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NEW SERIES
By Terry Eagleton

Makers of modern Marxism

CENTRE PAGES

CALL A GENERAL STRIKE! BRING DOWN THE TORIES!



Two weeks into the national steel strike, BSC management put the boot into the trade unions with the confirmation of 11,300 sackings at the two giant South Wales plants of Llanwern and Port Talbot.

But instead of pressing forward with its original call for an all-Wales General Strike from January 21, and fighting to force the British TUC to call parallel action, the Welsh TUC has restricted itself to calling a "day of action" on January 28 and "all-out action" from March 10.

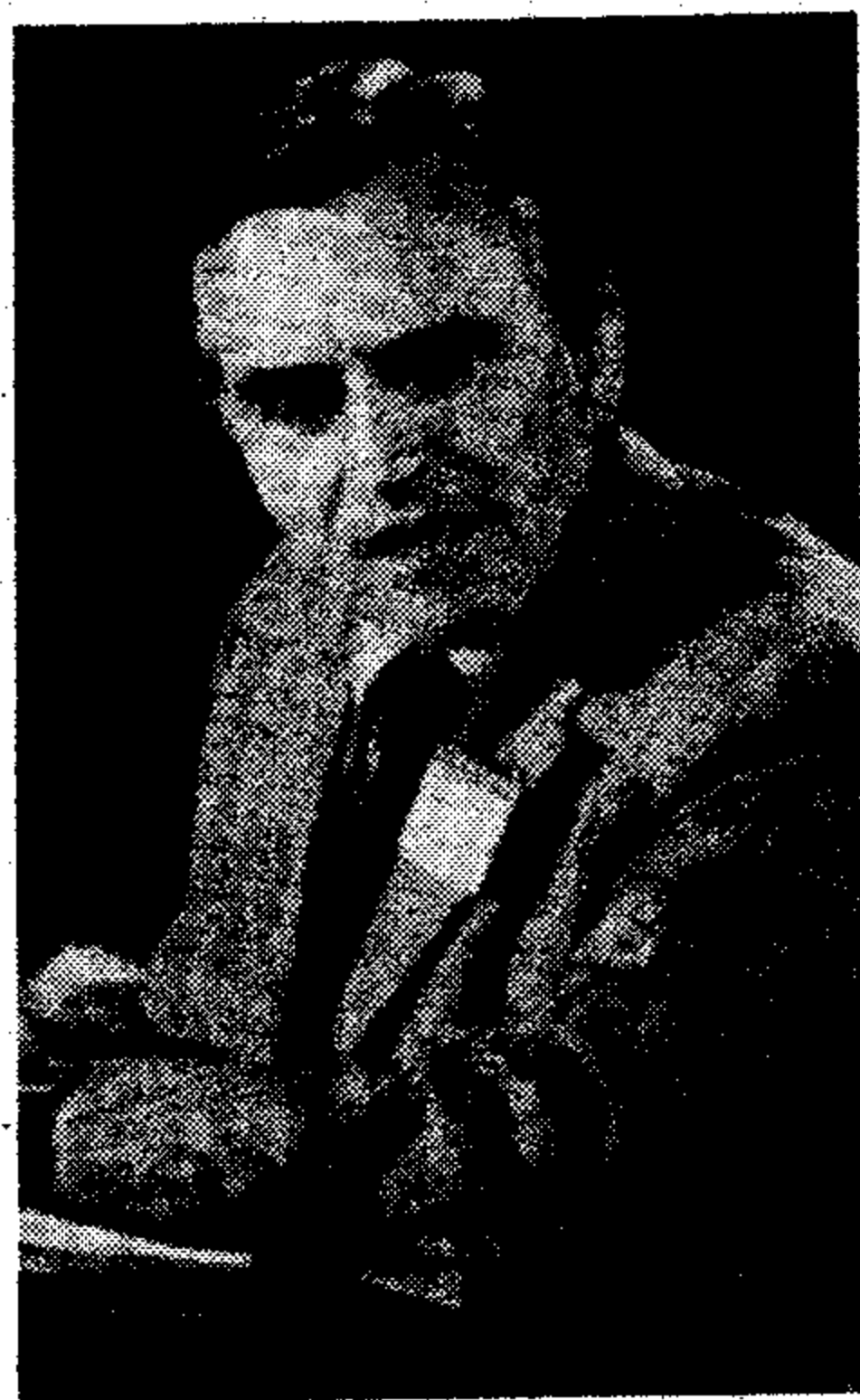
Blank refusal

This climbdown followed the blank refusal of Len Murray and British TUC leaders to call out trade unionists in all-out struggle against the Tory government, whose attacks are now hitting every section of the working class.

But the repeated talk during the last week of a possible general strike indicates that the steel struggle indicates that the issue is still very much alive.

ISTC leader Bill Sirs, forced to admit that the steel unions are engaged in a political fight with the Tory government, warned of a possible "holocaust". A general strike, he said, would be a "very frightening" possibility if BSC went ahead with its closure plans. And right wing railwaymen's leader Sidney Weighell told the *Financial Times* that:

"he was coming under great pressure from his members to fight the associated threat to railway jobs, particularly in



Sid Weighell

South Wales, where about 3,000 were at risk."

"But trade union action confined to South Wales would not be enough to stop BSC's plans," he added. "It's a 1926 situation".

It is not unusual for even right wing trade union leaders on occasion to call and direct massive strike action in pursuit of a pay demand.

Battle on jobs

What frightens Weighell, Sirs and the TUC bureaucracy is that this pay battle threatens to grow into a national battle on jobs, producing a full-scale showdown with the Tories which union officials will find it hard to wriggle out of or to control.

The central role of BSC's sackings plan in fuelling steelworkers' militancy has been shown clearly by the militant

response of workers at the doomed Corby and Shotton plants to the strike call.

They see the national strike as a means of waging a battle against closure and striking a major blow at the hated Tory government.

With other sections of workers now pressuring their leaders to take action alongside the steelworkers in defence of jobs, now is the time to fight throughout the labour movement for a *General Strike* with the clear objective not simply of delaying the BSC closures, but of *bringing down* this reactionary Tory government.

Weighell admits the NUR members are clamouring for action: a ballot of South Wales miners also showed overwhelming support for a strike... Other railwaymen and miners would undoubtedly follow their lead.

Offer a lead

Were more generalised action to spread, it would offer a lead to countless thousands of workers in other industries currently under Tory attack:

*100,000 BL carworkers, whose insulting 5%-with-strings pay offer clearly stems from the same Tory policies as BSC's closure plan;

*2 million public service workers, whose pay rise this year is pegged far below the cost of living by Tory cash limits, and who face cuts, closures and speed-up on every side;

*Civil servants, who face a steady erosion of manning levels and an endless tide of cuts;

*Workers in every industrial sector whose wages are under attack from Tory-fuelled

inflation, and whose unions are once more under attack from Tory legislation;

*Women workers, facing the worst impact of the cuts, the worst unemployment, and Tory attacks on their rights at work and on the right to abortion;

*Immigrant workers, confronted by new Tory racist legislation;

*The unemployed—condemned by Tory recessionary policies to a lifetime on the scrapheap or at best to a job at rock-bottom wages.

Not defeated

There is not a worker in Britain that does not have good cause to rally behind a determined General Strike to bring down this government.

But when Weighell talks of 1926 he is not wrong. The 1926 General Strike was *not* defeated; it was *sold out* by union leaders exactly like Weighell, who, terrified by the power of the action they had called, sent their members back to work after only nine days with nothing gained, and left the miners to be starved back to work six months later.

1980 finds the working class with an equally spineless, reactionary leadership which has no intention of bringing down the Tories—if it can be avoided.

Inadequate

The Welsh TUC leaders, in calling for a General Strike, centred on using the strike to press for three, completely inadequate demands:

*A two year delay in the closures;

*the replacement of the BSC management;

*an inquiry into the running of BSC.

Even in the unlikely event of these demands being met, it would merely give BSC two years to prepare the ground better to force through the closures—and leave the Tory government in office to press forward its barrage of attacks on the working class.

When we call for a General Strike we are not calling for a repeat of the 1926 betrayal; nor are we calling for a protest action. Nor do we place any confidence whatever in the TUC leaders to call or to lead such a strike.

We call on workers throughout the trade union movement to move resolutions to the TUC demanding that a General Strike be called in solidarity with the steelworkers' jobs fight, pledging support for such a strike, and insisting that it demand the removal of the Tory government.

Councils of action

At the same time such resolutions should call for the setting up in each area of *councils of action*, to draw delegates from every local labour movement body—union branches, stewards committees, tenants' associations, Labour Parties and other political organisations—to lead and extend general strike action independently of the TUC leaders.

Such councils of action would need to oversee mass picketing, the distribution of necessary supplies, the provision of essential services and the

defence of picket lines against attacks by scabs and state forces.

This fight to develop the steel strike into a general strike must be combined with a renewed struggle in the unions and the Labour Party for the ousting of the right-wing Callaghan-Healey leadership that paved the way for the Tories and now stands opposed to their removal by working class action.

What is needed is not a repetition of the treacherous Wilson and Callaghan governments, but a *workers' government*, prepared to implement socialist policies in the interests of the working class.

Such a government is at present unachievable without a concerted political struggle to expose the real role of the Labour leaders 'left' and right in the eyes of the mass of the working class.

This is why in the unions, the Labour Party and the councils of action, should they emerge, we will continue to focus workers' attention on the Labour 'lefts' that posture as opponents of Callaghan, but lift not a finger in practical struggle.

The coming struggles will prove to important and new layers of workers that 'left wing' reformism cannot defend the interests of the working class. Only a revolutionary leadership based on the Trotskyist programme can do that.

*No sell-out on steel jobs!
*Demand the TUC call a General Strike!

*Build councils of action!
*Bring down the Tory government!

*Kick out Callaghan-Healey: demand Labour carry out socialist policies.

INTERNATIONAL

IS ITALY MOVING CLOSER TO ICELAND?

The question may sound as improbable politically as it is geographically.

But it was to Reykjavik and not to the apparently more likely parallels of Paris or Madrid that Italian politicians were looking last week.

What happened in Iceland was that the equivalent of Enrico Berlinguer (General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party) was asked to form a government.

The Icelandic Berlinguer is Svavar Gestsson, leader of the Peoples' Alliance (the title chosen by the Icelandic 'Euro-communists' so as not to offend the bourgeoisie). This week he was asked by the President to form a government.

The call came after the failure of the leaders of the right wing Agrarian and Conservative Parties to find a majority following Iceland's indecisive parliamentary elections at the beginning of December.

Desperation

Gestsson's difference from Berlinguer is that his party is hostile to Iceland's continuing membership of NATO and to the presence of American bases in the country.

His appointment as Premier-designate therefore (it is by no means certain that he will be able to form a government) shows the desperation of the Icelandic bourgeoisie in its long search for a stable form of rule.

Though the Peoples' Alliance has been part of a coalition government before, this is the first time the ruling class has been forced to contemplate putting a Stalinist in control of its efforts to resolve the consequences of the capitalist crisis.

In Italy, too, the central political issue remains the extent to which the Stalinists of the Italian Communist Party have to be brought into political power in order to resolve the country's semi-permanent political crisis.

Early election

The Stalinists of the CP themselves demand to play a full role in a coalition government with the Christian Democrats (Italy's Tories). The Christian Democrats do not dare to let them in; but at the same

time wonder whether they can dare to keep them out.

When the previous formula, in which the CP was part of the parliamentary majority but not part of the government, broke down nearly a year ago, Italy was forced into an early general election whose result was no more conclusive than the later one in Iceland.

"Opposition"

The Italian Communists insisted that they would stay in "opposition" until they were admitted to the government.

The Socialists who held the parliamentary balance did not want the stigma that would attach to keeping a Christian Democrat government in office; at the same time neither did they nor the CP dare even to mention the possibility of a joint SP-CP government—a possibility which would in their view unacceptably increase the demands of the Italian working class for a resolution of its rapidly worsening material problems.

As long as all these positions are held to rigidly by the major political parties there is no form of government which can command a parliamentary majority in Italy.

So the only formula which can solve the government's conundrum in Italy is to have no government at all.

Even in Italy this is constitutionally not allowed; and so the bourgeoisie came up last summer with the closest possible thing to having no government at all: they appointed Francesco Cossiga as Prime Minister.

"Caretaker"

Cossiga's government has been officially labelled a 'caretaker regime'; and he was selected for the highest office in the land because he was about the most colourless and inoffensive person in the leadership of the Christian Democratic Party (and he is also Enrico Berlinguer's cousin).

But this semi-invisible government could be no long term solution, given the tremendous pressures of conflicting class interest which demand political expression.

Last week saw a 24-hour general strike by workers in defence of the limited sliding

scale of wages which protects them against the effect of rising prices.

It is in the Socialist Party that these pressures have now again broken through the surface. Last week the Socialist Party, after a long and bitter debate, took the new position that the CP ought to be included in a multi-party government; and that the SP would no longer support a minority Christian Democrat government in parliament, even tacitly.

This line, which was a rebuff for party leader Bettino Craxi's plan to be Prime Minister in a Christian Democrat-Socialist coalition, pushes Italy to the edge of a new acute political

The British Communist Party journal *Marxism Today* carries in its January issue a warning on the dangers of fascism in Turkey.

But at the same time it displays the politics of class collaboration that can only help to create conditions for a fascist takeover.

The article looks at two alternatives for Turkey.

The one is to follow the present economic course of restrictive fiscal and monetary policies which are causing unemployment and declining living standards.

Capitalist roads

But the alternative, according to the CP, is export diversification. This cannot now work because of a lack of international credit, competition from SE Asia and the "growing protection of the markets of the advanced capitalist countries."

Both of these roads are of course capitalist roads: the CP examines no socialist solution to the crisis. Indeed the second "alternative" they put forward vividly exposes the impact of the British Communist Party's nationalist policy of import controls—which exports unemployment from Britain precisely to countries like Turkey! Within Turkey itself, the article admits, the working class continues, in the face of mounting attacks, to organise strongly into trade unions. 40% of the industrial workforce are now in the left wing trade union confederation DISK.

"Sectarianism"

But alongside this there is "a rising tide of neo-fascism". The major problem, according to the CP, is that the Turkish left has been severely weakened by "sectarianism". In particular it has been "divided over whether or not to support Ecevit".

crisis and possibly to further parliamentary elections.

This new decision of the Socialist Party is not just a negotiating tactic of the leaders since it was voted by a party congress.

It probably, therefore, spells the end of even the temporary expedient of a Cossiga government.

The bourgeoisie must decide again: are they willing for all Italy's political wounds to be opened in a new general election campaign likely to produce a result just as indecisive as the last?

Safe bet

Or are they willing to take a step on the road to Iceland by asking Berlinguer to become not Prime Minister but at least a senior member of the Cabinet?

It is a safe bet that, whatever is decided, growing sections of the bourgeoisie in Italy—and in Iceland and the points between the two—have started to ask themselves a little more purposefully: what can replace parliamentary democracy?



Gandhi

Indian Stalinists attack Gandhi

"Democracy is not safe in Mrs Gandhi's hands, as she has taken her party's victory as a vindication of her emergency rule".

Thus spoke Rajeswara Ras, General Secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI) last weekend.

"With all the ex-maharajas, industrialists, blackmarketeers and landlords elected under her banner it is foolish to expect

Mrs Gandhi to solve unemployment, poverty and inflation—problems for which she was largely responsible during her previous eleven years as premier."

