

# SOCIALIST PRESS



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The next issue of Socialist Press will appear on Wednesday 16 April.

Weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League \* No. 193 \* April 2 1980 \* 20p

Affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee



April 8 is the date in the forefront of the thinking of union leaders in steel and British Leyland.

\*It is the deadline set by BSC for steel unions to obtain a return to work on the Lever commission's pathetic 15.5% pay offer;

\*And it is the date put forward for the start of all-out strike action by 85,000 manual workers in BL cars against management moves to impose a 5% pay increase linked to savage union-busting strings.

Frightened beyond belief by the growing strength and militancy of the working class as demonstrated in the steel strike—where full-time union officials have been ignominiously thrown off strike committees and the increased power of the rank and file has brought successive defeats for ISTC leader Bill Sirs—the bureaucracy are determined at all costs to prevent these two major struggles linking up.

This means last minute moves to knife the 14-week steel strike, coupled with brazen moves led by the AUEW bureaucracy to sabotage the call for strike action by BL negotiators.

It has been plain every since the steel strike began that right wing union leaders Bill Sirs and Hector Smith were looking only for a suitable pretext to move for a return to work.

Despite occasional militant speeches, Sirs has consistently struggled to keep the issue of pay—BSC's insulting 2% pay offer—separate from the swingeing programme of closures and 50,000 redundancies planned by the Corporation.

This crucial weakness is in no way a reflection of the mood of the membership, for whom the issues of pay and jobs have been increasingly seen as one and the same: in Port Talbot, for instance, mass meetings of both manual and craft unions have voted to stay out indefinitely until all jobs are safeguarded, no matter what the outcome on pay.

Sirs however has continued to start out *not* from the independent interests of his members in defence of jobs and conditions, but from the "viability" of the steel industry, and the need to restore profitability on the basis of "sacrifice" by shopfloor workers.

The Lever commission was cobbled together by BSC precisely in order to cash in on this weakness of leadership in the ISTC—with the even more right wing leaders of the craft unions already having declared themselves willing to accept any new offer that came up.

The "inquiry" specifically excluded the question of jobs, and set out to provide a high-speed token money increase that would enable Sirs to press for a sell-out settlement prior to April 8.

Yet so transparent is the fraud of this "extra" one percent that BSC management

immediately pointed out that it would be paid for in further closures and redundancies!

As we go to press strike leaders and executive members from various areas have declared themselves opposed to acceptance of the offer. Sirs on the other hand is to fight tooth and nail for an end to the strike—at the very point when it could be strengthened by joint action with BL workers.

There will never be a better opportunity for steel workers to press home their fight. If the 15.5% money offer is accepted, and there is a return to work, it will herald an unprecedented

round of job-cutting and closures that will decimate the industry and lay waste whole towns and industrial areas.

BSC has offered not the slightest concession on jobs. Under orders from the Tory government, management is engaged in a frontal onslaught on the workforce in pursuit of profit.

The rank and file committees that have emerged in the steel strike now face the most severe test of all: can they hold the line against Sirs' sabotage, and maintain the strike?

They have proven their militancy and their tenacity in struggle. Have they developed the necessary political independence to stand firm and fight on, hopefully alongside BL workers, for the defeat of the Tory government's attacks?

BL workers too, face grave dangers as a result of the manoeuvres of their union officials and the repeated capitulations of their convenors.

April 8 has been set as the day on which Michael Edwardes intends to impose the company's vicious 92-page book of new working practices—which effectively abolish every trade union agreement won in 30 years of struggle.

To clock in for work on 8 April, declares Edwardes, is to accept these "strings". To stay away, or to organise action against the company is to invite "disciplinary action"—clearly meaning the sack.

Yet it is obvious that militants in BL face a Catch-22 situation. If they organise a strike against Edwardes they may face the sack; but if they

clock in, and accept the company's blackmail, they can be picked off at management's leisure as soon as they challenge any one of the host of completely unacceptable conditions laid down in the 92 pages!

Given this situation it is scarcely surprising that genuine workers representatives and mass meetings have voted heavily to endorse the call for strike action on April 8. These include mass meetings of AUEW members at Cowley Assembly Plant, Llanelli, and BMC Services; mass meetings of TGWU members at Jaguar; and meetings of shop stewards at the Cowley Body Plant, Cowley Assembly, Castle Bromwich and Longbridge.

This is further evidence—if any were needed—that shop-floor workers in BL still stand behind the clear rejection of the company pay offer that they registered in a postal ballot two months ago.

But this is not good enough for the right wing AUEW Executive. They are committed to providing BL with a prolonged "moratorium" of no strike action in the hopes of restoring it to "viability".

So having failed to secure a postal ballot vote against strike action they now have attempted to use the votes of skilled tool-room workers as a pretext for refusing to call out their members in BL.

This is why they instructed AUEW convenors to hold mass meetings prior to a decision on the strike call.

Toolroom workers have already won a substantial increase in the last 12 months—and have now been offered double the increase on offer to semi-skilled workers. Few of

Edwardes' strings apply to the skilled men, and none of them have been subjected to the recent lay-offs.

From this privileged position they have felt able to vote heavily against strike action in both Swindon and Cowley tool-rooms. This casts a real doubt over the AUEW Executive's decision.

But for the TGWU, the major manual union in BL, there is no such excuse available. The ballot vote clearly still reflects the feelings of the membership.

And if there is no strike on April 8, the acceptance of Edwardes' package will effectively herald the end of trade unionism in many plants; it will open up every militant steward and convenor to a Robinson-style victimisation; and it will destroy the bargaining power of the unions until such time as an all-out fight can be mobilised.

Whether or not the AUEW calls action, the TGWU must call out its BL members on official strike from April 8.

Just as the steelworkers have been locked in battle with both BSC and the Tories, so BL workers face both Edwardes and his Tory backers. On the success of their struggle hangs the strength of the workers movement in many such battles to come.

This is why the steelworkers should not have been left to fight alone: and why BL workers must not be left isolated in their struggle.

This government is attacking the whole working class by picking off individual sections one by one: it must be met by a united class response.

This means fighting for a General Strike to bring down the Tory government and create conditions for a political reckoning with the Labour traitors who helped put them in office.

It means fighting to defend all jobs and living standards through the struggle for a workers government to establish a planned, socialist economy.

And it means fighting to build—in the steel industry, in BL and in every union—a revolutionary leadership prepared to start at all times not from the profits and "viability" of the employers, but from the independent interests of the working class.



Sirs (right): now singing a different tune

# Eurocommunist gangs up with Social Democrats

The last two weeks have seen extremely significant developments in the further break-up of the international "Eurocommunist" line-up between the French, Italian and Spanish CPs.

The split is particularly between the Italian and the French CPs.

Even at the beginning of the three-way alliance open differences existed between the parties on their attitude towards participating in the governments of the bourgeoisie—though these differences were transcended by the fact that all three parties worked to keep the bourgeoisie of their respective countries safely in power.

The other difference, on attitudes to the Soviet Union, began by narrowing as the French Stalinists began to criticise the USSR's policies on "human rights".

But since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a new gulf has opened up between the French and Italian Stalinists.

The French CP has uncritically supported the invasion, while the Italian party has equally uncompromisingly opposed it.

In order to underline his clear alignment with the imperialists against the USSR, Italian CP leader Enrico Berlinguer has now launched a major initiative towards European social democratic parties.

First of all on March 12 he held a meeting with leading German Social Democrat Willy Brandt.

The German SPD gave the



In friendlier days: Berlinguer (left) with Carrillo and Marchais

meeting hardly a mention whereas the Italian CP newspaper *L'Unita* eulogised it as:

"a cordial and useful, as all forms of constructive dialogue should be between different components of the European left which is trying to reconstitute the workers movement in the Old Continent".

As Berlinguer and Brandt were talking, the Italian CP representatives in the European Parliament were voting for the reactionary resolution demanding "the consolidation of links of friendship and alliance within

the framework of Atlantic solidarity".

Only a few of them revolted and refused to vote for a resolution they regarded as too "Atlantic".

Two weeks later on March 24 an even more significant meeting took place, between Berlinguer and Francois Mitterand, the leader of the French Socialist Party.

The official communique of this meeting talks of "a long and cordial conversation" and the need for initiatives towards: "disarmament, detente, co-

operation in Europe and the world, respect for human rights and preparing conditions favourable to the success of the Madrid conference."

(The Madrid conference, scheduled for next year, is designed as a successor to the reactionary agreements between imperialism and Stalinism taken at the "European Security conferences" at Helsinki and then Belgrade).

The Communique goes on to emphasise:

"the specific role which, in the difficult phase of inter-

national relations today, can be played in realising the objectives of the workers' movement by different parties which express those objectives and by the forces of the democratic and popular left in western Europe".

## Aroused

The meeting predictably aroused the ire of French Socialist leader Georges Marchais (already under severe pressure as a result of press allegations that he went as a voluntary worker to Nazi Germany in 1943).

Marchais's comments on the Berlinguer-Mitterand talks virtually broke all links between the French and Italian CPs.

He noted the "broad convergence" between the French Socialist Party and the Italian CP.

"They are both for austerity—we are against it. They are both in favour of the enlargement of the European Community to Greece, Portugal and Spain—we are against this in the interests of the peasantry and in the national interest. They are both for giving the Community supranational rights—we are against it."

## Explanation

After this reactionary declaration he added his explanation of Mitterand's motives—Mitterand, he says, wants to associate himself with Berlinguer's policy of "historic compromise" with the Christian Democrats and to dissociate himself from the French Union

of the Left with the CP.

Apart from the hypocrisy involved in putting all the blame for breaking the Union of the Left on the Socialist Party, this opposition to Mitterand is in no way based on political principle.

Marchais accuses Mitterand of seeking an alliance with the Gaullists and Giscard. He defines this alliance not as anti-socialist or anti-working class but as "anti social, anti-democratic and anti-national."

And Marchais goes out of his way not to criticise the principle of the "historic compromise" policy of the Italian CP. He simply declares it "perhaps conceivable in Italy" but not useful in France.

Marchais diplomatically avoided analysing Berlinguer's motives.

## Way out

They relate, however, to the Italian CP's continued search for a way out of their enforced "opposition" to the crisis-torn Christian Democratic regime in Italy.

They hope to establish political credentials respectable enough to ensure that they are offered some kind of role in the bourgeois government.

Close links with European social democracy, they hope, would qualify them for such a position.

But as we go to press it looks as if Berlinguer will be disappointed yet again.

Premier Cossiga seems to be heading towards a new "centre-left" coalition with the Socialist Party—but without the Stalinists!

# New battles to come in Portugal

Sa Carneiro's right wing government, comprising Portugal's two main bourgeois parties, has stepped up its implementation of the law, originally introduced by Mario Soares' Socialist Party, which reverses the land reforms that followed the April 1974 revolution.

The Agrarian Reform law gives the government powers to

remove farmworkers by force from farms, mostly in the southern Alentejo region, which they seized from the landowners in 1974 and 1975 and on which they have since worked on a cooperative or collective basis.

They can then be handed back to the expropriated landowners though usually in smaller units than those which existed before 1974.

About 2.5 million acres of land were expropriated after the revolution. Up to now 550,000 acres have been given back to

private owners since the counter-revolutionary Act was passed in 1977—75,000 by the present Sa Carneiro government, the rest by the Socialist Party government of Soares and its two "technocratic" successors led by Mota Pinto and Pintassilgo.

The present government's policy is to step up the pace of this counter-revolutionary offensive.

Before the general election, due in October of this year it intends to hand back a further

625,000 acres—that is, more in the next six months than in the past three years.

This policy has led to an enormous build-up of resistance on the part of the farmworkers of Alentejo.

