

The Red Mole

Paper of the International Marxist Group No. 62 3rd March 1973 Price 5p.

The *Morning Star* of 28 February points out that "if some right wing leaders have their way, next week's special Trades Union Congress will be nothing more than a talking shop". And the *Star* adds that the right wing wants to "rule out resolutions". We fully agree with such sentiments. But such sabotage must not be allowed to halt the advance against the pay laws. It simply means that the need for national organisation at the rank and file level becomes all the more urgent to develop the unity and strength of the movement.

From this point of view we support the call for the Liaison Committee conference on 31 March. However we must recognise that the *Star's* fine phrases about the right-wing's activity at the TUC about the right-wing's to the method of the Communist Party leadership within the LCDTU: a talk shop where resolutions cannot be put with the function of what the *Star* calls "rubber stamping decisions already taken by the leaders".

At the LCDTU conference last June the International Marxist Group had to fight against the ruling of the Chair in order to get a vote put that resolutions could be debated and voted upon; and this proposal was defeated thanks to the Communist Party caucus opposing it. Every delegate to the Liaison Committee conference on 31 March must go prepared to fight for its transformation into a body where resolutions for action can be openly debated and decided upon.

The IMG proposes that the following points should be included in any resolution:
*Support for the May 1st strike as the first step to a General Strike.
*Organisation of local mobilising committees to prepare for the May 1st strike. These should be open to all organisations prepared to strike on that day.
*Organisation of permanent committees in each area to support the struggle against the freeze and the government.

In the same spirit of wishing to build the strongest possible unity in action of all those forces prepared to fight the capitalist offensive, the IMG Political Committee will at its meeting on 3 March be considering the call from the *Workers' Press* for discussions between the different forces in the labour movement on different action in defence of working class interests.

The Fund Drive target of £10,000 set by the IMG Political Committee last autumn has been met. Money is still continuing to come in and the final figure should comfortably exceed £10,000.

The success of the Fund Drive shows the organisation's development over the last few years and the increase in its influence inside the vanguard layers of the working class.

Now that the major obstacle in the path of creating a weekly newspaper has been overcome, all our activity within the next weeks is going to be concentrated on making the changes necessary to facilitate the quickest possible transition to a weekly.

At its meeting on February 4th, 1973, the IMG National Committee decided that the name of the newspaper should be changed when it became a weekly. *The Red Mole* was a name chosen at a time when the vanguard was essentially concentrated outside the ranks of the organised labour movement and it reflected the character of the milieu in which the IMG was intervening.

The tremendous upsurge of working class militancy during the past three years has resulted in a change of orientation for the organisation, and the old name was thus felt to be somewhat of an anachronism.

The new name decided by the National Committee was *Red Star*. In the next few weeks we will be launching a subscription drive for the weekly *Red Star* and we hope that the response to this will be as enthusiastic as it was to the fund drive.

To Smash the Freeze, Rank and File organization is needed to

UNITE THE STRIKES SPREAD THE STRUGGLE

By
Bob Williams

Three quarters of a million workers are now challenging the pay laws. They are doing so in spite of the fact that trade union officialdom has been moving heaven and earth to limit the fight to sectional demands: a deal on bonuses here, an extra week's holiday there — anything to avoid an all out struggle against the pay laws themselves.

The *Financial Times* of 28 February spelt out that Heath is aiming "to prevent the working class from exercising the power that is undoubtedly available to them". The job of the trade union bureaucrats today is to prevent the mass of working people from realising in action the tremendous power in their hands.

FRIGHTENED MEN

They are frightened men. Frightened by the prospect of losing control over the millions of workers who are up in arms over the pay laws and the rocketing cost of living; frightened of the working class forging new, unofficial links of unity for a struggle against the government itself.

So they work hard, appearing on TV shows to present 'their case' and prove how 'unfair' the government is being to *their* members who are a 'special case'. Always careful to state that they are not for smashing the freeze, they are only against the way it affects *their* members.

The aim of union officialdom is to bring enough pressure to bear on the government to squeeze the concessions necessary to regain control of their own membership. There are differences of opinion on how much pressure can safely be exerted through mass action and these will come out in the debates at the TUC

At a meeting of the East London Teachers Association, held on Monday 26th February, the following motion was passed;

"This Association proposes the formation of an Ad-Hoc Mobilising Committee to prepare for an All-London Conference of Workers fighting the freeze.

"In order to build the Conference this Association will take the following steps;

a) Call an Ad-Hoc Mobilising Committee meeting on Sat. 10th March to which the following shall be invited; Inner London and Extra Met. Teachers Associations, Trades Councils, Central London Trades Union bodies, Shop Stewards Committees, etc...

recall conference next Monday. But these tactical differences over whether there should be a one day General Strike or not must not be allowed to obscure the essential unity of the trade union leaderships on one question: their refusal to squarely face up to the present needs of working people.

AWARENESS

Awareness is spreading inside the working class that the present government must be thrown out in order to defend basic working class interests. And such a fight requires united working class action to bring the government down.

It was in response to this that Gormley made his speech last week. He was trying to put over the idea that everybody must be out before anybody comes out — a sure recipe for *nobody* coming out. This week the rank and file action of hundreds of thousands is giving Gormley his answer.

But this is not the end of the story. When the Pay Boards are set up, the Government hopes that the union bosses will step forward to collaborate. A one day General Strike plus some months of protest activity without concrete results — all this can be used as an excuse for going to the Pay Boards. And when one union makes such a move all the other leadership will declare that they have no choice but to follow suit.

UNITY AT BASE

We must fight any collaboration with the Pay Boards and demand that the unions fight to seek the collaboration of the whole working

b) Call for the All-London Conference to be held on April 14th at a venue in Central London to be organised by the Ad-Hoc Committee who will also be responsible for advertising it etc...

c) Donate £25 initially for, the Ad-Hoc Committee and the Conference.

d) Agrees that the Ad-Hoc Committee will meet again within 15 days of March 10th to prepare the agenda, fix speakers etc for the Conference."

All those wishing to attend the ad-hoc mobilising committee on the 10th March or the Conference on April 14th, contact: John Duveen at 278-2616.

class in a united struggle against the freeze and the government. Already local conferences of workers from different industries are being organised for this purpose.

Militants must develop this unity at the base of the movement through the creation of action committees to carry forward the strike movement preparing the way for a General Strike. This will also prepare the way for Councils of Action capable of getting rid of the government and placing the running of the country in the hands of the working class.

Observers Released

From ROSEMARY SULLIVAN, Dublin

John Wyman of the British Secret Intelligence Service, and Patrick Crinnion, double agent for the Irish Special Branch and the SIS were both convicted for spying and immediately released by the Special Criminal Court in Dublin on Tuesday.

After the British terror bombings in Dublin while the Dail debated the anti-IRA Bill last December, Lynch was forced to crack-down on the British spy network. Crinnion and Wyman were arrested as part of this crackdown, with the resulting embarrassment for both the Irish and British governments.

But the embarrassment to the governments was kept to a minimum by the decision of the Dublin regime to hold the case *in camera* before the Special Criminal Court, thus denying to the public the full details.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

However, one section of the British establishment which will not be spared embarrassment is the *Observer* newspaper — amongst the details that came out during Crinnion's interrogation by G2, Irish Intelligence Service, was that when he started working for British Intelligence, his cover was as a special correspondent for the *Observer*.

Crinnion therefore joined *Observer* staffers Patrick Searle, Andrew Wilson and Colin Smith as their former "man in Dublin".

One unanswered question remains — are there any genuine reporters working for the *Observer*

The convulsive crisis of the international monetary system at the beginning of February has set the scene for a trade war between the imperialist powers.

In one week, between 5 and 12 February, more than 6,000 million dollars flooded into the German Bundesbank and hundreds of millions more poured into other central banks. Throughout the world, the capitalists were trying to get off the dollar's sinking ship, into strong currencies like the German Mark and the Japanese Yen.

The crisis was triggered off by the publication of the United States' 1972 trade figures. They showed that last year America had the biggest trade deficit in its history. But the full measure of the disaster can only be grasped when we remember that at the end of 1971, following the trade deficit of that year, the United States had devalued the dollar by 11% to ensure that the deficit would disappear. In fact, 1972, far from ending the trade deficit, brought a tripling of the 1971 figure.

The immediate crisis was ended by the US devaluing the dollar 10% and by the Japanese allowing the yen to float up to a higher value. But this halting of the monetary crisis — a very temporary halt and even now the exchanges are still coughing and spluttering — has merely set the scene for a fierce struggle over trade and other aspects of the relations between the imperialist powers.

INTER-IMPERIALIST RIVALRY
Behind esoteric technicalities of monetary crises lies a power struggle between the American bourgeoisie and its rivals in Europe and Japan. The international monetary system set up at Bretton Woods at the end of the war made the dollar the main international currency: the American economy was overwhelmingly dominant throughout the world and therefore provided a solid basis for confidence in the dollar. But since the war, the dominance of the United States has been increasingly undermined by the growth of strong capitalist economies in Japan, West Germany and other European countries.

These have begun to challenge American capital in one field after another, and call in question the international role of the dollar. The American bourgeoisie attempted to counter-attack in 1971 with the devaluation of the dollar and the imposition of an import

Below: Oliver MacDonald discusses the Monetary Crisis

The Slide to Trade War



Flags out in Wall St.

surcharges. The aim was to put the US in a more favourable position to beat its trade rivals, using the fact that the dollar was central to the international monetary system as a weapon. The February crisis demonstrates that this counter-attack has failed. Over the last year, the Japanese capitalists have been beating hell out of their American rivals inside the American market itself: in 1972 Japanese sales to the US were worth 4,000 million dollars more than its purchases from the US. This represents two thirds of the total US trade deficit for 1972.