Ras tactfully avoided mentioning the fact that the CPI supported Gandhi during that 11-year period of rule.

When she introduced her "Emergency Powers" on June 27 1975 (which included detention without charge; the banning of many political parties—though not the CPI; and the banning of strikes) the CPI enthusiastically welcomed the move, declaring that:

"A pre-emptive, stunning blow has been struck against counter-revolution."

The main edge of the emergency was directed against "neo-colonialist, reactionary, communal and fascist forces."

If Mrs Gandhi hadn't "taken the courageous step of enforcing the emergency India would have been turned into another Chile."

This was the position upheld by the CPI during the whole of the "Emergency Powers" period right up to and including the moment Gandhi was thrown out.

This is the main reason why in the latest elections the CPI only won ten seats; its organisation has been decimated by its years of servility to Gandhi.

Postured

Why did the CPI give this cringing support to the Indian dictator? Because she postured as an "anti-imperialist" and maintained friendly relations with the Soviet Union.

But of course this stance was simply one of a capitalist politician balancing between the Soviet Union and the imperialist powers in order to achieve the best deal for Indian capitalism.

The very nature of the emergency powers exposed the anti-working class content of her government.

Even today, as Gandhi lurches from side to side over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (supporting Russia at the UN, only to then condemn the invasion; welcoming Carrington and opposing "outside interventions, only to declare that the Afghan revolutionary council "invited Russia in") she is merely jockeying for position, in an attempt to secure the best deal for the crisis-ridden Indian economy.

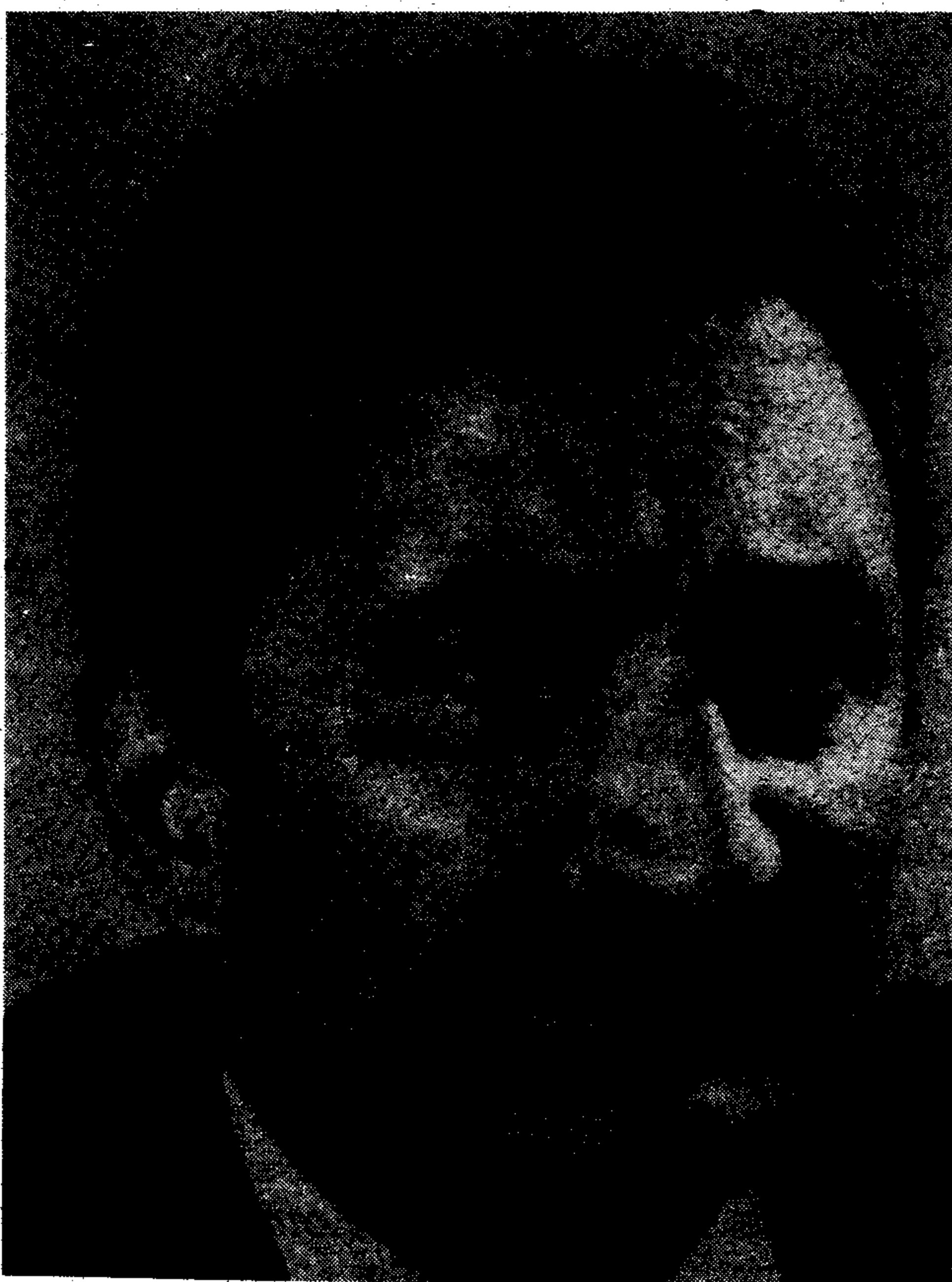
And in addition Gandhi is keen to prevent an imperialist campaign to arm the Zia dictatorship in Pakistan.

Switch of policy

But the scale of the election victory has given Gandhi the scope to drop the cosmetic anti-imperialist and left rhetoric of earlier years, and to brush aside the bootlicking CPI leaders.

This is no doubt the explanation for the switch in Stalinist policy. Meanwhile in Kerala, Gandhi's Congress (Indira) party has set up an anti-communist "Democratic Alliance" to fight the state government elections.

Turkey: break from Ecevit!



Ecevit

The main problem, on the contrary, is that Ecevit, a bourgeois politician who introduced savage martial law restrictions in most Turkish cities and drove the Turkish left (including the CP) underground, has been consistently supported by the Turkish Communist Party!

What plainly worries the British CP is that more and more left wingers in Turkey—and Turkish CP members in Britain—are recognising the necessity to break from Ecevit and to fight instead for a working class united front against fascism, comprising all the workers' parties and trade union bodies.

A crucial role of such a

united front must be to establish armed workers defence squads to combat the daily violence and intimidation aimed at the workers' movement by fascist gangs, and to struggle for the defeat of the Demirel government and the establishment of a workers and peasants government in Turkey.

British Communist Party members must demand that their leaders stop covering up for the Turkish CP's support for Ecevit.

It was a similar alliance with so-called "democratic" bourgeois parties that led to crushing defeats in Spain in the 1930s and in Chile in 1973.



Italian workers on the march

Will Labour's 'left' hold out against witch-hunters?

By John Lister



The line-up for and against a witch-hunt in the Labour Party will be revealed more clearly than ever this coming Wednesday.

While the right wing, aided and abetted by press stories of the "Trotskyist takeover" will no doubt be on the offensive, the willingness of the Tribune 'left' to stand in defence of the democratic rights of socialists to argue their views within the Party will be put to the test.

The meeting will be lobbied by a delegation from Oxford demanding the reinstatement of expelled socialist Ted Heslin, a TGWU delegate to the Oxford GMC and a long-time Labour Party member.

Not denied

Heslin was expelled last year for supporting the policies of *Socialist Press*.

He has never denied this charge: instead, with the full backing of his union branch and a defence campaign in Oxford, he has fought for the right to argue his position in the Labour Party and to fight the anti-working class politics of the Callaghan-Healey leadership.

On this basis he has taken the case through the Party's appeals procedure. But an inquiry conducted by Party bureaucrats has recommended that the expulsion be upheld.

And two weeks ago a meet-

ing of the NEC's organisation committee decided, on a split 7-5 vote, to recommend that the NEC, too, should place its seal of approval on the expulsion.



Bevan

ing of the NEC's organisation committee decided, on a split 7-5 vote, to recommend that the NEC, too, should place its seal of approval on the expulsion.

Opposition

The opposition to this was led by Tory Benn, and backed by four other 'lefts' present, including LPYS delegate Tony Saunois.



Benn

But two trade union delegates reputed to be left wingers—Alex Kitson (TGWU) and Doug Hoyle (ASTMS)—voted with the right wing to provide a majority for the hounding out of a socialist from the Party's ranks.

Yet the full NEC contains a substantial number of 'lefts' who have not yet had to take a position. The vote could still go either way.



Heffer

With the press in full cry over the supposed "takeover" of the party by "Trotskyists", however, the pressure is plainly on the NEC 'lefts' to make some gestures towards bourgeois respectability by sacrificing one or two vocal opponents of the Callaghan-Healey leadership.

But at the same time with Benn and leading Tribunites such as Heffer arguing that Trotskyists should be opposed

and answered by political argument rather than by organisational measures, there are plainly problems for them in simply endorsing the first of what threatens to become a growing list of expulsions.

Harmless

And quite obviously none of Labour's 'left' want to see the all-out war within the Party which would be unleashed by any attempt to purge the Militant group, which has over the years proved itself harmless to the right wing, a useful cheerleader for the 'lefts' and a means of attracting and drawing in votes and support from layers of youth who would otherwise be wholly alienated by the reactionary politics of the Labour leadership.

Youth officer and Militant supporter Andy Bevan, for instance, whose planned party political broadcast so horrified this week's *News of the World*, has repeatedly urged Callaghan to give the LPYS a free hand so that they can go out and get the youth vote for Labour.

As the right wing assess their options for embarking on a full scale witch-hunt, socialists within the Labour Party must recognise the necessity to mobilise in the fight for the removal

of the right wing leadership, and to defend the limited democratic rights that presently exist within the Party itself.

A consistent, socialist internationalist perspective must be fought for as the only alternative to a continuation of Callaghan's betrayals.

It is on their ability and willingness to wage such a fight in practice that the 'lefts' and the Militant must be judged.

In the course of such struggles, increasing numbers of Labour activists and trade unionists will recognise the necessity for an alternative socialist leadership to direct their fight.

Gold and the pound in your pocket

The price of gold has continued its giddy climb during the last week, peaking out at a colossal \$838 per ounce.

But what are the implications of this for the vast mass of us who neither own nor expect to own substantial quantities of gold? Why should we take any interest?

Same content

The fact is that the soaring money price of gold is not so much an indication of an increased value of gold itself—which still contains essentially the same content of necessary labour time for its production as it did six months ago, before the latest runaway price increase.

Rather it is a stark reflection of falling confidence in the value of paper currencies internationally, and the flagging confidence of important sections of capitalists in the continued stability of their system.

Money invested in gold may provide a short term speculative profit: but in the longer term it yields neither interest (as with bank deposits) nor profit from the exploitation of the working class.

Asset stripping

For substantial amounts of capital to be channelled in that direction is therefore a warning of further cutbacks to come in investment, more asset-stripping operations and more closures in industry.

And the falling value of paper currency in relation to gold can also already be felt in relation to the rising price of other commodities—in particular other metals and, of course, crude oil.

Wallets

As the gold dealers celebrate and look forward to the \$1,000 ounce, workers will look to the shrinking value of the pounds in their wallets. Every golden lining has its cloud!

Prepare for action to defy Corrie's law! All out Feb 5

Unless firm action is fought for within the labour movement, February 8 1980 could mark a major reverse in the struggle against women's oppression.

On that day the anti-abortion bill tabled by Tory John Corrie is due for its Third and final reading in the Commons, with an odds-on chance of being substantially carried by an unholy alliance of Tory and right wing Labour votes.

Under the Corrie proposals up to two-thirds of the abortions carried out in the 12 years since the present Act came into force would have been illegal: and charities and clinics set up to provide abortion facilities which the NHS refuses to provide would be forced out of operation.

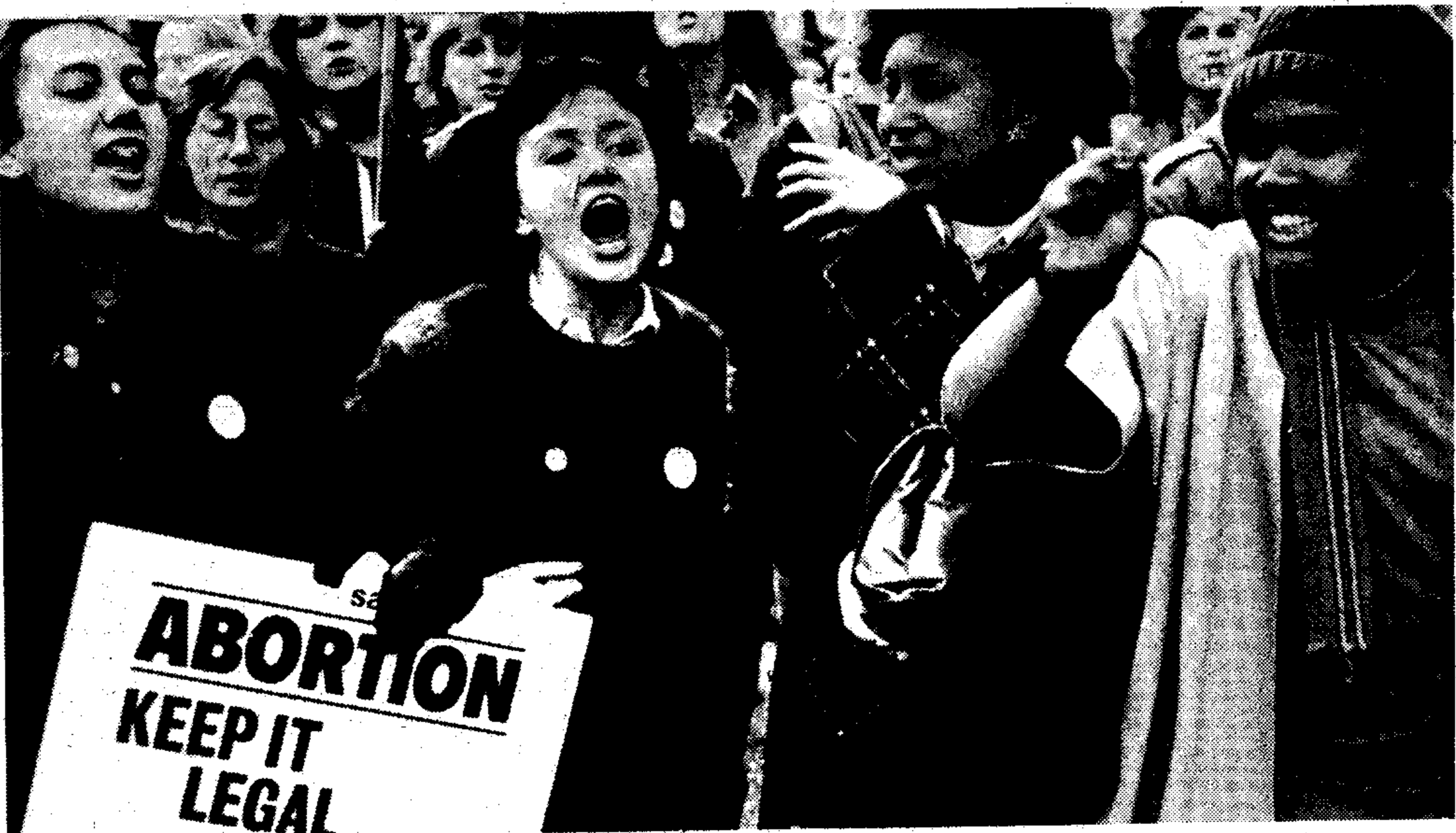
The consequence would be that while the opportunity of safe, legal abortion would be drastically reduced, thousands of women each year would continue to face the problem of unwanted pregnancy.

