a Marxist movement within the working class is looked at in these concrete terms that the historical importance of the 'student revolt' emerges. At one blow the revolutionary movement found itself in contact with thousands of people whom it did not have to break through a long and tortuous process of propaganda from Social Democracy and Stalinism. In the course of two or three years a massive growth of a Marxist cadre occurred. But this phenomenon was so unexpected and so unprecedented that in many cases both the strengths and weaknesses of students as a political layer have not been understood.

It is quite clear that the situation inside the working class described here, which is the real one and not the romantic illusion peddled by some people, is never going to be transformed by simple individual acts of propaganda and agitation. In this sense students as such have a far greater importance in the revolutionary process than as mere leaflet fodder. It is precisely this importance as a highly politicisable social group that the government is worried about. In consequence those organisations, such as the SLL and the IS, who in practice attempt to see students merely in terms of potential

individual recruits for their organisation—to be used outside the student field—actually play completely into the hands of the ruling class. They fail to understand both the real nature of the problem facing revolutionaries in gaining the leadership of the working class and the real nature of the importance of students as a social group.

This point can be seen clearly in the current struggle against the government's proposals on student unions. Here the situation is that the C.P., which controls NUS, is engaged in an attempt to come to a shady deal with the government. The concrete question therefore is how to evolve a strategy for fighting the government which will simultaneously defeat the plans of the C.P. What, therefore, is involved in practice is the problem of the political way in which revolutionaries relate to their student base. This involves first an analysis of what is the political structure of the base.

The first level is that of students who are still completely dominated by bourgeois ideology, but who are affected by the deteriorating situation of students. This group obviously will only come into activity on issues directly affecting its own sectional interests. As this group is by far the largest it is the mobilisation of these students that explains both the size of the campaign against the government's proposals, and its extremely low political level. At the other extreme are the students within the revolutionary organisations or around their immediate periphery. They have more or less completely broken with bourgeois ideology and will campaign on any political issue in a Marxist manner. In between these two extremes is a whole mass of radicalised students who however only assume some political direction either when their sectional interests are involved, when big crises are brewing in society, or when a definite lead is taken by the politicised students in and around the revolutionary groups. It is this group which contends with the right wing for the political lead over the mass of students in student union and other meetings.

The relative size of these groups is by no means constant. On the contrary, it is one of the prime necessities of revolutionaries to increase the size of the radicalised layer so that students as a social group can play an important political role in society. It is however the changing nature of the relation between the various groups that determines the political character and impact of the various movements amongst students. Hence, for example, it was the success of the revolutionaries in polarising the campuses around the issue of Vietnam that allowed them to mobilise a mass of students for participation in the VSC. It also explains the relatively high political level of that movement. It is



the inability of many revolutionaries to understand and evolve a strategy for fighting on the question of the government attack on student unions that has meant that the C.P. has been able to carry on its manoeuvres relatively unhindered and hence to prevent the politicisation of the radicalised student layers. The C.P. is therefore succeeding, by gaining hegemony on this issue, in repolarising the student mass along the political lines of decrepit reformism which it favours. This will have two decisive effects if it were to be successful.

Firstly. It would snap the links between the revolutionaries and the mass of students. For the first time for at least five years it would decisively smash the possibility of revolutionaries determining the framework of the political debates in the colleges. If the C.P. succeeded in this they would ensure that the political role of students as a social group would be channelled into reformism. For example, one of the most important bases of an initial springboard for a solidarity movement on Ireland would be cut from under the feet of revolutionaries. This would be a significant victory for the ruling class.

Secondly. Even at the less significant level of the supply of revolutionaries for systematic long term work directed towards the working class, the C.P. would score a significant victory by politically isolating the revolutionaries. Even at the short-sighted level of newspaper sellers, which is all some organisations can see in students, a significant drying up of the supply of cadres would occur.

For both these reasons, but more importantly for the first, the intervention of revolutionaries in a systematic way in a fight against the CP is a urgent necessity.

TOWARDS A STRATEGY

The first necessity for understanding how to construct a strategy for fighting inside the student field is to understand the political significance of students as a group, and not just their significance for recruitment and use in other fields. The fundamental reason why, for example, the I.S. is completely incapable of waging any sort of fight against the CP at all is because its particular economic brand of politics means it cannot conceive of students as a whole having any political role except that of servicing IS's economic, and frequently reformist, intervention in the trade union struggle. For this reason not only does it play completely into the hands of the CP by its analysis and treatment of the NUS as a trade union, but it is also completely unwilling to organise its student members around any political issue, notably Ireland, which would utilise the political role of students to the full.

The second point which must be grasped is the particular tactics imposed upon political activity amongst British students by the structure of the education system. The particular way in which British higher education expanded, through the binary

system and not via the growth of massive universities means that revolutionaries have far less social depths to call on in any individual college than has been the case in most countries. For this reason any real upsurge, and in particular any national co-ordination of struggle, has never been possible to achieve by organisational centralisation, but only by political centralisation. In Britain it is far truer to say that VSC created the student movement than it is to say that the student movement created VSC. Therefore any strategy for intervention must rest on the ability to take a political issue which is widespread and important enough to impinge on the consciousness of all students. Ireland, as the most decisive class struggle going on in which the British ruling class is directly involved at present, is the obvious candidate for such an issue. The organisational task of building any movement which could use the political weight of students to transmit revolutionary ideas into the working class can only be achieved once this political centralisation of focus on one decisive struggle has been decided upon.

Thirdly, the maximum mobilisation and co-ordination of revolutionaries must occur on the issue of the attacks on student unions so as to prevent the CP redrawing the political battle lines within higher education. The achievement of this task is the fundamental precondition for an ability to use the full political weight of students in the long process of breaking up the hold of reformist ideology and apparatuses over the working class.

To sum up. The decisive immediate task of the present period is to prevent the CP re-introducing the mass influence of reformism into the centre of student political debate. This can only be done by intervention in those areas, notably on the students union question, where the CP is trying to establish its credibility. This is a necessary precondition for the use of the political role of students on the decisive political issues, notably Ireland, of the day. The theoretical understanding necessary for this fight to be waged successfully is comprehension of the political role of students as such as opposed to their individual role as militants of a revolutionary organisation.

—J. R. Clynes
J. Marshall



THE MONTH OF SOVIETS

The truce of 12th July, 1921 ended effectively the Irish War of Independence. It began, too, a determined counter-offensive by the Irish employers against the gains made by their workers in the previous five years.

The link was not coincidental. From 1920 onwards there was world-wide reaction in which the bosses set about crushing their workers. In Ireland, this reaction took the political form of the Tan War and the Belfast pogroms. But, though the latter was effective in weakening the trade unions in the northeast of the island, the Black & Tans could only contain the advance of Labour; they could not reverse it. The continuing survival of the volunteers made it impossible for direct militarism to be imposed. The British Government's military advisers informed it that the Republic could not be defeated by force of arms in less than a year. Such a long drawn out solution was unsatisfactory to British capitalism for both economic and political reasons. So the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George sought an agreement with Dail Eireann. As the Dail feared the choice between military defeat and working-class mobilisation that the Tan War was forcing on it, it accepted the Truce. Ever since then, in fact, Dail Eireann has been the instrument of the capitalist 'democratic dictatorship' in 26 counties of Ireland.