GENERAL LINE UP

The result has been for a general line up against Japan. The *Financial Times* leader during the crisis was headlined: "The responsibility rests on Japan". But the problem posed is not a small one: if Japanese exports must not be directed at the USA then they would come to Europe instead — not a

pleasant thought for the editor of the *FT*, who has been publishing the agonised cries of British capital over the crushing Japanese push in the ball-bearing field in Britain. Furthermore, Europe has very little to offer Japan in the way of exports, for the Japanese economy at present is based on heavy industry requiring massive imports of raw materials such as iron ore, coal and oil, as well as food and other primary products. Europe has nothing much to offer in this field. Therefore there is a lot of talk about the need to fundamentally reorientate the Japanese economy to light industry and technological industries which do not require massive raw material imports, thus allowing Europe big openings to export manufactured goods to Japan. Such a transformation of Japan's industrial structure would be fine if the Japanese ruling class had just been defeated in a major imperialist war and could therefore be told what to do by its 'allies'. But today even trade

concessions are difficult to extract. When William D. Eberle, President Nixon's foreign trade official, arrived in Tokyo on 8 February to demand a change of heart he got a stony silence. As the *FT* reported: "Japanese sources point out that Japan is not in a mood at this time to offer any major trade concessions."

At the height of the crisis the *Washington Post* bemoaned: "Each crisis contributes something more to a growing distrust and hostility between the US and its commercial competitors" — in other words, the "friendly allies" that dominate the world capitalist system are increasingly reaching for each others' throats. With this latest convulsion the battlefield has been extended over a vast range of issues: the battle of exchange rates; the battle over tariff barriers; the US administration's fight against the EEC's Value Added Tax scheme which taxes imports from the US at 5% but allows EEC exports to the USA to go free of VAT tax; the struggle over various exchange control systems; Nixon's attempts to torpedo the Common Market agricultural policy which blocks US exports on that front; the fight over the distribution of defence costs between the different imperialist powers; and so on.

MEANING FOR WORKING CLASS

After each crisis editorial writers hope that the main powers will be shocked into an agreement for fear of a total breakdown of international trade and credit, such as was witnessed in the 1930s. Instead we find that every new crisis of the system produces more feverish struggles between the imperialist states.

At the same time, each bourgeoisie increasingly has to turn its efforts to stepping up its exploitation of the working class, destroying the gains made by the workers during the years of the boom and thereby strengthening the capitalist class's ability to fight its foreign rivals.

This is exactly what has been happening in Britain over the past years, leading to the Tory Government's Industrial Relations Act and wage control laws, in addition to the hundred and one other measures to slash living standards and hamstring working class organisation.

Gasmen Step up the Pressure

After two months of struggle, pressure is now mounting from rank and file gas workers for the escalation of the fight.

The gas workers have replied to the violent press campaign point by point. The Gas Board's huge cut backs in recent years have produced an average of two gas explosions per week before the strike. When an area is pulled out on strike, standby emergency crews ensure that pressure does not drop too quickly; seven days notice of cuts is being given; and house to house checks by gas workers ensure that the switch off is effective. The whole furore about the gas workers being 'killers' is nothing more than an attempt to whip up violence against the rank and file.

SPECIAL CASE?

But the press campaign has been used by the General and Municipal Workers' Union leadership as a pretext for dodging the task of leading the fight to smash the freeze through mass industrial action by millions of workers. Instead, their strategy is to find some loophole through which gas workers can be steered, ending the dispute in some imaginary area of 'independent' bargaining. Strike action they see as gestures of protest, nothing more. They insist that gas workers are a 'special case'.

After all, haven't they, the leaders, co-operated with the Gas Board, increasing productivity by 200% over 2 years, at the cost of 22,500 redundancies? Isn't the Gas Board the only state enterprise making a profit? And hasn't it provided cheaper gas to industry, thus improving the profits of the capitalists?

"There should be some flexibility for dealing with cases of special merit. Every period of restraint prior to this has allowed for examination of special problems", says G&M leader Basnett. But we ask Mr. Basnett: how is he helping to win the sympathy of the working class if he endorses pay restraint for everybody else except his own men? The TUC, frightened by the prospect of the gasmen leading the biggest strike wave since

1926, has itself been protesting loudly. But Heath has already told them that their protests are useless. Special case?, says Heath; but everyone these days is a special case. If we allow special cases, the policy would be ruined. Set up an inquiry? But my dear chaps, the Pay Board is already going to look into these cases you say are so special, and then award the suitable increases in the autumn. Expand the economy? But look here, the economy is expanding, and your industrial action can only damage this expansion. Keep down food prices with market subsidies? But we can't control the world market, now can we?

WILSON'S FAIRY WAND

In the face of the rapidly rising strike movement, what do the 'political leaders' of the working class have to say? They have seized on Basnett's line, hoping to break the back of the movement.

Wilson first tried to defuse the movement by appealing to the Government to set up the Pay Board before Phase 2 has gone through Parliament, to deal quickly with the gas men. If this is a bit too unconstitutional, call it a 'Royal Commission' instead, suggested Wilson. After all, what the gas workers needed was a "bit of magic", as he so eloquently put it in a letter to Heath. The Commission would have no powers, but the satin and leather might just do the trick. The working class is supposed to be impressed with things like that.

Edward Short, Deputy Leader of the LP expressed the root of this contempt: "I do hope the (Tory) policy of combatting inflation succeeds for the sake of Britain, and also because I do not want the Labour Party to come back to power in a situation which is already much more menacing than in 1964". What is this menace? *The initiatives of the millions of workers*, this is the "menace"

PRACTICAL MEASURES

What measures can the gas workers themselves take to broaden the strike, measures

which are urgently necessary but which the leaders are obviously not going to initiate because of their fear of the movement? If there is one thing the Government knows, it is this: you must combine propaganda with practical measures. It is not enough to denounce the hospital workers as killers, if you want to serve the interests of the ruling class, you send circulars to regional hospital boards explaining how to mobilise prisoners, schoolchildren and army personnel to do 'volunteer' work in the hospitals so as to break the strike. You don't just send a letter to the gasmen pointing out the physical dangers of their action, you mobilise the charities to help the aged and sick so as to win them over to your side against the gas workers. You might even organise the odd gas explosion if you can get away with it.

Since the object is to hit the Gas Board and the Government, and not the old and sick, what measures does Basnett propose, especially now that the workers are forced to shut off the gas altogether in many towns this week? He suggests a leaflet, a leaflet which gasmen switching off supplies can push into the householders' hands, or shove through their letter boxes. This is all very well. But it is not enough. The initiatives of Liverpool and Newcastle offer a way forward here.

NEXT PRACTICAL STEP

Shop stewards could approach all the tenants committees and associations on the housing estates affected by gas cuts in their area. To the assembled tenants, the gas workers could directly explain their case, and appeal for support on the grounds that the time has come for everybody to stand up and fight the

Government's policies together.

The tenants committees could ensure that, with the aid of the gasmen, the safety measures could be put into effect on the estate. The old and infirm could be catered for by the organised tenants and workers themselves. What is more, if the Labour Party claims to stand for the interests of the working class, then let the Labour Councils turn over the funds which they keep for just such emergencies as this, to the tenants' organisations to use as they see fit. After all, the tenants know better than the Town Hall what the heating needs of the old and sick on their estates actually are. It is the isolation and lack of practical perspective which has been responsible in the past if these groups have got demoralised and turned their eyes to the Government. The organised initiatives of millions can easily overcome these difficulties.

CONFRONTATION

The gasmen are unlikely to win on their own. The co-ordination of the existing strikes is necessary. The leaders are not going to do it, therefore the rank and file must set about it by holding regional conferences of all workers against the freeze at which detailed proposals for extending the movement can be worked out. But such a movement has to organise the mass of the population in support as well. The organisation of the housing estates which is necessary at this very moment to strengthen the gas strike is precisely one of the steps the workers need to take to organise the masses for the major confrontation which is necessary and which the bureaucracy is trying to prevent.

ALF JENNING

YORKSHIRE INDOCHINA SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

DEBATING CHAMBER, LEEDS UNIVERSITY UNION, 10 MARCH 1973, 10am-7pm

Speakers: Tariq Ali, Malcolm Caldwell, Lek Hor Tan (Cambodian Representative) and Trade Union speakers

VISITOR/DELEGATE 10p

For tickets or further details write to:

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This issue of The Red Mole goes to press before the results of the Irish election are known. An analysis of these results will be carried in the next issue.

'Butter Not Guns'

Bourgeois governments seeking re-election often have the task of persuading the electorate to vote for guns instead of butter. It is a reflection of the complexity of the Irish situation that the Lynch government, in seeking re-election in the South of Ireland is appealing to the electorate on a programme of "Butter not Guns".

Taking advantage of the £30 million which will be saved by the Irish Exchequer when the Irish agricultural subsidies are paid by the EEC Common Agricultural Fund, Fianna Fail is bribing the electorate with a proposal to spend this £30 million, representing more than one third of the total public expenditure, on a massive social welfare programme, which almost doubles the amount spent on welfare, and would make massive inroads into the gap between the Irish standard of social welfare, and the general Western European standard.

The other side of the programme, although not explicitly spelt out, will mean increased repression, in a desperate attempt to defeat in the South the Republicans whom the British are unable to defeat in the North.

The National Coalition "alternative government", an alliance of the traditional Law-and-Order thugs of Fine Gael with the Trade Union-backed Labour Party, is running on essentially the same programme, with this minor difference: it was the first to call for repression and the first to propose the bribe.

When Lynch first announced the snap election, many people saw this as a sign of his strength. In fact, that he is forced to offer this bribe at all is evidence of his precarious position. As pointed out in the last issue of *The Red Mole*, Lynch is aware that the White Paper is likely to offer little of significance to the Catholics in the North. Yet to be successful in the repression to which he is committed, he will be forced sooner or later to introduce large-scale internment, under whatever euphemism, in the South.

He could not do this on his old parliamentary strength. Thus one of the reasons for the timing of the election was an attempt to flush out and purge the "pro-Republican" dissidents in his own Party. But while Fianna Fail centrally appeals for votes on the basis of having kept the South out of the Northern war, in areas with strong Republican minorities, Fianna Fail canvassers are forced to appeal for votes on the basis that "Jack (Lynch) only cracked down on the boys when Cosgrave blew the gaff".

Halfway through the election, Lynch is forced to shake hands with Haughey whom he dismissed from the government and then imprisoned for alleged pro-Republican activity.

