

workers' ACTION

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LAST SUNDAY, June 4th, over 200 Ford shop stewards from all the company's British plants met in Coventry to draw up this year's pay claim, due for introduction on October 21st.

The main elements of the claim, as so far published, are a 25% pay rise, involving a minimum weekly increase of £20; a 35 hour week; 'improved holiday and sick pay, and better lay-off arrangements'.

After the Conference, Bernard Passingham, secretary of the Ford national shop stewards' committee, was quoted as saying: "In this country we have slipped to the bottom of the car workers' wage league table. We are still the cheapest Ford workers almost everywhere. Our claim is standing on its own merit and is in no way influenced by outside bodies".

Profits

This year Ford has announced massive pre-tax profits of £246 million in 1977. They have a full order book and long waiting lists for their major cars.

They were greatly helped by getting through last year's pay negotiations without a fight. With backing from the union leadership, the 12% final offer was accepted.

With the exception of Halewood at the beginning of this year, Ford bosses have not been faced with major workers' struggles over the year. And they have managed to victimise some militant stewards at the Dagenham Body Plant.

But a good year for Ford bosses means continued pressure on Ford workers. The inadequacy of last year's 12% deal has become increasingly obvious.

It did little to bring parity with Ford workers on the Continent doing the same work. It did nothing about getting back the 25% loss in real wages that Ford workers had suffered since 1974. It has not even allowed wages to hold their own against inflation over the last year.

Losses

These points were rubbed in by the announcement of Ford's profits and an 80% wage rise for Terry Beckett, chairman and managing director of Ford UK.

For his services to the bosses, the Labour Government gave Beckett a knighthood last week; for the workers they have promised another round of wage controls.

The present 25% wage claim reflects the pressure that has built up. If won in full, it will represent an important step to make up the

Fords

A claim to blast through Phase 4

losses.

It still would not make good the full loss since 1974. There is no reason to think that given a strong lead by the stewards the workforce would not be prepared to fight for making up all that has been lost and making sure that the new claim is inflation-proofed.

In last year's claim, there was an attempt to deal with the problem of future inflation by demanding a cost of living rise. The particular demand

was inadequate and in any case quickly dropped, but the general idea was a good one.

Lay-off

There should be a guarantee that wages will not be cut by inflation: £1 wage increase, automatically, for every 1% rise in the cost of living.

Money, however, is not the only important element in the claim. Of equal importance are the questions of hours and lay-offs. A 35 hour week would represent a massive improvement in conditions, as well as creating 3300 more jobs.

For too long management have treated Ford workers almost like casual labour — to be sent home when they want, usually without money. The demand for 100% lay-off pay,

in all situations, is a long-standing one. It needs to be won this year.

Last year the government and the company slid out of a confrontation over pay and offered 2% over the wage limit on the pretext that Ford was opening a big new works. While the stewards did not officially accept the offer, they organised no resistance.

Militancy

The militancy that will be needed to win the claim was not lacking in words after the Coventry Conference. Any attempt at wage restraint, whether by the Government or the TUC, was rejected; industrial action was mentioned if the negotiations weren't 'up to expectations'; and provision was made for a recall national shop stewards' conference before any deal could be accepted.

But with previous Ford claims, militant words have usually not been backed by militant action. Last year, there was no preparation and organisation to fight for the

Save Hugo Blanco!

Peru deports 12 to Argentina

THE LIVES of Hugo Blanco, a leading Peruvian Trotskyist, and eleven other opponents of the military regime in Peru, are in grave danger.

The twelve were arrested,

along with about two thousand others, when the military rulers launched a huge clampdown at the end of May, suspended all democratic rights, and called off the scheduled elections. The aim of the clampdown was to counter a general strike against price increases.

Now the twelve have been deported to Argentina, and are being held near the small town of Jujuy in the north of Argentina. Since something like 4,000 oppositionists have been killed since the army seized power in Argentina, another 15,000 are missing and unaccounted for, and dozens of well-known political figures have been shot down in Argentina by unofficial murder squads, the prisoners are in grave danger.

Blanco has appealed to the Swedish government for political asylum (his wife and his child are Swedish citizens), but has had no positive response.

In Britain a protest petition has been signed by a number of trade union leaders and MPs. The Committee for Human Rights in Peru (c/o Basement Flat, 24 Powis Square, London W1) is also pressing the demand that the British government should offer asylum to the twelve.



Hugo Blanco



Dagenham on strike over lay-off pay, 1977

continued back page

BOB FINE looks at the economic interests behind the search for a settlement in Zimbabwe [Rhodesia].

In 1976 there was over £1000 million of foreign investment in mining, agriculture and industrial production in Zimbabwe — double the 1965 UDI figure.

It is mammoth British companies like Lonrho and RTZ, American companies like Foote Minerals and Union Carbide, and, increasingly, South African companies, like Anglo-American, Hulett and Barlow Rand who are raking off the profits. GEC and ICI are there as well as the state-owned British Leyland and British Steel.

They are all there to take advantage of Zimbabwe's 'favourable' economic climate: a black population largely pushed out of the fertile land and forced into starvation-level subsistence farming in the Tribal Trust Lands, or into low-wage employment.

It is not only profit-making in Zimbabwe, but political stability for capitalism throughout Southern Africa, which concerns the British, US and South African governments

Zimbabwe: the dollars behind the deals

in their search for a settlement. Both the 'Internal Settlement' and the Anglo-American proposals rest on building up a pro-imperialist black middle class. The Anglo-American scheme includes a plan for a Zimbabwe Development Fund, to "insure the economic stability of Rhodesia in a transitional period".

Lures

The Fund would gather together about two billion dollars worth of American and British money, and use it to offer credit to Blacks for farms and businesses; to buy up land owned but not used by white farmers and distribute it to private black land-owners;

to reassure the whites with pension rights, compensation and other lures; and to increase capital investment in the major areas of production.

Dr Ian Hume, formerly of the World Bank, now of the Whitsun Foundation, plans to join "the best of socialism with the best of capitalism" by offering credit aid to expand commercial farming among Black private farmers, with one or two state-run enterprises thrown in for good "socialist" measure.

Meanwhile, Tiny Rowlands of Lonrho, with one million acres of forest and ranch land at stake, has launched the Zimbabwe Times for black readers, and offers largesse to Nkomo, to Sithole and to Kaunda. RTZ has appointed a prominent Black business-

man, Solomon Tawengura, to the Board of Directors.

Both in the internal settlement and in the Anglo-American proposals, the existing bureaucratic, military and judicial apparatuses of the state are to be preserved in the name of 'independence of the judiciary, public service and the security force'; in both cases existing property rights are guaranteed.

In both cases the repressive legal apparatus is preserved — with its Emergency Powers Act allowing detention without trial, indiscriminate curfews, curtailment of the press and forced movements of people; and its Indemnity and Compensation Act, granting immunity to all 'public employees' for any harm done 'in good faith' to combat 'terrorism'.

Neither proposes repealing of the Land Tenure Act, a fundamental instrument for the exploitation and expropriation of the Black workers and peasants.

Both schemes propose a dictatorial transition government. At present it is the interim government organised by Smith, with Chirau, Muzorewa, and Sithole as black stooges; under the Anglo-American plan, Zimbabwe would be ruled by Field Marshal Carver, a veteran of the bloody suppression of the Mau-Mau nationalist fighters in Kenya.

The Anglo-American proposals and the Internal Settlement do, however, have differences. The Internal Settlement makes less concessions for the sake of building up a black middle class.

This was shown clearly when

Minister Byron Hove was sacked for recommending rapid admission of blacks into the security forces. The Anglo-American proposals have more regard for abolishing the formal trappings of racism and less regard for the lower echelons of the white power block. They concede equal voting rights, though they would exclude the most militant core if the nationalist movements by allowing votes only to people over 21.

The Internal Settlement entrenches the privileges of the white settlers by establishing separate racial voting roles. There will be 28 parliamentary seats for whites, 72 for blacks and it will take 78 votes to amend any of the 'entrenched clauses' of the constitution.

The Internal Settlement is based on a formal, explicit maintenance of racial privilege. The main reason why Britain and the US have rejected the Internal Settlement is that the Patriotic Front opposes it. Their simple, and probably correct, calculation is that without Patriotic Front cooperation the settlement will not be able to achieve stability.

Bills

There are plenty of signs that the Patriotic Front leadership are willing to give cooperation to the US and Britain.

Joshua Nkomo is equivocating on the land question, has Lonrho pay his hotel bills and his economic and legal consultants, and makes no determined effort to relieve the hammering taken by Mugabe's forces.

But we should not underestimate the problems for imperialism. The Patriotic front alliance so far stands firm, the militant nationalist movements in all of Southern Africa have gained a lot of strength and the interests of the settler whites and those of imperialism are not identical. All that is desirable for capital is not always possible.



Middle East: the masses still pay the cost

THE FAILURE of the political theatricals by Egypt's President Sadat last year in Israel is complete. But the costs are still to be counted.

For Sadat it meant taking a big blow to his political reputation and giving his opponents a weapon with which to attack him. For Ezer Weizman, would-be successor to Israel's Prime Minister Begin, it meant running the risk of losing the support of the most hard-line traditional supporters of the ruling Likud bloc.

Sadat's way out has been to put a referendum before the Egyptian people, rig it, and, on the basis of the rigged results, outlaw all opposition. Even the *Economist*, which backs Sadat, had to admit that "his claim that 85.2% of Egyptian voters turned out for Sunday's referendum to record a resounding 97.82% 'yes' did enough harm on its own. The bare trickle of people who went to the Cairo polling stations suggested a turnout of nearer 20%".