The Irish employers recognised this immediately. Even under the Black & Tans they had attempted policies that led to clashes with their workers. As the end of the War approached, various employers began to act with new vigour. On the 24th of June the owners of 15 to 16 Dublin stores called for wage cuts. With the actual truce, the employers initiated the class war. One of the most significant confrontations during this period of struggle was that which produced the Cork Harbour Soviet.

The origins of the struggle can be traced back to 14th March, 1920, when the dominant Sinn Fein-I.T.G.W.U. coalition on Cork Corporation passed a motion setting up a Commission into the Cost of Living in the city. At the end of September, it reported estimating that a "living-wage" in Cork was 70/- per week—rather more than most workers received at the time. On 12th February 1921 the Corporation ratified this statement. Immediately, the harbour workers raised a claim for the recommended living wage (an increase of 7/6d per week in what they got). But under the pressure of the claims of unity against Britain, this was allowed to lapse until the Truce.

At a meeting of the Board in August one of its members Councillor Robert Day, the Secretary of the Cork Branch of the I.T.G.W.U., proposed that the matter be referred to arbitration. He could not get a seconder, although the Chairman F. J. Daly expressed sympathy. On 25th August, he repeated his demand to the Cork & District Trade Union & Labour Council which nominated a delegation to see the Board on the matter. It failed too.

From 12.30 p.m. the next day, apart from the docks of the City of Cork Steampacket Co. & the Clyde Co., the port of Cork was strikebound. This situation was intensified further because the dockers were supported by the river pilots

(those pilots responsible for working sea traffic between Cork & Queenstown, now Cobh) and by a sympathetic strike of 4 Queenstown dockers. On Friday, 2nd September, at 2.30 p.m. 150 strikers marched in a body behind the Red Flag to the office of the Harbour Board to be paid off. On receiving their money, they placed another Red Flag over the office, before continuing a march, behind the banner, through the city. Later, the I.T.G.W.U. announced that it would distribute permits to ships for their pilotage from its Cork H.O. The next day a meeting of strikers voted against granting any such documents. It seems to have been then that Day proposed and got carried his motion to take over the harbour office.

On 5th September, both the Cork daily papers were encouraging panic against the strikers, who nonetheless refused once more to let two colliers at Cork Quay either leave or unload timber at the North Channel. Instead, they placed pickets on them. A special meeting of the Harbour Board was then called to discuss the strike, at which Standing Orders were suspended to discuss a motion of Alderman Liam de Roiste, T.D., that the strike be arbitrated, under the direction of the Dail Department of Labour, by a committee composed of representatives from the Board, the workers, and the Dail.

Day opposed both the motion and the suspension of Standing Orders. He declared that the workers were ready to take over the full running of the port, that they would be able to obtain their 70/- per week thereby, and that they would improve efficiency, weeding out the incompetent ruthlessly. He declared that the proposed, belated offer had come too late. He had put the motion for a takeover. The mechanics were willing to serve under the Soviet. Now he offered the clerks a similar share in it. The Red Flag would be taken down only at the cost of "10,20—aye, 100 lives. If the Irish Republican Government can put me out of office tomorrow, they can do it. But they have to count the cost."

De Roiste was conciliatory. He pleaded the Tan War and Martial Law as the excuse for the harbour's inefficiency. He declared himself ready to offer control of it to the I.T.G.W.U.—but only under the proper forms. He ended up by emphasising Dail Eireann's capitalism; it recognised the right to strike, but it was determined to protect property.

The board voted in favour of de Roiste's motion. It also appealed to the Cork Executive of the I.T.G.W.U. to accept it (and thus, to restrain Robert Day); but the Cork Executive announced its full support for its District Secretary.

The next day, September 6th, at 10.30 a.m., a crowd of workers proceeded to the Harbour's Offices to take charge. Day led in a group of three composed of himself, Thomas Coyle, and William Kenneally, the Chairman of the Cork Branch of the I.T.G.W.U. They asked the Secretary to the Harbour Board to serve under workers' control. When he refused, they replaced him. Kenneally made a circuit of those of the harbour staff that had not yet been consulted as to the seizure. It was accepted by the Harbour Master Captain Blanchard, the Assistant Engineer, the caretaker and the telephonists. The office staff was less favourable. In the department of the Accountant and the Dues Collector, a slight majority of the employees denied the liquidity of the Soviet and refused to work in it. They were allowed to leave peacefully.

Having won what support could be won in the Cork offices, Kenneally, Coyle and Thomas Murphy took a lauch (flying the Red Flag) to Queenstown to take over the harbour there. But the office workers' lack of solidarity, added to the locking away of the Harbour Office books, were handicaps to the Soviet's power. Nevertheless, its Commissioners asserted their readiness to collect the harbour dues. Day announced that ships would move to and from the harbour only with his permission, and set about his business promptly, giving exit permits to several of

the ships that had been waiting to leave. Then the Commissioners held a press conference. Here Kenneally announced his readiness to assert the authority of the workers even against that of Dail Eireann. Day was more moderate. He declared that the Soviet had taken the greatest pains to avoid involving anyone other than the harbour workers, and pointed out that the cross-channel shipping and carrying companies were operating as usual.

But the Harbour Board was looking for a means to regain control, even by a tactical retreat, and appointed a deputation which met Kenneally and offered him new terms: that the strikers return to work on the old pay scale (receiving back pay for the strike period) until Saturday, 10th September. Then, at 11 a.m. a committee made up of Day, Daly and a Chairman, to be appointed by Dail Eireann, would meet to discuss the full wage claim.

At a specially arranged meeting of the strikers, Kenneally moved acceptance of the proposals; and Day, while addressing his hearers as 'Bolsheviks', backed Kenneally. He insisted that the proposals did not provide for 'arbitration', but for a conference, and that, if this failed to end in the claim being granted, he would move to revive the Soviet. He denounced the lost trade unionism of the clerical staff. Like Kenneally at the press conference, he warned against too much trust in the Republicans; the I.R.A. could be used as a strike-breaking force, in which case, it would have to be opposed. When the proposals were put to the meeting they were carried unanimously. Day then directed the strikers to return to work.

The following Saturday, 10th September, at 11.30 a.m., the commission met. The settlement that was reached included the payment of the 7/6d per week demanded since 14th February in a lump sum for the increase claimed. For the future, the workers were to receive a rise of £1 per week until a new Commission on the cost of living in Cork reported. This body's decision would be binding retrospectively to the 10th of September, unless the workers would suffer thereby. On the 14th September, the Cork Harbour Board ratified the agreement, and for the rest of the year the port of Cork remained generally quiet.