Numerous armed clashes have taken place in the past few weeks between farmworkers and the paramilitary police, the CNS.

Three cabinet ministers were sent to Alentejo on March 12 to supervise the operation and were met with hostile demon-

strations.

Armed helicopters flew over the region in an attempt to keep the ministers out of trouble.

Eighteen farmworkers were injured in a police attack on a demonstration; several were arrested and face trial.

## Dominated

The leading political force in the area is the Communist Party which dominates the farmworkers' unions.

Its policy in the face of the attack has been one of militant words coupled with a refusal to organise any concerted militant action against it.

While the CP is refusing to organise strike action, farmworkers in some parts of the Alentejo have both taken strike action and organised demonstrations outside the usual framework of the CP and the unions which it dominates.

This important movement, however, remains in a rather spontaneous form and has not developed a consistent leadership.

This means that arch-opportunist "left" General Otelo de Carvalho was able to take advantage of the vacuum of leadership to make demagogic calls for the arming of the workers and for a mass march on Lisbon.

The frustration of the working class is now appearing not only in the Alentejo but in the rest of the country and other sectors of the economy as well.

Two weeks ago railway workers staged a two-day strike in support of a wage claim—and they have made threats of further strikes.

Other workers in the public sector, especially transport and the state-owned newspapers, are pressing similar claims against a government which is extremely

resistant to granting any of them.

But the ruling class is nonetheless showing increasing signs of disunity and long-term insecurity.

There is open hostility between President Eanes and Prime Minister Sa Carneiro's government.

Eanes is trying to encourage an alternative governmental coalition of the Social Democrats not with the Christian Democrats as now but with the Stalinists.

But the Social Democrats have no interest in the proposal and are publicly advocating that a civilian candidate replaces Eanes as President in the presidential elections due in December, a few weeks after the parliamentary elections.

This proposal, however, has brought them into public conflict with their coalition partners the Christian Democrats, who continue to favour a military president who would be "above party politics".

But even the Christian Democrats don't want Eanes, whom they identify with the Socialist Party.

So Portuguese capitalists and their lackeys and defenders in the leadership of the main workers' parties are as far as ever from finding a stable government formula.

They are publicly bickering only a few months before they will be forced to expose themselves to the masses in two national elections and at a time when working class resistance is once again growing to the counter-revolutionary offensive of the government.

There is, therefore, every indication that Portugal is moving towards a new period of major class battles.

# Hungarian mini-purge

The conference of the Hungarian Communist Party which took place last week was a slightly more dignified affair than the Polish CP conference a month earlier.

At least the Prime Minister turned up—which was more than could be said for his Polish counterpart.

But, like the Polish party congress, the Hungarian one echoed with evidence of the failure of the bureaucracy's economic plans and the resulting economic hardships which face the masses.

And, like the Polish congress, the Hungarian one ended in the classic Stalinist response to political problems—a purge.

After criticisms from Party Secretary Janos Kadar (installed in power by Soviet tanks during the workers' uprising of 1956), the Prime Minister Gyorgy Lazar, was obliged to make a remarkably self-critical speech about the economy.

He admitted that the objec-

tives of the present 5-year plan on economic growth, productivity and real wages had not been fulfilled.

## Energy crisis

Like his capitalist counterparts he tried to draw a veil over the real causes of these failures by blaming it all on the "energy crisis".

And his proposed solutions to the problem sounded very similar as well—"to make profitable or eliminate loss-making production", to increase productivity and reinforce discipline in the factories, to "regroup" the workforce (meaning create redundancies), to end "egalitarianism" in salaries and increase differentials as an "incentive".

"We must get rid," Kadar said in his preliminary report to the Congress, "of this false conception of socialism: security and absolute egalitarianism cannot be priority imperatives".

Kadar's novel conception of a "socialism" which involves the

end of job security and the pursuit of profit is spuriously attributed to Lenin, who "always said we had to reach the same level of efficiency of the capitalist countries".

The Hungarian bureaucracy's "taking account of just criticism" and the "very open exposure to public opinion of the problems and difficulties" was all much more beautifully stage managed than it had been in Warsaw.

After Lazar's speech, Kadar congratulated him on all the self-criticism.

Then came the elections to the leadership. A few heads rolled—just to show that the bureaucracy wasn't quite perfect.

But even those demoted stayed on the Central Committee, so despite their mistakes they won't lose all their privileges.

This whole procedure parallels recent developments in a series of the deformed workers states in recent months—in Poland, in Cuba and in Vietnam.

It reflects widespread and growing opposition among workers in the Stalinist-ruled states to economic hardship and austerity and to bureaucratic privilege.

The bureaucracies are forced to recognise this through harmless but widely publicised purges of a section of the leadership along with a great orgy of "self-criticism".

But this is a purely demagogic exercise.

Because when the "self-criticism" is examined it in fact turns out to be criticism of something or someone else—partly of the economic problems imported from the capitalist countries, but most of all criticism of the working class for being unproductive and undisciplined.

"Self" criticism therefore is an expression of the enmity which exists between the working class and the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy that feeds off and shackles the nationalised property relations in the deformed workers states.

# CARTER'S PRE-ELECTION RECESSION



Oliphant © 1980 Washington Star

'Captain—Someone has to go over the side...'

As President Carter—faced by record post-war inflation running at 18% per year—embarks on a Thatcher-style programme of recessionary policies, there are signs of considerable unease within the American capitalist class.

The big capitalists of course are not going to suffer unduly as a result of Carter's credit squeeze, his increases petrol taxes or his swingeing \$13 billion cuts in Federal spending. The burden of these measures will fall first and hardest on smaller and weaker businesses, and the cuts will bite with particular savagery on the most oppressed layers of society—the young, the old, the sick and the unemployed.

### Spending cuts

Carter's spending cuts seem likely to hit the budgets of state legislatures, big cities and depressed areas, along with a cutback on food-stamp benefits and pensions for former federal employees.

They will also include postponement of the welfare reform programme; the axing of 20,000 Federal jobs; and cutbacks in postal deliveries, the job-training programme and child health assistance.

Meanwhile US interest rates continue to run at a staggering 18%, with bankers declaring that the combination of credit squeeze and the monetary policies taken by the Federal Reserve Board mean effectively "no money at any price".

A full-scale recession, bringing mass unemployment and a real fall in production, now seems—after a number of false starts—to be on the way in the US, in election year.

### Timing

Indeed the timing of these moves by Carter underline the

scale of the crisis faced by US capitalism yet it is unlikely that any of his opponents will attempt to exploit these for political advantage.

One of Carter's main worries in presenting his draconian package of cutbacks was that he sounded too much like a Republican.

### Less government

Republican front-runner Ronald Reagan places Federal spending cuts at the centre of his Thatcher-style electoral campaign for less taxes, less restrictions on private enterprise, and "less government".

Reagan's "less government" however would preside over the deployment and possible use of a vastly expanded military arsenal: he proposes a major increase in "defence" spending.

In this he is of course at one with fellow Republicans George Bush (former CIA director) and supposed "liberal" John Anderson.

While Reagan and Bush stress the need to counter the military power of the Soviet Union, Anderson focusses much of his chauvinist agitation against the anti-imperialist struggles in the Middle East, claiming that:

"The threat to the security of our oil supplies stems from internal political strife in the Persian Gulf".

### Hard to outbid

But the Republican leaders are all finding it hard to outbid Carter's aggressive cold war stance towards the Soviet Union and extravagant military programme—which included the riotously expensive and ecologically destructive MX-missile system.

Indeed on every aspect of foreign and domestic policy Carter is at present able to fend off his reactionary critics by simply pointing to the fact that he is already implementing a



Carter

policy almost as right wing as they are seeking.

While this stance seems to have held Carter's support among the proportion of the US electorate that participate in the primaries and in the Presidential elections it seems to cut far less ice with the massive numbers of workers, unemployed and radicalised younger people who continue to abstain from the choice between a Republican Tweedledum and a Democrat Tweedledee.

The renewed bi-partisan war drive by American capitalism is still in its infancy: yet already tens of thousands of youth, minorities and students have taken to the streets and

campuses in protest against Carter's measures to prepare for a reimposition of conscription.

Memories of the horrors of the Vietnam war have not been erased by jingoist speeches from Republican and Democrat hawks.

### Anti-draft

Even in the US labour officialdom two leading AFL-CIO bureaucrats recently voted against the draft—a political stand that was notably absent during the early stages of the Vietnam war.

It is with an uneasy weather eye on the potential opposition from such elements that Senator



Edward Kennedy is gamely pressing ahead with his almost certainly doomed campaign for the Democratic nomination.

### 'Liberal' face

Kennedy has sought to channel the opposition to Carter's economic policies, opposition to the draft, and misgivings about an all-out cold war, into a Presidential campaign with a fraudulent 'liberal' face.

On this platform his class collaborationist appeal swiftly enlisted the support of 15 major trade unions—including Chrysler director Douglas Fraser of the United Auto Workers.

But at the same time Kennedy has spelt out his reactionary panacea for runaway inflation: compulsory wage and price controls.

AFL-CIO leaders have for some time called on Carter to impose such a policy: but it is far from likely that working class voters would flock out in their thousands to endorse it at the polls.

Meanwhile Kennedy's opportunism and diehard imperialist stance were also demonstrated by his exploitation of Carter's supposed "softness" on the Palestinian Liberation Organisation—which helped win him the massive Jewish vote to swing the New York primary.

Kennedy clearly offers no alternative whatever for the American working class.

But nor does he seem likely to offer US capitalists a serious hope of enlisting working class support or acquiescence to the kind of savage imperialist policies and domestic austerity programme they hope to impose in order to preserve their rotten and crisis-ridden system.

### Chicago strike

One demonstration of the dubious hold of the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party over the labour bureaucracy and its rank and file has been the tenacious three-week strike by Chicago firemen against Democrat Mayor Jane Byrne.

The firemen, taking a lead against the cuts, struck demanding a union contract—and stayed firm in defiance of a back-to-work injunction by the courts, fines on their union and a five-month jail sentence on local Fire Fighters Association President Frank Muscare.

An organised scabbing operation failed miserably, while local trade unionists rallied increasingly behind the strike.



Kennedy

The leadership of Chicago's substantial black community lent their public support to the strike—and Byrne's strike-breakers were forced to climb down.

It was no coincidence that in the course of these events Kennedy was loudly booed as he marched alongside Byrne in a St. Patrick's day parade through Chicago—and was immediately afterwards trounced 2-1 by Carter in the Chicago primary.

American workers have only one real choice—to reject both Carter and Kennedy.

### Labour party

The task in the next period is to take up the fight in every union local and workers' organisation for a break from the reactionary and discredited politics of the twin bourgeois parties, and for the building of a Labour Party based on the trade unions.

Only such a party—within which revolutionaries would organise and fight for a programme of democratic and transitional demands to secure workers' independent interests—offers a way out of the bi-partisan agreement on a future of austerity, anti-communism and imperialist war.



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No. 1 Nov. 1979

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# Des Warren re-examines Shrewsbury betrayal

Why have you re-issued your pamphlet on the Shrewsbury frame-up?

The first 5,000 copies were sold out and now with the Tory attacks on the trade unions, I thought a re-issue was relevant.

The whole experience of the Shrewsbury frame-up and subsequent cover-up must have provided the Tories with valuable lessons, particularly the treachery of the trade union and labour leaders.

How do you think they will use those lessons in the proposed Employment Bill? Will the conspiracy laws feature prominently?

I don't altogether agree with that, because the union leaders' treachery has been established since 1926. There is a lot more contact between these right wing trade union leaders and the Tories than most people think.

What I think the Tories learnt was how the movement would react, the rank and file mainly.