Sadat will use the new powers the referendum gives him directly against the left and indirectly against the reformed Wafd. This traditional party of the Egyptian bourgeoisie, Sadat hopes, will now be too scared to act.

Weizman has made a bid to restore his credit with Likud supporters. There are constant rumours that Begin has not got long to go, and a fight for the suc-

cession has already been started by General Sharon.

Realising that he is 'tainted' in the eyes of the hardliners as a conciliator who is ready to drop further ambitions for Israeli territorial expansion, Weizman has come up with the biggest West Bank settlement plan yet heard of.

While Sharon has championed the small settlements established by the religious zealots of the Gush Emunim against Weizman, the latter has announced a plan for settling 8,000 acres of Arab land with 32,000 Israeli settlers.

The plan envisages setting up six towns on land 'vacated' by Arabs who fled Israel in 1948. The land is presently held by the military government.

Once again it is the Arab masses who are the immediate victims of what is called 'Middle East peace making'.



AFTER THE Vietnamese-Cambodian border war, an open battle of words has started between Vietnam and China.

China supported Cambodia in the border dispute. Another cause for conflict is that the Vietnamese CP has tried to steer a middle line between Moscow and Peking, and now, with Peking's hostility to Moscow having become sharper, it is aligning itself more with the USSR.

On May 24th the Chinese government issued a statement claiming that over 80,000 out of Vietnam's 1.2 million Chinese population had fled to China. In Vietnam the Chinese were being persecuted.

China has also cut back technical aid to Vietnam.

The Vietnamese government has said that the allegations of persecution are false, and that

80,000 Chinese flee from Vietnam

the Chinese are fleeing just because of China's propaganda.

To know the exact truth is impossible, since the Stalinist-type state systems in both countries make reliable political information unobtainable. Nevertheless it seems that the flight of the Chinese must be connected with recent Vietnamese government moves to restrict private trading in the south, the bulk of which was Chinese-controlled.

After American imperialism was thrown out in 1975, the new revolutionary regime was at first cautious and liberal in dealing with private enterprise. Early this year, however, they apparently became convinced that "so long as it [the private sector] exists, the reorganisation of agriculture and handicrafts along the socialist line will be very difficult. Similarly, as long as capitalist trade survives, it will be impossible to build a strong socialist trade".

It was necessary to "put an end to the corrupt practice of cadres and State personnel colluding with dishonest people in the theft of public property for sale on the free market of goods which they are charged with distributing, thus disrupting prices..."

Thus between March and May 30,000 small businesses were

closed down and a new currency was introduced, with an upper limit on the amount of cash that anyone could change from the old currency into the new. Compensation was paid for the small businesses taken over by the state — but only for stock for which the owners could produce valid receipts.

Since many businessmen had got a large part of their stock illegally, they got little compensation.

And they have been told they will be sent to the countryside to work on the land.

While hostility to the Chinese is traditional in Vietnam, these economic measures on their own could be sufficient to explain the flight to China.

The measures are probably not wise economically. The experience of the Stalinist states shows that such suppression of private trading, in conditions where the economy is not sufficiently developed to make state trading efficient and adequate, leads to black markets and the reappearance of corruption in different forms.

A democratic workers' state in a backward country could retain large areas of private business under the vigilant eye of workers' control. But the Vietnamese bureaucracy dare not appeal to workers' control. They are left only with the choice between two types of corruption.

Hunger strike for Chile

AN INTERNATIONAL hunger strike has been launched by the Chilean Resistance since May 22nd. Over 800 people are taking part, 250 of them in Chile itself.

In Britain, hunger strikes are now taking place in Glasgow, Stirling, Dundee, Edinburgh,

Liverpool, Manchester and London. The hunger strikers are demanding that the Pinochet junta reveals the whereabouts of 2,500 'disappeared persons' who have been arrested by the Chilean security forces and from whom no word has been heard since then.

Is Labour the conservative party now?

MARGARET Thatcher "is that very rare beast, an ideological Tory..."

"The importance of this has not been lost on Jim Callaghan. If she is an idealist, then she must concede the image of the 'practical and down-to-earth' party to Labour. If she is a radical, she must concede that Labour is the party of moderation and stability".

That is Martin Linton's conclusion in an article in this week's *Labour Weekly*: 'Tory Dreams Turn Sour'.

It is as the party of 'moderation and stability' — conservatism with a small 'c' — that Labour has made its recent comeback at the polls. Labour is gaining from the slight thaw in the economic

climate, as all conservative (small 'c') parties tend to gain when the established system seems to be doing better.

Thus the Labour gains at the polls can give little joy to working-class activists.

The economic thaw is very slight and will probably be short-lived. Far from the Labour government's policies setting Britain's economy straight, Britain has been later in recovering from recession than most of the advanced capitalist countries. The next capitalist world economic downturn will drag Britain down again before long.

But more fundamentally, when has socialism ever been about 'moderation and

stability' in running capitalism?

It is not because of Margaret Thatcher's personality that Labour appear as the conservatives and the Tories as the radicals.

Capitalism in crisis needs to push back the working class. The Labour leaders intend to do this by the conservative, stealthy methods of class collaboration. The Tories, lacking both the restraints and the advantages of Labour's connections with the unions, prefer a slightly more forthright approach.

The 'conservative' policy may appear to be a 'lesser evil' — but even that is doubtful. Since 1970 it has been more effective than confrontation in pushing



back the working class.

On the side of the working class, only the despondent and completely demoralised can resign themselves to counting the feeble and doubtful blessings of Labour conservatism. That is why **Workers' Action** is taking part in launching a **Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory**.

The campaign's watch-

words will be:

- ★ Vote Labour
- ★ Condemn the government's record
- ★ Prepare at rank and file level for the fight-back against the next government — Tory or Labour.
- ★ Impose working-class, anti-capitalist answers to the crisis, instead of allowing the bosses to make us pay the cost of their system's sickness.

■ ■ 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory': conference to be held in London on 15th July [changed from the 8th because of a clash with the Anti-Nazi League conference]. Details from WA [Campaign], Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.

Inquiry exposes Britain's Gulag

A PUBLIC INQUIRY held recently in Liberty Hall, Dublin, showed that Irish Republican prisoners are still facing torture, ill-treatment, and abuse in Northern Ireland, in Britain, and in southern Ireland too.

The worst conditions are in 'H' block, Long Kesh. There (and in Crumlin Road prison, Belfast, and Armagh Jail) 300 Republicans are refusing to wear prison clothing in protest against the denial of political status.

They are denied all prisoners' privileges and have only blankets to cover themselves. This has been going on for two years now.

Mrs Bradley of Turf Lodge, Belfast, described a visit to her son John.

"I was horrified at his physical appearance... His hands were trembling, his eyes were sunken and he could not bear to look at the daylight, his skin

was very pale and flakey... He does not get any exercise or fresh air...

"He... told me the screws hosed him down at 1.30am in the morning when he and his cell mate were trying to get some sleep on the floor. They used a very strong disinfectant which left them temporarily blind... They were also violently sick..."

"I am proud of him and all his comrades".

THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH ARMY IN IRELAND

Conference organised by the United Troops Out Movement.

Saturday 10 June, from 9.45am at Acklam Hall, Acklam Rd, London W11.

Also notorious is Castle-reagh RUC interrogation centre near Belfast. Brian Maguire died there on 10th May: according to the RUC he hanged himself. Beatings and degrading treatment have been reported from Castlereagh time and time again.

The inquiry head the case of Tom McAllister. he was shot in the leg and the base of his spine by a RUC patrol on 28th March. After five weeks in hospital, he was taken to Castlereagh, though his left leg is still in plaster and his right side paralysed.

His mother claims that McAllister was put sitting in a chair which his interrogators kicked from behind every now and again, thus jolting the injured spine and increasing the risk of permanent paralysis.

Since then he has been moved to Crumlin Road prison. The prison infirmary

cannot provide the necessary treatment, but doctors have said that without it he will be permanently crippled. He is also in terrible pain. He has been convicted of no crime.

In Britain there are 82 people in prison for their part in the struggle to end Britain's grip on Ireland. Solicitor Alastair Logan told the inquiry:

"Assaults on Irish political prisoners by prison staff are a common occurrence and being placed in solitary confinement not less so. The British government is purposeful in this victimisation and isolation..."

"Despite denials the authorities still use the special control units, supposedly closed in 1976 following public outcry. These units are, in effect, sensory deprivation cells where the prisoner is totally isolated from the outside world in a small cramped space, windowless, with white painted walls, under 24-hour constant electric light..."

One man spent 13½ months under such conditions..."

The southern Ireland authorities have joined the British government and the Northern Ireland police in their efforts to beat down the Republican movement. Former prisoners from Portlaoise jail made special mention of the disruption and cutting short of prison visits, and the repeated humiliating strip searches.

"The revolting practice of strip searching is carried out not in the interests of security, but rather as a form of degrading punishment. It must also dehumanise the searcher".

One man was strip-search-

ed six times in 24 hours while he was in solitary confinement.

At a conference after the inquiry, speakers pointed out that this brutality exists because it is the only way that the partitioned-off Northern Ireland statelet could be maintained against the opposition of the oppressed 35% nationalist minority.

The inquiry declared that the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland was a necessary condition for ending the brutality.

The official response to the inquiry from the Northern Ireland office was "no comment". In place of comment, the British authorities held one member of the inquiry panel at Heathrow Airport on his way home to Spain, and interrogated him for 1½ hours. Juan Maria Bandres, a lawyer and a Senator in the Spanish parliament, also lost his suitcase (with documents from the inquiry) and suspects it was seized by the British authorities.