The Cork Harbour Soviet itself had not been the most developed form of workers' control in its period. As with all the seizures, until then, it was conceived as a tactic to gain limited ends. And even as a tactic, its leaders carried it through with excessively outspoken optimism combined with too little caution in securing what they were promised. But the seizure was important because its leaders' outspokenness gave a specific form to existing signs as to how the Irish struggle might go. Until September, 1921, the Soviet disturbances had been merely signs of permanent revolution: that the Workers' Republic was a real potential in Sinn Fein's Republic. With the post-war economic crisis the actual capitalism in that Party's economic policy became explicit. With the truce, it was

more eager than not to formalise its position and to face the British Government as an equal, bourgeois power. Thus, Marcievicz could threaten the Bruee Soviet with the Volunteers. And, thus, in response to their situation, Day & Kenneally could insist belatedly on their readiness to oppose the Dail in the workers' interests.

The most effective immediate result of the Cork Harbour Soviet was that it ended the Sinn Fein-I.T.G.W.U. alliance that had controlled the Cork Corporation since January, 1920. The Soviet was the most obvious division between the trade union and the party. On 7th September, the Sinn Fein dominated Cork County Council voted out a motion binding it to employ only trade union labour. The Cork Trades Council's rejection of the new cost of living commission, on the grounds that its composition gave it a bias in favour of the capitalists, was the other side of the coin. What the Harbour Soviet did was to clarify the divisions between labour and Sinn Fein so that nobody could imagine, now, that there was much basis for unity.

The mistake of Day and Kenneally was that they did not try to force the pace any further. But it was understandable: they got no guidance from their National Executive. At least, they had brought matters to a confrontation. And as if to emphasise the importance of militant action, all Irish dockers, outside Cork, had their wages reduced by 1/- per week, with the backing of Foran (the President of the I.T.G.W.U.).

The Cork Harbour Soviet, and similar events elsewhere, coincided with a formal political awakening on the part of the leadership of organised labour. It began to hold meetings in its own name, posing as an opposition even to the Republican status quo. Whether this was sincere or was aimed to distract the militancy of its followers is uncertain; but in practice, it helped towards the latter. Such agitation could not destroy the objective cause of working class militancy. All it could do was keep the workers loyal to leaders who were not really prepared to lead them anywhere. A few militants were so moved by Labour's failure to capitalise either on the national, or on the economic & social struggles that they took over the small Socialist Party and turned it into the Communist Party of Ireland. But they were very much in the minority. Encouraged by its leaders, Irish Labour refused to face the question of state power. As a result, the vacuum was filled by the bourgeoisie. And thus, both the Republican & the Socialist struggles were betrayed.

D. R. O'Connor Lysaght

The above is taken from a longer article by Rayner Lysaght, 'The Month of the Soviets', published in The Plough, paper of the Irish group of the Fourth International.



New Struggles in Spain



THE NEW RISE OF WORKER'S STRUGGLES IN SPAIN

The Franco regime is letting loose a new wave of repression against the revolutionary left in Spain. Its choice of victims—the ETA, our comrades of the LCR and other revolutionary groups—has to be understood in terms of the regime's failure to crush the upsurge of the workers' movement which we have seen in the past few years. This failure has meant that through a series of struggles important sections of the working class have found new consciousness. Were the revolutionaries allowed to gain a greater implantation among them, the working class would very soon reject the class collaborationism of the CP's 'Pact of Freedom' with the 'democratic' Spanish bourgeoisie, and put the socialist revolution on the agenda.

The past decade of workers' struggles owes much to the appearance of a new generation of workers uncowed by the experience of the crushing of the Revolution in 1938/9. They have revived the tradition of struggle which made Lenin predict that the first socialist revolution in Western Europe would be in Spain. Since the strike-wave initiated by the Asturian miners, in 1962, there has been a series of bitter if sporadic strikes. The CP, still very strong in the Spanish working class, led a number of them into defeats, failing to prepare the militants to defend themselves against the State, and exposing their vanguard to repression. Still combativity has remained high, and despite Stalinist attempts to bureaucratise the Workers' Commissions which appeared in 1962, the working class has maintained its allegiance to the Commissions as basic units of self-organisation.

In 1969, faced by falling profits, the Spanish bourgeoisie imposed a State of Emergency to give it the powers to stop the strike movement. The workers have been undeterred, and new elements—white collar workers included—have been drawn into struggle against the capitalists' attempts to take away what gains had been made. In the universities too, there has been a continuing fight against police occupation of the campuses, and movements in solidarity with the workers' struggles.

BURGOS TRIALS A TURNING POINT

The past year in particular has been marked by a generalisation and politicisation of the struggle. The Burgos trials were a turning point. The strikes and demonstrations of workers and youths last December were directed against the State, its police and its legal machinery. They brought about a victory—the removal of the death penalty against the ETA militants—and therefore gave the working class a new weapon, the knowledge that it could win. In the months since then there has been constant activity on the part of the working class, despite new attempts at repression. In May the call of the revolutionary groups to boycott the State trade union elections found a significant response, despite the fact that the CP was calling for participation on the slogan 'Vote for the best man'. Certain sections of workers have sustained prolonged struggles: notably the miners of Asturias, who were out for virtually the whole of the autumn; and the building workers, an important force in the Spanish economy, who have kept up a series of

strike actions and developed militant, more aggressive forms of struggle than have been seen in the cities for a long time.

There has also been more generalisation of strike action, both in particular sectors (building, transport) and in solidarity with major struggles. In the September building workers' strike, after the police assassination of the CP militant Patino the number of strikers tripled and several factories also came out. The October strike and occupation in the SEAT car factory called for a still greater response, culminating in strike action throughout the country on 29 October. The strike itself was a clear fight against attacks by the bosses, like the earlier struggle in June: against the imposition of the night shift, for the reinstatement of workers sacked after a previous strike. Militant forms of struggle, to combat the repression, developed in the course of it: against the CP's attempts to keep the strike "peaceful" the Barcelona factory assembly resolved to defend itself against police attack, and the barricades went up. On demonstrations of solidarity in Barcelona and elsewhere, the workers went armed with chains and crowbars against police attack, and took up the slogan of our comrades, "Viva la revolucion socialista en Espana!" Here as in some of the building workers' strikes, self-defence detachments began to appear, detachments such as Trotsky described as the nuclei of the future workers' army.

DEVELOPING CRISIS IN BOURGEOISIE

Revolutionary activity in the working class, then, is rising. The crisis in the bourgeoisie—the other necessary condition of a pre-revolutionary situation—is also developing. The objective prospects for Spanish capitalism are bleak. There has been development since the ending of autarchy in the '50s. But it has been achieved by an enormous accentuation of the contradictions in Spanish capitalism, with its continued inability to complete basic tasks of bourgeois democracy. Industrial development has relied overwhelmingly on capital imports. Spain has had to import not only most of its manufactured goods but, in the absence of land reform, even food. All this has been paid for basically by tourism, and by the export of Spanish workers—of a quarter of the working population. Spain's position in inter-imperialist competition is so weak, that this situation is highly unstable, and the repercussions of crises within imperialism are great. In the present crisis, the income from tourism is falling and the emigrants are beginning to return. The bourgeoisie's need for profits, however, means that it is unable to alleviate the social effects of this phenomenon. Since 1969, prices have been rising fast, wages have been heavily attacked, and redundancies in industry have added to the soaring unemployment; while the need for greater 'productivity' (surplus value) means continued struggle on the shop floor.