The lessons that the Tories will have learnt from Shrewsbury is that the movement still hasn't developed consciousness to the extent that it understands capitalist democracy and the preparations they are making to really batter us. This has gone over the heads of the movement - take the recent arrest of some Welsh lads under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

They were just questioned and released, yet they were described as 'terrorists'.

These are the lessons: they are making preparations at a terrific rate, and there is a mass of information even in the capitalist press, but our people don't seem to be able to see the wood for the trees.

In the introduction to the new issue of your pamphlet you say that:

a) the TUC have refused you permission to study their files on Shrewsbury in connection with your private prosecution against the Home Office;

b) that UCATT, your own union, have refused you access to information concerning Shrewsbury and;

c) that the Communist Party leadership, among other things, refused you an examination by Party doctors upon your release, refused to print (or help in any way) your pamphlet, and suppressed an article giving details about drugs abuse used against you whilst in prison.

Do you think the CP acted and are acting in collusion with these right wing forces?

I wouldn't say there was collusion between the CP and the right wing, I think it's just the way they operate.

To take the first point. My solicitor approached the TUC for information on my Home Office prosecution and they said they have a 30 year ban on information.

We went backwards and forwards and they finally allowed us to study certain files - providing we didn't divulge the information.

As far as my union was concerned, a reporter who's helping me to write a book on Shrewsbury was given access to certain files but not others - the union leaders saying they were personal UCATT property.

You see, the TUC and the CP all go along the same lines, even though the CP were pressing the TUC to do this, that and the other.

They still follow the same reformist policies and when you

In the wake of the 1972 national building workers' pay strike under the Heath government came a major frame-up trial against 24 flying pickets, who were charged under the conspiracy laws.

Despite massive protests from rank and file trade unionists the TUC leaders sat back and allowed the Tory courts to victimise the 'Shrewsbury 24' - of whom Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson were handed vicious jail sentences.

Warren, a Communist Party member, was subjected in jail to a total of eight months in solitary confinement, and to savage drug therapy which on one occasion left him comatose for two weeks, and after which he was unable to write.

His doctor is on record as saying that Warren's symptoms of 'Parkinsonism' are caused by treatment received while in prison.

Warren has now put out a second edition of his pamphlet on the Shrewsbury frame-up. Entitled 'Shrewsbury: Whose conspiracy?' it is published (40p plus 17p p&p) by the WRP's New Park Publications, 21b Old Town, London, SW4 0JT.

Here Warren talks to *Socialist Press* about the lessons he draws from his experiences.



Shrewsbury protestors march past law courts

gritty, the TUC never talk about smashing the capitalist system and the CP seems to follow the same line.

The CP don't call for the downfall of the capitalist system, it's always based on reforming the system.

The British Road to Socialism is a bleeding fairy tale; when you look at what the British ruling class are prepared to do, who can believe they are going to allow us to stroll down the British Road to Socialism?

They're going to batter us and I believe we've got to be armed with as much information as possible.

I think if the CP were honest they would put everything in relation to Shrewsbury before the people and say this is what really happened and at the same time say "But we still believe in the peaceful road to socialism."

I could accept their view, but when they cover up and hide certain facts that contradict their line, that's being dishonest, this is what sticks in my craw.

This question of the drugs, you mention. Jim Arnison wrote an article and the CP suppressed it. The *Sunday Times* didn't suppress it - they made it headline news!

Why is it the *Sunday Times* can put something on their front page that the *Morning Star* won't touch?

As to this question of collusion, you mentioned the TUC, the CP and the trade union leaders. I see them all moving along the same line.

I don't see them as three separate organisations.

You have stated in your pamphlet that the treatment you are receiving at the hands of the CP flows from a peaceful road to socialism perspective - essentially that a tortured class war prisoner is a living proof of the bankruptcy of such a strategy. Are there other CP members involved, looking at it this way?

Well you must know yourself there is a lot of controversy



Warren (right) and Tomlinson arriving at court going on.

I've been accused by some people of attacking the CP. But what are they saying? That we should all be in agreement and pat each other on the back?

We're only going to get at the truth of the situation if we discuss everything, everything the capitalists get up to. This information should be made available to the movement so they can draw their own conclusions from it.

In my case, in my experience the CP have turned a blind eye to certain aspects of the Shrewsbury case, and the only conclusion I can draw from that is that anything which contradicts the British Road to Socialism or casts any doubt on its validity they just sweep under the carpet.

This is very dangerous. It might make the people who drew up the British Road to Socialism feel like smart fellows by hiding the facts from the

movement but it's a very dangerous thing to do.

We have to get all the facts and say look, things are not going the way we thought they would, we have to revise this.

But the most important thing for me is not to prove the CP wrong or some other party right but to present the whole movement with the facts.

There was a time when I wouldn't have done this interview, but I've changed. The WRP have printed my pamphlet and this is an indication of my immediate aims.



PHOTO: Laurence Spatham, IFL

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# Howe steps up Tory offensive

Any *Socialist Press* reader earning over £400 per week, owning small businesses, or planning to open factories in the industrial wastelands of London or the North West will be well pleased with the latest Tory budget.

For the vast majority of the population, however, Chancellor Howe's package amounts to a savage escalation of the Tories' offensive on jobs, living standards, the welfare state and basic rights.

In one of the most brazen onslaughts in recent years Howe singled out the unemployed, the

poor, pensioners, children and the sick as chief victims of his attack. Strikers' families, too, are to be viciously penalised.

\*Earnings related unemployment benefits are to be scrapped completely—plunging the growing numbers of unemployed immediately onto poverty-level benefits.

\*Unemployment, sickness, injury and invalidity benefits will rise at 5% less than the rate of inflation—to ensure that the poor get poorer. And all these benefits will now be subject to tax.

\*Child benefits are to be cut by 9% in real terms, through the award of a miserable 75p increase instead of the £1.25

needed to match inflation.

\*Pensions go up by only 16%—lagging again behind runaway Tory inflation.

\*Prescription charges rocket to £1 in a new step towards stamping out the free National Health Service and imposing a fee-paying system.

\*Strikers' families will be effectively fined £12 per week—the amount to be docked from social security payments to which they are entitled.

On top of this barrage of fines and penalties, Howe brought in a package of tax increases on petrol, car licences, beer, spirits, wine and tobacco.

Despite superficial changes in income tax, the tax burden

itself is actually increased by £1 billion—the bulk of that falling on the shoulders of the working class.

The main intention of Howe's tax changes is to give further handouts to the rich—and to cut still more civil service jobs.

## Jobs to go

More jobs will also go as a result of his additional £500 million in public spending cuts in 1980-81, and his future plans for even more stringent cuts in which 50,000 civil service jobs, and thousands more public sector jobs will face the axe.

The housebuilding and maintenance programme is also to be slashed by a drastic £672 million—guaranteeing that the already vast army of homeless will grow even further in the next period.

But not absolutely everyone is miserable at Howe's package. For those earning in excess of £30,000 per year, for instance, there is a £13 per week tax handout.

For small businesses there is a succession of measures of tax relief and handouts amounting to £124 million this year and £363 million next year.

And for the most ruthless and avaricious employers "free enterprise zones" in which they are able to set up rate-free, tax-deductible businesses, free from planning regulations, customs restrictions or obligation to train their labour force.

Such measures represent Howe's attempts to restore some of the more serious damage Tory policies have inflicted on small businesses in the last year: but even the *Financial Times* felt obliged to point out that:

"The enterprise zone notion



... could encourage the worst and most anti-social businessmen as well as the best entrepreneurs. For the amount of time and energy that it has already involved in Whitehall and elsewhere, it may well only have a marginal impact on the areas in which the zones are to be sited."

As Labour's arch job-slasher and social service cutter Dennis Healey pointed out in reply to Howe:

"At least those the Government puts out of business will find it a little easier to start again."

But the task of the labour movement is to mobilise in action to put the Tory government out of business and out of

office. There was no glimmer of a response along these lines from either TUC or Labour leaders in the wake of Howe's budget.

TUC leaders vied with each other for lofty phrases to condemn the Tory attacks—but rallied behind Len Murray's anxious denials that the call for one-day strike action on May 14 is designed as part of a move to bring down the government.

Such leaders must be challenged: the most basic rights of the working class are at stake, and can be defended only through the ousting of the Thatcher government and the struggle for a government that will establish a planned, socialist economy.

# Huckfield's ten point plan

Les Huckfield, Labour MP for Nuneaton came to political prominence as a "left".

However, during his period as a Junior Minister at the Department of Industry he achieved a reputation as a consistent defender of the Wilson and Callaghan governments.

So enthusiastic was he in this role that it was rumoured that the Tribune group was thinking of dissociating themselves from him.

But since the Labour government's defeat at the last election Les Huckfield has become a 'left' once again—incurring the particular wrath of the right wing AUEW bureaucracy who objected to his tub-thumping support for BL convenor Derek Robinson which led to the Labour NEC voting to support him as the AUEW leaders moved in for the kill.

Recently Huckfield has also proposed a 10-point programme to fight the cuts.

This programme was passed at the West Midlands Regional Labour Party Conference on Housing and Public Spending Cuts held on February 23.

## Maximum resistance

The preamble argues that Labour Councils should adopt it as a focus of a united fight for the "maximum resistance to Tory spending cuts".

The Labour Local Government Charter calls for an improvement in administration in terms of handling of complaints; the ending of the means test; the ending of prestige projects like new town halls and wasteful spending on banquets; the extension of low rent housing, more democratic control and improved standards of repairs, etc; the expansion of public sector economic development—the creation of new jobs, through direct labour schemes, cooperatives and factory building, and council subsidies where central government backs out; expansion of free day care for under fives (District Councils to step in where County Councils make cuts); an end to racial and sexual discrimination; no redundancies, no cuts in services no sale of municipal assets including council houses and defence of comprehensive education using falling rolls to improve standards.

This policy was adopted by Nuneaton Trades Council on March 5 "as a policy to move forward from and in need of expansion".

There is much that could be said about this policy, which falls into two broadly different parts.

Firstly there are the elements which refer to defence and extension of existing services.

Here the problems lie in the lack of any suggestions as to how this can be done.

If a local council does not make cuts in services, what follows? Do they overspend? Put the rates up? What will be done when the Tories move in to stop this?

There is a great danger that this Charter can be seen as the policy for Labour Councils in the indefinite future.

The second element of the Charter are the points about financing economic developments via the public sector.

Here again, the questions of capitalism and socialism are conspicuously left out. The problem of the need to fight for nationalisation of the banks and basic industries is ignored.

## Cooperatives

In its place there is vague talk of cooperatives—simply a utopian device for attempting to solve problems within capitalism.

The programme is being raised in labour movement organisations in the Midlands Area.

When it comes up for discussion it will be necessary to strengthen it with a clear perspective for strike action and occupations now to defend our gains and confront the Tories, together with an explicit commitment to take up the fight for socialism now!



Huckfield

# PRESS GANG



The decision by the Royal Family to call an all-out strike if the government does not increase its 19.4% wage offer is an act of gross irresponsibility.

For too long the taxpayers of this country have been pouring money into the vast and ever open coffers of this institution.

The demand that the Royal Family should have their standard of living protected is a symptom of the all too familiar syndrome of something for nothing.

It must be made clear to 'Red' Liz and her Trotskyite pals that they cannot go on forever consuming more than they earn.

In particular the decision to increase the wages of Ann Phillips by 30% to mend her roof, is a clear breach of the government's cash limits and cannot be justified.

The call from Tribune MPs to featherbed the Royals by import controls against 'dumping' deposed

monarchs in Britain is as familiar as it is dreary.

## More efficient

The plain fact is that foreign royals are more efficient and better finished than the British models, who are ageing, inefficient and in any case rely heavily



on German components. That is why Michael Edwardes says that 30% of the Royals must lose their jobs through natural wastage and assassination.