Hazards

They would then have to choose between the torment of having an unwanted child or the hazards and suffering of an illegal abortion.

Prior to the 1967 Act, over 3,000 women each year were admitted to hospital as the outcome of illegal abortions: in 1975 after the limited gains of the Abortion Act had made themselves felt, this figure was cut to 600.

In Spain, where abortion is



Demonstrators on October 28

illegal, 3,000 women a year are admitted to die: in Britain in 1976 the figure was only 7.

Corrie's Bill is a blank cheque for the most barbaric suffering and for the death of hundreds of women in the years to come.

Coupled with the cuts already savaging the National Health Service, the Bill threatens above all working class women, who cannot afford the expensive private abortions that—regardless of the law—have always been available to bourgeois women.

And with no method of contraception being 100% safe, the possibility of abortion is essential to allow any woman

the elementary right to control the workings of her own body.

Without this right there is no possibility of women achieving genuine equality of opportunity with men, or shedding the bonds that tie them to domestic labour in the home, and prevent them from playing their full role in the labour movement.

Right wing

It is no coincidence that it is Tory politicians like Corrie and Labour right wingers—each dedicated to forcing women out of the labour force and back into the confines of the home and domestic labour—that have taken the lead in attempting to

restrict abortion rights.

They are of course eagerly backed up by the money and apparatus of the religious bigots of the Catholic Church, which believes it is fine to kill women in back-street abortions, and to force unwanted children into a lifetime of misery, but unthinkable to carry out a simple, safe and free abortion.

Not even the most vigorous campaigner for the right to free abortion on demand wishes to propose that abortion be made compulsory—simply that it be available for those women who choose not to have a child.

The only issue of "conscience" at stake, therefore, is that facing the women con-

cerned, who must decide how best to approach her own problems and circumstances.

This is why the right to abortion is a basic, democratic right that must be defended by the labour movement in struggle against the Tory government.

The Corrie Bill seems set to become law. But history shows that democratic rights have only been won in struggle against reactionary laws: the ground must be prepared to mobilise the labour movement to oppose and resist the new restrictions.

This means fighting in trade unions and Labour Parties to:

1) Build maximum delegations for the mass lobby of Parliament on February 5 including the fight for strike action.

2) Call on the Labour Party to enforce its policy of "free abortion on request" by a) imposing a three line whip on Labour MPs to vote against the Corrie Bill and b) pledging the next Labour government to the immediate repeal of all anti-abortion legislation.

3) Call on trade unions to ensure that sponsored MPs vote in accordance with Labour Party and TUC policy.

4) Call on union national executives, particularly ASMTS/MPU, to commit their unions to strike action in the event of any member being prosecuted for continuing to provide abortion in defiance of the law.

5) Support trade unionists who take action, including strike action or occupation, in defence of abortion or other health service facilities threatened by the government's public spending cuts.

PRESS GANG



Harold Whitlock was a fast walker in his time. In 1936 he strolled off with the gold medal at the Berlin Olympics for the 50 kilometre walk (and presumably shook hands politely with Hitler).

At 76 his chances of being selected for the next Olympics are remote and speculation about the chances of him pulling out of the Moscow games has been less than intense.

The Daily Telegraph had no hesitation, however, in rushing us the hot news, on the back page, in one of those fillers normally reserved for telling readers that someone they had never heard of is dead.

"I wouldn't go" said the headline and underneath was Harold declaring that "if he was still a top athlete he would not go to Moscow unless the

Russians pulled out of Afghanistan."

It was good for the Telegraph to know that they had sport on their side. All they have to do now is get Harold into the Olympic squad and this boycott might start to catch on.

So far there have been no reported recantations from Scottish footballers who played in Chile or Argentina.

Better still would be recantations from English footballers who didn't play in Argentina, but who would have done if England had not been knocked out of the World Cup; and who now would have boycotted Moscow if football was being played there; and if they were picked; and if the Soviet troops did not pull out of Afghanistan (and Militant did not pull out of the Labour Party).

At least that would spare us from the agony of whether

Prince Philip was going.

As head of the International Equestrian Federation he travelled to Moscow last year to see if the drains were big enough for his horses' shit. (It is this attention to detail that marks a great world leader and explains why the Daily Mail thinks it would be a major propaganda coup for the Russians if he attends the Olympics).

Perhaps saddest of all is the case of all those public spirited enterprises which though they would cash in on the Olympics by paying towards the team's expenses and being permitted to boast about having done so.

According to the Sunday Telegraph, Watney's are considering cancelling a plan to send 100 customers and landlords to Moscow, while Chiltonian biscuits "hurriedly removed all reference to Moscow from an Olympics medal chart this week".

CBI bleats for help

British bosses are being forced to reassess their position on government aid to industry.

After only seven months of the Tory government's recessionary policies, the CBI last week submitted a list of proposed cuts in public spend-



Chancellor Howe

ing totalling £1.5-£2 billion, linked to an appeal to Thatcher to make no more cuts in state aid to the private sector.

"The financial pressures on the company sector are severe and we therefore urge that no further economies be made for the present in assistance to trade and industry.

"To do otherwise would threaten adverse consequences for investment and employment".

Some fairly "adverse consequences" for employment have of course already been caused by Tory cuts in the public services, and by the savage policies of rationalisation imposed on industry by the high value of sterling and astronomical interest rates—each of which have been welcomed by the CBI.

Gesture

But with sections of their membership about to go to the wall financially, CBI leaders have felt obliged to make some gesture of protest—firstly by calling at their recent

conference for Thatcher to impose selective import controls and now by appealing for a continuation of government cash hand-outs.

It is unlikely that Thatcher will completely ignore these pleas from her staunch backers in the CBI: but on the other hand the crisis of British and world capitalism means that in any event many private firms face a gloomy future of near-zero profits, declining sales, and eventual closure.

After years of being cosseted by reformist Labour governments dedicated to keeping them in business at any price, the CBI finds this hard to take. But there is no easy way out of the impasse of British capitalism.

There are two roads open: one is downhill through mass unemployment and wholesale closures in the hopes of eventually restoring profitability: the other requires mass action by the working class to bring down the Tories, force the nationalisation of basic industry without compensation, and the establishment, under workers' management, of a planned socialist economy.

HESELTINE COOKS THE BOOKS

By Terry Smith

Loss-making "sale of century"

Labour spokesman Roy Hattersley last week pledged the next Labour government to repeal the Tory Housing Bill.

The Bill aims to provide council tenants—at massive expense—with the "right to buy" their houses at knock-down prices.

The Tory plan is to slash the number of houses available for rent in the public sector, in order to boost the rents that can be charged by Tory rack-renting private landlords, and the prices of houses built by Tory developers in the private sector.

Slick

In order to dress up this viciously anti-working class plan as somehow desirable, Heseltine and the Tories' slick campaign managers have had to concoct a completely spurious set of figures to "prove" that selling off council housing will make money for the local authorities.

But of course Heseltine himself has claimed that the "sale of the century" is a major handout to would-be buyers, declaring that:

"No single piece of legislation has enabled the transfer of so much capital wealth from state to people".

And indeed a close look at Heseltine's figures shows a concerted attempt to cover up the fact that in almost every likely instance the sale of a council property will, in the long term, produce a net loss to the authority concerned.

A number of key fiddles emerge in Heseltine's paper.

*The paper looks only at profit or loss on the sale of houses over a 20-year period: but those council houses likely to be sold will last much longer than that—at least another 50 years—and would therefore



Laughing all the way to the bank—Heseltine

potentially bring in 30 years' more rent.

*Heseltine throws in an arbitrary figure of £5,500 for the renovation of council houses: but leaves out of account any projected value for the sites on which they stand—thus artificially increasing the liabilities to councils without accounting the assets.

*Heseltine works on an average rent figure for all council houses—ignoring the fact that only the better quality, higher rent council property tends to be sold. In this way he lowers the amount of rent revenue to be expected.

*Despite evidence that the typical buyer of a council house

is aged 30-40, Heseltine's figures assume the buyer is 50, and would live to 85—thus reducing the amount of rent he/she would pay and increasing the amount of rent rebate they could claim.

This kind of gross manipulation enables Heseltine to claim a profit of £2,185 for every house sold. Yet the original paper on the "sale of the century" predicted losses ranging between £4,550 and £5,530 on each house!

Thus while a handful of people could become homeowners, the working class as a whole as taxpayers and tenants lose out all ways on the Tories' "bargain" package. They face

a dwindling stock of housing, increasing insecurity, soaring rents, rates, mortgages and house prices, and growing queues for accommodation as council housing programmes continue to fall away.

All this is good news for the Tories' friends—the speculators, developers, landlords, bankers and building employers.

But even with the added lure of profits to come, private builders are unlikely to produce anything like the number of new houses needed to make good the cutbacks in council housing.

Not confident

Plunging working class living standards, rocketing inflation, high interest rates and the spiralling market value of private housing mean that developers are far from confident of realising an adequate profit on a vastly increased number of houses.

Top estimates for new houses built in the private sector this year suggest a total of only 140,000—leaving a gap of some 40,000-100,000 between the number needed and the number available.

But of course capitalist production takes place not to fulfil even the most elementary human need—like a roof over workers' heads—but simply in order to accumulate profit.

Capitalist

The Tory government, as a capitalist government par excellence, is dedicated to profit first, profit second and profit third.

Despite the eloquent speeches and indignant arm-waving of Labour spokesman Hattersley and the torrent of reformist arguments refuting the Tory figures, nothing will prevent the Tories implementing their "sale of the century"



Hattersley

short of mass action to bring down the Thatcher government.

The task is to prepare the ground for such action—which must unite those struggles like the steel strike now in process against the Tories attacks with the battle against the spending cuts and the destruction of council housing.

Tenants associations must link up with union branches, trades councils and working class political parties in electing committees to open up the books of the local authority housing departments—to reveal the level of interest payments to the banks, the real costs of council housing, and the completely inadequate plans for future development of housing provision.

Workers' inquiries in each area must probe housing needs, and expose the crisis facing working class families, to show the need for united class action to defeat Thatcher.

But, far from resting content with Hattersley's bombastic promise to repeal the Tory measures, the fight must be taken up in the Labour Party for the ousting of the right wing Callaghan leadership and for the adoption of a socialist housing policy, based on the nationalisation without compensation of the big landowners, the building monopolies, banks and building societies.

Gay student fights back

You may have thought that to be a teacher all you need is the right academic qualifications. But if you happen to apply to Leeds University for a Post Graduate Certificate of Education course you could find an additional requirement: you must be heterosexual.

This came to light last month when gay student Geoffrey Brighton was refused a certificate of health not on grounds of physical or mental illness, but because of his homosexuality.

Two doctors at the University's Student Health clinic decided that, since Brighton was gay they could not judge his "emotional stability".

He was told he would have to see a psychiatrist for a second opinion!

He refused, and went back again to explain his position to Dr Fraser, head of Student Health. Fraser put the odds at 4-1 against Brighton being accepted for the course.

A campaign is now underway against this brazen example of sexist prejudice and discrimination, which can be contacted c/o Box 110, LAP, 29 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2.

Workers Socialist League
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MAKERS OF MODERN

1. Antonio Gramsci

In the wake of the first imperialist world war, a wave of revolutionary defeats rolled across Europe.

The years around 1920 were to see the crushing of the Berlin Spartacus uprising and of the Vienna general strike, the overthrow of workers' soviets in Munich and Budapest, and the failure of mass factory occupations throughout Italy.

Prominence

It was in this latter struggle that Antonio Gramsci, son of a Sardinian minor civil servant, and without question Italy's greatest Marxist revolutionary, came to political prominence.

As a left-wing member of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), Gramsci had captured control of its journal *L'Ordine Nuovo* in 1919, and through its pages urged the formation of democratic factory councils in Turin.

Within six months, 150,000 Turinese workers were organised into councils, whose task Gramsci saw as preparing the working class for revolutionary insurrection.

In 1920, a lock-out at the Alfa Romeo plant in Milan triggered an occupation which spread to most of Italian heavy industry.

Factory councils throughout Italy controlled production and organised Red Guards, armed workers

From the 1920s to the present day, major contributions to Marxist theory have been made by thinkers indifferent or implacably opposed to the revolutionary heritage of Trotskyism.

From George Lukacs to Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci to Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Korsch to Herbert Marcuse, a powerful body of 'Western Marxist' theory has been developed, which has yet to receive full critical assessment by Trotskyists themselves.

How are the Stalinist or revisionist politics of these writers to be weighed against their theoretical contributions to Marxist theory?

In this series, Terry Eagleton examines the work of the theorists named above, as an introduction to a full evaluation of their work.

in Turin clashed with security forces.

Confronted with the question of revolutionary power, the supine PSI predictably sold the pass to the bourgeois government, abandoning the proletariat at its supreme point of struggle and inflicting upon it a catastrophic defeat.

Defeat

It was the combination of that shattering defeat with the haunting spectre of working class militancy which was to lead Italian history directly down the road of fascism.

Urged by Lenin to clear the PSI of reformists, Gramsci and his comrades around *L'Ordine Nuovo* convened in 1921 a party congress which was to result

in the formation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), dominated by the ultra-leftist sectarian Bordiga.

Bordiga's Theses of Rome' (1922) dogmatically rejected all alliances with other Italian parties; Gramsci also argued until 1924 against united front policies.

In 1922 the fascists seized power, rounding up most PCI leaders; Gramsci escaped arrest only because he was in Moscow as an executive member of the Third International.

A fierce fight within the PCI resulted in Gramsci's ousting the imprisoned Bordiga as party leader; and in 1924 he was elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies.

Two years later, follow-

ing 'exceptional measures' that an assassination attempt on Mussolini allowed the fascists to concoct, he was arrested and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment.

From 1928 to his death in 1937, crippled by ill-health, Gramsci wrote in prison the masterpiece of Marxist theory which has become known as the *Prison Notebooks*—33 laboriously hand-written manuscripts, composed cryptically to evade fascist censorship and smuggled out of prison by his friends.

The Marxism of the early Gramsci was partly formed by, partly a reaction to, the heavily 'Hegelian' Marxism of the Italian philosophers Antonio Labriola Giovanni Gentile (later to become a fascist ideologue) and the idealist art-critic Bernadetto Croce, whose 'Marxist' allegiance lasted all of five years.

Activism

From their Hegelian emphasis upon 'will', 'consciousness' and 'action' (later to degenerate in the hands of Gentile into the fascist cult of pure mindless activism), Gramsci learned to oppose the positivism and determinism of the "orthodoxy" of the Second International, insisting upon the unity of theory and practice and the active, interventionist role of the proletariat in the creation of history.

He welcomed the Bolshevik revolution as a 'revolution against Capital' (the book, notice, not the system)—as a vindication of conscious political struggle against what he mistook as the positivism and inevitableness of Marx's text.

Traces of this idealism survive in the mature Gramsci: it could be claimed that the 'materialist' is subordinated to the 'historical' in his work, that the scientific status of Marxism plays second fiddle to the concrete historical consciousness of the revolutionary working class.