Ideally, the most class-conscious of the Spanish bourgeoisie, represented by *Opus Dei*, would like to see a change towards a more stable situation of bourgeois democracy. The policy of the CP fits in very well with this. But at the moment, the bourgeoisie is incapable of making significant concessions to the workers, and the workers will not stand by while their movement is crushed. The key question is the formation of the revolutionary leadership of the Spanish working class. The regime too is well aware of this. Its repressive machinery is now concentrated against the most militant groups on the left: in particular, the revolutionary wing of the ETA, which has recently embarked on a new course of armed actions and expropriations against the regime; and the LCR (Liga Comunista Revolucionaria) which took important initiatives in the campaign to boycott the State trade union elections, and in the movement of solidarity with the SEAT strike.

REPRESSION OF MILITANTS

ETA militants are still in jail: on 3 December they initiated a hunger strike which has been taken up by political prisoners generally and six weeks later

is still going on. On the anniversary of Burgos, such action is a renewed call to the revolutionary movement.

Our comrades of the LCR were immediately active in organising solidarity action outside the jails, and in particular led demonstrations and distributed propaganda in Bilbao in the Basque country. Soon after this activity started, Franco's police walked into the Economics Faculty at Bilbao University and arrested 10 suspected LCR militants. Seven are still in jail after being so brutally tortured that medical evidence produced by the lawyers forced the Bilbao police chief—not generally renowned for sensitivity on such questions—to denounce his subordinates for "excessive ill-treatment" during interrogation. The trial of these comrades for the crimes of illegal subversive propaganda and having international revolutionary connections, is now being prepared. Police searches are continuing in other cities too.

The Left throughout Europe must call for the release of all Franco's political prisoners. But it must also prepare to do much more. Struggles of great importance for the world revolutionary movement are on the agenda in Spain.

Free Izko and his comrades!

Free the Comrades of the LCR and all the Political Prisoners!

Down with the Franco Regime!

J. Frazer

This is the first of a series of articles to be published at intervals in the Red Mole. Future articles will analyse the evolution of the Franco Regime; and Stalinism in Spain.

Ceylon Repression

SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE IN CEYLON

The Ceylon Solidarity Committee was formed in April 1971, when British revolutionary organisations joined comrades from three Ceylonese revolutionary organisations, led by the Ginipupura, to pledge solidarity with the struggle being waged in Ceylon by the J.V.P. (Janatha Vimukthi Praramuna—Peoples Liberation Front) against the Bandaranaike government.

The JVP had organised for five years, concentrating on the non-plantation sector of the peasantry, before coming out into the open in the election campaign of early 1970. Its political freedom was brief, for after the election of the coalition government, the JVP began to pressurize it to implement its pre-election programme. This resulted in a government announcement that the JVP were 'CIA agents' and the JVP then presented its own programme. The economic situation in Ceylon was becoming more and more disastrous and the JVP won more and more popular support every day. So the Bandaranaike government moved against the JVP on the pretext that a JVP 'plot' to overthrow the government had been discovered. A curfew was imposed, a state of emergency declared, mass arrests took place—not only of JVP members, but of any young people the police and the army felt like picking up—and prisoners were frequently killed, as the police and army had full powers of action without having to account to the relatives of their victims.

In face of this repression, the JVP decided on a policy of armed insurrection, and three weeks after the declaration of the State of Emergency, the struggle began. Bandaranaike's government was in a panic as it was immediately apparent that the uprising had mass support, and attempted to suppress the revo-

lutionary forces by using extreme savagery. The armed forces made an indiscriminate attack on the peasantry as a whole and employed torture on a large scale. Thousands were killed and by the end of May the revolutionary forces had been temporarily driven back into the upland forests. Bandaranaike received aid from her international allies, which included not only imperialist governments but also the Soviet Union and China.

At the present moment, there are 15,000 political prisoners in Ceylonese jails. It is alleged that they will be brought to trial shortly, once a new procedure for the conduct of the trials has been elaborated. The Ceylon Solidarity Committee, which organised meetings and a demonstration in the spring and summer of 1971 in solidarity with the JVP, and has published a newsletter to provide information about the revolutionary struggle, will be organising activities to publicise the trials and the plight of the prisoners and to affirm its solidarity with the JVP. A first meeting is planned for February 4th, at the NUFTO hall at 7.30 p.m. For further details consult *The Red Mole* or telephone 837 6954.

OPEN LETTER TO MRS. BANDARANAIKE

The undersigned are profoundly perturbed by the evolution of the situation in your country. There are said to be 13,000 persons held in jail for clearly political reasons. The most alarming rumours circulate as to the fate of many of these prisoners, including tales of rape and torture. Basic democratic freedoms continue to be suspended. The right to strike is no more tolerated and increasing restrictions are being put upon the free functioning of trade-unions and other working class organisations.

Without wanting to take a position with regard to the armed clashes which recently occurred in Ceylon, and while differing among themselves as to the nature of your government and the insurrection which was directed against it, the undersigned are of the opinion that a prolonged suspension of democratic and working class freedoms discredits in the whole of South Asia the cause of socialism which you say you want to further. Nor does this represent the best way to solve the grave social crisis which exists especially among the youth and lies behind the recent insurrection, as some of your cabinet ministers themselves have stated.

For these reasons the undersigned ask you to release immediately the political militants whom you have arrested, among them Wijeweera, leader of the JVP, and Illanshellin, leader of the Socialist Youth Front (a revolutionary socialist organisation among Tamil plantation workers), and to restore immediately the free exercise of democratic freedoms to all organisations of the labouring masses of your country.

Ernest Mandel
Alain Krivine
M. Rocard
Tariq Ali
Anthony Arblaster
Robin Blackburn

Brigid Brophy
E.F.C. Ludowyk
Ralph Miliband
Ernie Roberts
David Steel
Arnold Wesker

Russian copy of *The Revolution Betrayed*: facsimile of the original typed by Natalia Sedova and corrected in pencil by Leon Trotsky. Limited print of 300 copies. Price US\$20. Order from Red Books, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

Racist Education in Bradford

In the last but one issue of *The Red Mole* we published a letter from the head of an immigrant centre in Bradford saying of Angela Davis that "the quicker that Davis creature is removed from society, the better", (see also 'Our old friend, Carter', *The Red Mole*, 34). It would be wrong to see this incident as an isolated and unfortunate blot on an otherwise progressive education policy. In fact, immigrant children in Bradford are receiving an education guaranteed to satisfy capitalism's need for a reservoir of disposable unskilled labour.