Whatever the result of this election — and a Republican victory is excluded — it will not mean the end of the Irish struggle. The nationalist population of the North, which forms the backbone of the armed resistance to British imperialism, although Irish citizens according to Southern law, have no vote in the election.

Neither have the more than a million Southern citizens forced to emigrate to Britain. A poll carried out by the leading emigrant newspaper, the *Irish Post*, showed Republican parties getting almost half the votes of this section of the Irish nation.

In the South itself although an amendment to the constitution last year gave the vote to 18 year-olds, in this election nobody under 22 will have a vote, thus disenfranchising over 200,000 people.

Thus three of the politically most conscious sections of the Irish people, and those most active in pro-Republican politics, are unrepresented. But the energy and support of these people, mobilised on the streets, will continue to be the main base for this phase of the Irish struggle.

Gery Lawless

The Elections: Statement by the Political Committee of the Revolutionary Marxist Group

AGAINST REPRESSION VOTE REPUBLICAN

The Government has dissolved the Dail, without warning, or regard for the just claims of the 140,000 young voters enfranchised by the Referendum of December 7th.

Why has it done so?

The answer lies in the crisis in the North, now approaching its climax, wrapped up in the White-Law Paper. It can be safely prophesied that the Paper's proposals will solve nothing; that they will merely camouflage a withdrawal of British troops from the North, after they have made the North safe for the Vanguard movement.

To achieve this situation, a strong neo-colonial regime in the South will be essential. Lynch has weathered the storm very successfully so far; but he will need more seats to strengthen his position in order to withstand the opposition which he expects to the British plans for Ireland.

It is true that he has some disagreements with his master Heath — *Jack is a lackey, not a mere puppet: he has some room for manoeuvre.*

Heath basically does not care whether Lynch or Cosgrave is in power in the Twenty-Six Counties. On 30th November, Lynch was ready to go to the country, to get a mandate for his coercive law, the Offences against the State (Amendment) Act. Heath, however, wanted the law's immediate passage more than he wanted it to be operated by any particular government.

"Persons unknown" bombed and killed Dubliners, blowing the strawmen of Fine Gael away from the "Nil" lobby, where they had been going to oppose the Act.

The British were off the hook; Lynch was still wriggling on it.

He had 18 months left in which to call a General Election. He knows that the effect of the White-Law Paper will prevent any existing government in Leinster House from having an easy ride in the near future: he had to ensure his prospects by holding a general election before the White-Law Paper appeared. There could be no waiting for the enfranchisement of 18 year-olds in April.

The British, who so signally scuppered Jack's hopes of a Christmas election, are now helping him by acting as if they really mean to give everyone in the North a fair deal — if only by arresting Protestants as well as Catholics. The tendency among large sections of the population of the South to wish that the North would quieten down of its own accord is thus being encouraged. Eventually, people will wake up to the reality; but by then Jack and his gaffer, Ted Heath, expect that things will be too far gone for anyone to do anything about them.

BLANK CHEQUE

Jack Lynch expects — a blank cheque from this election.

The Dublin government already has the strongest powers of coercion enjoyed by any government in Western Europe. In gaining them, it has been helped by the claims of so-called liberals and constitutionalists to be opposed to the "non-political" strategies of the genuine fighters for national unification. Probably they had the support of the majority of the population, which, as we have said, is ready to believe in the ability of British imperialism and its Irish client capitalism to solve equitably the question of national unity.

The Revolutionary Marxist Group makes no apology for stating once again that this belief is an illusion, and a dangerous one. We claim that at least one man has proved his agreement with us — Jack Lynch. If he believed in the justice of the White-Law Paper, why did he not wait for it to appear to justify

his policies? Why is he prepared to disenfranchise the very youth for whom he claimed to take such pains to get the vote.

If Jack gets back, we may expect him to make disapproving noises at the mess that Britain and Vanguard will make of Northern Ireland.

However, when he acts, it will be against those elements who are subversive enough to do something about it. To succeed in this, he needs a "mandate".

But there are still more important reasons why the present situation is dangerous. Over the last decade, we have seen what the Government can do with the powers it has. The Trade Unions, the farmers, the homeless, R.T.E. have all suffered at its hands. Much of this occurred at a time of prosperity. Now unemployment is increasing again. At the same time inflation is rampant. Both these trends as the R.M.G. has warned before are likely to continue and accelerate, now that we are in the E.E.C.

Economic discontent will increase and the government will have more powers to deal with it.

Do you want Ruari Roberts to follow Ruari Brady into jail? Irish capitalism cannot avoid this, except at the cost of many humbler trade unionists.

The only immediate alternative to Fianna Fail is little more prepossessing — the Fine Gael/Labour coalition. A Government headed by Liam Cosgrave — a man notoriously guided by the urge to live down his Daddy's image — is unlikely to be either less subservient to Britain or more agreeable to workers.

But what of Labour, the partner in the coalition. Cosgrave senior also liked coalitions — of his dog and its fleas. Perhaps the Labour Party is a rather large flea, but its role is nonetheless written. It has changed its mind — usually for the worse — on so many issues, that it has credibility only for those who would vote for any hole-in-the-wall covered with a Labour poster. The only result of bringing (second-hand) brains into the Labour Party has been that these brains give better and more subtle reasons for abandoning Labour principles.

Under Billy Norton, the party at least tended to be firm on civil liberties (except of course in coalition when its own man was in the Justice Department). During the last year, however, we have seen the edifying spectacle of the Labour Party imitating the amoeba on the Prison's Bill (for non-biologists, the amoeba is an interesting creature — it can split indefinitely). Curiouser and curiouser... we saw the liberal constitutional Cruise O'Brien acting on this issue notably less liberally than Deputy S. (as in Storm Trooper) Coughlan.

But the politics of the coalition would be ludicrous enough, even if its executors had any credibility. In the present crisis, the only credible policies offered by an Irish capitalist Government would be those of a political nature; on the one hand "dismantling" the repressive nature of the state; on the other, secularising it.

Instead the firm of Cosgrave and Corish is going to spend money in a big way.

Where are they going to get the money? Where did Harold Wilson in Britain get the money for his social and economic reforms?

Yes, you're right. That's why there weren't too many reforms.

If any Irish capitalist government (and the coalition of Liam Cosgrave and the 50 other reasons against socialism will be capitalist) is to carry out any sort of economic development, reform is out, and repression is in.

The R.M.G. insists that there can be no joy for the Irish people from any government likely to come from this election.

DONT PLAY THIS CARD...



Against Repression
Vote
Republican

The only answer in the immediate future is to see that these sell-outs are limited and exposed by outsiders to their little game.

Accordingly we call upon all voters to support candidates pledged to work for the repeal of repressive legislation. Where there is no such candidate in a constituency, voters should make their views felt in other ways.

In particular where there is a Sinn Fein candidate, (Kevin St. or Gardiner Place) give him or her your No. 1 vote.

Oppose repression and the pending betrayal of the North, to keep the door open for the only equitable basis for economic development — The Workers' Republic.

GLOSSARY

Dail - Assembly. **Vanguard** - Extreme Orange Movement. **Cosgrave** - Liam Cosgrave, leader of the main opposition party, Fine Gael, which is fighting the election in coalition with the Labour Party. **Leinster House** - Meeting place of the Dail. **Ruari Roberts** - leader of the Trade Union movement. **Ruari Brady** - President of Sinn Fein (Provisional). **Billy Norton** - Former Labour leader. **Conor Cruise O'Brien** - liberal pro-imperialist Labour Deputy. **S. Coughlan** - Right wing Labour Deputy. **B. Corish** - Labour Party Leader. **Kevin Street** - Provos. **Gardiner Place** - Officials.

Copies of the special election edition of the RMG's paper *The Plough*, price 5p, can be obtained from *The Red Mole*.



REVOLUTIONARY
MARXIST
GROUP

(Irish supporters of
the Fourth International)

58 North Great Charles St.,
DUBLIN

I would like more information
about the RMG
and its activities.

NAME

ADDRESS

The Left and the Tory Government

As the gas workers, Ford workers and others go into struggle against the Freeze and even the press and right wing officials talk of the possibility of a general confrontation and the "country becoming ungovernable", it is necessary for the left to look carefully at its policies. Differences which now appear small may become of crucial importance in any mass upsurge. This article therefore looks at some of the most important debates at present going on in the left.

Except for a few nutty ultra-lefts, every organisation on the left is for getting rid of the Tory government. However the reasons given in favour of this are in general totally confused. The Labour Party suggests that getting rid of the government would almost by itself solve all the problems of the working class. This is nonsense. The economic attacks on the working class would continue. A simple change in government cannot control a capitalist economy. The Communist Party and the Labour left think that all would be well if the right sort of government, one with 'left' or 'socialist' policies got into office. It could then nationalise decisive sectors of the economy and tackle the economic problems. This also is totally utopian.

The British ruling class is never going to allow its economy and wealth to be taken off its hands peacefully. Only if the working class had first smashed the capitalist class's army and police could a government proceed to take over the economy. It is these facts which have to be the starting point of any analysis of fighting the Tory government. Firstly to show that no government, including the best intentioned Labour one, could solve the problems of the working class without taking the economy out of the hands of the capitalist class without smashing the power of the bourgeois state. The Social Democrats and most of the left *hide* these simple facts from the working class. They say that the real struggle is over the government. They do not base themselves on the fact that *any* government of a party of the working class cannot deal with the real problems unless the capitalist state is first dealt with. When revolutionaries say things such as 'All struggles must be placed in the context of the struggle against the Tory government' they in fact mislead and miseducate the masses. The only correct formulation is that 'Every struggle, including that against the Tory government, must be placed in the context of the struggle against the bourgeois state.' As we shall see, this difference is decisive when it comes to the question of general confrontation between the working class and the ruling class.

When placed in the correct context it can be seen that the correct attitude in principle towards the Tory government is like that towards any other part of the state apparatus (for a government is nothing other than a part of the state apparatus). It is necessary to *smash* that government. In that sense a slogan of 'Down with the Tory government' is just an expression of the general attitude towards all parts of the bourgeois state apparatus.

CENTRALISING THE STRUGGLE

Just to decide what a position is in principle is not sufficient to deal with all the problems of a practical situation. If the attitude towards the Tory government is like that towards every part of the state apparatus, then this does not give practical guidance as to whether struggle should be centralised against the government or against the army or against the monarchy, or what. It is still necessary to find the 'weak link' in the situation.