World view

In this, Gramsci is sometimes open to the charge of what has since become known as 'historicism': the notion that a theory is valid not to the extent to which it can secure objective scientific knowledge of reality, but to the extent to which it actively elaborates a class's self-consciousness, which Gramsci calls a class's 'world view', is, as we shall see later, related to his central concept of *hegemony*.

However, the accusation that Gramsci's 'factory councils' programme resulted from voluntarism (excessive reliance on the subjective will) or spontaneism is surely groundless: *organisation* is precisely at



its heart.

What is true is that Gramsci, at this early testing point, lacked any developed theory of political leadership and the role of the revolutionary party.

Abstentionist

The hostility of Bordiga and his group to the Turin experiments as 'economistic' was based upon a rigidly abstentionist attitude to mass struggle; but Gramsci himself was later to identify syndicalist elements in the project, and turned in the prison notebooks to the vital missing factor—the revolutionary party.

Previously he had subordinated the party to the role of a kind of secondary agent which cleared political obstacles from the path of the council's autonomous self-development; now, for the rest of his life, he was to explore the necessarily dialectical relation between party and class, in an authentic development of Leninism.

It was, however, a *development* of Leninism, not a mechanical repetition. One of the most crucial questions posed by the prison notebooks is: How is proletarian insurrection to be victorious in societies of a kind significantly different from Tsarist Russia?

In Russia, revolutionaries were confronted with a starkly autocratic state; in Western societies, they had

to confront, not simply a repressive state, but a dense, complex fabric of political, ideological and cultural institutions which went to make up what Gramsci termed 'civil society': trade union, school, family, political party, media, sexuality, religion, law, and so on.

"In the West", wrote Gramsci, "the State is merely a frontal trench, an advanced line of defence, and behind it there is a powerful fortress of concrete pillboxes."

This 'fortress' was precisely the thick network of habits, practices and institutions which served to reproduce bourgeois rule not only by *coercion* but by *consent*—and it was to this form of rule that Gramsci gave the name of *hegemony*.

His formulation of the concept is not, in fact, always consistent: sometimes hegemony means 'rule by consent' and belongs to civil society (whereas coercion belongs to the state), sometimes hegemony means a fusion of consent and coercion.

State apparatus

In arguing that, in the West, the preponderance of 'civil society' over state meant a preponderance of consent over coercion, Gramsci for one thing overlooked the vital fact that one of the prime means of securing the consent of the masses to bourgeois rule is,



The destruction of the offices of the SP paper 'Avanti'

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Gramsci

precisely, the state apparatus itself—the parliamentary system which breeds in the delusion of self-government. Moreover, Gramsci's main concern with the mechanisms of consent in modern class-society tends to play down the reality of repressiveness—a repressiveness which, even the advanced technology of such societies, is in fact superior to that of capitalism.

Despite its limitations, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is a richly productive one for revolutionaries.

War of position

It suggests that, prior to what Gramsci called a 'war of manoeuvre' (i.e. a direct assault on the state machine), the proletariat must conduct a ceaseless 'war of position'—an undermining of bourgeois hegemony in every area of 'civil society'.

This is commonly misinterpreted as a call for the working class to perform the (impossible) feat of coming culturally hegemonic before it has actually seized political power; but the famous passage in which Gramsci speaks of the need for the proletariat to exercise hegemony before conquering state power in fact refers, in orthodox Leninist fashion, to its hegemony over other oppressed and

task of conquering political power, must develop its own 'original conception of the world', fighting for 'new forms of art, of philosophy, of customs, of language' appropriate to a revolutionary culture.

There are problems with Gramsci's formulations.

A dominant or revolutionary 'world view' is not, in fact, as homogeneous as he suggests, nor does it arise directly from the experience of a social class.

Bourgeois society

Bourgeois ideology is not the 'ideology of the bourgeoisie', but of *bourgeois society*: it incorporates crucial aspects of the ways various social classes under capitalism live out their experience.

Equally, a revolutionary 'world view' is more than the consciousness of the working class: it integrates the perceptions and practices of other exploited classes, as well as elements which have no immediate class-assignment.

But Gramsci's idea of hegemony shows his concern for the field of culture and 'civil society' as a whole—a concern richly apparent throughout the prison notebooks.

There, in a triumph of concretely applied Marxist theory, he considers the specific history of bourgeois Italy: the way in which the Southern peasantry are welded to the landlord class by the mediation of a stratum of rural intellectuals; the lack of a 'national-popular' consciousness among the intellectuals, consequent on their cosmopolitan traditions, which divorced them from the masses; the central reactionary role of the Roman Catholic church.

Not since Lenin and Trotsky's writings on Tsarist Russia had a single society been scrutinised so intensively by a Marxist theorist; but Gramsci's analyses, like Lenin and Trotsky's, were made in the interests of drawing concrete revolutionary conclusions.

Uneven development

Italy was a divided society, with a notably unevenly developed capitalism and no history of a nation-state; it had never known a 'global force' capable of uniting intellectuals and masses.

The bourgeoisie, partly blocked by the church, had failed to carry through the nationalist revolution; but its failure was Marxism's opportunity.

Gramsci's achievement was to apply the methods of Marx and Lenin to the peculiarities of the Italian situation, and in doing so to extend and elaborate Marxist theory.

In his attention to problems of party and class, the relations between social classes, the revolutionary alliance of worker and peasant, and above all to the nature of the bourgeois state, he sustained and enriched the work of Lenin and Trotsky—work which was, moreover, little available to him.

In his preoccupation

with culture and 'civil society', with questions of hegemony and the role of the intellectuals, he carried that work into new fields, and re-wrote the history of Italy from a working-class standpoint.

His political failures were serious: together with almost the whole leadership of the PCI throughout the early 1920s he stubbornly rejected the united front in Italy, thus facilitating the rise of fascism.

Not until 1924 did he break with the Bordiga line on this issue, by which time it was too late: fascism had arrived, and the Comintern was now rapidly abandoning united front tactics itself.

Only during his long period of imprisonment did Gramsci turn back theoretically to the question of united front resistance to fascism, even though he had always rejected the PCI line that fascism and social democracy were mere "twins" between whom there was nothing to choose.

Opposed

That line, adopted by Stalinism during the 'Third Period', was fiercely opposed by Gramsci from the seclusion of his prison; his position on the Italian situation was now effectively identical with that of Trotsky.

In 1926, Gramsci had expressed the support of the PCI leadership for the Stalin-Bukharin majority in the Russian party, and subscribed to the view that the Joint Opposition was guilty of endangering the workers-peasants alliance by factional activity.

At the same time he had



Gramsci supported Stalin-Bukharin against the Joint Opposition

stressed the Italian party's fears about the course which the Russian inner-party struggle was taking, and affirmed its opposition to 'mechanical and coercive' discipline.

By the time of Stalinism's full-blooded emergence, Gramsci was a victim of fascism—a fascism which the Stalinism he had supported helped flourish.

The ironies of Antonio Gramsci's political career are manifold; but not least, perhaps, is the irony of his posthumous treatment at the hands of Stalinism itself.

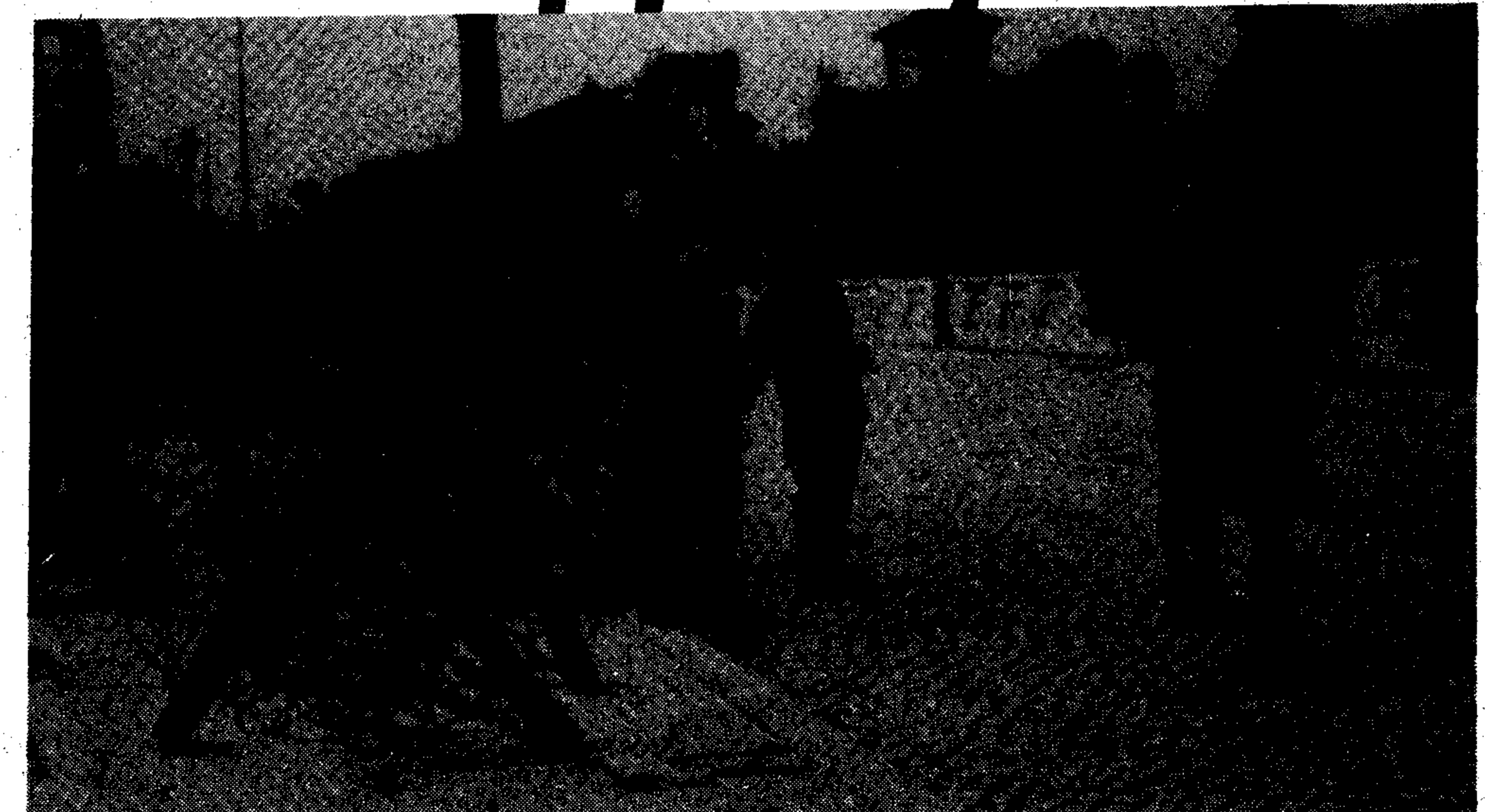
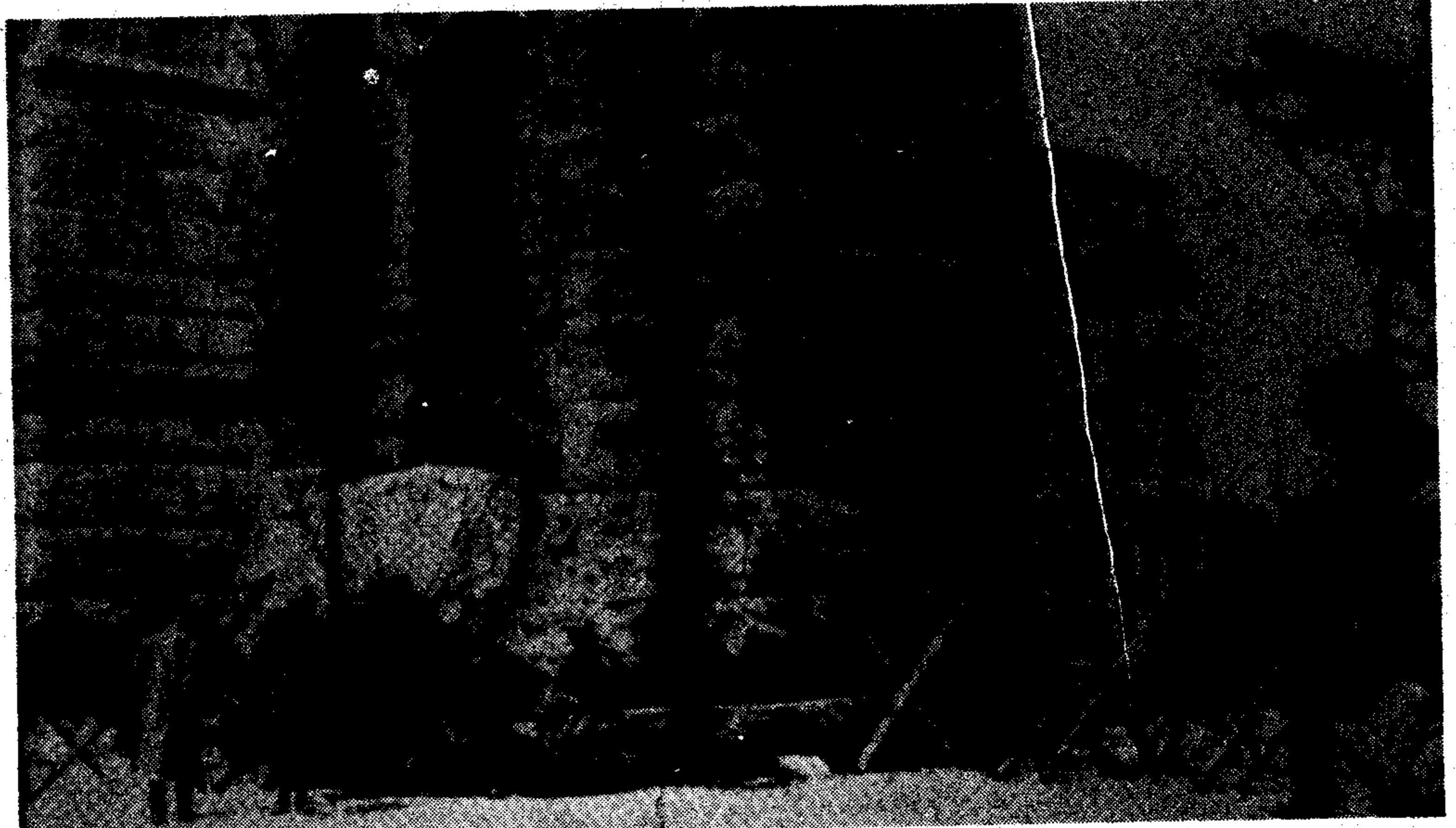
Gramsci's brother, to whom he had entrusted his views on the 'Third Period' for public transmission, remained silent to save him from the risk of expulsion.

After the publication of the prison notebooks in 1947-49, Gramsci's memory was solemnly venerated by the PCI while his writings went virtually ignored, or were manipulated in support of Stalinist policies.

No serious critical edition of his work was produced by the PCI for a quarter of a century after the end of the second imperialist world war.

Today, it remains for those outside the Stalinist camp to make a full critical evaluation of his limitations and achievements.

Next article: Karl Korsch



Scenes during the fascist mobilisation of 1922

FIGHTING FOR A WORKERS GOVERNMENT

Last week's *Socialist Press* carried an article by John Lister on the struggle for a workers' government. This week we reprint extracts on the question from two documents: the first is from *The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle*, adopted on 31 December 1979 by the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee. The second is from the *Workers Socialist League Manifesto*.