There were 7,297 immigrant children in Bradford schools in September, almost all Asian; 799 more than the previous year, and increasing as more children of immigrant families reach school age. Bradford's policy is to place immigrant children whose English is not up to following the normal school curriculum in one of 13 special immigrant centres. The children attend these full-time for three or four terms until they are ready to be transferred to a normal school.

This policy of segregation has two major failings. It prevents the child from learning English through everyday use with English-speaking children; and it reinforces the social segregation that is the lot of black children in a racist society.

SYLLABUS QUITE UNSATISFACTORY

The syllabus in the centres is mainly language work, with maths, some art, and little else. This is quite unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

1. The language course used is the Peak course designed for Asian children of primary school age in East Africa. Apart from cultural differences, it is especially inappropriate for secondary aged children, who are still using the East African equivalent of *Janet and John*. The Scope course, specifically developed for Asian children of primary age in Britain, is hardly used.
2. The provision of modern language teaching aids at the centres is totally inadequate. If businessmen can take a crash course in a foreign language in six weeks, and grammar school children can be supplied with language laboratories to get their O levels, why is it that immigrant centre facilities do not even match those provided for schools in Educational Priority Areas?
3. The children get a monotonous diet of old-fashioned language teaching and very little else. The centres are ill-equipped to teach maths in a modern way, let alone science or domestic science or history. Yet science lessons, for example, are an excellent way of teaching English in a meaningful context even at quite an elementary level. Amazingly, at one secondary centre the children get no physical education at all except an hour of swimming each week. One centre briefly had a lively speech and drama teacher, who was sacked because the head 'didn't like his personality'.

ESPECIALLY RAW DEAL FOR OLDER STUDENTS

4. The older students, for some of whom this will be the only education they get in England, get an especially raw deal. As we

have noted, they are treated like primary school children. Little is done to prepare them for the realities of work. Many are bitter because they are not allowed to take any exams or qualifications at the Centres. Until this year the local technical college ran language courses for immigrant school leavers, but this has been abandoned, allegedly for lack of room(!) and those who want to continue their 'education', or who can't find a job, and are selected as suitable, are sent back to the centre for another year of the mixture as before. Recently, a 15 year old boy was expelled because he refused to accept the first job he was offered. As for the rest, "They've been rather ruthless to the others who haven't got much promise; and said get out", said Bradford's chief Youth Employment Officer.

When they leave the centres their prospects are poor. Those who go to ordinary schools are dumped in the bottom or remedial streams, although they need language help not slow-learner classes. Those who go straight out to work are handicapped in the labour market by lack of paper qualifications and often inadequate English, with little chance of getting either. As Bradford's chief Y.E.O. admitted, "There isn't any great provision for the boy who is a recent arrival, whatever his intrinsic qualities". This, together with being black, means that they are particularly hard hit by unemployment. The level of unemployment for Asian youths under 18 in Bradford is officially three times that for white youths. Surveys from other parts of the country suggest that the figure may be higher; in any case it takes no account of the number of black youths who are forced to accept jobs below their capabilities because of discrimination.¹

DISPERSAL POLICY

Once they go into ordinary schools, Bradford's policy is to disperse immigrant children so that no school has more than 25 per cent (or 33 per cent 'in special cases'). There is no educational reason for choosing this magic number rather than any other. In any case, it has been proved that social class composition, large families, overcrowding, poor housing, and high teacher turnover are all more important factors in a school's 'success' than the presence of immigrants.² Are they then going to bus working-class children into middle-class areas? Dispersal means the breakdown of any links between the school and the parent community. Dispersal leads to absurdities such as the case of the West Indian couple who refused to send their two young children five miles across Bradford to the only school that had offered them places.³ Above all, the political rather than educational justification for dispersal is shown by the fact that white children are never bussed into black areas.

The most serious criticism of Bradford's policies is that they in fact make no attempt to educate the immigrant child according to his or her own needs. It is significant that Bradford's twice-yearly Report on the Education of Children of Commonwealth Immigrants is entirely concerned with statistics of admissions, and that the booklet they issue to teachers begins with a warning against "such emotive phrases as 'linguistically underprivileged' and 'socially and emotionally deprived'". Clearly the teachers who wrote this are not on the receiving end of a culture in which racialism is institutionalised. Hence no doubt the omission of any account of colonialism in their brief history of India and Pakistan in the same booklet. A genuine education for immigrant children would take account of the nature of the society they are in, and of the culture that the children bring with them. Yet one thing the children learn very quickly is that their own abilities, values and way of life count for nothing in English schools.

'NOW WE ARE IN ENGLAND'

This comes out clearly in a booklet that the headmistress of the St. Michael's Centre has written for new arrivals, called 'Now we are in England'. There is a picture of a youth with long hair, tight trousers and denim jacket. The accompanying text in simple English reads:

"Look at this boy! His hair is too long and very untidy. His shirt has many colours. His jacket is very untidy. His trousers are very tight. He is smoking. This is a bad school boy. This kind of boy will get into trouble."

On the next page is a picture of an Asian girl in grammar-school type uniform: "This girl is very smart for school."

Another picture shows a girl in colourful Pakistani clothes:

"Look at this girl. Her dress is not right for school. She must take off her big ear-rings. She must take off her bangles and necklaces. She must take off her fancy quameez and shilwar and put on a plain one. Now she is better, but a skirt and blouse are best for school in England."

The next page is headed 'Hygiene'. Two pictures show groups of children standing apart from a single child, like an Amplex advertisement.

"The boy who is standing by himself and the girl who is standing by herself have no friends. They are not clean. They do not wash or bath themselves properly. They are dirty. No one wants to be near them."

The moral of the story is obvious. We know you coloured immigrants. You insist on wearing your cheap-looking tasteless clothes. Worse than that, you smell. But we're going to civilise you, fit you out with middle-class clothes and values to match.

DENIAL OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Imperialism has always justified its oppression of black people by the denial of their cultural identity. As Frantz Fanon says:

"Every colonised people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards."⁴

The relevance of this is demonstrated by some recent research into the cultural identity of young black children in England, in which a substantial proportion of them justified good characteristics—and even themselves—with white figures rather than black ones.⁵ Asian children were found to be less vulnerable than West Indian children because of the relative strength of their own cultural patterns, but it is precisely these that are under systematic attack in Bradford schools.⁶

In spite of the lip service paid to cultural pluralism, the following statement from the Report of the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council gives the official position:

"The national system of education cannot be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups.... it must aim at producing citizens who can take their place in society properly equipped to exercise their rights and perform their duties."

We know what place in society is reserved for immigrants.

DEMAND AN ALTERNATIVE

The central component of a culture is its language. By depriving immigrants of their language in schools you officially sever their links with their history, their literature

their art. A child-centred education for Asian children means the opportunity to explore their own culture in their own language. (There is of course no reason why English children should not be able to learn an Asian language if they want to.) It also means a recognition of their own cultural integrity in Black Studies courses. These have been tried with success with West Indian children at Tulse Hill Comprehensive School in London (again, these are also open to white children). Neither of these proposals is incompatible with a crash course in English language in short, frequent and intensive sessions.