The United Troops Out Movement organised a picket outside the Birmingham Evening Mail in support of Irish political prisoners, on Saturday 27th. Photo: Birmingham Photographic Workshop.

PNP-Y: STOP LICKING MANLEY'S BOOTS

THIS WEEKEND (10th-11th) the national conference of the British youth section of the Jamaican People's National Party will take place in Birmingham.

In Jamaica, the PNP is the ruling party, led by premier Michael Manley. But in Britain the PNP Youth is dominated by the 'Militant' tendency which leads the Labour Party Young Socialists. And 'Militant' see it essentially as a conduit for black youth into the Labour Party and the LPYS.

This attitude, and 'Militant's' customary boot-licking deference to Michael Manley and the PNP government in Jamaica, have produced an angry reaction on the part of some PNP Youth members.

They will be putting forward

three principal demands. That the PNP-Y change its name, that the group distance itself from Manley, and that it should work for the development of a black political party independent of the official labour movement.

The question of the change in name is not just a matter of changing a few words. All the different issues are really concentrated in this one.

The opponents of the current PNP Youth line see the Jamaican nationalist appeal of the PNP as too restrictive. Instead they want a name for a movement which organises black working class youth for anti-capitalist struggle here and now in Britain.

The positive features of the PNP-Youth, which have help-

ed it to grow fast, are a definitely socialist, working-class approach, contrasted to narrow 'separatist' views. But the 'Militant' tendency want to subordinate the militancy of revolutionary-minded black youth directly to the sluggish official labour movement, and indirectly to Manley's bourgeois nationalism.

They will argue, correctly, against the principle of racial separation for working-class parties in Britain. If, however, 'Militant' manage to keep the same deadening grip over a section of combative black youth as they have over the majority of the LPYS, then they will end up fuelling the urge to separation.



Bandres: Spanish MP grilled at Heathrow after taking part in inquiry.

RUDOLF BAHRO's book "Die Alternative" (to be published in English translation later this year) is the most ambitious attempt at a Marxist theoretical explanation of the Stalinist states yet to come from the growing communist opposition within those states. The review of Bahro's book which we publish here is translated from the West German Trotskyist paper "Spartacus" (October 1977), and slightly abridged.

After expressing its solidarity with Bahro in face of the East German bureaucracy's repression — he is shortly to go on trial — the review outlines Bahro's argument...

Rudolf Bahro's book is divided into three main sections: [1] "The phenomenon of the non-capitalist road to an industrial society"; [2] "The anatomy of real existing socialism"; and [3] "The strategy of a communist alternative".

Bahro's basic argument goes like this: the starting point is the assertion that so-called 'real existing socialism' is not in a position to solve any of the problems of humanity, and that this 'socialism' has nothing in common with the social order sketched out by Marx in his socialist theory.

"What kind of a better life was it that we wanted to create? Was it simply that mediocre prosperity, in itself perspectiveless, with which we so unsuccessfully attempt to catch up with late capitalism, and overtake it on the road which leads, according to all our traditional convictions, into the abyss? We wanted to create a different, higher civilisation! A new civilisation which is more necessary today than ever before and whose outline has nothing to do with the illusion of a 'perfect society' without contradictions. In the meantime it has become clear that we are building a copy of the old civilisation..."

The new order does not even guarantee peace, which is "not to be confused with the 'balance of deterrence' in whose further reproduction it is actively participating."

'Real existing socialism', Bahro goes on to say, is a non-capitalist society ruled by a bureaucratic state apparatus. This bureaucratic state apparatus rules all life in society, having control over production and the distribution of the surplus product (not surplus value!) ("1). This bureaucratic system has, in the course of time (!), become a political organisation of officialdom, an anachronism which prevents the real development of the new society by breaking the

The communist movement exists only if in its daily practice it overthrows something of the existing conditions and brings general emancipation, and real equality and freedom, noticeably closer. Those who only reproduce what exists and defend it with terror against any progressive criticism are neither objectively nor subjectively communists, whatever doctrine they lay claim to. The ruling party apparatus has as little in common with communism as the Grand Inquisitor with Jesus Christ.

impetus of its social motive forces.

Bahro demands that an end is put to this bureaucratic system in order to develop society further as a free 'association of communes'.

However, according to Bahro, this bureaucratic state apparatus was necessary and progressive in the Soviet Union for carrying out industrialisation. Thus the October revolution was not a "substitute for the proletarian revolution" but an "anti-imperialist revolution for industrialisation."

The socialist movement in Russia fulfilled a different objective role from what it subjectively believed. At stake was not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but industrialisation.

And so the Soviet Union had to put an end to the workers' councils. All the party struggles were nothing but the birth pains of despotism. The coercive apparatus was necessary. Only now, after industrialisation, is the political structure of the Soviet Union outdated. The bureaucracy has become an economic burden and must be removed.

The "non-capitalist road" is necessary, according to Bahro, for all "pre-industrial nations", and must have a forced character until the completion of industrialisation. Cultural progress and industrialisation demand a despotic state power.

The origins of the "non-capitalist road" are found in the leftovers of the so-called "Asiatic mode of production" ("2). The Asiatic mode of production is important to Bahro's theory in two respects.

Firstly he maintains a structural

relationship between early Asiatic despotisms and "real existing socialism": "For in its classical highest form, as economic despotism in old Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China and Peru, the Asiatic mode of production — the form of the transition to early class society — shows an illuminating structural relationship to our epoch of the ending of class society... Nationalised, no-longer-communal and, on the other hand, not-yet-socialised forces of production are characteristic of both epochs."

Secondly, Bahro starts from the view that the "pre-industrial societies" (using the example of Russia) which carry out the "anti-imperialist revolution for industrialisation" are decisively formed by their "asiatic heritage". In our opinion Bahro does not proceed correctly here on the methodological level. It is inadmissible to pass directly from the level of marxist theory of history and its categories to the political level. A concrete historical analysis is also necessary.

Despite all the qualifications, "real-historical" references, and protests to the contrary, Bahro ends up with an a-historical analogy, in which "real existing socialism" — Stalinism — becomes the modern mode of production. (Moreover Bahro finds himself here in the uncomfortable company of K.A. Wittfogel, now an anti-communist. ("3).)

At the base of this incorrect methodological procedure of Bahro's is his exclusion of the imperialist world market from his analysis. By doing this he loses the decisive theoretical preconditions for analysing the October revolution and the Soviet

Why the GDR has locked up Rudolf Bahro

Union: the theory of international, permanent revolution and in particular the law of uneven and combined development. ("4.)

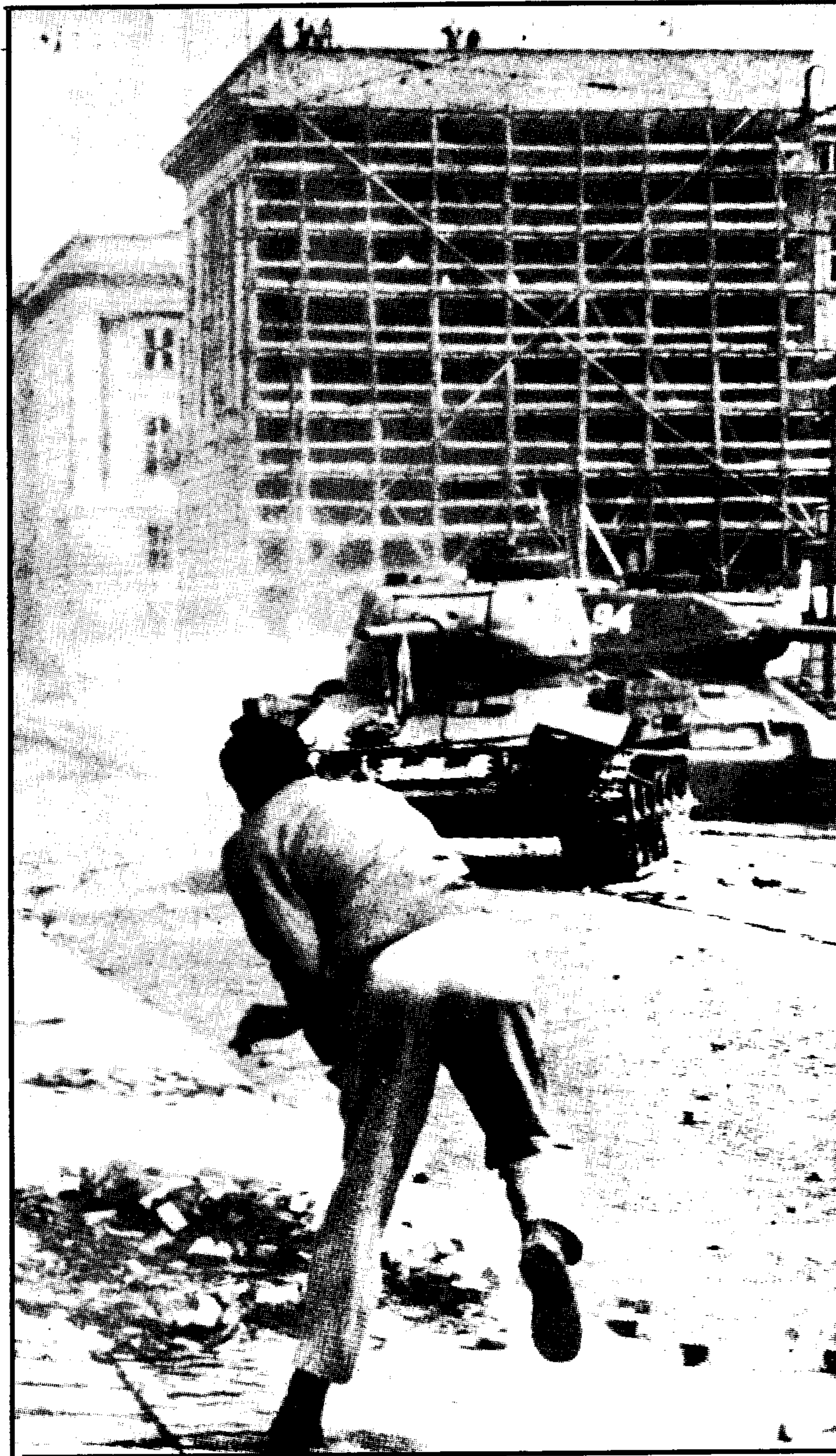
Lenin (and also Trotsky) were, contrary to what Bahro maintains, clear about the "semi-asiatic" character of Tsarist Russia. The decisive factor is how the backward countries (Bahro speaks wrongly of "pre-capitalist countries") develop under the conditions of the imperialist world market.