Lenin in 1917

The Workers' Government demand

At each step in the struggle for transitional and democratic demands, Trotskyists must weigh and consider the best tactical means of conducting the fight in such a way as to expose and discredit the existing treacherous mass leaders of the working class.

Such tactics will generally include fighting for workers to place specific demands on those trade union and political leaders that retain mass support for them to break from their present policies of class collaboration and act in the independent class interests of their members.

As the Transitional Programme shows, the culmination of this approach is the formulation of demands on the reformists and Stalinist leaders that they break with the bourgeoisie and form a *workers' government*.

The slogan can, as the Transitional Programme shows, be used flexibly as an agitational slogan in particular situations. As such its value is that it focusses the attention of the masses on the class collaboration of their leaders and the necessity for a government that will represent their independent interests. In every instance it is vital to couple the workers' government with the necessary programme of *transitional demands* and with the struggle to mobilise the working class in independent organisations through which it will fight for such demands.

Such an approach is in explicit contrast to the various parliamentary formations passed off by reformist, centrist

and Stalinist currents as "workers" or "workers and peasants" governments.

Indeed while the call for a workers' government can be used as an agitational slogan to advance the political consciousness of the working class from the level of spontaneity to the comprehension of the necessity of the revolutionary seizure of power, the culmination of the struggle for this demand must in the final instance—as in Russia in October 1917—be the definitive break with and destruction of the political forms, institutions and state machinery of the bourgeoisie, and the establishment of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

The workers' government slogan thus contains within it the dynamic of the class struggle in which the working class, gaining in strength and self confidence, demands increasingly more of its bureaucratic mass leaders to the point where they insist that these leaders break from the bourgeoisie, take power in their own hands, and implement measures in the interests of the proletariat.

As the Transitional Programme stresses, it was:

"the obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and SRs to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July Days, which definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks."

Now, just as much as in 1938, it is time to insist that:

"The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from its old

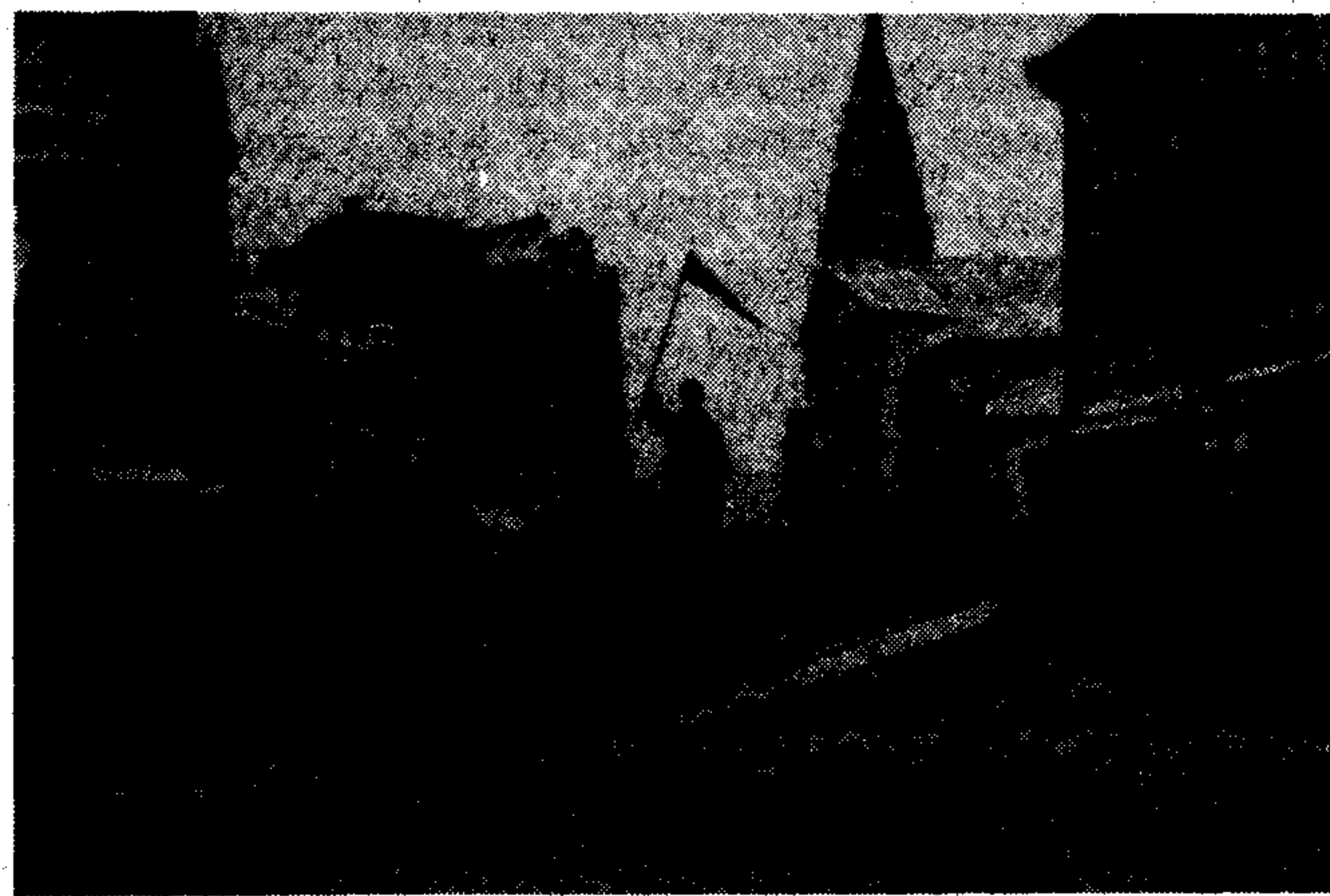
leadership whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress.

"The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organisations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie.

"Under these conditions the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: 'Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power' is an extremely important weapon for exposing the treacherous character of the parties and organisations of the Second, Third and Amsterdam Internationals."

While promising such leaders revolutionary support against capitalist reaction should they undertake the struggle for power, Trotskyists must maintain their political independence of such leaderships and persist with their own critical propaganda spelling out at each stage the role of the old leaders and the necessary programme of demands to be fought for by the working class.

It is on the construction of such a Trotskyist revolutionary leadership, and *not* on any ability of the reformists and Stalinists to transform themselves into a revolutionary force that the fate of the struggle for a workers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat must depend.



Barricades in the 1905 revolution



One of the first soviets, the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' Deputies

What kind of government do workers need?

There is no way in which the state machinery created as a weapon to defend the private property of the capitalist class can be transformed into a weapon in workers' struggle for socialism.

The charade of Parliamentary democracy must be exposed, and the mass of the working class mobilised to destroy and dismantle the state apparatus, and in particular its bodies of armed men, the army and the police.

In their place a *workers' state apparatus* must be established to protect the gains of the revolution through the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

What form would this dictatorship take?

First and foremost it would be a dictatorship exercised by the masses *over* the tiny minority of former capitalist exploiters and their agents.

As such, it would have an entirely different *class character* from dictatorships exercised by right wing capitalist or fascist regimes.

A central feature would be the dissolution of the House of Commons, the House of Lords

and the abolition of the monarchy, in favour of the power of *workers' councils*.

The mass struggles prior to the revolution will provide the basis for the formation of such bodies, initially as *councils of action* to organise workers' struggles independently of the union bureaucracy, posing a direct challenge to the power of the capitalist state.

SOVIETS

After the revolution, these councils, similar to the soviets that emerged in the Russian Revolution, would develop in power and scope, and would draw delegates from all workplaces and working class organisations.

As such they would be *class organisations* that would exclude the old exploiters, but directly reflect the feelings of workers in the factories, mines, yards, shops, banks and transport.

Delegates would be elected from factory committees and subject to recall by their

membership at any time they deviated from their mandate.

And they would receive no financial privileges—being paid no more than the average working wage.

Local level workers' councils in each town would elect delegates to regional and national level bodies, which would become the voice of the mass of the population, the highest level of workers' democracy.

Workers' councils would oversee the expropriation of major industry, the banks and transport facilities, while safeguarding the livelihoods of small farmers, shopkeepers, petty businesses and small savers.

While capitalist dictators seek above all to atomise, to repress and to crush the working class and any political opposition, the proletarian dictatorship fought for by revolutionaries must rest on the active *mobilisation* of the masses, their direct involvement in decision making, and in the defence of the workers' state from enemies within and outside its own borders.

This demands a thoroughly *internationalist* foreign policy—

beginning with immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and every other country, the breaking off of diplomatic links with right wing dictatorships and the offer of material aid to anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

A workers' government would pull out of NATO; other imperialist pacts, and the capitalist Common Market, calling on the workers movement throughout Europe to force similar action on their governments and to fight for a Socialist United States of Europe.

MILITIAS

It would oversee the *disbanding* of the standing army and the police, and in their place the institution of widespread military training for youth and workers to enable the formation of armed workers' militia answerable to workers' councils at local and national level.

Control over currency specu-

lation, international trading links and over the possible re-emergence of pockets of capitalism would be asserted by the closing down of the stock exchange, the imposition of a state monopoly of foreign trade, and the expropriation of the banks and major trusts—with protection for small deposit holders.

Within Britain itself, other aspects of the state apparatus would also need to be dismantled. The judiciary and the courts, through which the capitalist class protect their private property against the working class would be scrapped, and replaced by a system of jury trials before workers' courts.

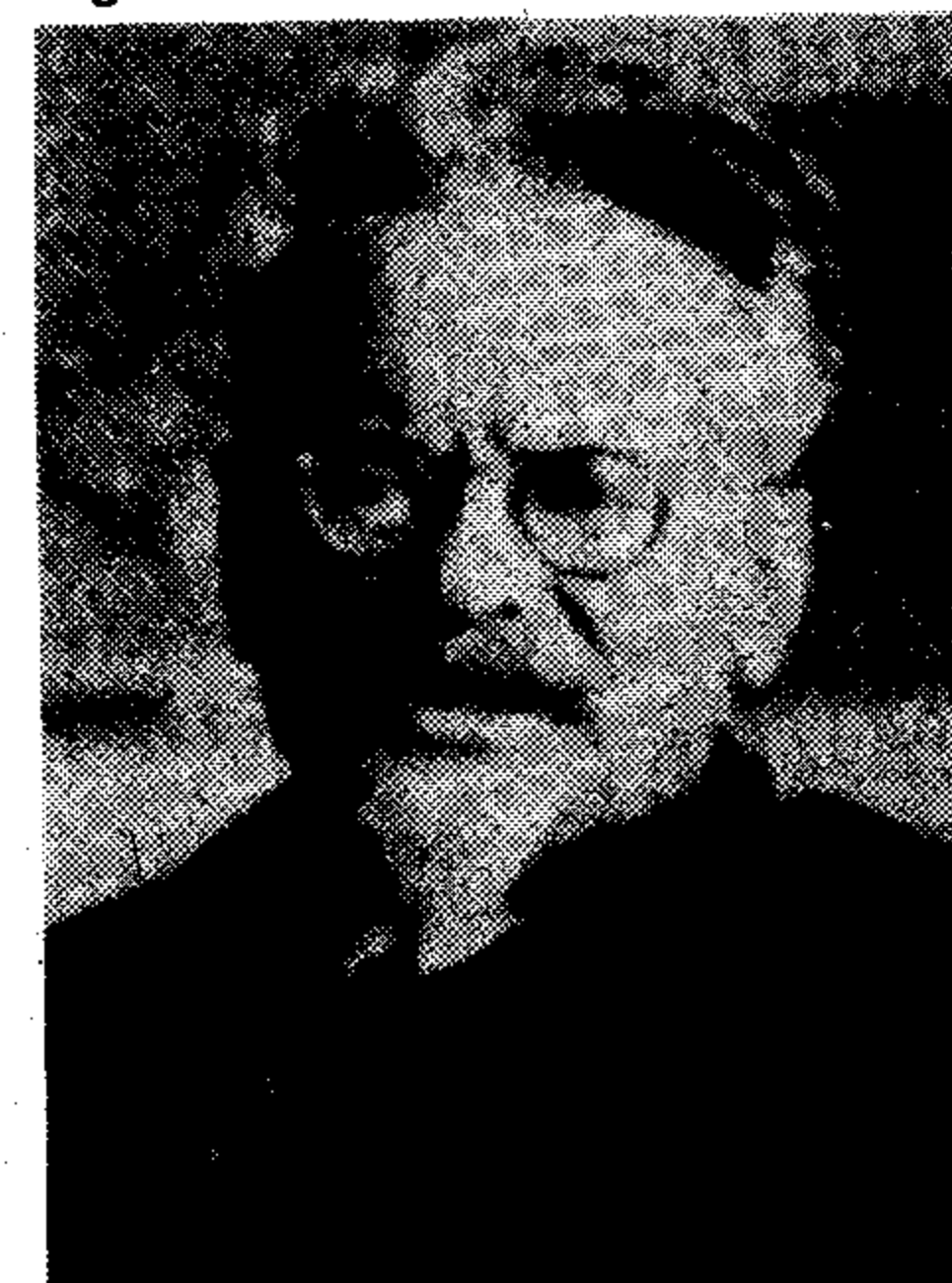
The civil service bureaucracy, which in reality takes the vast majority of day-to-day decisions on the administration of British capitalism, is not entirely the same, however.

Within the civil service are many administrators with detailed technical knowledge necessary for the reorganisation of industry and the economy.

A workers' government would need to take steps—

with the aid of civil service unions—to make this knowledge available to the workers' movement, and to bring the civil service firmly under its control.

Within such a framework, the task of fully opening the books of capitalist society as a whole and mapping out a five year plan for the socialist expansion of production and provision of social needs could begin.



Trotsky

The way forward in the Fourth International

Extract from "Theses on the Crisis of the Fourth International and the Tasks of Bolshevik Leninists".

"15) The Fourth International is not dead, nor has it been destroyed. It has undergone a process of political degeneration which has led to it being organisationally scattered. Today it lives on in the form of different factions. These cannot—with some limited exceptions—be considered as tantamount to the opportunist organisations of the labour movement.

They comprise the most conscious element of the world proletarian vanguard. Their politics are generally centrist in nature, but with special features. In reality these positions still do not reflect a complete break from the programmatic basis of Bolshevism. Still less do they constitute a direct reflection of social forces alien to the proletariat (the labour aristocracy, the parasitic Stalinist bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, etc). This makes them unlike Stalinist, Social Democratic and partly also unlike centrist parties.

This, together with the continuing processes of internal clashes, factional struggles and splits, (which show the viability of a debate within the Fourth International and the search by its militants—though in a confused fashion—for a correct revolutionary orientation) makes it possible and necessary to adopt a perspective of regenerating the Fourth International.

We reject as schematic those conceptions which, starting out from the reality of the centrist degeneration of most factions of the Fourth International, draw the conclusion that all revisionist organisations are irreparably lost to Trotskyism, and which equate them with opportunist organisations foreign to the

The following text is the conclusion of a document by the Committee for an International Bolshevik Leninist Faction (CIBLF) which, following the International Pre-conference hosted by the Workers Socialist League in December, has now dissolved itself into the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

Earlier sections of the CIBLF document examine the history and political degeneration of the post-war Fourth International and the nature of its component parts today.

Trotskyist movement.