Immigrant children in the centres sense that they are getting a makeshift education leading to the night shift at the mill or the dole queue, but elsewhere the myth prevails. The Bradford immigrant community must demand:

1. The closing of the immigrant centres and the integration of their children into ordinary schools, with part-time crash language programmes in withdrawal classes.
2. A curriculum that recognises their cultural identity, including some classes in their own languages.
3. Proper provision of technical and language classes at the technical colleges for school leavers.
4. Control of immigrant education in the hands of the immigrant community.

Dick Mole

FOOTNOTES

- 1 See the Stevenson-Wallis Report (article in *Observer*, 22 November 1970).
- 2 Carol Blair, 'Immigrant Education and Social Class' in *Race Today*, August 1971 and Dr. Little in *TES*, 10 September 1971.
- 3 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 18 March 1971.
- 4 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*.
- 5 David Milner, 'Prejudice and the Immigrant Child', in *New Society*, 23 September 1971.
- 6 Contrary to suggestions that immigrants really want integration, see, for example, the report of Marcus Thompson's survey of Punjabi 'parents' ambitions to remain a separate community", in *TES*, 10 September 1971.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Tariq Ali, Dave Bailey, Robin Blackburn, J. R. Clynes, Peter Gowan, Teresa Hayter, Alan Jones, Pat Jordan, Dave Kendall, Branka Magas, Martin Meteyard, Neil Middleton, Bob Purdie.

DISTRIBUTION: Debbie Dodge

Published by Relgocrest for *The Red Mole*, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 6954, 01-278 2616.

Printed by F.I. Litho Ltd. (T.U.), 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. 01-837 9987

PLEASE SEND ME *THE RED MOLE* FOR THE NEXT 6/12 MONTHS. I ENCLOSE CHEQUE/P.O./CASH FOR £1/£2.

NAME

ADDRESS

THE RED MOLE, 182 PENTONVILLE ROAD, LONDON N.1. 01-837 6954, 01-278 2616.

FOREIGN SUBS: Asia/Africa/Australia/N & S America: £5 per year. (airmail): £3 per year (ordinary). West Europe: £3 per year.

MAIRIN KEEGAN--OBITUARY

Mairin Keegan, a member of the Irish group of the Fourth International, died in hospital in Dublin on 7th January. We reprint below extracts from the funeral oration given by Rayner Lysaght.

Mairin's whole life is the story of political development from the pure idealistic form of nationalism, uncontaminated (as far as possible) by material considerations, to the position of a dedicated dialectical materialist.

She began and she always remained in the Gaelic League. Over many years though she became increasingly dissatisfied with the purely cultural and totally unpolitical outlook of this body in the 1950s. In 1962 however, she went to London and it was here that she saw for herself consciously the need for political and socialist activity if even her limited cultural aims were to be achieved. But not only this, she became more aware of the value of the socialist aims in themselves. She began to examine the various leftwing movements of the time. She rejected in turn Clann na hEireann and the Connolly Association. It was

only when she was about to retire from the struggle that she discovered and joined the Irish Workers Group. And it was from then onwards that she began to read, to analyse and to broaden her understanding of the issues involved.

She was not simply an armchair Marxist, she allied theory to action. In May 1968 in Paris she took part in the struggle of the workers and students which has opened the new era of working class revolution. And in 1969, back in Ireland, as a member of the Dublin Citizens Committee and more importantly Saor Eire, she gave aid to the national revolution that has been developing in Northern Ireland. Unlike many both of the ultra-left and the "pure" Republican movement she did not distinguish between the socialistic struggles in Paris and the immediate nationalist struggles of the workers and the minority of the 6 counties. She saw that they were not just isolated developments; she saw that the different forms of each masked the reality of permanent revolution. She joined Saor Eire because as a group it recognised this

reality. Her activism, political sophistication and dedication was recognised by her comrades who swiftly elected her to Saor Eire's central executive.

But she did not limit her understanding of permanent revolution to the purely national context. She saw that the only way to make Ireland socialist was in the struggle for the world wide classless, stateless society. To this end in the last year of her life she contacted Irish members of the Fourth International, and very notably the late comrade Peter Graham, and she participated with them in preparing an Irish Section of the Fourth International. Once again such was her ability in this task that on Comrade Graham's treacherous assassination by reactionary elements she was appointed as an official F. I. representative in Ireland. Her fatal illness prevented her from taking up this post however.

One more point should be made too: in just over 3 months the FI in Ireland has suffered two serious blows. Two of its leading cadres have been eliminated. There are some philistines who feel that such blows will prove mortal.

These people will be disappointed. Our losses grievous though they are, are limited compared to the losses that have been suffered by revolutionaries in the past. The slaughters of the Paris Commune, did not prevent the emergence of world wide scientific socialism. The Republican movement in Ireland was not destroyed because of the murders of 1916 or of 1922. The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg could not prevent the growth of German Communism, and the Trotskyist movement of the world has survived not only his death and that of his son Sedov but the murders of Trotskyists in and out of Russia. Compared to these facts we have got off lightly and if our losses were twenty times as great we would still survive.

I might conclude by wishing a long life to the FI but this would be contrary to that body's aims. It wants world revolution and the world includes Ireland as soon as possible. So I prophesy a short and successful life to the FI and to Saor Eire. Let our enemies which are those of the working class beware. We are only just beginning.

LETTERS

LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARY BLACK WORKERS

Dear Comrades,

In an otherwise excellent review of "If they come in the Morning," in *The Red Mole* Oct. 20, 1971, your writer repeats a misconception of one of the organizations in the African-American struggle that seems to have become popular in Europe amongst radicals and revolutionaries. S.C. speaks of the "continued steady growth of revolutionary Black organizations in the U.S. who are doing political work not only in the 'community' but also in the factories—in particular the League of Revolutionary Black Workers which now plays a significant role in the Black community of Detroit and in certain of the essential car plants there."

This reflects a lack of knowledge of the real situation. The League did have an important impact in 1968 and early 1969, however, since then they have suffered a serious political and organizational decline. This reflects their lack of a strategy for mass struggle for Black liberation inside and outside of the plants.

They have refused to oppose consistently the Democratic party in the Black community. For instance in 1969 they gave backhanded support to a Black "law and order" candidate sheriff Austin, nominated by Black Democrats for Detroit's mayoralty. This was after they attempted to get the Democrats to nominate one of their own leaders. When revolutionary socialist militants exposed this in the Black movement, the League initiated physical attacks and threats against us. Recently one of the leaders of the League, Luke Tripp, has published a pamphlet in which he praises popular fronts as a way of gaining political power.