Trotsky had, for example, written in his History of the Russian Revolution: "At the

same time as peasant land cultivation as a whole remained, right up to the revolution, at the level of the 17th century, Russian industry in its technique and capitalist structure stood at the level of the advanced countries, and in certain respects even outstripped them. ... This fact, first established by the writer in 1908, hardly accords with the banal idea of the economic backwardness of Russia. However, it does not disprove this backwardness, but dialectically complements it" (Vol. 1, p.27).

The uneven and combined

Pictures, from Left: Walter Ulbricht; the June 1953 workers' rising; Ulbricht's successor Honecker



1. For Marxists 'surplus product' means that part of the total production of society which goes to purposes other than the direct subsistence of the producers and their immediate dependents. It is a feature of all societies except the most primitive.

In most societies it goes to the upkeep of the state and the luxury consumption of the idle privileged classes. In capitalism, it takes the particular form of surplus value, i.e. the ruling class (the capitalists) does not simply grab a certain amount of produce, but profits from the fact that the value produced by the workers' labour is greater than the value of the workers' labour power (i.e. wage costs). Correspondingly, surplus value is mainly directed to the accumulation of capital, rather than just luxury consumption. In the Stalinist states there is surplus product, but it does not exist in the form of surplus value.

2. The Asiatic mode of production (according to Marx) was the economic system of ancient China, India etc. This system comprised: (i) village communities, operating in a semi-

communist fashion (land was not privately owned); (ii) a strong state bureaucracy, maintaining itself by taxing the peasants, whose economic function was to organise the building of necessary irrigation works with forced labour.

3. In his book *Oriental Despotism*, Karl Wittfogel — a former Communist, now a right-winger — argues that the Stalinist states are essentially new versions of the old Asiatic mode of production.

4. Trotsky pointed out that, by its very nature, capitalism developed unevenly on a world scale: the relative prosperity of the big capitalist powers and the 'under-development' of Asia, Africa and Latin America are two sides of the same process. However, the development also has a combined character: many 'under-developed' countries (like Russia before 1917)

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Rudolf Bahro

THE EAST GERMAN oppositionist Rudolf Bahro was arrested last August on a charge of 'espionage'.

There can be no doubt, however, that his real crime was to write 'Die Alternative'. When he was arrested he was preparing to give lectures on the themes in his book, which have since then been published in the West German paper *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

Bahro has since then been kept in solitary confinement with only one visit, of one hour, each month. He is expected to come to trial very soon, but there have also been reports that he will just be expelled to West Germany and deprived of his citizenship.

This tactic — used against the singer Wolf Biermann and many of those who protested against his expulsion — allows the East German bureaucracy to depict their opponents as anti-communists who prefer to live in the West, while at the same time depriving them of an audience among the East German workers.

A committee for Bahro's release has been set up in West Germany, and in England a letter is being circulated with signatures from labour movement figures and various socialist writers, calling for his release and publication of his book in East Germany.

When it has come to the stage that the central party and state authorities grant themselves mansions, luxury cars, holiday villas and special clinics, then the only answer is removing the whole clique which holds these positions from power. The political revolution will definitely have the support of the majority of the population.



and distribution: it also includes bourgeois justice and the totality of material privileges, including their institutionalised results expressed in the structure of the state.

Bahro's comments on Lenin's party are also contradictory.

His position on the Left Opposition around Trotsky can be explained from his position on the necessity of Stalinist despotism: "They lost power because they did not fit in with the developing state. Stalin won it because he fitted in." But it is incomprehensible why the Bolshevik Party was destroyed if it "...in embryo already represented the new type of state", as he claims.

The destruction of Lenin's party (not only politically and ideologically but also physically) is, however, an expression of the fact that it was not compatible with the Stalinist state, and for that reason the Stalin period "robbed Leninism of its humanist perspective" (Bahro).

In the framework of a comprehensive debate with Bahro it would have to be proved that his central mistake (as outlined above, his lack of a concept of imperialism and permanent revolution, etc) is connected with his consistent underestimation of the working class and overestimation of the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia becomes for him almost the revolutionary subject of history and not just for the countries of the 'third world' and the capitalist countries, but also and particularly for the countries of 'real existing socialism': "In history the working masses mainly serve quantitative accumulation". [...]

Bahro starts from the fact that antagonistic interests divide the bureaucracy and the 'social productive worker'. ("7.") The bureaucratic self interests sail under the flag of the common interest. The bureaucratic system

of "organised irresponsibility" must fail economically. The economic driving forces of capitalism are not at its disposal.

With the exclusion of the mass initiative in which the self-development of man is the motive force and expression of social progress (not just economic progress) the bureaucracy in its relations with the "direct producer" is thrown back on the use of extra-economic (political) force, which the workers passively oppose. This system is primarily driven on by pressure of legitimacy, which rests with the bureaucracy.

It "exists in the interests of self-maintenance of the apparatus in the face of the unrelenting challenge of the materially and technically superior world-historic opponent and partner" (i.e. capitalism). "The average party and state officials are not driven to a heart attack by their consciences — their overt mentality fits the pattern of traditional bureaucratic conservatism — but by the drive for self-maintenance of the highest officials, who don't want to give up the levers of power at any price. Naturally, in this relationship the party leadership is less the creator of a new civilisation than the plagiarist of those 'alien' driving forces of late capitalism which keep technical-economic progress moving".

Not only are people's needs not fulfilled, but the structure "runs badly"; the countries of "real existing socialism" are only building copies of the old civilisation. Bahro impressively describes how the rulers of both systems are in the process of destroying our planet.

Finally, the analysis of the economic inefficiency of the bureaucratic state culminates in Bahro's conclusion that this system blocks the way to the emancipation of the individual. "The

corresponding needs are satisfied by substitutes. By possessing and using as many things and services as possible that are valuable for exchange one must keep oneself protected from the fact that one has been sold short in real human needs. ... The emancipatory interests on the other hand are directed towards the growth, differentiation and self-realisation of the personality in all dimensions of human activity."

Here Bahro brings in the concept of cultural revolution. For him this concept means the process of the revolutionisation of society in the direction of communism, to the complete emancipation of man. In these passages Bahro (minor details apart) stands in the best Marxist tradition of "scientific utopianism", and here he goes much further than most of the efforts to date of the emerging opposition in the transitional societies. His demands reach back to Marx's writings on the Paris Commune. They are as simple as they are radical.

For Bahro, the central starting point for the self-realisation of the individual is the overcoming of the division of labour. The division of labour lay at the basis of the formation of classes. The division of labour includes (at least potentially) the contradiction of rulers and ruled, the difference between manual and intellectual work, between town and country, etc. It is impossible to realise the potential for development, the universality, of the human species without abolishing the division of labour: indeed in part these things are identical with its abolition.

The "cultural revolution" must fashion anew the objective potentialities of human subjectivity.

The realisation of a real equality demands "the reorganisation of work according to the principle that all make an equal contribution to the activity of different levels of functioning; the opening of unlimited access to a general education covering natural science and technology, society and culture, up to the highest stage for all; the socialisation [democratisation] of information and decision-making..."

To these aims Bahro adds a list of immediate measures: "Liquidation of bureaucratic corruption from above" (i.e. reduction of all salaries which are above the normal range of salaries, elimination of all material, cultural and other institutions providing the functionaries' apparatus, elimination of the petty-bourgeois pomp of orders and medals, etc).

Further, "The abolition of work norms and piece-work rates" and "The planned periodic participation of all the leading and intellectual personnel of society in simple and productive work" and "Preparation of a correction of the wages structure [in the direction of the equalisation of incomes]".

One can see that the rulers of the GDR had their reasons for locking-up Rudolf Bahro.

To be continued
Next week.

Stalinism thus has to limit itself to the 'hypocrisy' of this regime. (Without going further into it here, we moreover think that the course of industrialisation not only showed the economic advantages of a "non-capitalist industrialisation", but also — and this is easy to prove — that the price of industrialisation was enormously increased by the political regime.)

From this central mistake of Bahro's flow all the other contradictions and mistakes.

Thus, the historical justification of the Stalinist regime leads him to a seriously mistaken criticism of the "deformation thesis", particularly Trotsky's — although he is obviously acquainted with Trotsky's position. ("5") Thus he initially stresses, correctly, that "Despite occasional experiments production has never taken place in the countries of real existing socialism for the sake of some state profit. It was never primarily a question of surplus value, but of surplus product. Strange as it may appear at first sight, exploitation is a political phenomenon here, a phenomenon of the distribution of political power."