The absurd restrictive practice which says that only the Queen can open Parliament, and the crippling stand she has taken against new technology—preferring to ride around in a horse-drawn coach—has helped make her and her cronies unviable.

Not only are those highly paid drones to be found nodding off at official functions but the quality of the product is now reviled across the world.

Appeals for restraint have fallen on deaf ears.

The Royal Family have made one arrogant demand after another acting on the assumption that they could not be closed down because they are 'a British institution'.

The ordinary tax payer has had enough. Either the Royal Family should their offer or they should be allowed to go the wall.

# FRANTIC ATTEMPT AT POLITICS BY NUMBERS

# WHAT HAS IMG GOT

# COMMON WITH THE

On 3rd September 1938, the Transitional Programme was adopted by the Founding Conference of the Fourth International. This Conference was attended by 30 delegates from organisations in 11 countries and represented the culmination of Trotsky's struggles to construct a new international against the stream of Stalinist betrayals and the forward march of fascism in Europe.

Central to the experience which informed the programme of the new international was:

"The definite passing over of the Comintern to the bourgeois order, its cynically counter-revolutionary role throughout the world" (*Transitional Programme, p.3*).

The tragedy of Germany, where Stalinism was the actual handmaiden of Nazi power, was scorched into the programme and perspectives of the Fourth International.

For Trotsky, after the experiences of China, Germany and Spain, there was no question but that:

"the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to world revolution" (*In Defence of Marxism, p.19*).

It was this understanding of the impossibility of reforming the Comintern and the Stalinist parties which compelled Trotsky, in the teeth of constant harassment and intimidation—not to mention outright murder of his supporters—to struggle for the construction of a new international to keep aloft the banner of Bolshevism.

Furthermore, for Trotsky, this struggle to keep the flame of revolutionary socialism burning was his most significant contribution to revolutionary politics.

As he wrote in his journal for March 1933:

"I think the work in which I am now engaged is the most important of my life—more important than 1917, more important than the period of the civil war or any other."

His reasoning for this was simple:

"The collapse of the two internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of those internationals is at all equipped to solve."

"The vicissitudes of my personal fate have confronted me with this problem and armed me with important experiences in dealing with it."

"There is now no-one except me to carry out the mission of arming a new generation with the revolutionary method over the heads of the leaders of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals" (*Diary in Exile*).

That was the political legacy which Trotsky bequeathed to the Fourth International, before his death in 1940 at the hands of Stalin's assassin.

In the post-war years, however, these very political foundations of the Fourth International came once more under assault. Nor was this fresh



PHOTO: Mark Risher, IFL

assault on the Trotskyist movement restricted to the forces of Stalinism, Social Democracy and Bourgeois Liberalism who had hated the young international from its inception.

Instead, the most deadly challenge to the fundamental principles and perspectives of the Fourth International came from its very heart: the International Secretariat.

In the wake of the social overturns in Eastern Europe, the F.I., under the secretaryship of Michel Pablo, began a process of revising its analysis of the world situation.

This was to lead inexorably to the liquidation of that "fixed capital of ideas" which Trotsky had laid at the very centre of the F.I.

Above all, the Trotskyist analysis of the counter-revolutionary role of the F.I. itself—now regarded as "the old Trotskyism"—was rejected in favour of "new" perspectives.

'Pabloism', as it became known, assumed predominance within the world Trotskyist Movement.

The effects of Pabloism in the Fourth International have been dealt with in much greater detail in the two WSL documents 'The Poisoned Well' and 'The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle' and it is not the intention of this article to recount once more this history.

But it is necessary to understand this background in order to grasp the real nature of developments currently taking place in organisations claiming to continue the work of Trotsky and claiming to represent the Fourth International.

The purpose of this article is to examine the current orientation of the International

Marxist Group as British representatives of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, and continuators of Pabloism.

In a feature article printed in *Socialist Challenge* no. 138 entitled 'Our Common Cause', the main arguments are presented which explain the IMG's drive towards 'revolutionary regroupment'.

The perspective for regroupment was originally adopted at their 1978 conference. What is new from this year's conference is that this now centres almost exclusively on seeking unity with the Socialist Workers Party (GB)—a centrist group that declares the Soviet Union and deformed workers' states to be capitalist regimes.

Of course, as Trotskyists, the Workers Socialist League is itself absolutely committed to the reconstruction of the Fourth International. We see this process taking place through a series of splits and principled fusions.

Such fusions must, however, be on the basis of programmatic agreement and open discussion of the practical and theoretical lessons of the last 30 years.

It was on this basis that in the period up to last year's XIth World Congress of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the WSL argued consistently for a discussion of the differences which had emerged in the world Trotskyist movement since the war.

As we stated at the time, in our efforts to open up a discussion on these questions and programme:

"Despite the substantial

differences that exist—in particular the fact that the WSL does not recognise the USFI as 'The Fourth International', characterises it as Pabloite and fights for the reconstruction of the F.I.—there remains the objective possibility of the WSL fusing with the USFI. It is our duty to examine to what extent this is a concrete possibility through the opening of a discussion between our two organisations."

Crucial to this was a discussion of the document 'The Poisoned Well' and of the problems of the post war F.I.

Our recognition that as Trotskyists we were obliged to defend the revolutionary programme against Pabloite liquidationism did not prevent us from seeking to open up and widen out the discussion of the problems of the F.I. to others who claimed to be Trotskyist, including those, like the USFI and its sections, who we characterise as Pabloite.

In the event, the IMG and the USFI rejected such a discussion—on the grounds that the WSL refused to recognise the USFI as being 'The Fourth International'.

But within weeks of this decision, the unresolved questions they refused to discuss had brought the USFI to a major split—with the effective expulsion of the LTT and Bolshevik Faction over the question of Nicaragua and the intervention of the Simon Bolivar Brigade.

The WSL for its part has continued to work for the principled reconstruction of the Fourth International—and in January the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee was launched on the basis of general

Masses of youth rally on ANL Carnival

lines of programmatic agreement on basic issues facing Trotskyists.

The IMG, however, having rejected open discussions with the WSL, has now set out on a desperate courtship of the SWP in which it would appear that none of the 'scruples' and 'principles' which were erected as a barrier to the discussion with the WSL are likely to get a look in.

The SWP very probably does recognise the USFI as being 'the fourth international'. We should, however, be very clear what they mean by that.

"The only realistic assessment of the Fourth International is that it is a current of opinion and its conferences etc. are a debating society. This is not something to be ashamed of, since it is a fairly large society and has the potential of becoming bigger"

(*International Socialism, Winter 1980, p.123*).

Clearly, that is not what Trotskyists mean when they refer to the F.I. For the IMG, however, this assessment apparently raises no problems.

This is explicable largely by the fact that in many respects it falls in line with the views of the IMG's European mentor, Ernest Mandel.

In his book "From Stalinism to EuroCommunism" Mandel, amongst all the concessions to EuroCommunism, manages to reduce the F.I. to no more than a senior cousin to the left as a whole:

"The Fourth International has worked longer on this question and has reached much more serious Marxist conclusions than any other current of

the international workers' movement".

Clearly then, in this context the approach to the SWP is no more than a continuation of past positions. That these positions are not those of the founders of the F.I. apparently matters not a jot. Thus the IMG state:

"We think that the SWP should draw the conclusions of the last 30 years. In the debate with the SWP in International Socialism before the XIth World Congress of the F.I. we suggested holding discussions on the issues which prevent the SWP from affiliating to the F.I. We still want this discussion. We cannot comprehend the reasons which prevent the SWP from affiliating to the F.I."

"However, the IMG does not make affiliation to the F.I. a precondition for fusion with the SWP. Other alternatives are open, such as becoming a sympathising organisation or allowing individuals to become members of the F.I."

Ignoring here the fact that even for Trotskyists the "conclusions of the past 30 years" have yet to be drawn up—due in large part to the refusal of the USFI to countenance any discussion of the events behind the splits in 1951-3 and the 1953 fusion with the American SWP—it will suffice to note here that in one fell swoop the IMG has reduced the Fourth International to an optional extra.

Thus, the struggle by Trotsky and his supporters in the 1930s against Stalin's assassins, the ravages of fascism and the betrayals of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals, to construct a new international is stripped of all historical significance.

And Trotsky's own assessment that "outside these cadres (of the F.I.) there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name" becomes no more than bluster.

Of course, Trotsky had a somewhat different attitude to the question of revolutionary regroupment. In the Open Letter for the Fourth International" in 1935 he spelt out the need for revolutionary intransigence.

"... the condition for success is irreconcilable criticism of the centrist leadership, exposure of the attempts to create a Two-and-a-half International, and a ceaseless explanation of the fact that the revolutionary tasks of our epoch doom beforehand to ignominious bankruptcy those unifications which are hybrid and amorphous" (*Writings 1935/36*).

For Trotsky what mattered was not that some centrist might be with us today; but rather that we educate real revolutionary Marxist cadres through systematic development and the application of the fixed capital of ideas, which Marxism represents, to events.

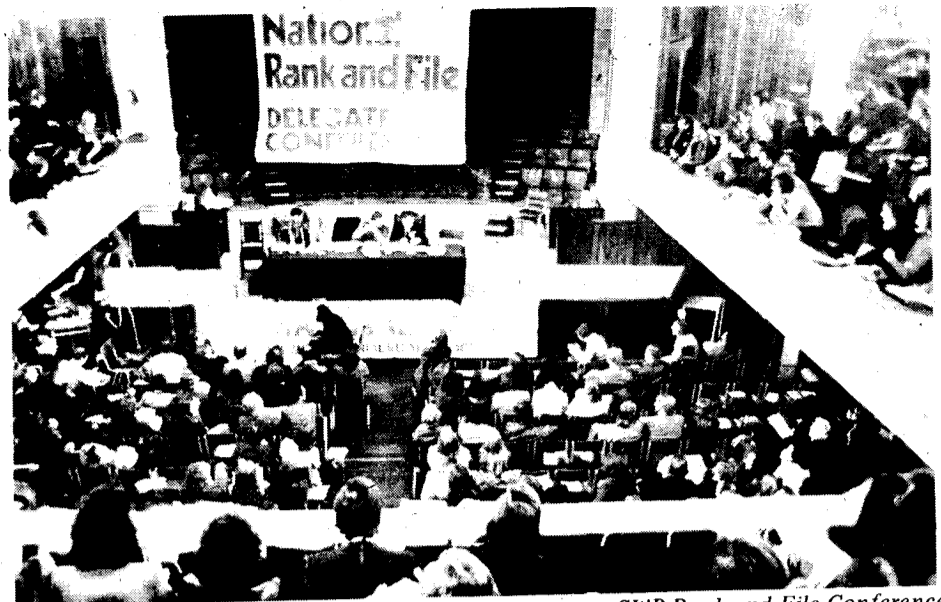
For the IMG, however, rejection of the historical struggle for the F.I. goes hand in hand with a rejection of that fixed capital of ideas.

Not content with minimising the role and tasks of the F.I., they proceed to strike at the central experience of the

# IN SWP?

COLIN MORROW looks at the political questions that arise from the latest 'unity' drive by the British International Marxist Group.

PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report



SWP Rank and File Conference

Trotskyist movement: the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Pablo sought to revise his analysis, to couch it in doubts and evasions. He sought to convert this fundamental understanding of the Trotskyist movement into just one of many possibilities, and to introduce the idea that Stalinism could, under certain conditions, play a progressive role.

Under 'mass pressure', suggested Pablo, Stalinist parties could evolve to become centrist—even revolutionary—parties! In their orientation to the SWP, the IMG have followed suit, carefully moderating their comments on Stalinism to meet the needs of the SWP's own current scheme for joint work between their Rank and File front and the Stalinist-dominated LCDTU.