Within the plants, their strategy has suffered from a sectarian strategy of intervention similar to that described by Chris Caldwell in his article in the Oct. 20 *Red Mole* on Britain's SAU. They attempted to make what could have been a powerful Black trade union movement "democratically centralist" and based on sterile incantations of Mao-tse Tung thought, rather than the issues and demands facing the Black workers and the Black community. This allowed the bureaucrats and reformists within the United Auto Workers to isolate them from the workers and to allow the employers to fire and otherwise victimize the League's militants. Their principal

error was to see the relationship of the Black community and workers struggles as formally divided and to view the workers struggle through economist lenses. They have rejected all Black struggles outside the plants as subsidiary at best. For instance in 1970 at a Black student conference, they told the students they should not get involved in struggles that would lead to expulsion or disrupt their studies since their only role could be to give their skills to the community after graduation. They have consistently opposed mobilizations of the Black community against the Vietnam War and for the demands of Black women. One wing of the League has now developed the viewpoint that Black nationalism as expressed by Malcolm X is completely reactionary.

In the past year they have not only shrunk in influence in the campus and community as well as the plants to a shell of their former selves, but they have suffered a number of deepgoing splits which seem to be largely based on clique rivalries as opposed to politics.

Their sad decline demonstrates the fact that success in the struggle for the liberation of African-Americans and other oppressed nationalities must be based on a strategy for mass struggle of the Black communities and workers, must oppose the Democratic and Republican parties in real struggle and must recognize the combined national and class character of the African-American struggle and the struggle for socialist revolution in the U.S.

Revolutionary Greetings

Tony Thomas
New York

In Memory of

STEPHEN McCARTHY

who died 26 Jan 1971

We have tried virtually everything,
so far without success....

But we won't give up.
McCARTHY FAMILY, FRIENDS
& SUPPORTERS

WHITHER AFRICAN MARXISTS?

Dear Comrades,

Even before the ink dries on my paper, I can hear the cries counter-revolution, undiplomatic, etc. concerning this precis about the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. These cries will come from the counter-revolutionary and petty-bourgeois led African nationalist organisations which are apt to mimic Maoist slogans in return for cash from Peking.

As a Marxist in the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa, I feel it is crucial for all African revolutionaries to point out to the masses the counter-revolutionary character of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. This leadership, like the Soviet bureaucracy is counter-revolutionary. It is difficult not to come to this conclusion. Revolutionaries who do not fear the masses have nothing to lose by accepting and applying the Leninist principle of 'criticism and self-criticism'. In his fine Marxist days in the twenties Mao said:

"China is in urgent need of a bourgeois democratic revolution and this revolution can be completed under the leadership of the proletariat. Because the proletariat failed to exercise firm leadership in the revolution of 1926-27 which started from Kwangtung and spread towards the Yangtse River, leadership was seized by the comprador and landlord classes and the revolution was replaced by counter-revolution".

Yet in the case of Pakistan recently, the Chinese Communist Party leadership actively and objectively supported the military dictatorship of Yahya Khan and in this way the spread of the national democratic revolution from East Bengal to West Pakistan was ruthlessly halted. Now that Yahya has been ousted, the Chinese leadership supports the Bhutto regime which represents the interests of the comprador and landlord classes of Pakistan.

There is now absolutely no question about the roles of Peking and Moscow with regard to the struggles of the peoples of The Third World. Though the two capitals invariably take what appears to be opposing positions, the net result in each instance is counter-revolution and consolidation of repression and bourgeois rule. As revolutionaries of The Third World, our watchwords should be vigilance and revolution in permanence

—Sam Mhlongo

ADS

Black on red, red on white: £1.05 each including postage from: *The Red Mole*, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1



EAST LONDON RED CIRCLE meets on Tuesday nights at 7.45 p.m. in the 'Black Bull', Stratford Broadway (opposite road from Stratford station onto Broadway).

IRISH CITIZEN FORUMS February 4th, 'I.S. and the Irish Solidarity Movement' (I.S. speaker invited); February 18th, 'Paisleyism and Orangism: Fascist movement? (Anna de Casparis). Forums held at the General Picton, Caledonian Road, at 8 p.m.

RED MOLE & IMG PUBLICATIONS and other publications, available in the North from: Books, 84 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2. List in preparation, send large s.a.e.

ANGELA DAVIS ON TRIAL! Torch light vigil to mark the opening of the trial, Monday 31st January at 7 p.m. outside U.S. Embassy, Grosvenor Sq., W.1. All progressive organisations urged to attend—bring banners. Organised by the Angela Davis Defence Committee, 10 Greek Street, W.1. (01-437 5960).

IRISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN demonstration in York, Saturday, 29th January. Assemble Lord Mayors Walk, 2.30 p.m. to march to Northern Command H.Q.

GLASGOW RED CIRCLE
WEEKLY DISCUSSION GROUP FOR
REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS
IONA COMMUNITY CENTRE,
214 CLYDE STREET
EVERY THURSDAY AT 7.30.

Piers Wins Despite Scabs

It is very easy for student union leaders to proclaim their intention to defend student militants. The only problem is, that they hardly ever do so. The example of Imperial College and its attempt to expel a leading militant, Piers Corbyn, from the campus shows this. Piers has in fact successfully fought this, and was re-instated by the college last Tuesday. However, he only managed this in isolation with the help of a few militants around him. The leadership of the students union, while giving empty verbal support, in fact scabbed on Piers in every way it could. The Union Council never at any stage of the struggle discussed the question of mobilising the students at Imperial in support of Piers. At the most, a majority of the Council was prepared to ask a Union General Meeting to ask NUS for legal aid for Piers in fighting his expulsion—which in the absence of any political support on the campus would just have drawn Piers through a fruitless legal experience and thus have pre-empted any struggle at Imperial.

However, the mistakes of the Union Council in general pale into insignificance beside the behaviour of the Union President, John McCullough. McCullough not only failed to assist Piers in any way, but deliberately attempted to sabotage his defence. At the Union General Meeting at which the case was discussed he attempted to destroy the motion of support by amending it to prevent the union asking NUS for legal aid—although NUS had already guaranteed it—and by the time this manoeuvre was fought off and his amendment defeated he was able to declare the meeting inquorate. It may not be entirely coincidental that he also recently had a meeting with Mrs. Thatcher.

How did Piers manage to stay in Imperial College with a leadership like this? Part of the explanation is that with the support of a very small SocSoc he was able to generate enough discussion on campus through union meetings, leaflets, etc. to frighten the college authorities into believing that the Left might be able to mobilise Imperial students into taking action despite their 'leadership'. Also important were the numerous messages of support from student unions and SocSocs following an appeal from the Liaison Committee, which appears to have had a considerable effect on the college's decision. Nor can they have failed to be influenced by the attitude of the local branch of the National Union of Public Employees, which sent a very strong letter to the Rector giving full support to Piers and threatening action in support of any action which the students might take. This was in contrast to the behaviour of the C.P.-led ASTMS branch (of which Piers is a member) whose position throughout the struggle was, to say the least, ambiguous.

Certain very important lessons can be learnt from this struggle. If threats of action by a small minority of activists can gain victories in spite of the official leadership, then genuine collective action by the mass of students can do even more. Defeat is not always inevitable. But it can only be avoided if, as in this struggle, it is realised that in many cases union officials are not concerned to defend their members and independent action must be taken; that struggles must not remain isolated but must be generalised to other colleges; and that every effort must be made to obtain support from those workers most closely involved in the day-to-day running of the colleges, such as the NUPE branch at Imperial.