In this connection he attacks Trotsky, who is alleged to have assumed that "The responsible officials would privately appropriate the factories at some point, [thus] he shows only how anachronistic the schema was with which he tried to comprehend the Stalin period." And he criticises Ernest Mandel because he (together with Trotsky) "sees the main contradiction being between the non-capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois mode of distribution". However, Trotsky did not at all say that "the officials" would privately appropriate the factories, but that a bourgeois counter-revolution would be necessary for this private appropriation of the factories, i.e. the bureaucracy would have to be eliminated in favour of a new (old) class; ("6.) and the bourgeois mode of distribution means more than what Bahro assumes, i.e. merely the system of supply

It seems that the author of the review is arguing that a counter-revolution in the USSR could only come about by the bureaucracy being ousted by another social group, which would take the factory as their private property. S/he counterposes this to the idea of the bureaucracy itself (or a section of it) carrying through a bourgeois counter-revolution — an idea which Bahro considers "anachronistic" because (he reckons) the bureaucrats have no drive towards seizing the factories as private property.

In our view Bahro is right (and the review's author wrong) in his account of Trotsky's ideas — though wrong in his criticism of them, for there have been perceptible urges on the part of sections of various Stalinist bureaucracies towards gaining individual property rights.

7. 'Social productive Worker' (productiver Gesamtarbeiter) and 'social Worker' are neo-Marxist terms of Bahro's to describe the whole of the human productive forces of society. Intellectuals, even if not directly productive, count as part of the 'social Worker'.

development, an expression of the drawing of Russia into the imperialist world market, explains the internal relationship of forces in society (strengths and weaknesses of the individual classes).

If this aspect is at least hinted at by Bahro, his most important limitation is that he assesses the "maturity" of a country for the socialist revolution only from a national standpoint. Bahro stands here methodologically (if not consciously) on the ground of the theory of "Socialism in one country".

The question is however not at all whether particular countries are "ripe" or not. As Trotsky wrote in "Permanent Revolution": "Insofar as capitalism has created a world market, a world division of labour and world productive forces, it has also prepared world economy as a whole for socialist transformation."

"Different countries will go through this process at different tempos. Backward countries may, under certain conditions, arrive at the dictatorship of the proletariat sooner than advanced countries, but they will come later than the latter to socialism."

"...In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international socialist revolution." (Chapter 10).

When Bahro also starts from the national "maturity" or "immaturity", he differs from the Stalinist theory only in that he refuses to sell the "non-capitalist road" (of the Soviet Union) as socialism. Bahro's criticism of

have an industrial capitalist sector with advanced technology from the richer countries. According to the theory of permanent revolution, a classical bourgeois revolution is not on the agenda for those 'underdeveloped' countries, despite their backwardness. Rather, there must be a workers' revolution, combining elementary tasks of land reform, national independence etc., with socialist tasks — and seeking to extend itself internationally.

5. The 'deformation thesis' apparently refers to Trotsky's theory that the USSR is a degenerated workers' state, and the theory of later Trotskyists that the other Stalinist states are deformed workers' states.

6. 'Spartacus' here refers to Trotsky's "Revolution Betrayed", Chapter 9 (page 247-8 of the Pathfinder Press edition).

ES

This is the 9 o'clock news from... the British Army

LAST WEEK, Colin Thomas, a BBC documentary director of 16 years' standing, resigned because of changes demanded in his portrait of a Northern Ireland community and 'editing' of another programme he helped to make — 'The City on the Border', a Journal of a week in Derry.

A new book by the sociologist Philip Schlesinger [★] shows the pressures Thomas faced were not exceptional.

Schlesinger spent four years interviewing radio and TV news reporters and watching them at work. He shows how TV in Northern Ireland was tied in with the sectarian regime from the start. The BBC policy was 'to keep an iron grip on all local news and to allow nothing to go out which suggested that anything in Northern Ireland could or would ever change'.

Up to 1968 Northern Ireland was generally ignored by British TV. Today Northern Ireland is seen as a 'problem' for the BBC.

According to the May 1972 BBC News Guide, current affairs editors must submit all news reporting ideas to the News Editor in Belfast and to the Editors of Current Affairs in London. On approval the items can be recorded and then once again submitted for inspection.

In Colin Thomas's case the Belfast Controller and his deputy demanded extensive changes in his film.

Officially the BBC is 'impartial', but the continual vetting ensures that it virtually becomes a British Army propaganda machine. In their presentation of TV news, 'law and order', 'violence' and 'terrorism' are key terms. No prizes for guessing who gets labelled as 'violent terrorists'!

As Schlesinger points out, no context or background is explained, and so news coverage reinforces the view that the present troubles are incomprehensible and irrational. It encourages people to 'see terrorism as the cause of the conflict rather than one of its symptoms'.

But the Tories and Labour ministers still complain that the BBC is not servile enough. Last week in the letters columns of the 'Times', Tory MP William van Straubenzee complained that the BBC radio programme, 'You're the Jury', had been used by the 'politically motivated left'.

The jury of 100 people had decided that the British people had not been told the truth about Northern Ireland.

When in November 1976 the BBC was 'directed' to put a news black-out on all Republican resistance to the British Army, no letters of protest appeared in the 'Times'. Opening a new studio in Belfast at that time, Roy Mason told BBC chief Sir Michael Swann to stop reporting all IRA activity for three months. This 'request' was not even reported in the British media until January 1977!

Similarly the attempts to close down 'Republican News' and the recent Dublin inquiry into repressive legislation and the treatment of prisoners have been generally ignored by the media.

MIKE FOLEY

★ Philip Schlesinger, "Putting 'reality' together: BBC news". Constable, 1978. £4.95 paperback.



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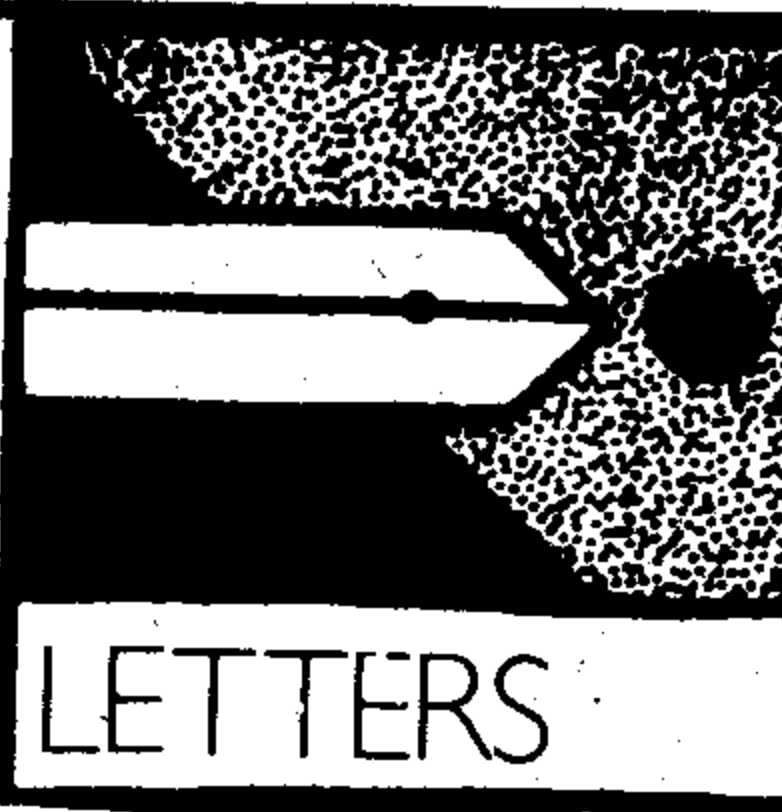
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CP stalls workers' defence



Comrades,
In your editorial last week *A Programme to beat the National Front* (WA 104) you mention that fascist organisations are out to launch a frontal assault with the aim of smashing the labour movement and that in the North West there have been attacks on labour movement meetings and events.

In response to those attacks my trade union branch (CWS Packing USDAW) put forward a motion to Manchester Trades Council at its last meeting calling for a regular stewarding force to be set up with volunteers from affiliated branches, which was to attend all Trades Council meetings and events.

In moving it I cited factual cases of fascist violence and disruption and the attitude of the police to such happenings. I said that the Trades Council should formalise its stewarding arrangements to

- a) minimise fascist violence and
- b) curb any over-reliance on the police at meetings and marches, as the police sometimes tend to arrest

those at whom the fascist violence is directed.

The response of the Trades Council Executive was to oppose this motion. They said that punch-ups would result as our stewards would be 'heavies out to cause trouble'!