In some situations it is definitely incorrect, a complete diversion, to centralise the main struggle against a government. In a country like Argentina or Greece, for example, the government is a mere puppet made and unmade at will by the army. To concentrate in such a situation on the government, and not on the army, would be completely to mislead the masses.

In Britain at present, however, the Tory government is a weak link. This is for two basic reasons. Firstly the Tory government is an open declared enemy of the working class. The removal and smashing of this government would therefore be seen by the working class as a big step forward. It would strengthen the confidence and militancy of the class. Secondly, a Labour government would find it hard to carry out the particular policies needed by the ruling class in the present situation. Social Democratic governments are very useful to the bourgeoisie when it is a question of doing a quiet deal with the trade union bureaucracy. They are also useful to the ruling class in a revolutionary situation. Then the Social Democrats form alliances with the fascists, murder workers' leaders, etc.

At the present time however the ruling class needs neither of these things. A quiet deal

and file under control, and things haven't got so desperate yet that the ruling class is prepared to embark on such dangerous courses as murdering working class leaders. What is needed at the present time is a policy of economic and political confrontation with the unions. For this the Labour party, which relies for money and votes on trade union support, is far less useful as a government to the ruling class than the Tory party. The bringing down of the Tory government would therefore most likely leave the ruling class with a weak flabby government which would find it far more difficult to carry out properly the tasks that were needed for British capitalism.

EVERY MEANS NECESSARY

Once it is decided that a central task at the present time is to get rid of the Tory government then of course the means to be used are clear. As only the revolutionaries are practical men they alone conclude that *every means necessary* must be used. There is no point in willing an end and then refusing the means necessary to get it. That is just utopianism. All that has to be decided on are what are the most decisive means to use in the situation.

What are definitely *not* decisive means are the present way in which the working class is going into struggle. The present tactics of the working class are not confronting the general centralised attack by the ruling class with a general centralised attack by the working class.

Of course, it may be that the gas men, the Ford workers and so on will win even in individual struggles. It is the task of every socialist and trade unionist to ensure that this does happen. But the present struggle is being carried out in a way that is extremely ineffective from the point of view of the real political strength of the working class and in a way that gives big and unnecessary advantages to the ruling class. Whereas the capitalist class is centralising all its efforts through the state, the working class is going into struggle in individual detachments. By allowing the struggle to go forward as first gasmen, then teachers, then civil service workers, then Fords men and so on, the working class is not using its full strength. A centralised general form of struggle has far better chances of success.

A GENERAL STRIKE

If we consider the working class of Western Europe, it is clear, and proved by experience, that in general the mass general strike is the instinctive weapon of struggle.

The reasons for this are obvious. The withdrawal of work paralyses the country and frees the working class for the tasks of organisation. It is therefore natural that now, when the working class is faced with huge attacks, the general strike should be the form of struggle that the most advanced militants think of for decisive struggles.

What does the slogan of a general strike mean in the consciousness of the working class movement? For the bureaucratic leaders it means just a form, a rather frightening form, of protest. For the masses however it means something entirely different. A general strike for them means an all out war against the enemy. The masses may be unsure as to the exact aims or exact forms of the struggle, but the slogan of a general strike means a desire to bring about a decisive clash with the class enemy. The revolutionaries of course advance and support this demand. They too are for a decisive struggle against the foe.

FALSE POSITIONS

One very important point which has to be dealt with in connection with the general strike is the way some revolutionaries put forward the demand. They say "The TUC must call a General Strike" and couple this with a central demand of "Recall the TUC". This is a completely wrong way of putting forward the slogan. It suggests that the bureaucracy is all powerful and that *only* they can really organise the struggle.

This is completely false. On the contrary, by far the most important general strikes are those which burst out from the base and which the bureaucracy is forced into supporting after they have started. It is completely false to say only the bureaucracy can organise a decisive clash. If that were true all would be lost, for the bureaucracy is never going to

revolutionaries suggesting that the actions of the bureaucracy are all important, they must all the time stress that it is possible for the masses to struggle without and against the bureaucracy. The job of the revolutionary party is to concentrate the attention of the working class on the steps *the masses* can take - not to concentrate attention on what the bureaucracy is doing.

Another big confusion on the question of the General Strike is on what its aims should be posed as. One variant here is to suggest that its aim must be the return of a Labour government ('pledged to socialist policies') or to force a General Election. This is completely wrong. It is one thing to raise the demand for the strike to kick out the Tories. This is a necessary step in the class struggle whether they are replaced by another government within the bourgeois state or whether that bourgeois state is replaced by a proletarian state. It does not in any way place a limit on the aims of the struggle. What will follow the Tories will depend on the relation of forces at the time such a thing was achieved.

The demand for a General Strike to lead to a Labour government, let alone for a General Election, is something quite different. This is to accept *in advance* that the relation of forces during the struggle will not develop to a point where the bourgeois state can be broken. It is to project one of the highest forms of struggle of the working class while accepting that it will only achieve a result within the capitalist state. This is not at all the role of revolutionaries. Their task is not at all to draw a line and say the masses will not advance beyond this point. The task of a revolutionary organisation is to

Alan Jones

intervene to attempt to develop the relation of forces to the furthest possible extent in their favour - not to accept in advance that the struggle will not go beyond the bounds of the bourgeois state.

A confusion of a similar type was made by some revolutionary tendencies at the time of the Freeing of the Five when they called for a General Strike to smash the Industrial Relations Act. This is just another confused variant of those who claim that the aim of a General Strike must be to gain a Labour Government. To pose the aim of a General Strike as being against the Industrial Relations Act is also to accept in advance that the struggle will not advance beyond a certain point, that the relationship of forces cannot develop within the struggle in favour of revolution. If the Act is repealed then the aim posed for the strike would be achieved. It would be like the grand old duke of York who marched ten thousand men to the top of the hill only to march them down again. The aim of such a decisive clash as a General Strike cannot be posed as some reform. Even if the strike should start round more limited aims it is the task of *revolutionaries* to attempt to turn this into a decisive struggle for *power* - not to pose its aim as some gain *within* the bourgeois state.

GENERAL STRIKE AND THE STATE

The difference between "placing all struggles in the context of a fight against the Tory government" and "placing all struggles, including that against the Tory government, in the context of fighting against the bourgeois state" can be seen most clearly and practically in the case of preparation for a general confrontation such as a General Strike. If the struggle is simply against the Tory government then the existing organisations of the working class may well do for the struggle - the Tories will be forced out of office, there will be an election etc. If on the other hand the struggle is against the *state* then very different steps have to be taken.

To British ears, conditioned by decades of reformism, struggle against the state sounds very odd. It sounds as if small groups of people should attack police stations or something like that. To fight

against the state as opposed to simply fighting against the government, at present means two things. Firstly it means beginning to educate the working class that the state despite its Parliamentary democratic forms, is a bourgeois state, a class state, and that the law is a class law. This means completely rejecting all arguments such as that the government 'does not have a mandate'. To advance such an argument is actually to *accept* the present basis of the state and simply argue that the government is not functioning correctly as part of that state. It is to completely mislead and miseducate the working class as to the nature of bourgeois democracy. Secondly it means to begin to project in the working class struggle *as it is unfolding today* those steps and measures which will become decisive in any general head-on confrontation between the working class and the bourgeoisie. The key measures here are two. Firstly, it is hopeless for the working class to attempt to fight the centralised power of the state without drawing all the forces of the working class and its potential allies into the struggle. This means pointing out the need for a *generalised* confrontation against the bourgeoisie. The second task is explaining and showing in practice the necessary steps for success in any such confrontation. These political and practical steps are the decisive ones in preparing for a general strike.

HOW TO PREPARE

While for the working class the demand for a General Strike means a call for a decisive clash with the ruling class, nevertheless it has to be realised that enormous problems exist with the slogan of the General Strike. In particular as a real weapon of war a general strike in itself, the mere stoppage of work, is a relatively weak weapon. It may do for economic struggle but it is hopeless for decisive political tasks. Nothing could be more absurd than to propose to starve the capitalists into surrender, for while the workers may be immobilised by the strike the repressive forces of the state, the army and the police, are very much active and mobile. A general strike which only leads to a simple stoppage of work therefore runs a big risk of being a defeat for the working class. Every general strike of this type in history confirms this lesson.

Does this mean therefore that revolutionaries are opposed to general strikes? On the contrary. While a stoppage of work in itself is not a strong weapon nevertheless that stoppage makes possible hundreds of things which *are* real and formidable weapons of struggle. The most important of all these things is organisation. Once the working class begins to elect strike committees, form Councils of Action in the areas, move towards national conferences of factory delegates and so on then the power of the ruling class is at once really threatened. Immediately the question of 'who rules' is on the order of the day. This can be seen even in such a simple question as the control of the movement of supplies and transport. Are scabs and supplies to be moved 'according to the law of the land' or are they

going to be controlled by the workers? It is this type of development, in which the working class begins to assert its own power against the bourgeois state, that is the real threat to the capitalist class - not the simple stoppage of work.

It is quite clear from this that the main task of revolutionaries in preparing for any sort of decisive clash, such as a general strike, is to bring to the forefront the question of the *organisation* of the struggle. It is this which is decisively important because it is the success or failure of this which will determine the outcome of the struggle. If the working class is not organised before or during the struggle in strike committees, councils of action and similar organisations, then not only will the working class not be able to tackle really decisive problems, the overthrow of the government, the seizure of state power, but the reformist leaders of the working class will be able easily to get the movement under their control and sell it out.

This theme of organisation, which constitutes the main work of revolutionaries in preparing for a decisive clash, is summed up in the slogan **ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE**.

STRIKE. This is far more decisive than arguments about the exact day when the strike should begin - although of course in certain situations, like the arrest of the five dockers, it is necessary to place the emphasis on demanding that the strike should start immediately without delay.

PRACTICAL STEPS.

But simply to issue calls for organisation and to pass resolutions through union branches on general strikes is not enough. It is necessary to know what *practical* steps must be taken to bring about the necessary organisation.