The task facing orthodox Trotskyists is therefore to build a Bolshevik-Leninist faction of the Fourth International, based on the political lines of the Theses and Resolutions of the 1936, 1938 and 1940 Conferences.

But while rejecting the sectarian position that considers every Trotskyist-revisionist organisation as lost for Bolshevism, Bolshevik-Leninists must at the same time reject as delusory any hypothesis of a spontaneous evolution of the revisionist factions towards orthodox Trotskyism.

Instead it is necessary to engage in a struggle for the regeneration and Bolshevik reorganisation of the FI, similar to the struggle waged by the Left Opposition in the Comintern from 1929-33. Bolshevik Leninists must consider as lost, incapable of regeneration and completely outside the Fourth International those right wing forces which have definitively entered the counter-revolutionary camp.

Within the organisations of the centre, it is necessary to promote the formation of Bolshevik-Leninist factions, linked both to each other (independently of the sections of the Trotskyist movement in which they intervene) and to independent orthodox Trotskyist organisations within the framework of an international Bolshevik-Leninist Faction, which must itself be based on demo-



Trotsky speaking at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern

cratic centralist methods, both nationally and internationally.

Such factions should, in general, avoid engaging in a split. Instead they should make the centrist leaderships responsible for any administrative measures—such as expulsions—that may occur. A comparable attitude should be taken within ultra-left Trotskyist-revisionist organisations.

The international Bolshevik-Leninist Faction as such, and the independent orthodox Trotskyist organisations must express the positions and present the public activity of

the Bolshevik Leninists towards both the whole Fourth International and towards the forces of the labour movement outside the arena of Trotskyism.

The above tactical indications do not imply that there is any sure, established pathway for regenerating and reorganising the Fourth International in a Bolshevik manner—not that it is necessary or probable that one or more of the present FI factions will be successfully regenerated.

But only a flexible, dialectical strategy for its regeneration, combining independent work in the labour movement with factional intervention within revisionist organisations, will allow us to accomplish the complex process which—through splits, fusions, partial regeneration and the growth of independent work—will enable the Bolshevik-Leninist Faction to recruit the political majority of Trotskyist militants, so becoming transformed into a regenerated Fourth International. Clearly there exist different practical possibilities for developing such action by Bolshevik-Leninists.

For this reason they must—maintaining the political independence of the orthodox Trotskyist faction—be ready to adjust their tactics to concrete developments in the situation of the Fourth International.

16) The basic aim of the Committee for an International Bolshevik Leninist Faction (CIBLF), is to favour unity of all consistent Trotskyist forces into one and the same, democratic centralist international faction.

At present the most important consistent Trotskyist organisation, namely the WSL/GB, together with allied Greek, American, Turkish and Danish organisations, is carrying out activity towards the construction of an international tendency on an orthodox Trotskyist basis.

The CIBLF wishes all orthodox Trotskyist forces, all over the world, to participate in such a process of building an international faction. It believes that in the framework of such a process there are all the conditions for the necessary work of achieving political homo-

geneity between the various consistent Trotskyist organisations.

This task of homogenisation and political clarification is imposed both by the need to draw a balance sheet of thirty years of the crisis of the Fourth International, and by the quite different origins of the present orthodox Trotskyist organisations.

All of them, however, share experiences of a clearcut break from different forms of opportunist revisionism (Pabloism, Healyism, Lambertism, etc), and most have also come into conflict with and rejected the sectarian caricature of Trotskyism represented by the IST.

The CIBLF declares that at the very moment it is able to participate with full rights in the preparatory activity being carried out by the WSL and its allies for founding the international faction of consistent Trotskyists, its own transitional role will become exhausted and thus the CIBLF as such will dissolve."

With amendments

Reconstruct the Fourth International!

No. 1 Nov. 1979

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'Meteor'—not as preposterous as it sounds

By our science correspondent

This film is a good example of how the ideology behind many Hollywood productions reflects the dominant ideology of American capitalism.

It depicts co-operation, albeit at first unwillingly, between Russian and American space scientists against a common external threat—a huge meteor, which has been

dislodged from the asteroid belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter by a chance collision with a new comet.

This meteor is heading straight for Earth. The film appears at a time when negotiations on strategic arms limitations (SALT II) have—until the Afghan events—been in the air and dove-like views on this topic have become popular amongst the major presidential

candidates.

Once unthinkable, high level collaboration between Russia and America in overseeing each other's military/space activities is now a distinct possibility.

The plot is not as preposterous as it sounds. Geologists have deduced that the Earth has indeed been bombarded by enormous meteorites in its past. Some of these may have left craters several hundred kilometres across.

These are hard to discern except on satellite photographs because subsequent geological and human activity has tended to obscure their outlines.

Of course most meteors heading towards earth are so small that they burn up in our atmosphere without even reaching the Earth's surface.

Others are reduced in size to that of stones and do little damage.

Large objects

But several hundred large objects (up to a few metres across) land on the Earth's surface every year.

In this film it transpires that both the Russians and the Americans have set up space platforms, armed with banks of nuclear missiles.

These missiles are aimed at targets in Russia and America against the wishes of the scientists, such as the one played by Connery.

The scientists wanted the missile banks placed in space to



US military missile: who knows which way they're pointed

external against any potential threat to the Earth, such as the meteor.

Apparently, this idea was actually discussed in the late 1960s at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology under a project named ICARUS. But it is not clear what happened after that.

by their combined fire power. The fire power of either missile bank alone would not be enough.

Technically, the film is not very impressive. The special effects are the poorest of the latest crop of science fiction films to come from Hollywood.

However, the early arrival of fragments of the meteor allows the producers to cram in an avalanche sequence, a tidal wave sequence and the partial devastation of Manhattan, to warm up audiences for the final climax.

The aerial view of devastated Manhattan, however, is so poor that it looks more like a burning Winston cigarette advertisement.

The producers couldn't resist certain chauvinist touches: thus, for instance, fewer Russian missiles reach their target than American ones, in a small jibe at allegedly inferior Russian technology.

The film fosters the illusion that scientists form some sort of elite cadre, insulated from political developments, and immune to the base motive of aggression. They are shown beavering away in a political vacuum for the good of humankind.

The film's redeeming feature is that it raises the question of just how much control we would have over missile banks in space, or if we would even know of their existence.

It totally fails to develop this theme further, however, and opts for pyrotechnics and a truly awful "happy" ending.

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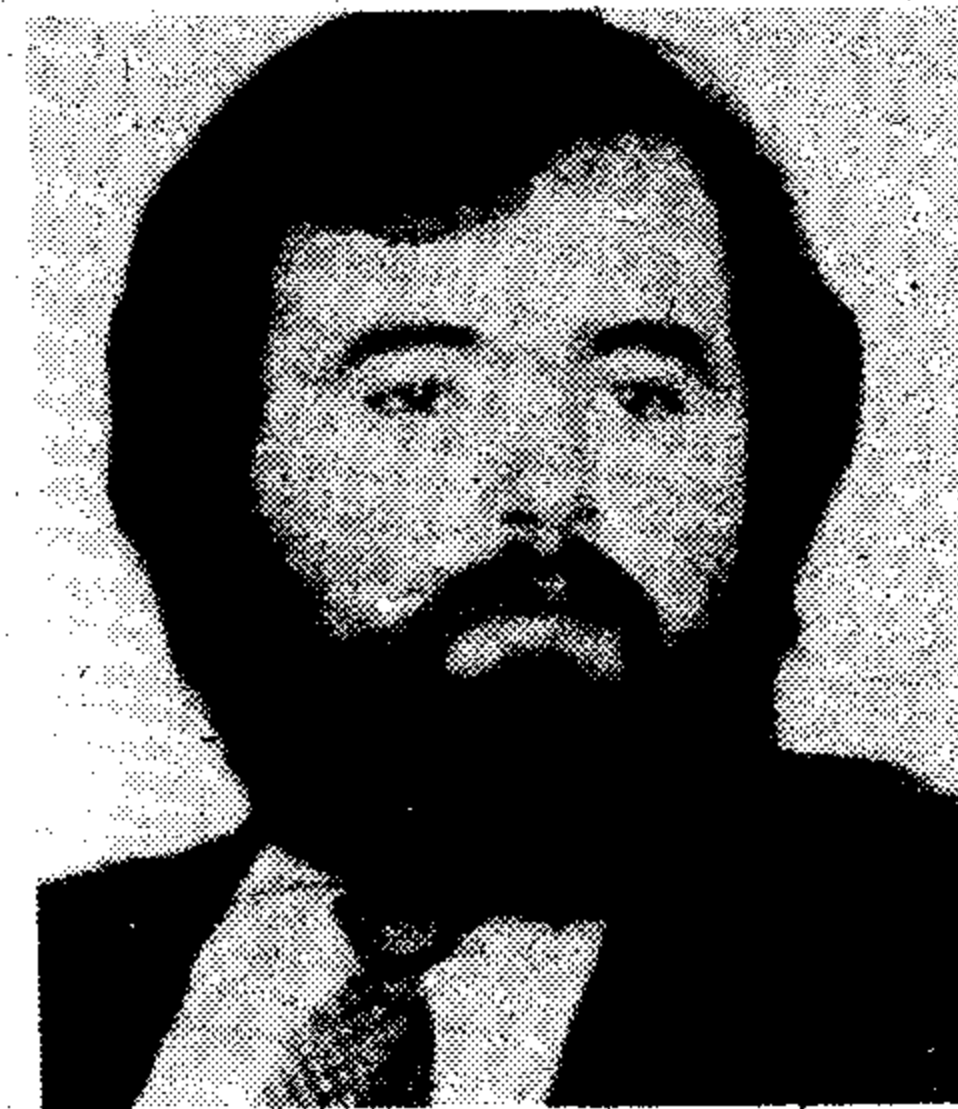
Don't let Chix be another Grunwick

Over 100 pickets—drawn locally from Fords Langley, the Direct Works Department at Hammersmith and from Reading Trades

Council—joined the Chix picket line in Slough last Wednesday.

They had mobilised in response to what had been described as a "national picket" of the factory, 13 weeks into the strike there for union recognition.

94 workers, mainly Asian women, have been sacked for joining the GMWU.



Dromey

Token effort

But GMWU regional official Gerry McMullen obviously sees the whole affair as a token effort.

Speaking after both scab vans had entered the plant, he declared his belief that "bringing the two sides together" to negotiate was the only way of resolving the dispute.

He did not explain how he proposes to "negotiate" around the basic issues of reinstatement and union recognition.

Rounding off the speakers was Jack Dromey, of "dead and buried" Grunwick fame. He promptly launched into yet another rendition of his "our brown brothers and sisters" speech.

But on this occasion he was challenged and asked just what he—as Secretary of the SE Region TUC and a TGWU official—was actually going to do to support the Chix strike.

Hecklers

Hecklers attacked his role in the Garners and Grunwick sell-

outs. But while Dromey mobilised only himself on the "national" picket, there was also a significant absence of engineering workers from the heavily Communist Party-led Slough and West London area.

The Chix strike is an important test of the willingness of the union bureaucracy to lead a serious struggle against the employers. It must be fully supported.

Mass pickets are to be held in Slough every Wednesday at 6.30am.

More information from, and messages and donations to: M. Anwar, 271, Goodman Park, Slough.

Craftsmen fight sell-out contract

The 300 boilermakers and other craftsmen employed in the construction of an oil rig at Hunterston, Ayrshire, went on strike as from Wednesday last (16 January) against the terms of the agreement under which they have been working.

The contract (the terms of which were reported in a recent issue of *Socialist Press*) is in the words of one of the workforce, "one of the worst agreements ever made by the Boilermakers Union."

The striking workers have demanded that the Executive member of the Boilermakers, Murray, who concluded the deal must come up to Scotland and renegotiate the terms immediately.

Murray now says he will be unable to come north until 21 February. The men are no longer prepared to accept a situation where the trade union leadership treat their members with such utter contempt.

The management of the companies involved, Chicago Bridge and Ayrshire Marine, have now threatened the striking men with the loss of their jobs.

They have received backing in this from Robb, the regional official of the Boilermakers' Union, who has warned that he will hold a ballot of the workforce and, if he does not get co-operation, will bring in scab labour.

Abby Courtney, the boilermakers' shop steward, in an exclusive interview with *Socialist Press* said:

"This strike is important in that it shows that workers will not be intimidated.

"The employers on the site thought they could take advantage of high unemployment in this area to foist terrible working conditions upon us, and in this they had the complete co-operation of the trade union leadership.

"This is a fight against the union officials and their contempt for the membership.

"It is a fight for union democracy and the right of workers to decide their working conditions. The workers in dispute have appealed to the GMWU men on the site to join them in struggle.

"To ensure success in this battle the shop stewards realise that they will have to go beyond this and look for support in the broader trade union movement."



PHOTO: Charlie Augusto, IFL

Chix picket line

Acrow victory

A 22-week strike for the reinstatement of a plant convenor at Adamson's Containers, Stockport, has resulted in a major victory.

John Taylor, a boilermakers' steward sacked last August along with three other stewards in a "redundancy" move by management, has been unconditionally reinstated, and the industrial relations officer who sacked him has himself been sacked.

Strikers will have their national insurance stamps and holiday entitlements paid up.

Adamsons is part of the Acrow group, and the move against Taylor was clearly linked to a concerted offensive against trade union organisation at the plant.

But a tenacious battle by the workforce—who rejected an almost complete climbdown offer by management only a week before Christmas—has forced back the employers who at one point threatened to close the factory.

This successful resistance to victimisation must now set the pace for the defence of trade union organisation in BL and throughout industry.

YOU SHOULD JOIN US!

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class.

Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or 'left'—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their "own" employing class.

In a period where the contradictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

To achieve such a perspective a leadership is needed

which, in today's struggles fights to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain

Internationally, we are affiliated to the newly-formed Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, which fights for the reconstruction of the Fourth International and the building of revolutionary parties in every country to lead the struggle against imperialism and against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

We invite all readers of *Socialist Press* to seek more details of the WSL and its work, and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

RED YOUTH
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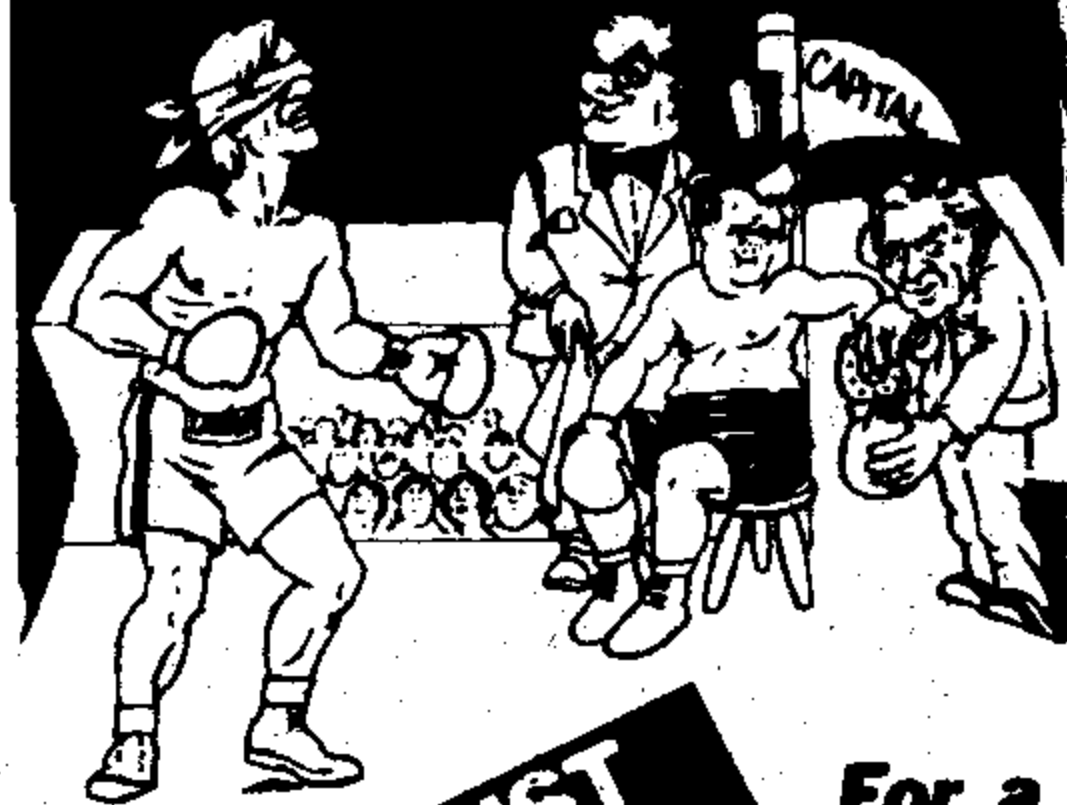
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Teachers fight back

2,000 South Nottinghamshire teachers are to be called upon to take strike action in defence of a victimised colleague at a mass meeting in school time next Wednesday.