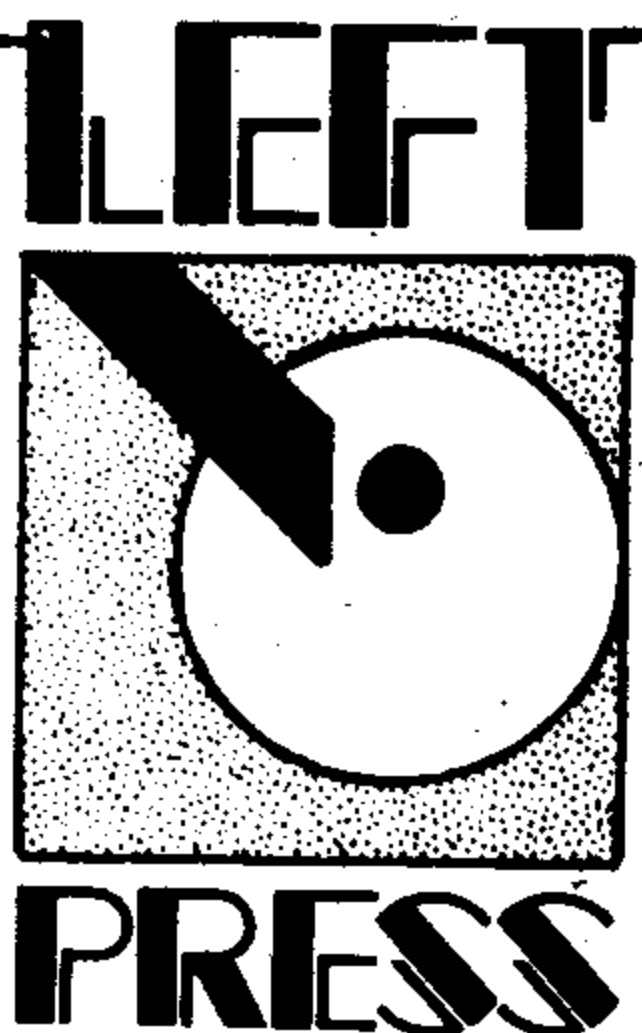
Even a delegate who said he was a member of the Anti-Nazi League opposed the motion, as did all the Communist Party members and sympathisers. It lost, but narrowly.

This episode showed how much confusion exists in the labour movement on the question of self-defence. Ironically, the last motion on the same meeting's agenda was one deploring the arrest of the Leeds Trades Council Secretary — an arrest carried out because the Trades Council May Day march was going ahead in defiance of a police ban on marches which had been imposed in the name of stopping ... the fascists.

JOHN DOUGLAS
Manchester



Socialist Press on the Lib-Lab pact



SOME revolutionary tendencies have maintained that the demand for the Labour Party to break the Lib-Lab pact is central. It is the pact, they say, which has enabled the government to hold back the working class and to find a cover for its policies.

The reality is different. The pact came about because of Labour's weak *Parliamentary* position; it protected Callaghan from the Tories, not from the working class. To hold back the working class the Labour government does not say "we must be moderate so as not to scare off the Liberals", it uses the trade union bureaucracy to argue that wage restraint and cutbacks are the only possible policies in conditions of crisis.

That is why the political concessions made to the Liberals were so small and why the Cabinet stopped short of inviting Liberals into the government. The pact made no noticeable difference to the politics of the government, except when the Liberals forced a reduction in the proposed Budget increase in petrol tax.

Socialist Press, the paper of the Workers' Socialist League, ignores all this, even in the latest issue published after the Liberals laid the pact to rest. We are told for example that the pact "provided Healey with solid support from outside the labour movement in laying down his Phase 3 ultimatum to the TUC traitors".

In fact the support from outside the labour movement for continued wage restraint came from big business as a whole and not specially from the Liberals. And it was precisely the support from *within* the labour movement — from the TUC traitors themselves — that was decisive.

All the Labour Government's anti-working class policies were well under way before the pact. Of course, the pact was only possible because the government's policies were so right wing, and therefore the pact must be opposed, as part of the fight against those right wing policies. But to blame the policies on the pact is evidently nonsense, and can only serve to blur over the thoroughly capitalist nature of the Labour Government *even without the pact*.

The WSL's tactic is borrowed from the Trotskyists' approach to the 'People's Front' alliance of the Communist Party, Socialists, and Radicals in France in 1935-36. Then, the main revolutionary demand was to kick the Radicals out of the People's Front.

But before they entered the People's Front the CP and the SP were parties which were preaching the arming of the workers, the violent overthrow of capitalism,

and the dictatorship of the proletariat. The People's Front gave the CP and the SP leaders the necessary excuse to jettison this revolutionary agitation. They said: we must put aside our socialist demands so that we can unite with the Radicals; and we must unite with the Radicals in order to beat the fascists.

The Radicals held the whip-hand in the People's Front, using the CP and the SP as foot-soldiers.

The Lib-Lab pact is obviously different. Agitation centred on ending the pact can only result in spreading illusions about the Labour leadership, and particularly the Parliamentary Left.

In the latest *Socialist Press* the WSL puts forward a whole scenario based on its slogan of "Make the Lefts fight".

"The question for the working class is on what basis will the coming election be fought: under the discredited coalitionist leadership that has inflicted unprecedented cuts in living standards? Or under a leadership pledged to a programme of socialist policies that are capable of galvanising maximum working class support and ensuring the return of a Labour government?"

Where will this new radical leadership come from? From the WSL? It is unlikely that they see themselves becoming the leadership of the Labour Party by October. From the existing Parliamentary Left? Presumably.

"Trade union branches and Labour GMCs must at once take steps to ensure that the Labour Party conference is recalled prior to the General Election and the Callaghan-Healey coalition cabinet driven from office.

"Those 'lefts' that have claimed to oppose the government's flagrant collaboration with the capitalist class must be called upon to take up a fight and turn their words into action.

"To those that show the slightest sign of such a fact we extend both critical support and the demand that they press further and fight for a socialist programme..."

The WSL do not really believe that the 'Lefts' will fight for a socialist programme; they just believe that this is the way to 'expose' the 'Lefts' before the working class.

Yet among those workers who do still have illusions in the 'lefts', this WSL propaganda will reinforce confused ideas that 'socialism' is something put through Parliament by a left Labour government, and that the Lefts would be genuine socialists if only they plucked up a bit more courage in fighting for their nationalist, state-capitalist programme.

The Lefts can be exposed, not by such vague and illusory

demands, but rather by demanding that they *act now* in support of concrete measures in the interests of the working class, even if it means that the government falls.

Similarly, the WSL put forward illusion-spreading arguments on voting Labour. They say: "Workers have been turning out to vote Labour because they have come to realise that a Tory government would be even WORSE. (emphasis in original).

"Workers vote Labour because they recognise that such Tory attacks would destroy jobs, rights and living standards won in decades of struggle".

But how are the Tories 'worse'? They would certainly introduce reactionary legislation, attack the social services and so on. But the last Tory government was met by a working class counter-offensive which forced them to retreat and eventually drove them out of office.

The Labour government has been able to push through *much harder* attacks on the working class. Its connections with the trade unions and the working class have enabled it to restrain the fight-back and thus be a *stronger* government for the bosses than the Tories were.

Moreover, the task *now* is to fight the Labour leaders' worker-bashing policies. Scaremongering about the possible *future* horrors of a Tory government can only encourage complacency about the 'lesser evil' of Labour's attacks and defeatism in relation to the chances of *beating* the attacks which will be launched by a new Tory government.

But, of course, if the new Labour Government is going to be the one which, under the leadership of the Left MPs (like Wilson, Castle, Foot? — they were all once 'Lefts!'), will bring in *socialism* ... then certainly the Tories will be 'worse'!

On one point in the article, we do agree with the comrades of the WSL.

"Callaghan-Healey intend to campaign on their record as wage-cutters and job slashers [This] makes it clear that it is by no means enough to sit back until October and vote Labour".

For just that reason Workers' Action is launching the Socialist Campaign for a Labour victory. We invite WSL supporters, despite our differences, to join with us in this campaign to ensure that a revolutionary voice is heard inside the labour movement in the coming elections.

UPW Conference FIRST UNION FOR A FOURTH PHASE

DESPITE resolutions from seven branches opposing any future form of wage controls, the 1978 UPW conference saw the right wing leadership under Tom Jackson as secure as ever in their role as slavish defenders of the Labour Government's pro-capitalist policies.

After giving Chancellor Denis Healey a standing ovation at a pre-conference rally, the delegates not only defeated a resolution calling for a minimum wage of £100 a week but voted 10-1 for the idea of phase 4 wage controls.

Indeed, at times it was difficult to believe that Jackson's job is supposed to be defending the conditions of his members. In opposing the call for the £100 a week wage he had this to say: "These" (i.e. Japan and Germany) "are the nations with whom we are competing. If we deliberately price ourselves out of international markets, unemployment in Britain will grow".

With a leadership prepared to spout drivel like this, some of us are beginning to wonder what we need the Post Office management for.

The Conference also accepted a resolution calling for local productivity deals. At the moment, any productivity payments are distributed nationally, but supporters of local deals argued that we should "do as the miners do". What they forget is that the NUM is slightly stronger than we are!

Although as yet no details have been worked out, local prod. deals are likely to give management the green light to introduce large cuts in manning levels in return for a few extra coppers. Militants will have to fight hard to make sure that no such

schemes are accepted in their branches.

The only bright spot in the debate on pay was the passing of a resolution from the Croydon branch calling for the union to approach other Public Service unions to set up an alliance to oppose future restrictions on wages in the public sector. But this is not likely to go beyond the stage of words unless there is massive pressure from the rank and file.

There were two main issues on which there was a challenge to the leadership. A motion censuring the EC for their handling of the Grunwick dispute was only narrowly defeated by 9,694 votes to 9,033. Even non-militant branches felt it was inconsistent, to say the least, for the union to say to the management, "no reprisals against the Cricklewood members", and then to hammer the lads themselves.

Conference also rejected an EC attempt to bring back Sunday collections. Despite massive propaganda from management in favour of it, most delegates came to the conclusion that a return to the seven-day week was not on. And even if they had voted for it, it's unlikely that many would have turned up to work it.