Some revolutionaries say that the immediate answer is setting up Councils of Action, that is local bodies with elected representatives of shop stewards committees, trade union branches, tenants, students and so on. Is this policy correct? The answer is that it depends on the relation of forces in any given area. In a real mass upsurge a Council of Action is an absolute necessity, but to play any useful role it must be deeply rooted in the masses. Nothing is more useless than a tiny handful of people declaring themselves to be a real Council of Action and claiming that they lead the working class in an area. But if a Council of Action with real roots in the class in an area can be established then it should be set up without delay.

The first and simplest step is the organisation of conferences in areas to discuss the struggle against the freeze and against the government. These should draw in the widest possible layers of trade unionists, tenants, students and so on. Some first steps along these lines have already been taken. The Ford shop stewards asked health workers and others in struggle to their national meeting to discuss their pay claim. Various elected committees of gas workers have tried to work out how to involve other sections. Health workers organisations such as the London Alliance of Shop Stewards in Health have called for conferences to discuss joint ways of fighting, and conferences have taken place or been planned in Manchester and Rotherham. The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions Conference on 31 March could be a step forward - although unfortunately here the Communist Party's refusal to practise working class democracy will probably prevent as much being achieved as could be. At the very least, however, ad hoc committees for the planned strike on May 1st can be established.

These and similar conferences can and should be called throughout the country as an immediate step. They can be used to lay the groundwork for any future steps in organisation. In some cases it may be possible to establish permanent organisation at once out of such meetings. In most cases it will not. But at least the question of decisive working class organisation for struggle will begin to be raised in the minds of militants.

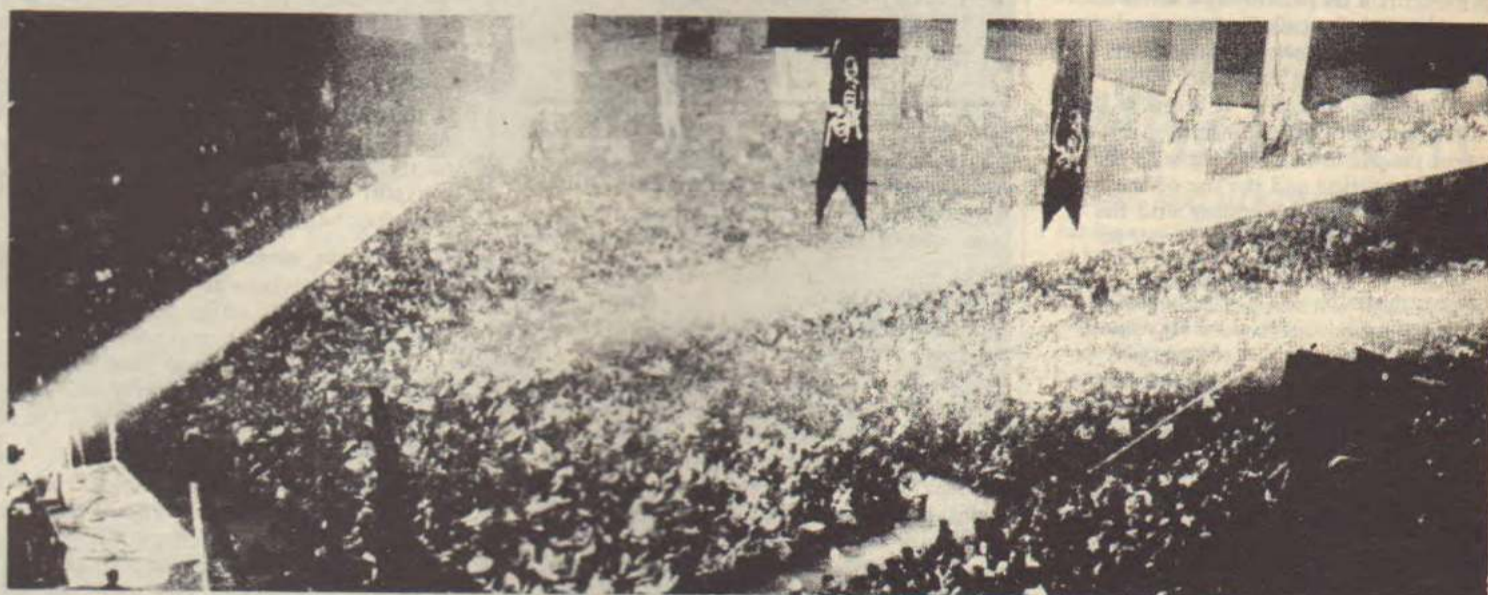
COMING STRUGGLES

The next decisive steps forward in the struggle for organisation can be taken during the big strike struggles which are coming. Already round local struggles various groups have taken initiatives. In the case of the CAV struggle attempts were made to organise real solidarity conferences. A national conference of solidarity was held for Fine Tubes. During the miners' strike solidarity between all sorts of social forces was established on a big scale. In East Anglia, for example, miners, other workers, unemployed and students organised picketing, accommodation, watches on the ports and other forms of solidarity action. Such moves must be made on a far bigger and more organised scale during any future big struggles.

In every big national or local strike all social groups and organisations should come together to pursue the struggle. A conference or support committee organised in an area can organise trade unionists to carry out blacking and solidarity strikes, students and tenants to provide accommodation, unemployed to picket, law students and claimants unions to deal with the police and social security, and so on. The response to the legal attacks on Briants where thousands of trade unionists demonstrated and students picketed round the clock shows the way here. Once again such immediate steps can begin to raise the question of organisation for big and decisive struggles. It is these practical and to the point measures which aid the present struggle and prepare future ones which now flow from the general slogan of organising for a decisive clash with the bourgeoisie. This is what real practical and decisive preparation for a

Union of Left 'a blind alley'

THE LEFT AND THE FRENCH ELECTIONS



Communist League rally at Paris Sports Palace

Rouge

"For revolutionists, there is only one road to socialism. The bourgeois state must be destroyed and the dictatorship of the proletariat established ... For the first time, thanks to 1968, the question of power is posed."

With these words, Alain Krivine opened the election campaign of the Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International) at a meeting in Paris on 7 February. Seven thousand people packed into the Palais des Sports to hear the speakers put forward an alternative to the 'common programme' of the Union of the Left. (coalition of the Communist Party, Socialist Party and the Left Radicals) A tremendous ovation was given to the last speaker, Ernest Mandel, who had once again defied the entry ban imposed on him by the regime in 1968 to speak for the Fourth International at the meeting.

AGREEMENT

The Ligue is running 92 candidates in the elections, on the basis of an agreement with the Lutte Ouvriere (LO) group whereby the two organisations will not run candidates against each other. As a result there will be a candidate exposing the 'parliamentary roadism' of the Union of the Left in 263 out of the 487 constituencies. In the first round of voting, on 4 March, the Ligue is calling for a *programmatic* vote, i.e. a vote for the revolutionary candidate or abstention where none is standing. In the second round, however, on 11 March, it will call for support for the candidates of the Union of the Left - but purely on the basis that a success for the coalition would be a setback for the bourgeoisie which would strengthen the confidence and combativity of the working class in its struggles.

ELECTORALISM

At the same time, though, there will be no letting up in the denunciation of the electoralism of the Union of the Left. As Krivine put it at the Paris meeting: "The components of the Union of the Left think social institutions are neutral; they want to build socialism by using the present structures. It's like giving a drinking straw to a fireman and thinking that that makes it a fire extinguisher."

Already the 'common programme' is being presented less and less as a path to socialism, and the leader of the Socialist Party, Mitterrand, is adamant that the coalition wants to retain Pompidou as President, despite the latter's veiled hints at a coup d'etat if things go too badly for the bourgeoisie. Just where such an electoralist perspective leads has already been demonstrated by the S.P. secretary, Chevenement, who proposes to prevent a sudden outflow of capital by guaranteeing its profitability in France. In other words, by *guaranteeing the continued and increased exploitation of the working class under a government of the Union of the Left*. Marchais, leader of the CP has promised too that there will be fewer strikes if the coalition wins.

The whole campaign of the Ligue

Communiste has been centred around the need to destroy illusions that a victory for the Union of the Left can substitute for the independent struggle of the working class and its allies to overthrow capitalism in its entirety. Such a struggle, the Ligue emphasises, will involve illegal methods and the use of violence to achieve its purpose.

ILLUSIONS

Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the other major 'Trotskyist' groups taking part in the elections. The OCI-AJS, followers of Pierre Lambert and formerly part of the SLL's International Committee, initially agreed to join the Ligue and Lutte Ouvriere in dividing up the constituencies, but has now decided that the Ligue and LO candidates "are crypto-Stalinists pushed by the bourgeoisie". So instead it will vote in the first round for the candidates of the Communist and Socialist parties, and *against* those who stand on the basis of rejecting reformism.

Moreover, this goes hand in hand with the peddling of the most amazing illusions in what such a government could do. The Lambertists first note that "none of the elementary and basic demands of the proletariat and the youth, of the masses, are realisable under the decadent capitalist system" . . . and then go on to conclude that, "To the question, What Government can satisfy their demands? there is but one answer: Only a government of the big workers' parties, a government set up by the SP and the CP."! In other words, somewhere along the line, this government is going to overthrow capitalism! As an article in the Ligue's newspaper, *Rouge*, commented: "This is no longer opportunism; it is servility." One wonders why the OCI-AJS should even bother to put up the 19 candidates it is running.

LUTTE OUVRIERE

Lutte Ouvriere, too, while correctly stressing the altogether moderate and ambiguous nature of the social measures contained in the 'common programme', also manage to sidestep the most important question: how the working class is going to destroy the domination of the bourgeoisie and frustrate its counter-revolutionary violence, in order to impose *any* demands it might raise.

Instead, LO have tended to concentrate on raising "more revolutionary" demands than those of the Union of the Left - a 30 hour instead of a 40 hour week, a minimum wage of 1,500 instead of 1,000 francs a month, etc. etc. This is combined with two proposed alterations in the state power: "A closer control by the voters over those they elect"; and "The decentralisation of power and decision-making centres". But nowhere is the class content of this power specified. This inevitably leads to what are not only confusing but positively dangerous demands, such as that to decentralise the police force! LO's 'Programme of the Revolutionists' has this to say: "We are told that the police are necessary, even indispensable, for the protection of the citizens. Fine! But then let's put them at the disposal of the

citizens, that is, of local institutions of power".