No longer is the CP seen as a fundamentally counter-revolutionary body. Instead, the IMG declare:

"The objective role of the CP, since it stopped being a revolutionary party, has been to bolster the hold of the Labour Party and reformism in the working class" (S.C. 138).

And again: "The policies of the CP generally succeed in doing nothing more effectively than reinforcing the hold of left reformism."

"The politics of the CP have acted as a block to those workers breaking with Labourite politics."

From this, it would appear that the CP is really no more than the alter-ego of Benn and Heffer. But they go on:

"Between 1929-31 it was the CP's ultra-leftism—its refusal to contemplate a united front with the Labour Party, its analysis that it was 'social fascist'—that led many militants to go back to the Labour Party. Either way around, ultra-left or tail-ending the reformists, the CP's role has had similar results."

No mention here, in this anglo-centric view of Stalinism, of the German catastrophe which led millions of militants not to reformism but to death at the hands of the Nazis following the German CP's block with the fascists against the social democrats.

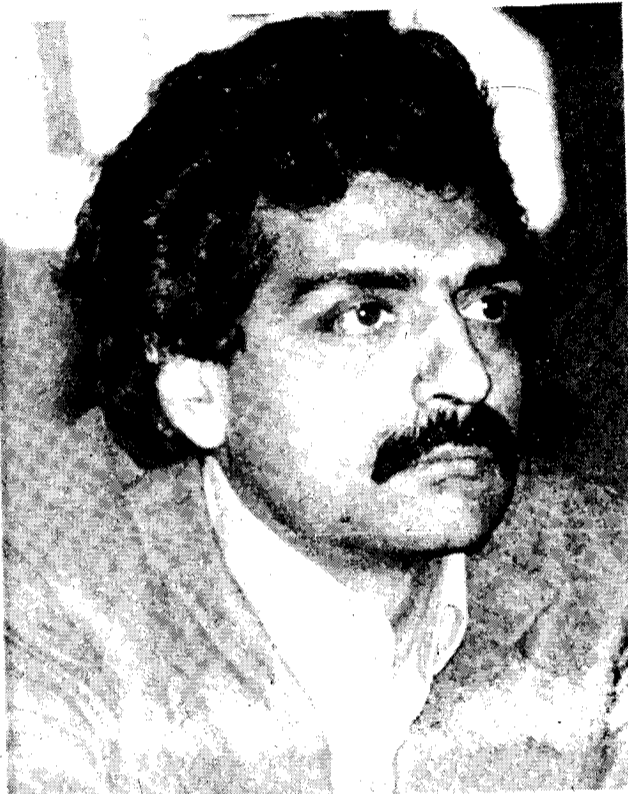
No mention either of the 'river of blood' which in Trotsky's analysis separated Stalinism from Bolshevism.

No, for the IMG, as continuators of the method of Pabloism, the CP is just another left-reformist block to be 'outflanked'.

And lest it be argued that this is no more than a temporary aberration on their part, a quick flip to page 2 of Socialist Challenge will show, under the heading 'Our Policies':

"The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the Euro-Communist nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state." (our emphasis).

In reality the CPs have a meaningful strategy for the preservation of the capitalist state as part of their fight to preserve 'peaceful coexistence'



Tariq Ali

with capitalism on a world scale.

Here again, therefore, we can see how Pabloism throws overboard the 'fixed capital of ideas' of the Trotskyist movement to meet the needs of supposedly 'new' facts and 'new' situations.

Thus, in arguing for regroupment with the SWP—who actually regard the Soviet Union as "state capitalist", and regard all the post-war extensions of socialised property relations in Eastern Europe as 'Soviet Imperialism', the IMG can cheerfully acknowledge:

"There are other differences between the SWP and the IMG [i.e. other than those about the FI itself—Ed.]—those on the character of the Soviet Union and the use of transitional demands are well known."

A cruel person might well ask, what then, for Trotskyists, are the points of agreement, given that the SWP rejects the FI as having any claim to have ever been the 'World Party of the Socialist Revolution, rejects Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union, and rejects the role of transitional demands?

If the SWP reject both the programme of the FI and the role of the FI itself then what is to be gained from discussions for fusion other than the chance to blunder into the retaining walls of yet another cul-de-sac?

But for the spokesmen of latter-day Pabloism these crucial impediments pale into insignificance before the possibility of being... bigger!

"A fusion between the forces of the SWP and the IMG would change the whole appearance of the British left. It would provide an automatic answer to the question of which revolutionary organisation to join... the numbers of the unified organisation would take the unified organisation out of the grouplet stage—there would be at least 4,500 but with the many new members that would join the united organisation our size would rapidly grow to at least 6,000."

(SC 138)

Never mind the programme, feel the width! Again, of course, Trotsky had some slightly different ideas:

"As for the Bolshevik Leninists, they must learn to draw some helpful lessons for the workers' vanguard from this painful experience. Programme first! 'Mass paper'? Revolutionary action? Regroupment? Communism everywhere? Very well, very well... But programme first! Your political passports please, gentlemen! And not false one, if you please—real ones! If you don't have any, then pipe down!"

(Crisis in the French Section)

Of course, lying behind this urge to multiply is the fading memory of the 'heady' days of 1978/9 when the Anti Nazi League brought thousands onto the streets for Carnivals (whilst the fascists marched unmoles- ted).

This approach—with its appeal to bourgeois political leaders at the expense of any proletarian perspective making it an almost classical example of popular frontism—is curiously described by the IMG as a 'United Front' in the traditions of the Communist International.

Carefully ignoring the real nature of the united front as a mobilisation in united action of the mass organisation of workers, and of Trotsky's emphasis on the centrality for Trotskyists of the programme of the proletariat in these actions, the IMG subsume under the heading of 'United Front' any mobilisation like the CND, which could draw out the thousands.

This is linked with a consistent evasion of the bitter lessons of Popular Frontist betrayals. Socialist Challenge 138 for instance carried an article by Tariq Ali on the Chilean catastrophe which described Allende's Popular Unity regime not as a Popular Front but as a "reformist united front".

In a whole page of text Ali fails to mention even once that Allende brought not only bourgeois politicians but also generals into his government—thus paving the way for Pinochet's coup in 1973.

Whether or not we accept that Allende personally "died fighting", it is crucial that Trotskyists draw the correct political conclusions from this historic defeat for the Chilean working class brought about by Allende's treacherous and utterly bankrupt policy of class collaboration—which was of course fully endorsed by the Stalinists.

At base, however, the IMG's refusal to draw out such lessons represents the lingering regrets of the current IMG leadership that Trotskyism separated itself definitively from centrism in the 1930s.

Time and again we see the IMG seeking a path to reforge "unity" with centrists. Yet if we look at the actual thoughts of the Communist International, prior to its degeneration, on this subject we find a very different approach clearly spelt out.

"Any member of the CP who bemoans the split with the centrists in the name of 'unity of forces' or 'unity of front', thereby demonstrates that they do not understand the ABC of Communism and that they themselves happen to be in the CP by accident."

(On the United Front, March 1922).

Furthermore, while the IMG are eulogising the so-called 'United Front' tactics of ANL and the Defend the Unions campaign, the SWP themselves have acknowledged that for them this represented a shift to the right!

Thus, for example, in the February 1979 SWP Internal Bulletin we find Eide O'Callaghan writing:

"Rightly at this point the organisation took a tactical turn to the right in order to prevent complete isolation and also in the process preventing the danger of our degeneration into an ultra-left, semi-terrorist bunch of anti-fascist street fighters."

Part of this turn was the 'Socialist Alternative' work for the elections, but:

"another aspect of our turn to the right in our anti-racist, anti-fascist work, i.e. ANL mushroomed."

That is the extent of the SWP's commitment to the IMG's beloved "united front" tactic. Perhaps that is why in Socialist Challenge 138 we find the IMG lamenting that:

"Sometimes the SWP chooses the method of the united front, as it did with the Anti Nazi League... But the SWP does not always choose this approach. On other occasions it follows a totally different tactic summed up by the phrase 'rank and file movement'."

In fact, the SWP does not have any generalised perspective for winning the masses to the socialist programme of revolution. Having rejected the use of transitional demands, the SWP simply blunders from one 'good idea' to the next in search of a panacea.

Thus, again in O'Callaghan's article we read:

"After four years in the political wilderness, so to speak, we suddenly found ourselves in out of the cold, unexpectedly back at the centre of the political stage, while at the same time outside the anti-fascist movement the political terrain was very difficult, especially after the defeat of the firemen and with the gradual decline of the Grunwick strike."

Here, clearly stated, is the total incapacity of the SWP to conceive of any consistent struggle to win workers towards the revolutionary programme.

If this is taken together with Cliff's notorious analysis of the working class in retreat and the SWP's accommodation to Stalinism at the LCDTU conference,

the political bankruptcy of the SWP is ably summed up.

The drive for unity with the SWP is in reality the IMG itself in search of panaceas, in search of another short cut to resolving the sharp political problem of building the revolutionary party in Britain, and of building the FI.

In the interests of this marriage of convenience they will gladly mortgage the principles of the Trotskyist movement to raise funds for their dowry.

In the interests of or that tactical or numerical advantage in 'outflanking' the CP they will trade in even the struggle to build the FI.

Trotsky's dictum on the principled conditions for revolutionary unity and the need to break from centrism must be ringing in the ears of the "unifiers" of Upper Street:

"But on whatever arena, and whatever the methods of functioning, they are bound to speak in the name of unqualified principles and clear revolutionary slogans. They do not play hide-and-seek with the working class; they do not conceal their aims; they do not substitute diplomacy and combinations for a principled struggle. Marxists, at all times and under all conditions openly say what is."

(Writings 1935-6)

We ask the comrades of the IMG: what is the SWP? It regards the Soviet Union as state capitalist, carries out the most flagrantly opportunist and economist practical work, rejects the use of transitional demands, sees the crucial problem at present as being that the working class is in retreat and regards your own World Congress as a debating society!

What is this hybrid beast? What do you have in common with it?

And what of the IMG itself, British section of the USFI?

How much longer will its leaders persist in hiding their heads in the sand sooner than confronting the unresolved political problems of the Trotskyist movement?

How many more splits and disasters are required before they will face up to the need for an honest discussion?

Despite the ravages of Pabloism the FI is not dead: it lives on in the struggle of revolutionaries throughout the world to reconstruct the FI on the basis of its founding programme and principles.

Only in that struggle is there an alternative to the continued adaptations to Stalinism and centrism that live on in the Trotskyist movement as the legacy of Pabloism.

We call on the IMG and other USFI forces to participate in this struggle: we have tabled documents for discussion: The Poisoned Well on the historical problems of the post-war FI and the programmatic document of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee. We still await a political response to these from the IMG.



SWP leader Tony Cliff



Mass demonstration during the General Strike

# THE GENERAL STRIKE

On the May Day of 1926, there erupted the most bitter and significant struggle in the history of the British working class.

The miners were locked out on that day by the employers who demanded the most enormous cuts in their wages and conditions.

On 3 May, millions of workers struck in support of the miners.

The forces of the capitalist state were brought into action, and after nine days the leaders of the trade unions declared unconditional surrender.

Many strikers were victimised, and after six bitter months, the miners were forced back to work, alone and defeated.

These events affected class and political relations in every corner of the world at the time, and since then they have had their echo in every generation.

## Culmination

The General Strike was the culmination of an entire decade of militant struggle by the British working class.

With the emergence of the wartime shop stewards movement and the flooding of workers into the newly amalgamated and centralised working class organisations in the brief period of post-war boom from 1918-20, the class struggle reached a high point.