LSE Occupy

Students at the London School of Economics will be occupying the school on Friday, 21st January, after a complete breakdown in negotiations with the authorities over a new union constitution. The students decided to implement their draft of the new constitution unilaterally at a union meeting on 15th January, and on Monday the School retaliated by freezing the union's funds, which they control.

This struggle marks a revival in organised student action at LSE after a gap of three years. After the 'great' year of 1968 the Left was effectively smashed by the authorities, and the strategy and tactics that were evolved at that time were rendered irrelevant in the changed situation where the School recovered its control, conceding virtually nothing to the student body. However in the time that has elapsed the Socialist Society has gradually reorganised itself, developing through small-scale spontaneist actions such as the occupation of Houghton Street to the production of a coherent critique of bourgeois education, and also the removal of secular divisions by a group broadly united by the 'May Day Manifesto' on education (available 6p, LSE SocSoc).

The position of the LSE Students Union is a complicated one; the essential point to understand, however, is that the London School of Economics is a Limited Company. Its relationship with the ruling class is very clear, providing as is well known many of the ideas used by the capitalist elite for the perpetuation of their system. The position of the Students Union within this framework is much as it would be if the Thatcher proposals were already implemented (no control of the union funds etc.).

To strike against this position a new union constitution, deleting the powers of the Director and the Court of Governors, was drafted and then overwhelmingly carried at a union meeting. This was then followed by the victory of the Socialist Society slate in the Union Council elections, the slate being pledged to the implementation of the new, 'free' constitution. On 16th December the new Union Council took these demands to a meeting with the Court of Governors. They were decisively rejected.

As a result the union meeting of 14th January resolved overwhelmingly to:

- Implement the new constitution unilaterally;
- elect immediately a returning officer to arrange the new elections and new committees;
- prepare to resist by all means necessary any attempt to interfere with this implementation.

The same meeting also voted to take over the LSE from the evening of Friday, 21st January, to the evening of Monday, 24th January.

The situation at LSE will provide a testing-ground for all militants, as well as for NUS. A national campaign against the Government's attack on student unions can only have any meaning if it includes concrete support to those colleges who are themselves engaged in local struggles over union autonomy. LSE must now be seen as one of the focusses in this campaign; by their action, the students there have demonstrated very clearly that there can be no half-way house between complete public accountability/State control and full union autonomy. In their reaction to this struggle we shall judge the seriousness of those whose defence of union autonomy has so far remained at a purely vocal level.

Liaison Committee Conference

Representatives from 48 students unions and 30 socialist societies attended the second national conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Students Unions, held at Aston on 15th January. The conference decided that the unifying slogan of the LCDSU should be 'Unions for the struggle, unions against the State!'. It was recognised that the idea of 'public accountability', which is so dear to the hearts of the NUS Executive and the C.P., means in fact accountability to the State—a State which is merely the instrument of the ruling class. The conference was very clear that to accept such State control was to render the demand for union autonomy completely meaningless.

As a corollary to this position, the conference also decided to recommend all students unions to vote money to the miners' strike, either directly or as speaker's 'expenses'. It was felt very strongly that we should not only oppose the form of the Government's proposals but also specify clearly their class content; that if we are opposed to the State then we must give full support to all other sections of society, in particular the working class, who are engaged in the same struggle.

The conference also discussed the NUS 'emergency conference' on the Government's proposals, to be held in London on 29th January, and agreed to oppose any attempt by the Executive to impose negotiations or a compromise on the conference. It was also decided to present a Liaison Committee slate for the elections at the next NUS full conference in Easter.

There will be a special meeting of all NUS delegates and others who support the LCDSU on the Friday night before the emergency conference in London. For further details phone North London Poly at 01-607 6767.

YSA Convention in Texas

The Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), revolutionary youth organisation in political solidarity with the Socialist Workers Party of America and the Fourth International, met in Houston in Texas, for its annual convention between December 28th and January 1st. Some 1200 members and sympathisers of the YSA demonstrated the all-national presence of the organisation (coming from branches in over 30 states), and also their contempt for the local Ku Klux Klan which had conducted a campaign of harassment, including machine gunning, of local YSA and SWPers. Over 500 of the 1000 or so observers who had trekked from all corners of the US to celebrate their Christmas discussing politics were not yet members of the YSA, although 60 very quickly applied to join. And 250 of the people present had come from Texas itself marking the penetration of revolutionary ideas to even this Wallace-type area.

One of the major themes of the convention was the coming presidential elections. Much debate centred around both the sort of support which the YSA could mount for Linda Jenness and Andrew Pulley, standing on an SWP ticket, and on the effect that the presidential campaigns would have on the mass movements which the YSA saw as the major planks of its activity in the coming period. On the SWP campaign, the convention decided to set up support committees, Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley, in all areas where they could and help finance a series of campaign teams which would be touring between now and the presidential elections. To this end, \$16,000 was raised in a rally which was held during the convention.

The other aspect of this was for the YSA to do everything to prevent a disorientation in the mass movement due to what they saw as the inevitable downturn they would suffer through the effects of the election year. With this qualification the YSA re-endorsed their strategy of building mass movements around single issues independent of the capitalist parties.

The convention agreed to give its full support to building a mass anti-war demonstration called by the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) for April 22nd. It considered that it was even more necessary than ever to get the American people out on the streets to demand the immediate withdrawal of all American troops from Vietnam. In this it also felt that there would be an echo of recognition in the American working class itself, given the imposition of the wage freeze to combat inflation, a major cause of which was seen to be the Vietnam war.

The other major mass movement it would attempt to build was around the question of abortion, in which it was expected that the women's liberation movement would rally around the campaign called by the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition.

The convention had representatives from thirteen fraternal and sympathising organizations from around the world. It received fraternal greetings from many more including Hugo Blanco, Latin American revolutionary peasant leader in exile from the Peruvian dictatorship. In connection with this latter it took note of the growing repression of revolutionaries in Latin America, taking this opportunity to launch a defence campaign in support of all political prisoners in Latin America—particularly in Bolivia and Argentina—which will be taken up by the Fourth International throughout the world as an important part of its activities in the coming year.

Alan Bates

More Arrests in Spain

We have just learnt of the arrest in Spain of three members of the Ligue Communiste (French Section of the Fourth International)—Jacques Giron, Gilles Marquet, and Gilbert Dufourcq. They have been held prisoners at Figueras since the beginning of January, and the Spanish authorities have as yet given no reason for their arrest. Knowing the methods of Franco's police, there is every reason to be concerned as to the kind of treatment they are likely to be receiving.

The Ligue Communiste is mounting a big campaign in France along with other groups to secure their immediate release. Readers of *The Red Mole* are similarly urged to send telegrams demanding their immediate release (copy to us) to the Spanish Embassy, 24 Belgrave Square, London S.W.1.