This actually ignores the fact that the police are an instrument of bourgeois rule; that an integral task in the struggle of the working class has to be the disarming of the armed bands of the bourgeois state, and their replacement by armed workers organised in self-defence committees. Instead, the workers are supposed to put their trust in some classless police force under the control of some classless 'citizens' in a situation from which the most vital element - the question of who rules, the working class or the bourgeoisie - is totally omitted. Thus LO, despite its critique of the Union of the Left, finishes up on much the same terrain.

BOURGEOISIE

If most of the left prefers to skirt around this problem, however, the bourgeoisie has no such illusions about its lack of importance. For them the question of state power is absolutely fundamental, as has already been shown by its use against the revolutionaries in the election campaign. In several constituencies, candidates of the Ligue and LO have been harassed and arrested by the police in manufactured incidents. More seriously, the Ligue has been refused time on TV; the number of candidates it is putting forward entitles it to seven minutes, but the State authority claims not to have received the necessary official forms. The Ligue was not informed of the meeting at which this was decided, and LO found out about it only three hours before it took place.

Further, LO has been refused the use of the Palais des Sports for a meeting on 26 February. Attempts to find an alternative hall have at the time of writing met with rebuffs from all the municipal authorities approached.

The bourgeoisie recognises the importance of who holds the State power, all right. It intends to use it, too. But the left for the most part absolutely refuses to face up to this question. The importance of the Ligue Communiste's campaign is that it alone has stressed as the central task the *independent organisation* of the working class and its allies to break for ever the hold of capitalism.

John Marston

Hear
ALAIN KRIVINE

of the Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International)
speak on: 'THE FRENCH ELECTIONS AND THE TASKS OF THE LEFT'

Wednesday, 7th March at 7.30 p.m.

Old Town Hall, Hampstead, N.W.3.
(nearest tube: Belsize Park)

Meeting organised by London IMG

REVIEWS

"Preparing for Power"

Pluto Press is doing a great service to the labour movement by publishing a series of what could rightly be called minor classics of the 20th Century workers' movement. J.T. Murphy's *Preparing for Power* definitely falls into this category. It is one of the most useful short histories of the labour movement yet published, starting with the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the modern working class and ending with the perspectives confronting British labour in the 1930's.

The book is more than a history, however, as its title indicates. It is an apologetic for the author's own political safari from syndicalism through communism and stalinism to the centrist socialist League in the Labour Party, led by Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan.

Several sections of the book should be of particular interest to the new generation of revolutionary socialists who may be unacquainted with these particular periods in working class history. Murphy was a Marxist, who showed the potential of developing into that rarity in British socialism, an outstanding theoretician. This was shown by his recognition of the significance of the shop stewards' movement in 1917 though it was not till after the first world war and the Russian Revolution that he, and others, were able to draw the full revolutionary implications. Unfortunately, Murphy's theoretical development was to be blunted against the rock of stalinism, but his use of the Marxist methodology in his analysis of the labour movement helps the reader to an understanding of the strengths and shortcomings of the movement as it developed since the turn of the century.

Many younger revolutionaries may be puzzled why Marxism was never able to win the leadership of the British labour movement even in the distorted form of Continental social-democracy. From Murphy's book it becomes clear that it was the sectarianism of the early "Marxists" led by Hyndman which isolated the revolutionaries from the main stream of the workers' movement. They went to the opposite extreme of the economists and made a frontal attack on the trade unions which only succeeded in antagonizing that movement. Later, when the Labour Party was formed, Hyndman and his supporters failed to recognise the historical importance of what Lenin described as "...the first step to socialism and a class policy for the mass proletarian organisation" (Collected Works, vol. xii, pp 347-348). At that stage, in the Labour Party's infancy, genuine revolutionary Marxists could have played a significant role in its subsequent development.

In the years which followed, the militant wing of the labour movement fell more and more under the influence of syndicalism and the De Leonist brand of "Marxism", whose chief exponent in this country was James Connolly. It was in this school that Murphy had his political baptism to emerge as one of the leaders of the

PREPARING FOR POWER, by J.T. Murphy (Pluto Press, £3 hard, £1 paper) | George Cunvin

Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement in the 1914-18 war. As a member of the Socialist Labour Party, he became one of the founders of the Communist Party in 1921.

STALINISM

Murphy was in Moscow, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, when the fight against Trotskyism began. By this time he had been completely absorbed into the bureaucratic machinery. His critical faculties were blunted and he threw himself into the struggle on Stalin's side. To him fell the dubious honour of moving Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist International.

Stalinism had a particularly disastrous effect on the British Communist Party. It followed blindly the diktats from Moscow and, as a consequence, despite the undoubted militancy of many of its rank and file in the industrial field, was never able to establish itself as an important political factor in the British labour movement. Murphy himself, after his expulsion from the CP in 1932, became, in retrospect, severely critical of the role of the CP and even expressed the thought that the party should never have been established in the first place. By this time, however, he was quite unable to distinguish between Stalinism and the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky, both of whom had striven desperately to try and save the British communists from drowning in the morass of sectarianism.

The weakest section in the book is probably the concluding chapter, "Perspectives and Conclusions". This covers the period of the Socialist League, a "left-wing" development inside the Labour Party, started by that section of the ILP which refused to follow Maxton and Brockway when they led the party to disaffiliation from the Labour Party. Murphy saw salvation in the essentially centrist "Programme of Action" drawn up by the League. For him the road forward to socialism now lay through the Labour Party, if only (ah, if only) the leadership could be changed. Stafford Cripps and Bevan, the leaders of the Socialist League, eventually became members of His Majesty's Government, in the 1945 Labour cabinet. How far did they take us towards that socialist goal?

This book is valuable as a first-class history of the turbulent years of the labour movement in Britain which marked the first three decades of the 20th Century. From it it is also necessary to face up to the problem which Murphy and his fellow-revolutionaries failed to solve. How can revolutionary Marxists overcome their isolation from the mainstream of British labour and win its leadership?

LETTERS

As the leading participant in the St Pancras rent struggle, you will, I hope, allow me to review Jack Lewis's review of the pamphlet by Dave Burn (in *The Red Mole*, 3 February) and add a few comments of my own.

I had already reviewed the date and chronological aspects of the draft during summer '72, and would readily subscribe to the accuracy and correctness of details and events as portrayed throughout the narrative.

The role of the Labour Party is also well illustrated—although much more could be said of the degenerative and anti-working class policies and attitudes of the local parties, the councillors, Transport House and the two local Labour MPs of that period.

Jack, however, seems to be mainly intrigued with the CP involvement in the struggle. He criticises the lack of detail, accepts certain unsubstantiated propositions that the CP were in the leadership of the struggle, and failing to find any alternative, blames them alone for changing the tenants' policies and for the subsequent defeat of the movement.

He does, however, recognise that the tenants' leadership did not consciously 'sell out' after waging such a fierce struggle, although he identifies myself and others in the leadership, with the CP.

I accept, of course, that Jack may be making his analysis only on the basis of the pamphlet. It is also possible to reflect on a 12 year old struggle and see more clearly what might have happened.

The real problems of the struggle have certainly not emerged from either the pamphlet or the review.

The main strength of the movement from the beginning resulted from the fact that whilst members of CP, LP and non-party worked together as the leadership of the tenants, neither CP nor LP were allowed to dominate the tenants' policies.

The LP made certain vital errors. First, they attempted to take over demonstrations. When this failed, constitutionalism was thrust down the throats of the tenants. This also failed, so in the early days of the actual rent strike (Jan. '60) they descended to out-and-out sabotage, in an attempt to smash the movement, before the movement smashed the Tory council (which almost happened), thus preventing a political advance by tenants and workers totally incomprehensible to these so-called political(?) leaders of the working class.

This treachery succeeded in part, but failed to break the mainstream of the movement, which maintained its threat of outright opposition to the Tory rent policy.

The CP played an entirely different role. They chose not to intervene, and were seen as giving all possible assistance and technical aid, yet allowing the tenants to make their own judgments and decisions.

Obviously both CP and LP, as groups, injected their own interpretations of political analysis and policy into the tenants' meetings. But the fundamental policies were closely maintained by the tenant leadership.

This, during the struggle up to the evictions, was the tenants' strength. No-one could move them away from their own policies.

Indeed, because of this, both CP and LP finally had to concede their own line of policy, and accepted and operated the tenants' policies.

Such strength, however, was to become a major weakness, leading to changes which depleted the movement.

Following the evictions, the enormous strains and stresses of the situation led to splits developing amongst the tenants, thus losing the positive and dominant position of strength which gave such correct leadership.

Major revisions of policy by all groups obviously allowed CP and LP opportunities to inject into the tenants' meetings suggestions which changed the course of the tenants, with all concerned being partially responsible for such changes.

The tremendous militancy finally deflated to the level of local elections—whereas at the height of the struggle, the tenants' leaders were prepared to confront the State and all that would be involved.

Jack's summing-up in his final paragraph serves to emphasise a very real problem—one that continually repeats itself.

I would summarise in a different way—a militant situation is not necessarily lost because of wrong political strategy—sometimes the correct strategy just isn't possible.

Don Cook

Jack Lewis's otherwise excellent review of the pamphlet by Dave Burn surprisingly failed to take up one of the pamphlet's few inaccuracies. Describing the response to the evictions, Dave Burn tells us that about 100 workers from the Shell South Bank site marched in solidarity. In fact, as one of the site committee at the time, I can say that nearer to 2,000 marched. When we arrived at Silverdale, little could be done because of its military-geographical setting. At Kennistoun House, following an "absolutely unprovoked" attack by mounted police, we saw a situation possibly unique in "British" working class experience since the end of the second World War—the cops fled: we had smashed them.

From then (some time in the region of 3-4 pm) the leadership of the rent strike dillied and dallied, failing to give a clear decision as to whether they wanted the Shell site (South Bank) workers to evict the cops from Don Cook's flat, promising all the time that more workers were arriving.