Nursery teacher Eileen Crosby was suspended and

replaced by a probationary teacher after she refused to supervise 40 under-fives with only one instead of the customary two nursery nurses.

The cut in staff is part of the local authority's spending cuts.

Last week the other seven NUT members at Robert Mellors Primary School went on

official strike in her defence, and NUT leaders warned that the action could spread.

If education standards and jobs are to be defended it is clearly essential that the authority is forced to reinstate Eileen Crosby and that the NUT in every area declares itself willing to take immediate strike action to stop the cuts and to defend

any teacher victimised.

*In Glasgow last week 20 angry teachers defied a no-strike vote, and staged a half day stoppage protesting against the failure of their union, the EIS, to press their much-delayed pay claim. Further action, and pressure for an official stoppage are now likely.

SIRS SEES THE LIGHT

A hurriedly-called steelworkers' demonstration through Sheffield attracted 3,000 strikers in thick snow on Monday.

Shouting "What do we want? 20%!" and "Thatcher Out!", the march made its way to City Hall, where every militant statement was greeted with rapturous applause, and hecklers interrupted ISTC leader Bill Sirs.

Cheering crowd

Rotherham MP Stan Crowther told the cheering crowd that they were fighting "for every trade unionist in the country". Bernard Connolly from the EETPU said that Thatcher should be thanked for achieving what trade unionists had been after for years: solidarity among the unions.

"Other unions should realise its about them, too, and get into it", he added, to loud applause.

An AUEW speaker predicted that the Thatcher government would fall "under its own dead weight" long before the next General Election.

And Sheffield AUEW District Secretary, Stalinist George Caborn said he was fed up with industrialists coming up to him saying that Thatcher is mad.

"We must do with the Employment Bill what we did to the Industrial Relations Act",

he yelled above deafening applause.

A standing ovation was given to a message of solidarity from German steelworkers and dockers.

Yorkshire miners' leader Arthur Scargill slammed into both the Tory government and the last Labour government. "I have been accused of interfering in this strike", he said, "and I plead guilty!"

A defeat for the steelworkers, he added, would be a political and industrial setback for the whole working class.

And as a closing gesture he handed veteran right winger Bill Sirs a miner's lamp—to "show him the light" in the struggle ahead!

Sirs himself, making the mistake of speaking after Scargill, insisted that the ISTC leaders were looking for "a moderate settlement".

Political gulf

To shouts of "20%! 20%!" he replied that to put a figure would "tie the hands of your negotiators", and he angered other strikers by stressing his reluctance to pull out private sector steelworkers.

He must also be desperately looking for ways of ending this dispute which daily widens the political gulf between the right wing ISTC leadership and their rapidly awakening shop floor members!

WHO PROFITS FROM BSC'S LOSSES?

The ISTC's strike broadsheet *Steelworkers Banner*, produced to give a "steelworkers' reply to BSC", reveals nearly as much about the treachery and deception of the steel union leaders as it does about the obvious frauds perpetrated by management.

ISTC leaders have year after year merely accepted BSC and government figures indicating huge losses on steel production: and have gone on from accepting these figures to accepting thousands of redundancies, shop-floor speed-up and a succession of plant closures.

Known all along

Yet the inside page of *Steelworkers Banner* reveals that the union leaders have known all along that BSC's figures are completely spurious.

This year's predicted £300 million "loss" is examined in general terms in a "steelworkers' balance sheet", which reveals that:

*£188 million is to be creamed off this year in interest payments to the banks.

*£135 million is to be spent by BSC this year on using domestically-produced coking coal—an item of expenditure covered by government subsidies in other EEC countries.

*£81 million has been allocated to building up steel stocks to ride out any industrial action taken against the closure of Corby and Shotton steel works.

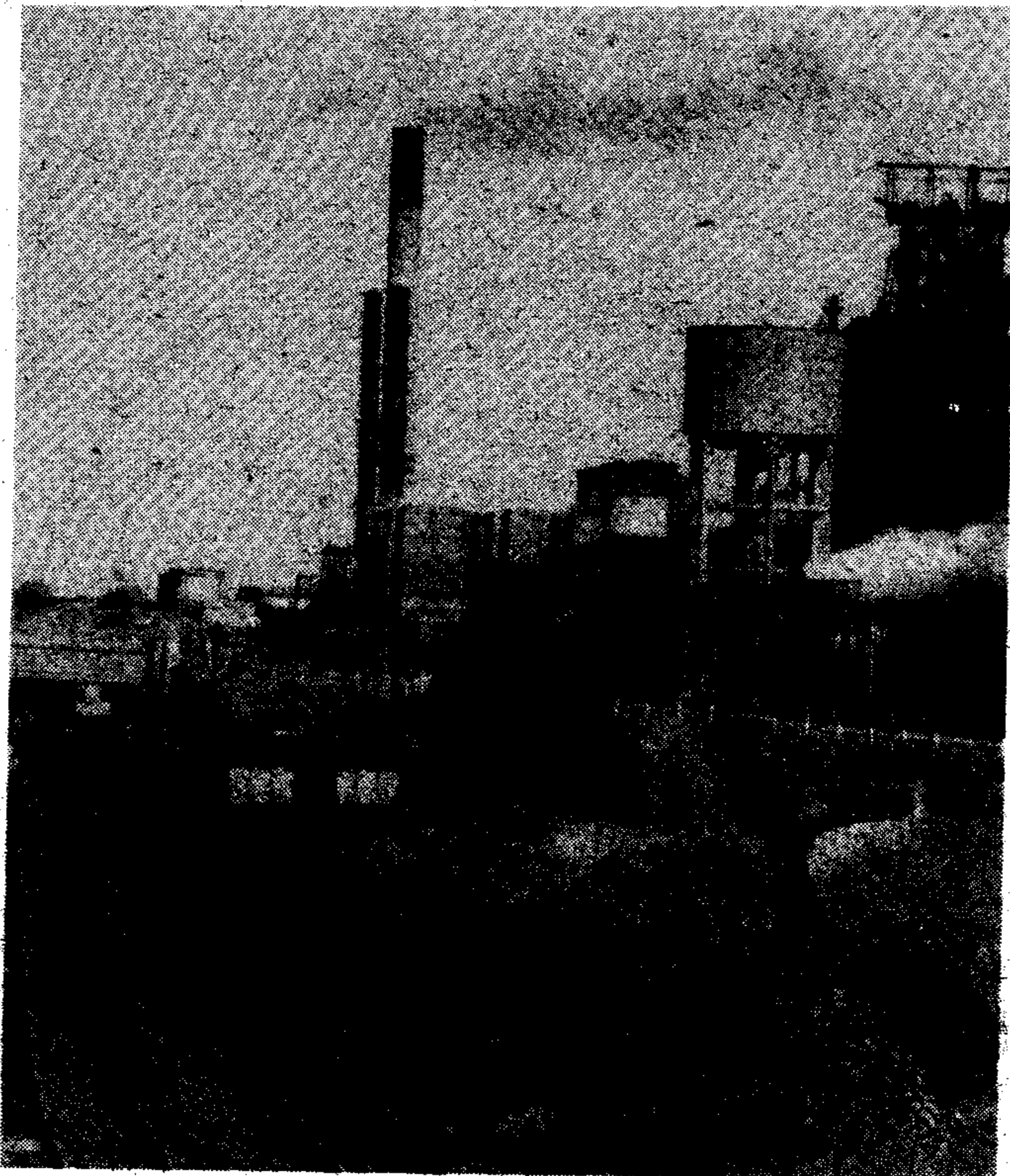
*£10 million is earmarked for attracting new jobs to areas where BSC plants have been shut down!

*£10 million has been paid as a levy to the anti-working-class alliance of European steel producers, the ECSC.

*The overtime bill in this supposedly "overmanned" industry will be £80 million this year—while BSC proceeds hell-for-leather for mass sackings!

Double book-keeping

These items alone add up to a staggering £504 million of expenditure which results from



Corby steelworks: rail and coal jobs also at stake

government policy decisions, the double book-keeping which distorts the figures from every nationalised industry in Britain, or from the exploitation of steel workers by the banks and trusts that benefit from the £188 million interest payments.

Profit

In other words the British Steel Corporation actually functions at a profit of over £200 million—the bulk of which finds its way into the pockets of private capitalists!

But the ISTC figures are only a start. There is no investigation, for instance, of the profit margins of the steel industries' suppliers, transport contractors and consumers.

There is no breakdown of who exactly profits from the interest payments.

Nor is there any accounting for the profits and growing scale of operation of the private steel-makers, and the moves being made by the Tories to prepare chunks of BSC for a return to

profits extracted by the capitalists from "loss-making" industries and the need not only to fight now in defence of every BSC job, but to struggle also for the nationalisation without compensation of the private steel firms, stockholders and contractors, and for the entire industry to be placed under the management of elected workers' committees.

Such a fight requires not only the defeat of the Tory government, but the removal of the anti-working class Labour leadership—for whom Bill Sirs is one of the main right wing cheerleaders.

It is up to steelworkers, therefore, to take steps to begin such a struggle in conflict with the ISTC bureaucracy.

Robinson: new delay

It looks like the much postponed outcome of the inquiry by the AUEW Executive into Derek Robinson's sacking has been put off yet again.

As we go to press, the North West Executive member has been quoted as saying the result could be out "in February".

Earlier this month Terry Duffy announced the result would be out on January 22.

With the number of branches condemning the Executive's handling of the case now numbering over 350 and with Duffy's election coming up this year it is clear the Executive have a problem.

Every AUEW member should be increasing this pressure by getting their branch to demand a recall National Committee to call all-out strike action in defence of Robinson.

Every AUEW branch should be demanding a ballot of the union to remove the entire Executive over its handling of the case.

Fraud

Of course the reason is that the right wing ISTC leaders recognise that such a campaign would demonstrate unmistakably to workers the fraud of repeated government/management claims that BSC is not "viable", the continuing huge

LCDTU will solve nothing

The January 26 Conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions promises to be larger and better attended than on many previous occasions.

The conference will cash in on the rising tide of anti-Tory feeling in the workers' movement, and the search by many militants for a lead in the struggle against the capitulations of the official trade union bureaucracy.