The police strikes of 1918-1919, the railway strike of 1919

The first few months of 1980 have brought to the fore the demand for a General Strike to bring down the Tory government. Such a demand naturally gives rise to further discussion on the lessons of the 1926 General Strike, betrayed by the TUC. With this in view, we are reprinting in two parts an extended article on the General Strike by John Docherty, first published in a supplement to Socialist Press in April 1976.

and many other important battles were dealt with by a combination of careful strategy on the part of the Lloyd George coalition government and the lack of fighting spirit of the union leaders.

Jimmie Thomas of the NUR, for example, deliberately timed his 1919 struggle so as *not* to seek the support of those miners and transport workers who were combined with him in the 'Triple Alliance' and had undertaken to give full backing.

During these months, the Cabinet received regular reports from its Directorate of Intelligence about the changes in mood and activity within the working class and left wing political organisations.

With mutinies in the army, strikes in the police, and many waves of struggle from miners and others to contend with, it is not surprising that during 1920, the Cabinet discussed 'military plans for dealing with a possible insurrection', including how, in the event, they might take 'private steps to secure the aid of a certain class of citizen'.

In August 1920 a National Council of Action was formed by all the main organisations of the labour movement to oppose any possible intervention in the

war against the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile local equivalents with the same title began to prepare strikes. The Directorate of Intelligence wrote to the Cabinet that these first Councils of Action:

"Were taking on more the form of Soviets and in some areas (were) forming plans for the seizure of private property and the means of transport".

But the job of heading off this enthusiasm was left to the trade union leaders, who instructed the councils that they should:

"not in any way usurp the functions of trade union executives, especially so far as the withdrawal of labour is concerned, but to act as centres of information".

When the mines were handed back to the owners in the following July, and the miners were threatened with wage cuts, the Prime Minister Lloyd George knew he could rely on the leaders of the other partners in the Triple Alliance to leave them in the lurch.

"Thomas", said the Premier, "is all for peace... I have complete confidence in Thomas' selfishness".

When Hodges for the miners publicly expressed a willingness

to compromise, this provided exactly the division that the government wanted, and it was exploited to the full.

On 15 March 1921, the miners were left to fight on alone. This was 'Black Friday'. As the Prime Minister and his Secretary observed in an exchange of notes at the time: 'It is not enough to have a good cause. You must have good leaders'.

The period between 1921 and 1925 saw an ebb in the class struggle. The ruling class was now armed with an Emergency Powers Act and with a range of strike-breaking machinery that was carefully preserved through the period of Labour government in 1924.

The need for such powers grew more acute as the post-war problems of British capitalism intensified, and the markets for British goods, especially coal, contracted.

The return to the gold standard at the old rate in 1925 further increased the prices of British exports and forced the reduction of living standards of those who produced for this market.

In this period Tory Prime Minister Baldwin told the miners that:

"All the workers in this country have got to face a reduction of wages to help put industry on its feet".

It became more and more clear to the Tories, however, that they would have to enforce an exemplary show-down, preferably with the miners, in order to bring this about.

In July 1925, on 'Red Friday', when the Triple Alliance together with the engineers threatened to come in together to protect the miners from wage cutting, Baldwin was compelled to retreat for a time by granting a temporary subsidy to the mining industry.

From July 1925 to May 1926, the government carefully prepared. The country was divided into military districts, and officials were put in charge of food distribution and other tasks within each one.

The semi-official Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies recruited retired army officers, members of various extreme right wing organisations and other disaffected sections of the middle class into a strike-breaking force.

During these months the trade union leaders did nothing to prepare for the forthcoming struggle. In their heart of hearts

even the most left wing of them always believed that a settlement was just around the corner.

Thus Arthur Cook, Secretary of the Miners Federation of Great Britain and in many ways a genuine militant, while publicly repeating the slogan 'Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day', in private was prepared to suggest compromises of all kinds.

On 21 April 1926 Cook spoke of a "national minimum not only with pluses above it, but also with minuses below it".

On May 2 he even admitted to the Prime Minister's Secretary that "the word revision would ease matters if it was understood instead of reduction".

MFCB President Herbert Smith, before the General Strike was even over mentioned wage cuts for miners between 10 and 15%.

The fact is that however much even the most militant union leaders were prepared to compromise, this was not good enough for the ruling class.

Though Baldwin and his government negotiated right up to the last moment in the hope that the union leaders would make major concessions, once this became impossible they





Scabs at work on London Docks

simply seized on the pretext of workers at the *Daily Mail* refusing to print a lying, strike-breaking editorial to leave the TUC negotiators standing alone in the dark outside Downing Street faced with the task of leading an all-out struggle against the government.

At this point the government's strike-breaking machinery came into operation. Telegrams were sent to all the regional civil commissioners set up under the government's preparations containing the single word 'Action'.

Those who received them knew what to do. Immediately all naval and military leave was cancelled. Troop reinforcements were moved into London and the main industrial centres and two battalions of infantry marched through Liverpool with steel helmets, rifles and full equipment.

### Battleships

The battleships *Ramillies* and *Barham* were recalled from the Atlantic fleet and anchored in the Mersey. Warships were also anchored in the Tyne, the Clyde and the Humber, and a at Bristol, Cardiff, Swansea, Barrow, Middlesbrough and Harwich.

The military were used for various purposes. They were sent out in plain clothes to infiltrate the strikers and report any evidence... of sedition and subversion.

They were also used in enormous numbers to break the very effective picketing of the London docks.

On Friday night, 7 May, scabs were moved into the docks from the river and the following morning 105 lorries moved out, containing food and armed soldiers and accompanied by armoured cars.

The reporter from the *New York World* thought that this activity was supported by 'enough artillery to kill every living thing in the neighbourhood'.

Over the week-end of 8-9 May, there were baton charges by police against crowds of strikers in many parts of London, in Plymouth, Swansea, Southsea, Nottingham, Middlesbrough, Newcastle and in Hull, where there were 25 arrests and 41 hospital admissions.

In York the crowd tried unsuccessfully to rescue an arrested striker from jail, and there were violent scenes over four or five nights in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

### Communist literature

Early the following week many hundreds of strikers were arrested, often for nothing more than possessing copies of Communist Party literature.

The government's *British Gazette*, edited by Winston Churchill, notified individual members of the forces on 7 May that:

"any action which they may find it necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the Civil Power will receive both now and afterwards the full support of His Majesty's government".

There are many other aspects of the events of those nine days which it would need an entire book to describe.

For example, there were the interminable and self-deceptive efforts of Thomas and the other union leaders to achieve a

'settlement' and there was the pathetic sight of the leaders of the most powerful action in the history of the British working class trooping to Downing Street on 12 May to announce their unconditional surrender.

But the great mass of workers showed a great deal more courage and inventiveness than this.

On 13 May, there were more of them on strike than on the day before, as they fought tenaciously against the efforts of their employers to victimise individuals or to deprive them of trade union conditions.

In this they were largely successful, despite being abandoned by their leaders.

The failure of the union leaders to prepare for the General Strike was closely linked to the methods they used to limit it once it got going.

Bevin of the TGWU was the strongest voice in the TUC's Organising Committee and he was determined that all effective decisions should be made by the unions themselves, even on a local level.

Jimmy Thomas said what he "dreaded about the struggle more than anything else" (including presumably defeat) was that power "should have got out of the hands of those who were able to exercise some control".



Baldwin

The activities of the union leaders during the strike simply sabotaged its effective operation.

At Wellingborough the Secretary of the Building Trades Federation went to a meeting where he found that:

"each affiliated secretary was on the platform with me, each with differently worded instructions".

The Swansea strike committee sent a message to the TUC on 8 May which said:

"Telegrams are being received at intervals, cancelling one another signed by leaders of different unions... is government concocting conflicting telegrams to mislead Strike Committee?"

Such a situation could not be allowed to continue, and although in some important centres such as Leeds rival strike committees continued in operation throughout the struggle, generally speaking local trade unionists pooled their resources, ignored their leaders, and set up joint bodies often under the title 'council of action' taken

over from earlier struggles.

Many of them then issued permits for the movement of goods. Most issued strike bulletins, against the wishes of the TUC.

Some set up defence squads or organised mass picketing, and as a result had little trouble from the strike-breaking authorities in their areas.

It remained a major fear of the union leaders, as Charles Dukes of the GMWU later explained to the TUC, that:

"Every day the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible Executives and into the hands of men of no authority, no control, no responsibility."

### Councils of action

The councils of action and local strike committees certainly won increasing power and authority within the working class movement during the General Strike, and they took on a range of tasks which the leaders of the movement simply tried to ignore.

There has often been a myth put forward about the councils of action, particularly by Stalinist authors that during the strike they 'exercised complete control over their areas' or even



Baldwin

'began to develop an embryo alternative centre of government'.

It is true that such possibilities were implicit in the situation. They might even be said to be grasped for by the striker in South London who shouted 'we are your masters now' after a blackleg bus.

But the possibilities did not become the reality because quite simply there was nobody at all there to point the way to develop beyond such possibilities. The struggle to build an alternative state power can in no way be carried through in a spontaneous way, without conscious leadership.

In order to explain this point it is necessary to go on to consider in some detail the activities of revolutionaries before and during the General Strike and the views of their activities that have been put forward since that time.

Continued next issue

# Stalinists spell out reformist strategy

TUC leader Len Murray's frank confession that he and his right wing colleagues "would not know what to do with the power" if a General Strike brought down the Tories has drawn out an equal confession of bankruptcy from the Communist Party.

In an editorial politely entitled "A word in your ear, Len" (March 20) the CP daily *Morning Star* offered Murray a few suggestions of what could be done—every one of which speaks volumes on the CP's nationalism and outright opposition to revolutionary socialism.

According to the *Star*, there is:

"no shortage of ideas among working people as to what they should do to counter the offensive against their rights and living standards currently in full swing at Mrs Thatcher's behest".

For many workers the anarchy and destruction of the capitalist crisis—of which the Thatcher government's policies are only a reflection—are leading for the first time to a recognition of the need for a socialist planned economy.

### Nationalist

Not so the Stalinists of the Communist Party. Far from socialist policies their first suggestion for the exercise of state power by the TUC is to erect nationalist import controls:

"The steelworkers... would no doubt be able to come up with some alternatives (even if expressed in colourful language) to the proposal by state-controlled BP to buy £7 million worth of steel pipes from Japan".

The message is clear: in the CP's view the first act of a workers' government in Britain should be to stick the boot into steelworkers in Japan!

A similar nationalist note is struck by the *Star's* suggestion that "the British people" should get out of the "Brussels rich man's club"—the Common Market.

Socialists make no such concessions to nationalism: they advocate a withdrawal from the EEC and from NATO as part of an internationalist policy designed to mobilise workers throughout Europe in the struggle to destroy these capitalist alliances and establish a socialist united states of Europe.

Yet the mass Communist Parties in France and Italy fully support the Common Market!

### Tinkering

Moreover socialists unlike the Stalinists recognise that the crisis of British capitalism cannot be resolved by a few tinkering reforms administered by a parliamentary Labour government—whether right wing or 'left'.

The *Morning Star*, committed to the reactionary perspective of Joseph Stalin's *British Road to Socialism*, argues precisely for parliamentary reforms as the road to prosperity. It argues for an end to unemployment not through nationalisation but through:

"boosting pay and benefits to create purchasing power for goods".

Why didn't either the Labour or Tory leaders think of that? If such solutions are available through capitalism itself

why has not a single capitalist government implemented such a strategy?

The answer is of course that it is a utopian schema that avoids the reality of the capitalist system—that the crisis revolves around the falling rate of profit, which can only be stemmed through the most ruthless rationalisation of capital and brutal attacks on the working class.

Undaunted by such facts, however, the *Star* blunders on, calling for import controls and, in a show of radicalism for:

"steps to control the power of the giant multinational companies which have been causing havoc to the economic and social fabric of the country..."