More workers did arrive, but not in any large numbers. They came mainly as individuals at knocking-off time. By then, a combination of the long wait (we had been marching since before dinner time), the indecision of the leadership, plus the sickening sight, as we fought our way round the corner of Lady Margaret's Road to Kennistoun House, of a gigantic, ugly butcher's apron (known in polite British circles as the Union Jack) being flown from Don Cook's flat by the rent strikers: all these combined had pissed off most of the (mainly Irish) Shell workers. This made it possible for the C.P. to propose a march out of the (easily defended) Kennistoun House area to the Town Hall on Euston Road, where, despite fighting until nearly midnight by mainly CP and Irish militants, weight of numbers and the command experience of the police triumphed. We were dispersed having written yet another "glorious" page in the history of the "British" working class.

Yours fraternally,
Gery Lawless

Economics and Ideology

5. EXPLOITATION AND PROFIT
by Paul Morel

One of the most important products of Marx's Labour Theory of Value was the discovery of the source of capitalist profit in the exploitation of the working class. Let us assume that a worker labours for ten hours a day. For his efforts, in a capitalist system, he will receive a money wage. He uses this money to buy food, clothing, and all the other necessities of life. In other words, he receives a share of the social product in return for hiring out his labour-power for ten hours.

SOURCE OF PROFIT

Marx shows that while the worker is paid the full value of his labour-power, he is not paid the full value that that labour power can produce when it is set to work with machinery and raw material. The value of labour-power is determined in the same way as the value of any other commodity: it is the amount of socially necessary labour-time required to reproduce that labour power; in other words, the equivalent to all the consumer goods and services which the worker requires in order

to be able to reproduce the same standard of work for ten hours each and every day. But what is peculiar about the commodity labour-power is the fact that unlike any other commodity, its consumption produces new value. By setting the labour power to work in the factory for ten hours, the capitalist will get much more value than the equivalent of the consumer goods and services required to reproduce the labourer. It is this which is the source of profit.

Marx calls the amount of labour embodied in the consumer goods received by the workers the variable capital, denoted by the letter V. The length of the working day is made up of the time of work equivalent to the value of the consumer goods the workers buy plus the portion of labour time which is taken by the capitalists, known as surplus value S. Thus we can

express the length of the working day as V+S. If S is zero there will be no profit for the capitalists, and the system will not be able to function for any length of time.

Marx measured the degree of exploitation by dividing S by V (S/V). This expresses the amount of surplus value taken for each unit of labour time received by the workers in the form of consumer goods. The fraction S/V is known as the rate of surplus value.

COMPOSITE

The major part of Marx's *Capital* is devoted to a capitalist system which is perfectly competitive. Marx also shows how the labour of a highly skilled worker can be regarded as an intensive composite of the general average labour in the society. If it is assumed that the labour force is freely mobile, and for the sake of simplicity

there is no skilled labour, then workers will move around in search of higher wages until every worker receives the same money wage for a day's work. In this situation the rate of surplus value for each worker will be the same, as each worker will buy a similar bundle of consumer goods with his wage.

This theory of exploitation—central to Marxist economic theory—is significantly absent from bourgeois economics. Marx's theory of surplus value explains the origin of profit, but this does not mean that profit and surplus value are the same thing. In fact, they are not only numerically different; they are measured in terms of different accounting systems: one in terms of values and the other in terms of prices. It is unfortunate that the confusion between values and prices has occasionally been made by accomplished Marxist writers. It is only by separating surplus value from profit that the Marxian theories of exploitation and profit can gain their full force and significance.

In Belgium today the school students' movement is waging a mass struggle against the introduction of repressive legislation: a bill to quash exemption from military service and strengthen the police and army; and a bill to ban "any group whose aim is to resort to force or whose conduct tends to disturb order or public safety".

BRUTALITY

In January alone 176,000 school students took to the streets of Belgian cities - according to the government itself. On 17 January there were nation-wide demonstrations demanding withdrawal of the bill to do away with exemption from call-up, and democratic rights in the army. On 24 January mounted police with drawn sabres charged a demonstration of 4,000 in Brussels, inflicting many injuries - an act of brutality which brought the repressive intentions of the bourgeoisie home to many sections of the population. On 31 January, contingents of demonstrators, 15,000 in all, descended on Brussels from all over the country, and marched through the streets behind the protection of a strong stewarding force, demanding the withdrawal of both repressive bills.

The local mobilising committees which sprung up in the course of this activity have now joined to form a 'National High School Front', which held a conference of 400 Flemish and French-speaking delegates on 10 February. It is now engaged in a fortnight's campaign to bring home the meaning of the schools' movement to the rest of the population, and warn against the government's likely manoeuvres over the coercive measures.

ADVANCE

The developments of January and February mark a great advance for Belgian youth. There is a strong basis for an ongoing movement: in Belgium the school leaving age is 18, and by contrast with Britain, the overwhelming majority of the age-group involved is therefore of working class origin - an important factor in the repercussions the schools upsurge is having in the working class movement. A number of trade union

Jane Walsh reports from Brussels on Belgium Youth Against Army Law.



above: school students protest against new laws

branches have passed resolutions supporting the aims of the school students - and coaches bringing contingents to the 30 January demonstration were even supplied with free fuel by striking petrol workers.

What the schools movement has done is to initiate an open mass struggle against the repressive legislation as a whole, advancing from the initial protest against the conscription clauses to demand the withdrawal of

both repressive bills. It was after the 24 January sabre charge that the revolutionaries in the movement - particularly our comrades of the Ligue Revolutionnaire des Travailleurs (Belgian section of the F.I.) - were best able to take up the issue of the bill banning groups "tending to disturb order or public safety", a clear measure of repression against the revolutionary left and therefore the workers' movement. If the Belgian bourgeoisie persists in its measures of repression, it will now encounter stronger and more united resistance than in the first confrontation of the January days.

What's On ?

RANK AND FILE DEFENCE COMMITTEE

has been set up to defend ERIC PEAGAM, a member of the Rank and File Editorial Board, and two other teachers suspended by the ILEA. The committee calls for the Union's withdrawal from the employers' hearing and for the unconditional reinstatement of the 3 suspended teachers.

Further information and petitions are available from address below. Messages of support and solidarity from TU branches, etc. should be sent to: Rank and File Defence Committee, c/o 82 Acre Lane, S.W.2.

WOMEN'S DAY on March 8th (Thurs.) to coincide with International Women's Day - organised by Colchester Women's Liberation Group, to be held at Essex University. Will consist of workshops, speakers, street theatre, exhibitions, disco etc. All welcome, especially other Women's Liberation groups.

BOOKS announce that the full range of books and pamphlets from the French left-wing publishing house of Maspéro is now available in England. Orders can be quickly dealt with by post. Write for 'Maspéro Catalogue' to BOOKS, 84 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2. Phone 42483.

LIGUE COMMUNISTE - report of 3rd Congress from *Rouge* now in English translation. Political resolutions; the elections in France; the 'Union of the Left'; Ligue Communiste-Lutte Ouvrière electoral agreements, 10p each plus 5p postage. Ten or more copies post free. Available from: Roger Blackmore, 28 Baily Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. Proceeds to Fund Drive.

CENTRAL LONDON A.I.L. FORUMS - March 16th: Chris Gray on 'The Role of the Catholic Church in Ireland'; March 30th: Gery Lawless on 'The White Paper'. All meetings are held at General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (Kings X tube) at 8 pm on Fridays.

WORKERS FIGHT - public meeting on 'The Fourth International'. Speaker: Sean Matgamna. Sunday, 11 March, 7.30 pm at the Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road (Kings X).

GRAND IRISH CABARET in aid of Northern Distress Fund at the Cock Tavern, 596 Holloway Rd, N.7, on Weds. 28th March. Commences 8pm sharp. Admission 50p. Artistes include: Sugaw Folk Group, Jim Bulger Four, Cyril Garner, Richard Griffin Dancers, Helen Grogan, Jim Mulvihill, plus supporting programme.

INDOCHINA SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

University of East Anglia, 10/11 March, starts 10 a.m. Saturday. Films include 'Inside North Vietnam' and 'People and their Guns'. Speakers include: John Gittings, C.R. Hensman, Pat Jordan, Malcolm Caldwell, representatives of the C.P., BCPV, CFB(M-L), trade unionists etc. Also group discussions on topics.

Further details from: Fiona Fredenburgh, EUR II, University of East Anglia, Norwich.

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I.M.G. RED FORUM - A series of introductory discussions for those in the London area on the politics of the Fourth International. Every Tuesday, 8 p.m. at the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (five minutes walk from Kings Cross tube).

MERSEYSIDE I.M.G. - Public Meetings every Tuesday at 8 p.m. in the AUEW, 46/48 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. Contact 10, Pinfold Close, Bootle 10 (tel: 428 1140).

George Cunvin reports on

'The Lion Stirs'

White South Africa has had its biggest shock since the Sharpeville massacre, ten years ago. Defying the laws which deny them the right to strike, tens of thousands of African workers in Durban walked off their jobs. They have now returned to work. Their gains are small. The Durban municipal workers demanded £5 a week - they got £1. This brings their average weekly pay - before deductions - to £7.50. Some of the men will get as little as £3.50. This despite the fact that the official "poverty line" in South Africa has been fixed (and "fixed" is the right word) at £11.

WORSE

Conditions in Durban and in Natal generally are just a little bit worse than in the rest of the apartheid republic. The *Sunday Telegraph* (Feb. 11) reports the case of a company which doubled its profits last year but whose basic pay rates were about 8 rand a week (about £4.40), out of which the worker has to pay about £1.10 to travel to work. (Under apartheid laws, black workers have to live outside the "white" urban areas, far away from their place of work.)

The Johannesburg *Financial Mail* cites the Frame Group, an industrial complex whose directors are very closely connected with the South African government. This group is paying an average rate of £13.50 a month to Africans. Last year the pre-tax profit of one of its companies jumped by 70 per cent

to £1,250,000.

In South Africa the iron law of capitalism operates in all its naked savagery where African workers are concerned. In order to squeeze the maximum surplus value out of the workers, their labour power is purchased, where possible, for below its value - i.e. the cost of maintaining the worker and his reproduction. There is always more cheap labour available from the so-called Bantu homelands, which are really nothing more than huge reservoirs of cheap labour.