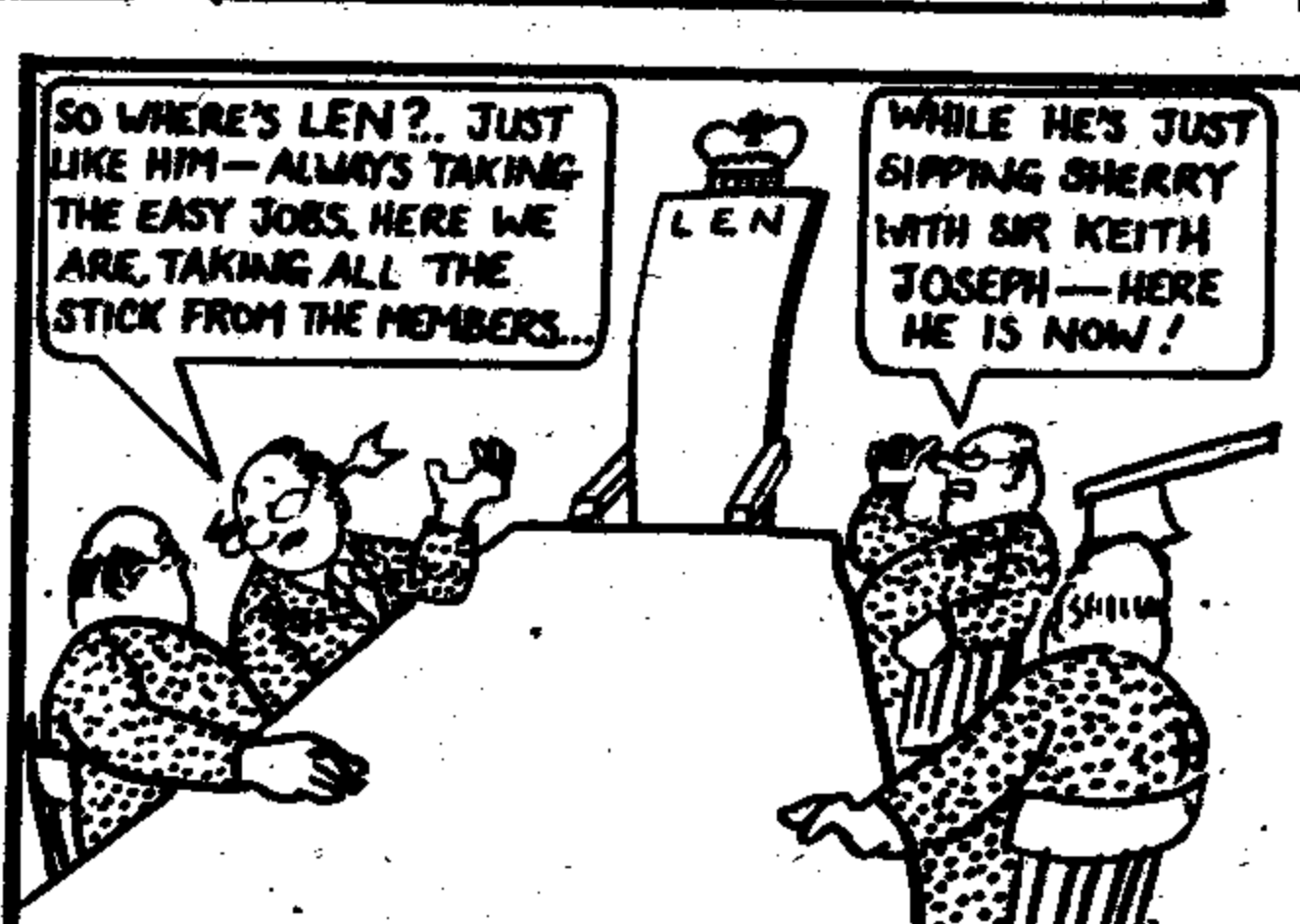
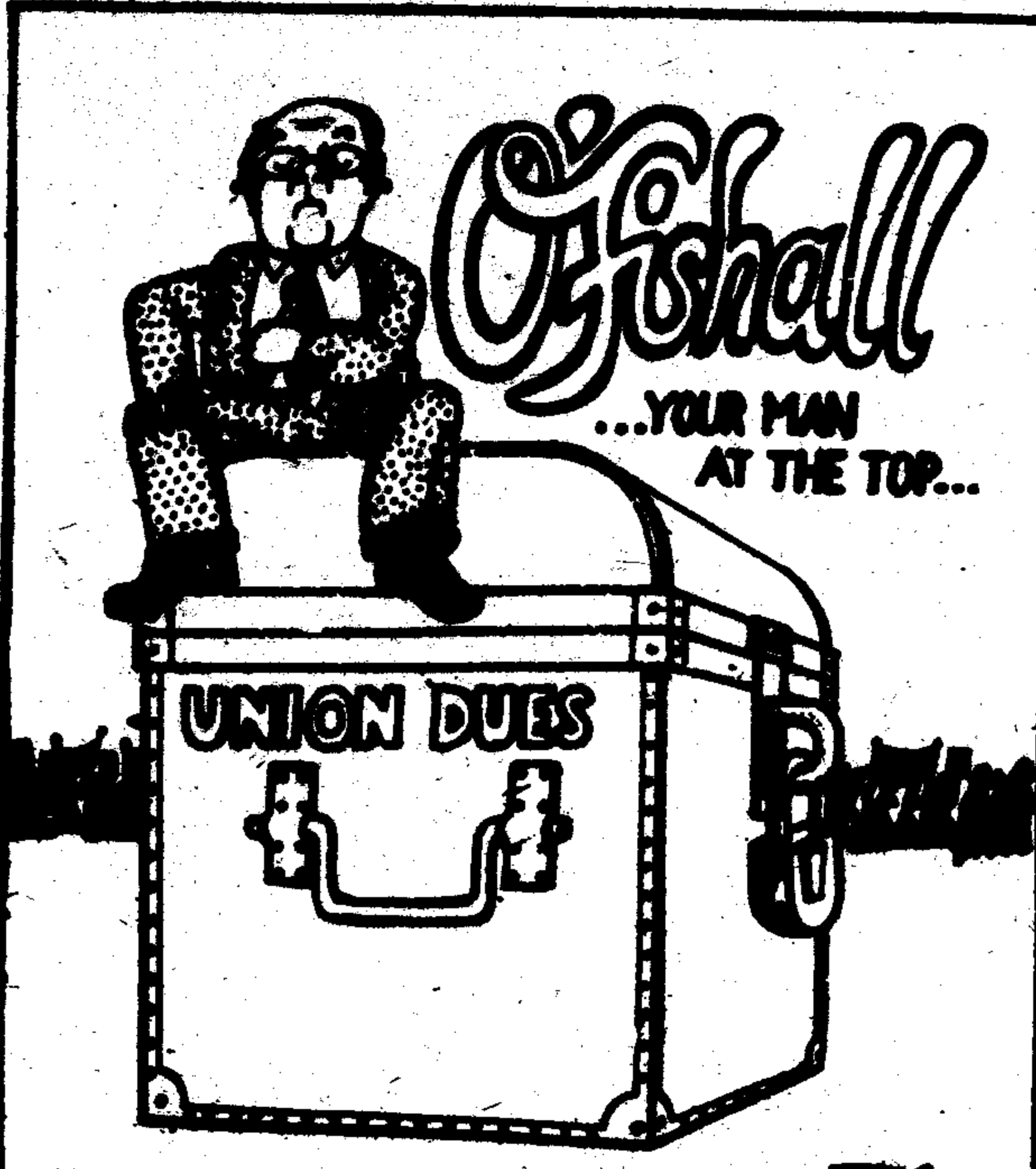
But the Stalinist-run LCDTU is in no position to offer such a lead. The Communist Party—dedicated as it is to the parliamentary road to socialism—has no perspective of challenging the TUC leaders' line of seeking simply to pressurise the Tory government into making con-

cessions to the working class.

Just as it did under Heath—when it helped derail the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act into a series of token protest actions—the LCDTU will offer no more than a diversionary platform for a succession of hand-picked Stalinist and Broad Left celebrities to thump out empty and demagogic speeches.

For all the fawning support for the LCDTU from the Socialist Workers Party, nobody known to oppose the Stalinists' political line will get as far as the stage-managed speakers' list.

But to expose the bankruptcy of the politics of the CP and develop our struggle for the policy of a general strike to bring down the Tories, Socialist Press supporters will attend and attempt to intervene in the conference.



SOCIALIST PRESS ★



Brezhnev hugs Olympic bear

USSR sanctions fiasco

As attempts to cobble together a concerted imperialist response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan crumble ignominiously, the media have carefully averted our gaze towards the side-issue of the Moscow Olympic games.

While a string of capitalist governments have spoken with one voice in denouncing the invasion, the question of economic and military measures to answer it has fallen victim to the various conflicting vested interests of the capitalist class in different nation states.

The Argentinian dictatorship for instance, which had been proudly boasted as a supporter of the US grain embargo on the Soviet Union, hastened to explain that it has no intention of cutting back its trade on grain—and indeed stressed that its future trade would rest on market conditions.

Since these conditions will be influenced by the large influx of US grain formerly destined for the USSR onto the world market, it seems likely that the Argentinian junta might seek to sell additional quantities to the USSR.

Certainly the Brazilian dictatorship has made clear its refusal to participate in the US moves to restrict exports of soya beans to the Soviet Union, and expressed the hope that its own trade would increase following the American boycott.

And in the Common Market a prolonged debate amongst Ministers failed to produce any common line of action against the USSR, despite the urgings of

the British Tory government. The French government has even denounced the Carter/Thatcher call to boycott the Olympics!

Meanwhile the attempts by US and British imperialists to buy new friends in the Middle East and Asia in the wake of the Afghan invasion have met a mixed response.

Pakistan's dictator Zia has described a \$400m aid offer as "peanuts"—looking for more: India's Gandhi sits resolutely on the fence; Saudi Arabia wants nothing less than to become identified as a frontline base for US imperialist operations; and even the right wing Turkish government is reluctant to lose its grain trade with the USSR.

Even the scare stories of a possible Russian invasion of Yugoslavia are falling flat, as investigation shows no Russian troops within striking distance of the Yugoslav border, and the now one-legged Stalinist Tito and his regime apparently far from dead.

But Carter's election chances plainly hinge on maintaining the momentum of the new Cold War, come what may: it is the duty of socialists in the imperialist countries to oppose such chauvinism and anti-communism.

We fight in unconditional defence of the historic gains of the USSR, while simultaneously fighting for the political overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies.

We in no way defend the reactionary foreign policy of the Stalinists, but rather fight for the defeat of our own ruling class, and for Trotskyist parties internationally to lead the struggle against imperialism.

RIGHT WING SABOTAGES BL PAY FIGHT

Deliberate delaying tactics by the right wing on the Leyland Cars National Joint Negotiating Committee have put BL workers' wage claim in real danger.

The claim, for £24 per week plus a full cost of living clause, has been outstanding since last year's contract expired on 1 November.

BL management, in a package very similar to that offered by BSC to steelworkers, proposed only a miserable 5% increase.

No concessions

But in return they demanded a new agreement abolishing the existing 80% lay off pay for disputes within BL; abolishing the principle of mutual agreement on manning standards; and abolishing seniority in job entitlement.

Since October 31 there have been 13 meetings at LCJNC level.

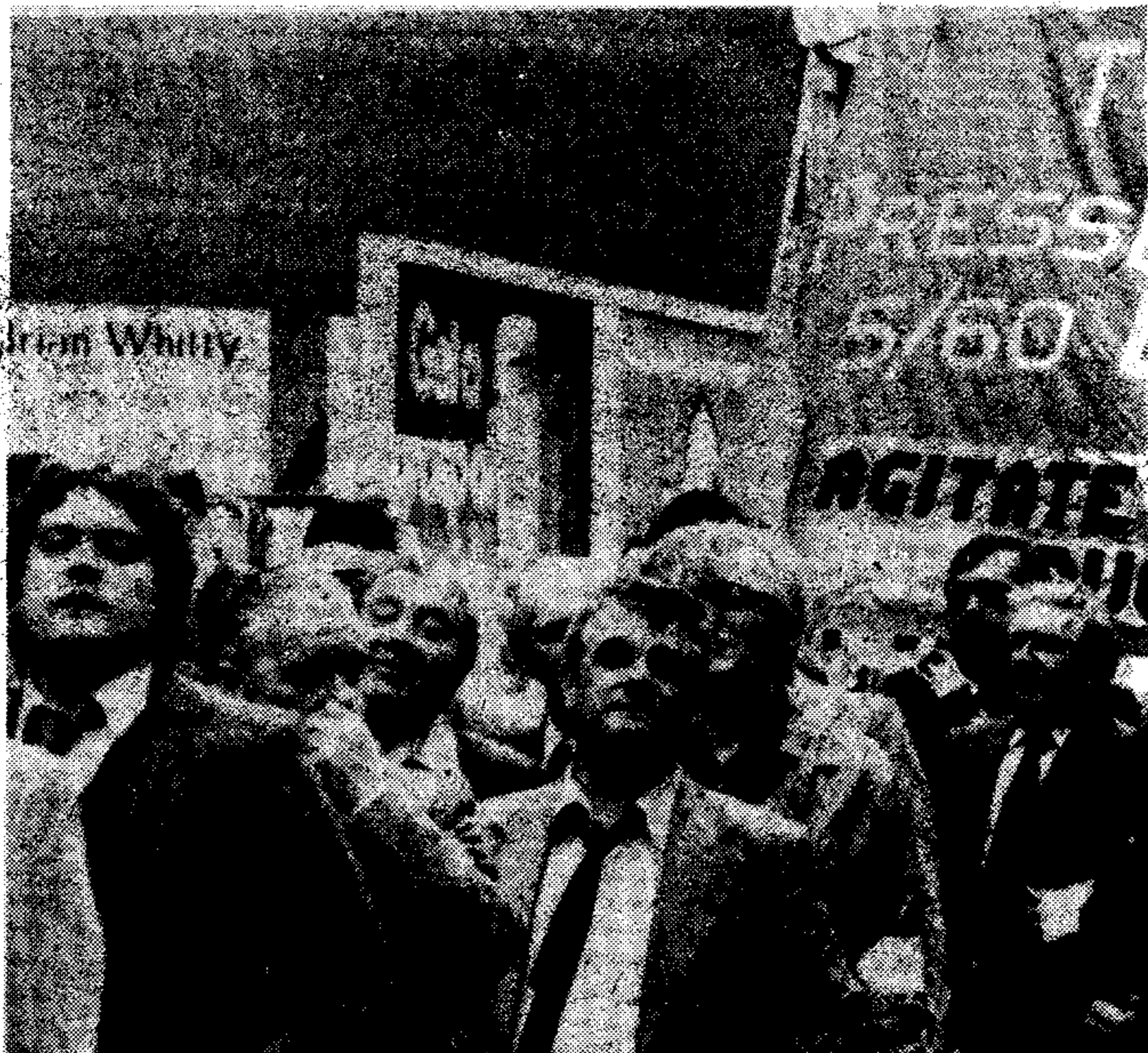
No concessions have been made by management during those 2½ months. In fact their original 85 pages of "strings" have been expanded to 92 pages.

The last meeting with management took place on 17 January. It was management who broke off negotiations.

Preconditions

They made a statement saying that negotiations should terminate and that they wanted the package "implemented" at once.

The trade union negotiating committee met and decided to



BL workers—saddled with the world's worst negotiators?

ballot the members and recommend rejection of the package.

By a small majority it was agreed that this would be a trade union-organised ballot.

Despite the fact that they declared in advance that they would not accept the outcome of the ballot, management immediately put down a series of arrogant preconditions for providing facilities for the ballot to take place.

They said that BL would finance a ballot—providing it was conducted by the Electoral Reform Society and was a postal ballot.

They demanded that they be allowed to insert a Company statement into the envelope if the trade unions enclosed a

statement. And they even insisted that the Electoral Reform Society have the power to veto the question which goes on the ballot paper.

Faced with this management stance, the right wing on the LCJNC at once put forward a proposal that the Electoral Reform Society run the ballot. This was carried by a small majority and became policy.

Damaging decision

The Negotiating Committee then decided that the question to be asked on the ballot paper would be "Do you support your Negotiating Committee's rejection of the Company's offer?"

But even with this succession of wretched capitulations to management, the most damaging decision taken was to withhold the voting until February 4.

This move is deliberately designed to delay a decision.

The LCJNC right wing, recognising shop floor hostility to the pay offer, are deliberately trying to avoid striking at the same time as the steelworkers.

The time to have taken the vote was immediately after management broke off negotiations, when feeling was running highest. Mass meetings could have been held immediately in every BL plant and a vote taken for action alongside the steel workers.

Choice

Even if the ballot had been undertaken, a trade union-organised ballot could have

taken place this week. Management would have been faced with a choice: provide facilities for a ballot, or mass meetings will be held at once.

Mass meetings

Now the delays, diversions and capitulations mean that no decision on action will be forthcoming until the middle or end of February—by which time the steelworkers could have been out for nearly eight weeks.

If the steelworkers are sold out or defeated in that time, BL workers will face extremely difficult conditions in defending their living standards and hard-won agreements.

But a strike alongside the steelworkers would be a major blow against the employers and the Tory government.

*Reject the offer! Hold mass meetings in every plant!

*Strike alongside the steelworkers!

Bomb tragedy

The tragic death of an IRA volunteer and two innocent civilians in an accidental bomb explosion on a Belfast train last week highlights the bankruptcy of the IRA strategy.

Nobody can doubt the personal courage of those that take up arms and explosives in the struggle against British imperialism in the six counties of Ireland.

And it is of course correct to point out the deaths in the Irish war are all the outcome of the continuing British military occupation.

Isolation

But the resort to individual clandestine military actions furthers the isolation of the anti-imperialist forces from the mass of the working class, which must be mobilised in the fight to drive out the British oppressors.

While there can not be a simple 'military victory' for republican fighters, selective action against military targets—army patrols, UDR, RUC and prison officers—can be recognised as a significant part of a struggle that of course requires the demoralisation of the occupying army and its agents.

But the campaigns of bombings against what are loosely described as "economic targets"

carry the danger of increased civilian casualties, while doing nothing to advance the anti-imperialist consciousness of the Irish working class.

The republican movement's rejection of Marxism leads it also to reject the necessary programme of demands starting from the daily problems of the working class in the six counties and leading through mobilisation of mass struggles—to the fight for national liberation and socialist revolution.

While we defend all opponents of British imperialism against state repression, therefore, we continue to fight for a socialist perspective and a Trotskyist party in Ireland.

FUND

As further pledges and money begin to arrive in the office for the £3,000 Special Fund launched last week, we should soon be in a position to see how the fund is beginning to go. Clearly while we need pledges and targets for fund raising events to be sent in, we also need these pledges to be redeemed as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the January Fund should not be overlooked. At the moment it is trailing rather badly, with only £461.55 in to date. That leaves us with nearly £300 to raise in the next week.

All donations for either fund should be sent to:
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COMMEMORATION
DEMONSTRATION**
Saturday 27 January 2pm
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