(emphasis added)

Whatever happened to the old Marxist call (dating back to the Communist Manifesto) for the "expropriation of the expropriators"—the nationalisation of major industry, banks and trusts without compensation under workers' management?

Whatever happened, to the call for a planned, socialist economy? Even in its occasional dreams of what it would do if given the power, the Communist Party has turned its back on such revolutionary demands: it is completely dedicated to a policy of piecemeal reforms.

To make this quite clear the article goes on to call for:

"expanding and adequately financing the public sector of industry". (emphasis added).

The private sector, we can therefore assume, will be left to cash in profitably on the "increased purchasing power for goods" created by the CP's programme of pay increases and of increased social security pay-

ments for the 1½ million unemployed.

Even these minimal demands are obviously unachievable under the Tories, the CP admits. But they are policies which the *Star* feels could be implemented not by a Communist government but by "a new kind of Labour government".

This Labour government is itself to be the product of the CP's "Parliamentary Road to Socialism". Workers must be mobilised, declares the *Star*, to "defeat the Tory attacks" and ensure that:

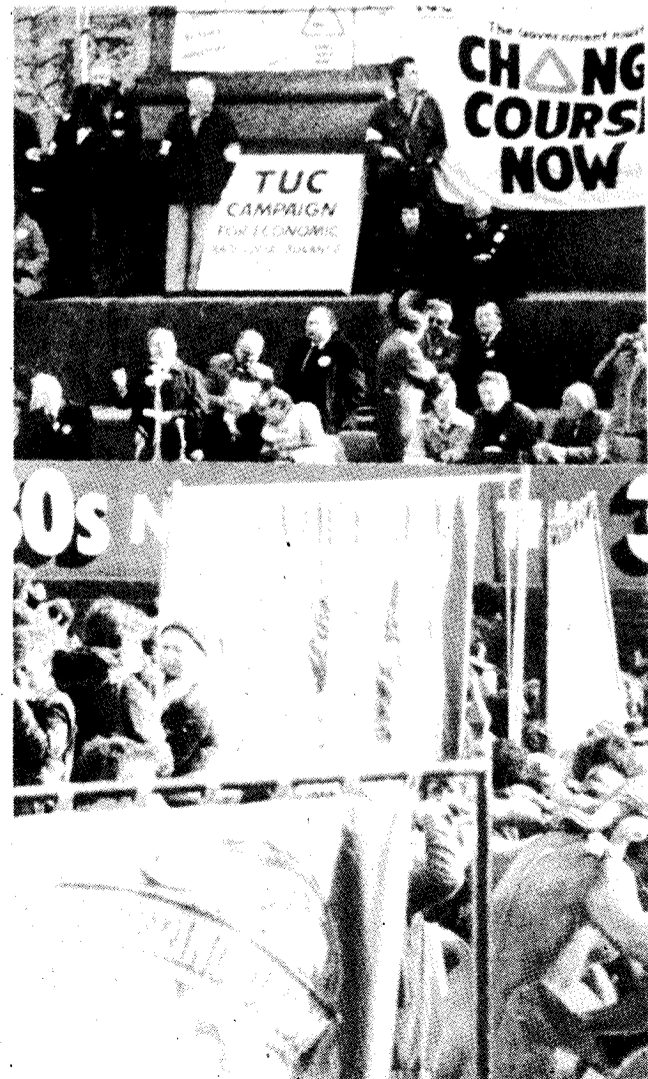
"a new Labour government fights on a left programme, wins an election and is then pressed to implement real change".

It is hard to believe that such rhetoric—considerably less rousing and militant than many speeches from the Tribune Group—comes from a party that waves the stolen banner of Communism.

In offering such sympathetic words in the ear of Len Murray, the CP run no risk of frightening him and thus upsetting their cosy working relationship with the trade union bureaucracy.

But they increasingly run the risk of alienating the already dwindling numbers of militant workers and youth who misguidedly look to the *Morning Star* and the CP as a revolutionary answer to their problems in the fight against the Tories.

Conspicuously the *Star* itself—like Murray—also refuses to make any call for an all-out General Strike to bring down the Tories: the political fight for such a perspective and for a socialist programme and a workers government falls now to Trotskyist revolutionaries in the labour movement.



TUC leaders on March 9 rally



TUC leaders on March 9 rally

# Scots' safety strike

280 boilermakers and 190 GMWU workers engaged in building an oil rig platform at Hunterston, Ayrshire, still remain suspended after four weeks by their employers, the Chicago Bridge Company.

The issues at stake are the totally inadequate safety arrangements on the site. On Tuesday last the management, after being lectured to by a representative of the Health and Safety Executive decided to give way to the men's demands and meet the safety requirements. But they then demanded that in return the shop stewards accept that the workers had been engaged in industrial action.

This would mean that they had broken their contracts and would forfeit holiday bonuses for the next six months.

The management also demanded that the compulsory working week be increased from 40 to 48 hours.

The stewards obviously could not agree to such demands and the workers remain suspended. Maximum solidarity with this dispute on the crucial question of safety is essential. A conference of representatives of workers in oil production and related industries is urgently needed to thrash out a programme on conditions and wages.

Messages of support and financial donations should be sent to: The Convenors Office, Ayrshire Marine Construction Site, Hunterston, Ayrshire.

# May 14: make it the start of real action

As more unions, under pressure from their membership to take action against the Tories, have called for a one-day strike on May 14, even TUC leader Len Murray has been forced to declare that:

"We want all the people out on that day that the unions can get out. We want the unions to encourage people to take the day off for purposes of protest."

For someone as reluctant as Murray to use the word "strike" this is probably as close as we are likely to come to hearing a call for all-out action on that day.

The TUC rejected a resolution from the NUR leadership asking it to instruct all trade unionists to stop work—arguing that such a call would conflict with the rules of some affiliated unions.

## Boilermakers

Yet already it is clear that with both the NUR and ASLEF pressuring the Transport and General Workers Union to join them in strike action, and with boilermakers and the print union SOGAT already pledged to strike action, public transport, shipbuilding and national daily papers will grind to a halt in what promises to be the

biggest strike movement since the 1926 General Strike.

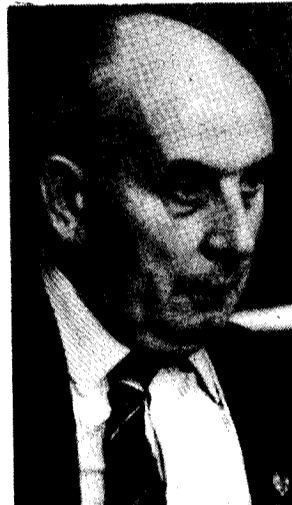
This is not the only parallel with 1926, however. The General Strike was ignominiously betrayed by the TUC leaders (see page 8): the 1980 May stoppage represents a move by today's TUC leaders to release the pent-up militancy of the membership and avoid the necessary call to indefinite General Strike action to bring down the Tory government.

## Anxious

As the *Financial Times* pointed out last week:

"Mr Murray was anxious to avoid any impression that the TUC was working for the government's downfall".

On the contrary the TUC leaders are as afraid as the Tories themselves of the emergence of a mass movement of



SOGAT leader Keyes

the organised working class in confrontation with this government.

Such a movement would jeopardise the bureaucratic control and privileges of the union officials, whose power rests on balancing between the strength of the workers and that of the employers.

## Beaten back

The fact that May 14—despite Murray's efforts—reach the proportions of a General Strike shows that the bureaucracy can be beaten back: in the next period it is necessary to push forward the fight for an alternative, revolutionary leadership and for all-out indefinite General Strike action to bring down the Tory government.



NUR leader Weighell

# JOIN THE WSL!

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.

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woman worker

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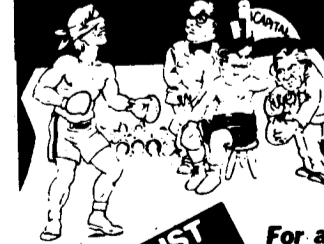
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# HOW WE FOUGHT OUR WAY INTO THE STRIKE

**Socialist Press:** When did you start picketing?

**EB:** Well we put our name down from day one—but let's put it this way, we've only been on the picket ten weeks.

**Socialist Press:** Why is that?

**EB:** At the beginning of the strike the office didn't want women involved.

**Socialist Press:** How did you get involved?

**EB:** Well first thing they said was that we could make sandwiches.

**AD:** Yes, that's all they thought we were good for!

**EB:** I just kept going down and saying you've got to get the women organised. I just kept asking what I could do. They just replied 'no women on the picket line'.

Then they gave me a job to do—to contact all the men on the picket lists who weren't on the telephone when they were needed for duty.

This was only after we had a meeting with some officials present who said under pressure if we could get organised we could have a small corner in the picket office to help them out.

Then I got the picket lists for my job and I found out the number of women who had put their names down for duty and were never called—so I called them all and we all went out to help out on the picket line at Hayden Nylos. There was a great response to that.

**AD:** It was Sheerness that really turned them.

**EB:** Oh yes, Sheerness. It was arranged that a group of women would go down the day after the mass picket to confront the 'back to work' women who were abusing our pickets.

But with persuading they changed their minds and we were allowed to go on the mass picket and that was the changing point.

They saw us stand our ground with the men as they kicked us up and down—and make no mistake those SPG can kick!

But we took it as good as the rest of them and after that the men accepted us, gave us picket duty the same as anyone else and now they've got me on the strike committee itself.

**Socialist Press:** What's the response to you now on the picket?

**ST:** Terrific—they've really

**Socialist Press interviews Sheffield steel pickets Enid Beever, Sylvia Taylor and Ann Dawson on the role of women on the picket lines in the steel strike.**

looked forward to us coming. It's changed their whole attitude to us as women, they take us on the level we are.

There's no chance of any of the fellas on the picket saying give up your job you're just a woman.

They wouldn't want to and wouldn't dare.

Mind you, there's still those 50% stuck at home instead of on the picket line, there's no accounting for them. They might still say it but if they try we'll turn around and say "we were on the picket line—where were you?"

**EB:** We had great discussions on the picket, matters that they never knew women thought about on politics.

Little things show they respect you as a woman but class you as one of them, like swearing: they've given up avoiding it because there's "ladies" present.

**Socialist Press:** Up to the strike what did you think of the leadership of the union?

**EB:** They never did now!

**ST:** They put up no fight at all in our valley to defend jobs—four departments of between 4-500 jobs were closed—stainless, umbrellas, light springs and bar and rod.

They were nearly all women's jobs. That many jobs in just one valley went with no fight at all—just sold down the river.

Now we're out fighting we're demanding to know why they never lifted a finger. The answers are pitiful.

They declare they just didn't know it was closing, and then they say "well anyway the members were willing to take redundancy."

Well we were but not till we'd done what little we thought we could.

We'd met Moss Evans at a function and told him about the closures: he told us not to worry about our jobs, just drop

him a line.

We did, but never heard any more.

Same with Benn.

**Socialist Press:** Have the leadership sold you out in other ways?

**EB:** Oh yes, they must have to have settled for the wages we've been getting all these years. They'd have settled for the 2% if they'd had their way.

**ST:** Another instance—we started a fight with the management on an equal pay issue—women only on half men's bonus for the same job.

We never won it of course—the company just turned around and said "You're too late: the union already signed for the bonus rates!"

The worst was the jobs. They said they wouldn't enforce redundancy but you know how it is.

Most got fed up, they were given no lead on how to fight and had had enough of working with broken down machinery and low pay.

Some were offered redeployment. I was. I wanted to fight the closures and I went up to my official and said: "I'm fighting for jobs for school kids."

He said "Why don't you give up your job—you don't need it, you're a woman!"

You'd get a lot of that too from the men you worked with. There's very few women in the union!