UNIONS

Only 2 per cent of African workers are organised in unions. This is not because Africans do not want to join unions, but is due "mainly to racial discrimination in the law and labour practices; government obstruction and intimidation and colour prejudice among white workers" (Alex Hepple - *Workers Under Apartheid*).

Although African trade unions are not illegal in South Africa, their activities are hemmed in by so many restrictive laws and regulations that it requires little short of heroism for anyone to undertake the organising. Under the notorious Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the government can declare any organisation, including African trade unions (but not other unions) "unlawful" on the grounds that it engages in activities calculated to further any of the objects of "communism" as defined in the Act. African trade



Police clubbing striking worker:

union leaders can be arbitrarily banned; can be detained for 180 days without trial; or "endorsed out" of the area where they are active.

Africans are expressly prohibited from strike action by Section 18 of the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, which states that "no employee or other person shall instigate a strike or incite any employee or other person to take part in a strike or the continuation of a strike."

Strikes are defined to cover stoppages, go-slows, refusal to work and so on.

The law lays down severe penalties, and African strikers can also fall foul of the Suppression of Communism Act and the Sabotage Act, infringement of which can bring life imprisonment or the death penalty.

It is against this sombre background that the Durban strikes must be viewed. The very fact that they took place at all, that at one stage over 100,000 workers were involved and that they did bring some gain, however meagre, will have a tremendous effect on the morale of the workers. For the first time in a decade, the viciously exploited black wage slaves of South Africa have flexed their muscles and felt their giant strength. This time they have managed to wring only miserable concessions from the white boss class, but they have started out on the road which will inevitably lead to their final emancipation.



INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

(British Section of the
Fourth International)

182 Pentonville Road
London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG and its activities.

NAME

ADDRESS

On Tuesday, 20 February, armed policemen shot and killed two young Pakistani workers. The dead workers, Basharat Hussein and Mohd. Hanif Hussein, were 19 years of age. Britain's first political killing in decades took place when three young Pakistanis, incensed by reports of ill-treatment of Pakistani POWs in India, decided to occupy the Indian High Commission in London and draw attention to the plight of the prisoners. They "armed" themselves with ordinary toy guns before occupying the Indian embassy.

LIVE MATERIAL

The embassy staff rang up the police and a unit of the Special Patrol Group (SPG) specialising in embassy duty was soon on the scene. The SPG's consist of armed policemen with a licence to kill if necessary. The special police gunmen opened fire on two of the Pakistanis and carried on firing regardless of the fact that there was no answering fire. There couldn't be since the two workers were not armed. The policemen emptied a total of eleven bullets into the Pakistanis, killing them immediately. Having been trained for several years the gunmen found in these two young Asian workers some live material for target practice. The third protester was a 15 year old school student, who escaped death, but is now a prisoner charged with "attempted murder".

The sheer effrontery of the judicial section of the bourgeois state apparatus is staggering. An unarmed 15 year-old school student is charged with "attempted murder" and the policemen who killed two unarmed workers go scot free. That's British justice for you!

The fact that members of parliament of all parties have been commending the "courage" of the police gunmen shows the blatantly racist nature of the society in which we live. Let no one imagine that the reaction to the killing of two white protesters in a foreign embassy by British policemen would have been the same. British politicians and the mass media prefer not to discuss the killings at all. They blame the victims for the crime: the problem, we are informed, lay in the toy guns which looked very real. The discussion is thus neatly concentrated on the merits and demerits of importing toy guns from Japan. This sickening display of hypocrisy by bourgeois politicians and the unfree press must be exposed by the workers' movement and the left groups.

TASKS OF THE LEFT

The response from the left groups to the killings has been somewhat slow. The fact that the protest concerned an issue which is not of interest to the revolutionary left in this country must not be allowed to obscure the real issues involved in this episode.

Gunmen kill two workers



Stanley Conley, of Scotland Yard's Special Patrol Group, one of the two police gunmen who shot dead Basharat Hussain and Mohammed Hanif Hussain at India House.

The left must understand that the killing of these two young Pakistani workers cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. It marks an ominous development in British politics and affects the entire labour movement. A qualitative increase in repression has to be answered by a united left.

We have to make it clear that regardless of the issues involved, we support the right of the Pakistani workers to protest, even when it includes embassy occupations. Would the police have shot and killed white liberal intellectuals (even if they had possessed toy guns) occupying the South African embassy? The answer is obviously no. And if they had, would we not have seen a massive response by the left and the student movement? Yes, we would have. Why then has there been virtually no response to the killings of these two Pakistani workers. Because unfortunately a bulk of the left is unable to grasp the real meaning and enormity of the killings which took place in Aldwych on 20 February, 1973.

UNITED ACTION NEEDED

It is vital that in the coming weeks there is some united action by the revolutionary movement on this issue. The trial of the 15 year old school student provides one focus for action in the coming weeks. Pakistani

workers in different parts of the country are organising protest meetings in the coming weeks and these must be supported by the revolutionary groups and by trade-union branches.

The NUS and the NUSS should also be prodded into taking action. It must be understood that the arming of special police units is only one indication of the nervousness which exists in ruling circles in Britain. The extent of the social crisis coupled with the structural problems of the capitalist economy has made the British ruling class extremely uneasy.

The SPGs and similar units are not merely meant to kill Pakistanis in foreign embassies, but are meant to deal with workers and students in Britain. The creation of a British equivalent of the hated French CRS is clearly on the agenda. The response of the British left to the Aldwych killings will be an important test of its ability to defend itself in the coming months and years.

NOTE: The IMG will be organising a picket outside the court where the Pakistani school student is being tried. For further details ring: 01-278 2616

BRIANTS 'A Decisive Stage'

The workers at Briant Colour Printing are entering the eighth month of their work-in and the search for a buyer continues. An agreement on the factory's sale price has recently been reached between the liquidator and a prospective buyer. But the latter's financial backers have since refused to produce the money. They claim that the militancy of the Briant workers and particularly the massive solidarity demonstration organised when the court order expired, makes the company a risky investment.

At the same time the state is sharpening its legal apparatus - last week the police went to the Town Hall to get the lay-out plan of the factory. If no deal is concluded rapidly, there is no doubt that the state will use force to repossess the place.

DECISIVE STAGE

The struggle of the Briant workers against redundancies has therefore reached a decisive stage. As we pointed out in our last issue the ruling class wants to show that such militant tactics as occupations just won't work.

To make the struggle a political focus for the working class and to keep the issue alive so that the labour movement can rally to the defence of Briants if and when a confrontation comes, the students at the LSE have set up a support committee. The committee, which is supported by the Briant workers, is to co-ordinate all forms of solidarity activity such as the twenty-four hours a day picket at the factory, and a teach-in on the issue.

The teach-in will take place at the University of London Union, Malet Street on Saturday, 3 March, starting at 11 am. Bill Freeman from the Briant joint shop-stewards committee and other rank and file union leaders will be speaking. Details can be obtained by phone from: 405-7686 extension 468.

CHARTER AT THE CROSSROADS

The Building Workers' Charter conference on 10 March in Birmingham will take place against a rising employers' offensive. They are pushing the lump back into the country's leading sites. National agencies have been set up to sell labour only to the main contractors. In Liverpool an agency called 'Side Services' provides employers directly with their labour. Such organisations also check for any signs of past militancy.

BLOC

Meanwhile Charter is trying to recover from the failure of its newspaper to appear during the strike. It is trying to build a bloc between the rank and file and 'left' local and national

bureaucrats, and using the campaign against lump labour for this purpose.

UCATT is in a very dodgy financial position after the strike, and it is hardly in the interests of the union bureaucracy to have the majority of workers in the trade not paying union dues. At the same time Smith, the UCATT General Secretary, is determined not to be outflanked by the rank and file as he was in the strike or to be engulfed by the rival T&G. Already it is rumoured that some of the regional officials are seeking the easy way out through a merger with the T&G. Therefore he has been putting pressure on union officialdom to get on top of what the rank and file are up to.

BLIND

The Communist Party leadership is a little blind to the situation. Originally they set up Charter to extend their base out of the main cities onto a national scale. (Inside cities like London, Charter was used as a CP front.)

But now some of the rank and file militants outside the main cities do not want to know Charter, as it did not appear in the strike. That is when they needed the organisation, the first time they had been thrown into local leadership. Therefore the CP reasons that it will mop up what base it can, while the going is good, and CPers have started to appear on Charter platforms, billed as nothing else but CPers.

But as any building worker will tell you, a shop steward in the trade has a much better relationship with his men than in many other trades. The reason for that is simple. When the steward wants the men to do anything he has to call them into the canteen and debate it out with them. The result is that even the CP stewards are very sensitive about moves in the rank and file. Many of them do not want to see Charter turned into a front for the CP. They want to struggle for a genuine rank and file movement, which they realise is in the best interests of workers in the trade, facing the disorganisation that they do. All this is likely to lead to some big tensions in the coming months.

LUMP

The campaign against the lump is taking some time to get into its stride nationally

The problem is that the lump, like the poor under capitalism, seems to be always with us. Combine this with the way the campaign is being conducted (protest actions which do not embarrass the local bureaucrats) and you have a recipe for non action. Although some of the local actions that have taken place (for instance in Birmingham) have had some success, in no sense could they be said to have started a national snowball rolling.

To maintain this unity with the local officials there has still been no call in Charter for co-ordinated national action against the lump, conducted and centralised through the national unions. By limiting the struggle to a series of small and local actions, however, the militants are in danger of isolating themselves from the mass of building workers. In this situation the mass of building workers want to see some sort of effective, national action against the lump.

PRACTICAL STRUGGLE

Now, it is even more urgent to take up the practical struggle for the long-term solution to the lump, registration. We should see a campaign now for the national unions to take a register of all union members in the trade. We can begin at grass roots level for local shop stewards to take a register of all union members on their sites. The struggle against lump sites must be extended into the struggle for a closed shop. We must demand now that the building trade unions produce a plan for the registration of every building worker in the trade, with the necessary safeguards.

Paul Smith



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