The conference was a disappointment for the left, with no great advances recorded. But there is a mood of frustration at present policies beginning to build up amongst the membership. It will be the job of militants in the coming year to organise this into a more coherent opposition to the spineless leadership we've got at the moment.

PETE KEENLYSIDE
Manchester Amalgamated
Branch, UPW.

NALGO Conference

This year's claim goes down the Drain

WHEN THE conference of the local government staff union NALGO opens on Monday 12th, the union bureaucrats will already have registered victory over this year's pay claim.

At a Special Conference on Pay, on Friday 2nd, the NEC-backed amendment to stick to the Government's 10% guidelines won by a 2 to 1 majority.

Moves for a Special Conference started last autumn. An effort to get a conference on the demand for a flat £15 increase failed. But early this year the Broad Left-dominated Scottish region managed to organise 58 branches to call for a Special Conference.

The main resolution instructed NALGO negotiators "to ignore the 10% limit and settle for no less than current increases in the private sector".

General secretary Geoffrey Drain rejected even this weak demand, saying it could only be won by industrial action and most of the members did not want that.

Several militant amendments were defeated, and the NEC-backed Tyne & Wear amendment won. This instructed the negotiators to follow other public sector workers — i.e. accept the 10%.

NALGO still formally opposes Government wage controls.

Geoffrey Drain declared: "There is no sell-out contemplated. There is nothing going on about wages at the [TUC] talks with the government, either in the public or private sector. Get that out of your heads".

But many NALGO members are convinced that it is only a matter of time before the NALGO leadership try to push through some state-regulated scheme for fixing public sector wages.

A more immediate threat is contained in the recent NEC economic committee decision to introduce productivity deals where they don't already exist. This will mean selling out Town Hall jobs in exchange for a few extra quid.

As for this year's local government pay deal (due to run from July 1st): the claim includes "a substantial and equal percentage increase in earnings" (that will now mean 10%) plus two extra days' holiday and a 35 hour week. The hours and holidays demands are likely to be dumped. The union has already settled within the 10% guidelines (plus self-financing productivity deals) for its members in gas and electricity supply.

There will still be a fierce debate at the Annual Conference over future pay policy. Key

THE UNIONS



demands in resolutions from militant branches include:

- Opposition to government wage controls;
- A lump sum to restore real pay to 1974-5 levels, and automatic cost of living increases in future;
- A £60 minimum wage;
- A 35 hour week.

GEOFF BENNETT

LAST WEEKEND 250 delegates and about 100 visitors attended a conference called to set up a national organisation of anti-racist and anti-fascist committees. They attended not the birth, but the death of a movement.

For several years local groups of socialists have been struggling to combat the rising tide of racism and fascism in Britain.

Some groups have been healthy, striving to root themselves in the organisations of the working class and to rise to the political tasks they have set themselves, daring to confront the fascists, the State, and the leadership of the working class itself where they have promoted racism.

Other groups have drifted easily into the by-ways of the radical middle class, preferring endless contemplation of their own neuroses and snobbish criticism of the backward aspects of the working class.

Yet others have become more or less the property of cliques of ex-leftists, carrying on sometimes valuable work but incapable of breaking out of the charmed circle.

Recent rise

With the recent rise in the general level of racist and fascist activity and a corresponding increase in working-class opposition to them, things could not long remain as they were in the anti-racist movement. The need for a national organisation was glaring. For the 'traditional' anti-racist and anti-fascist movement the problem was complicated by the rapid emergence of the Anti-Nazi League, an organisation already claiming national status.

Continued existence outside of, or even semi-independently of, the ANL could only be justified on the basis of a political programme which answered the burning questions much more clearly than the

Not the birth but the death of an anti-racist movement

ANL has done.

The two fundamental questions facing last weekend's 'Campaign against Racism and Fascism' conference then were: **What is the minimum adequate basis for a united-front campaign against racism and fascism? And what relationship should there be between those fighting for that programme and the ANL?**

From the start it looked unlikely that these two questions would be adequately dealt with. The organisation of the conference was a shambles, and within minutes of its opening wrangles began over the agenda.

Debate rapidly became impossible, as petty bourgeois feminists and gay activists insisted that their concerns dominate the proceedings. Thus a resolution was carried "encouraging the formation of Campaigns Against Sexism, Racism and Fascism", and committing local campaigns to combatting organisations such as the Festival of Light, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, and the National Viewers' and Listeners'

Association.

Besides de-focusing the anti-racist movement, the feminists' demands were presented in such a way as to provoke the most hostile reaction from many trade union and black delegates, leading at times to open exchange of abuse between feminist women and Asians.

A 'united front' without a sharp and precise focus ends up at best as a narrow movement of generalised radicalism.

Sexism

The argument that sexism is integral to fascism will not do. Sexism is integral to class society as a whole. And is not the notion of private property also 'integral to fascism'? Are not certain views on art 'integral to fascism'?

One could go on in this vein: if one was willing to forget that fascism is fundamentally a factor in the class struggle, and to ignore the responsibility of defending those most under attack from the fascists

and raising the consciousness of those whose first steps into politics have been made because of their hostility to fascism and racism.

At the end of the first day most of the trade union and black delegates had walked out — and there had been few enough of them to begin with. This resulted in a further strengthening of those currents for whom the class struggle is literally incomprehensible.

For them fascism represents not a class phenomenon but just an evil which oppresses several sections of society, women and gays being the most prominent in their minds and blacks a very poor third (the working class is nowhere). The task is therefore to weld together these groups, and to drive out of the movement those who do not share the perspective — above all, workers and communists.

While activity against sexism was to be a precondition of admittance to the club, a commitment to fight against all immigration controls, against police harassment of blacks and for the defence of blacks against attack, was not. A **Workers'**

Action resolution outlining these and other points was 'lost' on the agenda somewhere and was therefore not even debated. Instead the conference was invited to choose between a resolution from the Organising Committee, which committed no-one to anything, and a highly sectarian motion from Workers' Power, which nevertheless spelt out a programme for united action.

With the fluent encouragement of the IMG, who were most keen to offend no-one, the conference chose the former.

In regard to the ANL, the conference voted to retain its organisational independence (while approving limited cooperation) and rejected the alternative offered by Workers' Action of fighting for an adequate programme inside the ANL.

Win workers

Since it also decided to elect, not a national committee, but a steering committee which will in the future establish a national committee, the conference could not even bring itself to the level of a national organisation. This is perhaps just as well.

For militants in the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement the lessons are clear. Where healthy local anti-racist committees exist, they should argue for a rapid turn to the ANL, in the effort to win over workers and others genuinely interested in fighting racism and fascism. Nothing is to be gained from a connection with those who dominated last weekend's conference.

In other areas, militants should fight to build ANL branches on an adequate programme — not on the politics of the current ANL leadership — and take up that fight nationally at the forthcoming ANL conference.

JAMES RYAN

WORKERS IN ACTION

Armed riot police sent in against French car strike

FOR THE FIRST time since 1968, France's giant state-owned car firm, Renault, has been hit by simultaneous strike action in several plants.

It began last week at Cléon. The spontaneous initiative of a few hundred young workers developed into an occupation of the factory. On Monday morning a mass meeting called by the main union, the CGT, voted to continue the strike and occupation.

A few hours later, the court at Rouen ordered the strikers to evacuate the factory within 48 hours.

If the court injunction is not obeyed, the management can legally call in the security forces to evict the workers by force.

At the Flins factory of Renault, the police have already kicked out workers occupying the press shop. Two companies of CRS riot police invaded the factory at 5am on Tuesday 6th.

At Cléon, the strike has spread to the majority of the five thousand workers, who are deter-

mined to fight for a monthly rate of 3000 francs (about £335), a shorter working week, an extra (fifth) week's holiday, and retirement at 60.

At Flins the situation is more complicated. With a workforce of 20,000, Flins is second in the Renault empire only to the giant Billancourt factory in Paris. However, so far the action has been limited to several hundred younger, more militant, immigrant workers in the press shop.

The Flins bosses imposed a lock-out until Thursday 8th. They have hired scab labour to try to make sure that they can restart on Thursday morning.

In both cases, the action began without warning and over seemingly minor incidents. At Flins, where absenteeism runs at a steady 15% a day, the strike was sparked off when a worker was disciplined for arriving late at work.

This is the first major strike movement to break through the demoralisation of the French workers since the right-wing victory in the March general election. Since March, the attack on working class living standards has intensified, with the ruling class seeing the election results as giving them a free hand. Speed-up and harassment by foremen had increased at both Flins and Cléon.

The present Renault strikes are the first major resistance by French workers to prime minister Barre's new wage control plans. But in order for it to be successful, the example of Cléon and the Flins press shop has to be followed by other factories, especially Billancourt.

However, the traditional trade union leaders — the Communist Party-led CGT and the Socialist-aligned CFDT — have confined themselves to token stoppages in the other Renault factories, apart from an assembly workers' strike at Douai. As far as the Communist Party and the Socialist Party are concerned, there is really nothing for it but to wait for the next election.

Teachers force a climbdown on threats

BARKING education authority have recently been forced to withdraw disciplinary threats to 13 teachers made after industrial action last term.

The teachers' unions had recommended their members to refuse all unpaid extra work, as part of pressure for a better deal on pay. At Mayesbrook Comprehensive school the NUT (National Union of Teachers) members refused to use their cars to move between the school's different sites, over a mile apart.

The head teacher told them they were going beyond the union's instructions. They phoned union headquarters and were told that their action was in line with union policy. This was confirmed at a meeting with an official from union headquarters present.

Next morning, despite intimidation, twenty union members refused to move between sites unless the headmaster provided transport. A letter from the Chief Education Officer was sent to 13 saying they had broken their contracts and disciplinary action would be taken against them.