**EB:** That's hardly surprising. There's one local ISTC secretary in BSC who firmly holds the view women shouldn't work anyway.

There's no lead given by the officers to get women along to meetings—they won't stop you joining—they'll take your money all right; but they'll do nothing for you.

**Socialist Press:** Do you see this strike as just on wages?

**AD:** No definitely not, not from our point of view.

We see it as a fight on jobs—



a fight for the future of our country—not for today, but for tomorrow.

Sheffield is steel. If you don't have steel you don't have Sheffield.

Like South Wales, it links into everything—into BL and the motor industry. Close steel and you close the pits. Just look what will happen if they shut Corby and Bilston—whole towns will go.

It links in with the whole question of cuts. Why educate the kids to stand on the dole queue? So they cut the schools and we end up with a scrapheap society.

**Socialist Press:** What about the leadership through the strike?

**ST:** Make no mistake it's the rank and file not the leadership fighting this strike. The strike has only gone on so long because they aren't sell us down the river. But, eventually they'll try to do it.

**Socialist Press:** What do you think of Bill Sirs?

**AD:** We went to Swindon House to lobby—we stayed at the bottom of the stairs shouting 20%—no strings.

Sirs came down with his fingers in his ears, saying we were giving him a headache—ay and it's not the last headache he'll have!

**ST:** What gets me, how can a union leader also be a JP?

What happens when a picket comes up against him for breaking the law on the line?

**Socialist Press:** And Moss Evans?

**ST:** Ah well he thought he could play the big militant last year with the lorry drivers dispute and Fords—you know new broom sweeps clean.

But to us now he doesn't stand more than six inches high.

Him and Sirs could have won this strike in the first week if they'd brought out the private sector and had a working TGWU

directive stopping all lorries.

They're not supposed to have issued any local dispensations and look what's happening. What do you do? We've been stuck out now 13½ weeks to get Thatcher and we've had to go the whole thing alone.

**Socialist Press:** What do you think of the strike call at BL?

**ST:** A bit bloody late!  
**AD:** It would have been better if they'd come out week one with us. The way we look upon it they'll try and make bloody sure we're back by the time they come out.

But we've had to go it alone. Can't they see if the Tories break us they've broken everyone's back?

## ASTMS DO-NOTHING DISPLAY

With their members in the Health Service increasingly demanding union action to oppose spending cuts and defend jobs and standards, the rightward-moving ASTMS bureaucracy last week tried to siphon off militancy by holding a stage-managed "conference" on the NHS.

It took place, appropriately enough, at London Zoo.

To ensure the NHS members did not have too much say the bureaucracy brought along twice as many non-NHS members as NHS members, and packed the platform with "left" MPs and union officials to ensure that there was virtually no time for discussion.

Clive Jenkins introduced the conference and set the tone by saying that the Tory government could only be brought down by a split from within its own ranks.



Jenkins



Orme

Our task was simply to campaign for the next Labour government to give more priority to the NHS.

Jenkins did admit that "resources applied by the last government were not enough" but called only for "a firm commitment" from the Labour

Party. The task of the conference, declared Jenkins, was to think about what policy to employ.

Stan Orme MP, the shadow minister for health followed with a tub thumping attack on the Tories—but also managed to say there should be no action

from NHS employees.

He was followed by Norman Willis, the Deputy General Secretary of the TUC, who has the same inability to speak as all top TUC bureaucrats.

Willis hoped that the points he lost in muddled speaking would be made up for in his sincerity.

But as one delegate from Yorkshire said: "I didn't travel 200 miles to find out the heart of the Deputy General Secretary of the TUC is in the right place. It bloody well ought to be!"

Lunch was then laid on—with wine and lots of other alcohol liberally provided at a cost of over £6 per head in a move designed to make coherent discussion even more difficult and keep high living bureaucrats around for the afternoon session!

The final platform speaker was Stalinist Red Bird, ASTMS National Officer responsible for the NHS.

He at last mentioned what

he thought were the practical ideas of what members should do. They were:

\*unremitting political pressure on Conservative MPs.

\*Look at our relations with Community Health Councils.

\*Get CATC and Regional TUCs to see how the trade union movement relates to AHA and RHAs and the trade union members on them.

\*Give moral and practical support to NHS members.

\*Write to the press—particularly if you are in the NHS.

\*Get active in local politics.

There was—at last—time for discussion. Many speakers stressed the need not to rely on the Labour Party and pointed to what the last Labour government did.

Others asked why we should wait four years before doing anything. One delegate—a Socialist Press supporter—reminded the conference of ASTMS policy for the NHS as adopted at Annual Delegates Conference five years ago which

is:

\*Reversal of all cuts.  
\*Cash injection of £1,000 million into the NHS.

\*NHS financing to increase with inflation.

\*Elected trade union committees to look into the day to day running of the Area and Regional Health Authorities.

\*The abolition of all private medicine.

The response of the platform to this challenge was to totally ignore everything said by that speaker—who had also called for a national conference of the ASTMS NHS members to discuss the various disputes the para-medical staff are involved in as well as the cuts.

Other questions were "answered" by going round in circles—but the question of policy and getting the NHS members together was totally and obviously ignored.

The jamboree was then closed and the platform speakers left—probably returning to the reptile house at the Zoo.

# SOCIALIST PRESS ★

## EL SALVADOR: U.S. READY TO SLAUGHTER LEFT WINGERS

Last week's assassination of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero by right-wing terrorists was reputed in the bourgeois press to have taken the 'centre' out of Salvadorean politics.

In a fit of collective amnesia the 'serious' papers omit to say that Romero, despite his past as a reactionary cleric and his continued denunciations of violence, had been forced by events to side with the left, to denounce the junta, to exhort soldiers to disobey orders 'contrary to their conscience' and support "the struggle for liberty".

Romero was liquidated precisely because the 'centre' had long disappeared and he, more than anyone else, embodied the radicalisation of the petty bourgeoisie as class conflict polarises and El Salvador reaches the edge of full-scale civil war.

### Insurrection

In killing the prelate the right aimed to provoke the Popular Revolutionary Coordinating Committee (an alliance of the leftist mass organisations—BPR; FAPU; L-28 and the UDN) into calling for an immediate insurrection, enabling the army to unleash its long awaited pogrom—its "pinochetazo"—and physically exterminate the left.

One small but critically important step along this path occurred last Friday when rightists gunned down Juan Chacon, general secretary of the 70,000-strong Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR).



American demonstrators in solidarity with struggles in El Salvador

Chacon, one of the prime movers behind the *Coordinadora*, was recognised as a staunch opponent of the adventurism of the left, and one of the strongest advocates of the strategy of 'prolonged people's war'.

Chacon was by no means a Trotskyist; influenced by the FSLN and the BPR's strong peasant base, his politics were those of petty bourgeois radicalism.

But there is no doubt that his personal bravery and commitment to the struggle against imperialism deserves the respect of all revolutionaries.

Despite the death of over a hundred people last week and constant troop movements there

has been no call for an uprising.

The *Coordinadora* has instead declared itself on a "war footing" and brought its 300,000 union members out on an 8-day general strike.

### Mobilise

This political action, like the general strike of March 17 in which 150 workers lost their lives, is intended to further mobilise the proletariat of San Salvador while the left builds up its military strength for the impending war.

While Cyrus Vance—with nauseating false piety—repudiates the slaughter of Romero (in fact Vance is one of those primarily responsible for this

and countless other killings in the country), the imperialists are pouring in military aid to the Junta long before the official credits of \$7 million receive the formal support of Congress.

Shiny new tanks are much in evidence in the city and US mobile training teams (MTTs) continue to direct the 'white terror' ('agrarian reform') in the countryside.

Even the Sunday papers have now felt constrained to make nervous references to Vietnam.

### Cuban arms?

Washington has attacked Cuba for shipping arms to the left through Honduras—but the Junta itself has denied this, and there is little evidence that Castro has performed this elementary internationalist task.

Equally the FSLN leadership, which itself received minimal military support from the Cuban Stalinists, is making only verbal gestures of support despite reported pressure on it by the rank and file.

### Lose control

It is clear that should imperialism lose control over El Salvador as well as Nicaragua it would face a major oppositional bloc in Central America and the likelihood of insurrection in Guatemala and Honduras.

This scenario is so utterly repugnant to the "domino theorists" of Washington that they will bathe El Salvador in blood before looking over their shoulders to see the shade of SE Asia.

## "Troops out" call from Labour CLPs

A recent measure of the continuing leftward shift inside the Constituency Labour Parties could be felt at the Conference held by the Labour Committee on Ireland.

Held in Islington on Saturday 29 March, the conference attracted delegates from 43 CLPs and other visitors.

Jock Stallard MP led the discussion with particular reference to the 1921 Labour Party Commission on Ireland which recommended a clear, self-determination position (long since abandoned for Tory policies of imperialist brutality).

Stallard correctly pointed out the massive discrepancy, not to say hypocrisy, that has separated Labour policy on say Guatemala from that on Ireland.

The 1921 policy followed on from the policies of self-determination accepted a year earlier by the Independent Labour Party, and the Scottish TUC, and achieved by mass campaigning.

### Troops out

This led to even the Parliamentary Labour Party demanding troops out and for a Constituent Assembly. "The current PLP must take such a stance", demanded Stallard.

In the ensuing debate, a *Socialist Press* supporter took issue with such a perspective.

"The Labour Party is already committed to Clause Four and all kinds of wonderful things in principle, but never in practice. This is not a question of developing and updating Labour's policies, but involves making a complete break with its anti-socialist and imperialist record.

"Mr Callaghan at election meetings, refused to discuss Ireland and accused hecklers of being paid to disrupt".

### Sanction busting

He reminded delegates of the record of sanction-busting in Rhodesia, supporting the Shah of Iran and in Ireland its removal of political status for political prisoners, its concentration camps, Diplock Courts, torture, murder, censorship and computer files, etc.

"It is a question of identifying with the oppressors or the oppressed: it is crucial that we fight for troops out now", he stressed.

In summing up, Stallard claimed to support the 'troops out now' demand, but argued that the conference had to initiate a debate and be sophisticated enough to agree to just one resolution, and therefore settle for a "policy of withdrawal".

When the issue was raised in the form of amendments to the LCI Draft Statement of Aims and then the Draft Model Resol-

ution for the 1980 Labour Party Conference, Stallard's position was emphatically endorsed by various delegates including all the speakers from the Troops Out Movement.

"We must campaign on what we can win!" exhorted one delegate from Battersea North CLP to the TOM's explicit approval.

However in the vote on the Draft Statement of Aims, the 'troops out now' position was won by 38 votes to 31. [Only Labour Party members were allowed to vote].

### Lost

But the same policy was lost on the vote for the Model Conference Resolution by a wider margin.

With other agreed amendments the LCI Statement of Aims concluded with the following demands:

\*A break with bipartisan-

ship.

\*An end to partition.

\*Greater understanding of the views of Irish labour.

\*A policy and commitment by the next Labour government to the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all military and economic involvement in Ireland.

\*Opposition to the policy of criminalisation of Irish political prisoners, and support for their campaign for political status. Opposition to repressive legislation measures like the PTA.

This conference represents an historic turning point on the question of Ireland within social democracy, and the massive political gains made against imperialism must be brought home to every section of the labour movement.

Particularly, Labour Party GMC's must endorse the campaign with resolutions for next Labour Party Conference.

\*Troops out now!

### NOW OUT



WSL pamphlet on the situation in Turkey. Available, price 30p including p&p, from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1V 6XX.

## Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

### Public meeting

Saturday 12 April at 2.30

\*For a full discussion on the crisis of the world Trotskyist movement.

\*Reconstruct the Fourth International!

Speakers from the WSL and TILC sections

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