Early this term the local union executive committee gave the authority a deadline: the letters must be withdrawn within three days, or strike action would be taken.

After the deadline passed, NUT headquarters finally authorised Mayesbrook school NUT to refuse to cover for absent teachers or ones who had left without being replaced. Ten out of the eleven secondary schools in Barking, and several primary schools, voted to take similar action, with the support of other teachers' unions (NAS/UWT, AMA).

This forced the borough to issue a letter cancelling the previous one, and withdrawing the threat of disciplinary action.

Two points need to be brought out. Firstly, the original victimisation was prompted by the chairman of the school governors and of the education committee, both Labour councillors, without the knowledge of their colleagues, some of whom were furious when they found out.

Secondly, massive support existed for the thirteen teachers, who were left isolated for weeks before this support was mobilised.

Until union leadership at national and local level begins to respond more to the demands of the members, disputes of this type cannot be ruled out in future.

ALAN BOOTLE, Barking NUT.

Advertisement — "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST"

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EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to *Events*, Box 1960, 182 Upper Street, London N1, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

SATURDAY 10 JUNE. Women's voice rally. 11.30am at the Top tank suite, Sheffield.

SATURDAY 10 JUNE. United Troops Out Movement conference on the role of the British Army. 9.45am to 5pm at Acklam Hall, Acklam Rd, London W11 (tube: Ladbroke Grove).

TUESDAY 13 JUNE. Open meeting on the Right to Know organised by the Aubrey-Berry-Campbell Defence Committee and Librarians for Social Change. 6pm at the Library Association, Ridgmount St, London WC1.

FRIDAY 16 JUNE. Anti-apartheid rally on the 2nd anniversary of the Soweto events. 7.30pm at Westminster Central Hall. Adm. 20p.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 17-18 JUNE. International Socialist Alliance's conference: at the Africa Centre, King's Cross, London WC2. Credentials and documents from Richard Kuper, 45 Falkland Rd, London NW5.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 17-18 JUNE. National conference of the Working Women's Charter campaign, at Manchester Poly, Cavendish House. All areas. Further information: Pat Cross, Flat 2, 49 Spring Bank, Hull telephone Hull 443 2433.

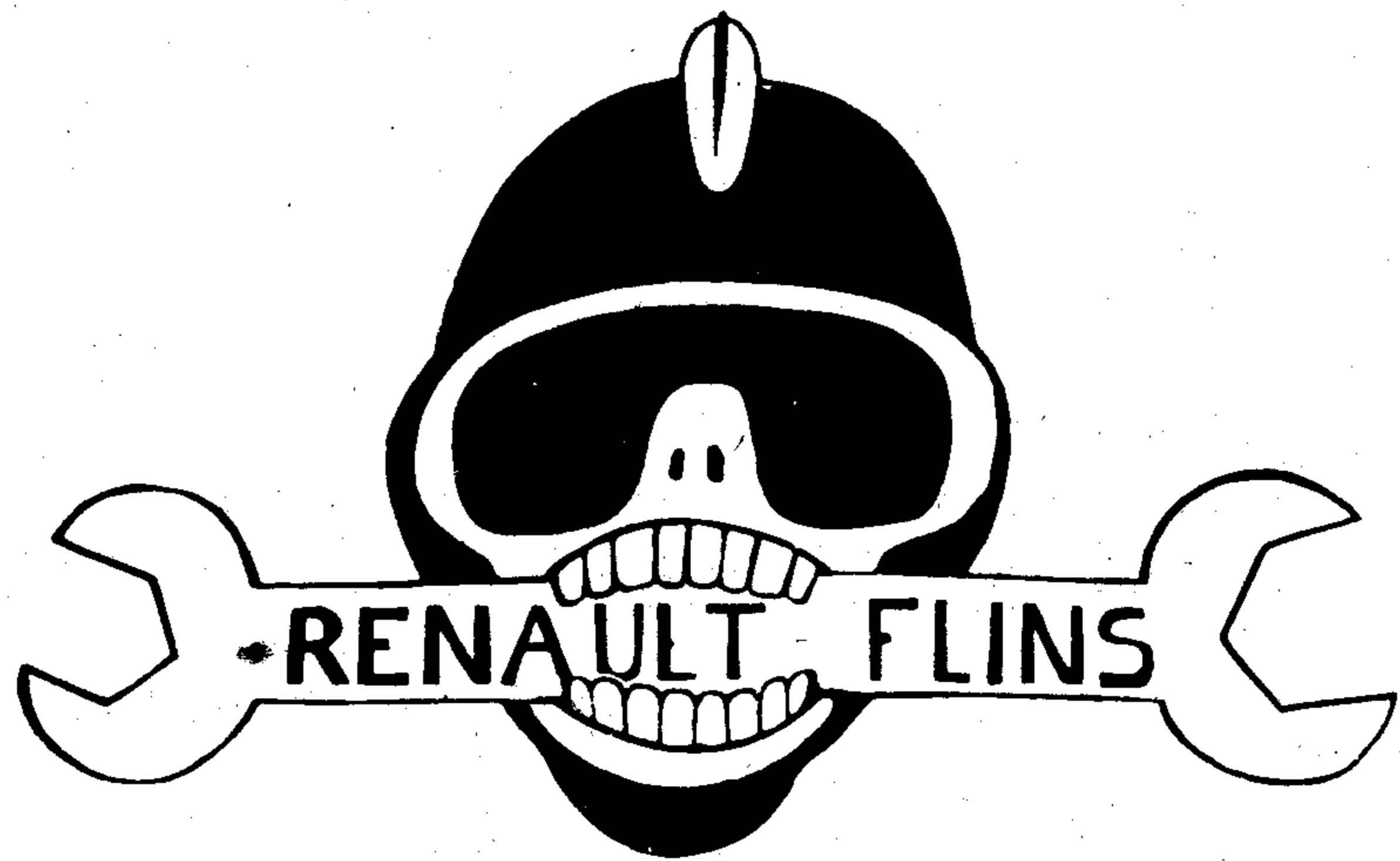
THURSDAY 22 JUNE. Garners support conference. 7.30pm at Transport House, Smith Square. Delegates' credentials from the Strike Committee, c/o TGWU, room 84, 12-13 Lenrietta St, London WC2.

SATURDAY 8 JULY. Anti-Nazi League conference.

SATURDAY 15 JULY. Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory conference, in London.

FRIDAY-MONDAY 14-17 JULY. Conference of Socialist Economists 978 on *The Crisis of Capitalism and Working class strategies in the 1970s*. Bradford. Booking details from Eddy Brett, School of Social Science, University of Sussex, Brighton N19QN.

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Posters produced when the CRS were sent to Flins in 1968

FLINS PAS FLICS

WILL UCATT SINK BUILDERS' PAY FIGHT?

THE Morning Star on Tuesday 3rd June declared that "it now seems certain that the conference [of the main building union, UCATT, this week] will approve the union's acceptance of a pay offer within the 10% guidelines".

How they can be sure of this they do not say; but certainly the Morning Star's attitude will help to make sure the building industry bosses' offer is accepted. The Communist Party (whose paper the Star is) is very strong among militants in the building industry.

In fact the objection being made to the bosses' offer by building workers in the TGWU (many of them CP members)

is not that it is within the 10% limit, but that it is more like 8% than the full 10%. Most building workers do not believe that there is the organisation and confidence in the industry to break the government's limit, but many do believe that they could improve on the offer. TGWU stewards have plan-

ned selective strike action from June 25th, the day the current agreement expires. The UCATT executive has already advised its members to cross the TGWU's picket lines. The question this week at the UCATT conference will be whether the membership allows the executive to get away with that.

N.F. BREAKS UP READING A.N.L. MEETING

ONCE AGAIN the National Front have broken up a left wing meeting. This time it was the inaugural meeting of the Anti-Nazi League in Reading, last Thursday June 1st.

About ten National Front thugs turned up and lashed out.

After a fight they were evicted. But the chairman, a Communist Party member, then closed the meeting.

A new meeting is being held on Wednesday 7th, with increased stewarding against the NF threat.



'Workers Action' sticker: 'No Platform for Fascists; No to immigration controls'. Order from Merseyside Workers' Action supporters' group, c/o 11 Buchanan Rd, Wallasey, Merseyside. 10p per sheet; all proceeds to the Workers' Action fund drive.

FORDS CLAIM

continued from page 1

claim; no involvement of the shop floor, except on a final vote to ratify a sell-out; no recall national shop stewards conference, despite a previous arrangement for one to be held; and a rapid caving-in on most of the elements in the claim.

If the militant words are to mean anything, and the claim is to be won, then militants need to organise against a repetition of last year's

experience. Immediately this means getting section and plant mass meetings called to discuss the claim drawn up in Coventry, amend it where necessary, and finally agree it.

In addition, the national shop stewards' conference needs to be recalled, not only to discuss any proposed settlement, but also to plan and organise action to win the full claim.

With these ideas, and a firm refusal to make concessions on workers' conditions to a Labour government operating in the interests of the likes of Henry Ford and Terry Beckett, the Ford workers can win and break the three years old freeze on wages.

JOHN BLOXAM

FUND DRIVE

for

workers' ACTION

Our fund total is pushed up at the beginning of the month by the payment of bankers' standing orders from several readers. With £58.80 from that source, plus £30 other contributions, the total now is £1175.80.

Regular standing orders are an especially useful way to contribute to the fund: for details, contact your local WA supporters' group or write to us: Fund, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.