

Workers' fight

5p

No.108 - September 6th to 13th 1975

NO GO FOR FASCISTS IN E. LONDON

LOCAL ORGANISERS of the National Front have been urging "a maximum turnout" for "this most important activity".

The "major national activity of 'Red Lion Square' importance and proportions" is their proposed march through East London on Saturday September 6th. Tyndall, Webster, and Kingsley Read are all billed to speak, and the "theme", 'March Against Muggers', is calculated to pull together the fragmenting ranks of the Front on a combined

"Law'n'Order" and anti-black basis.

As unemployment rises, the Front strains itself in becoming more and more sickeningly racist, in a frantic attempt to split the working class — and heal the splits in the Front.

Hackney Trades Council have organised a march against the Front. Leave from Victoria Park Square (opposite Bethnal Green underground station) at 1pm. Local community groups are supporting it — as is Workers Fight.

BOSSSES JUMP ON TUC BANDWAGON AND INSIST ON BIGGER CUTS

THE T.U.C. conference must have given the employers an inspiring picture of bureaucratic passivity in the face of attack. For before the delegates could leave Blackpool they were being pressed to agree to even deeper cuts into their members' living standards.

British Leyland executives meeting with officials from the engineering unions demanded negotiations to cut the workforce by about 25,000. Perhaps, as with the £6 ceiling and as with the 21,000 already made redundant at Leyland, the policy will be called "voluntary". Bob Wright of the AUEW is reported to have agreed in principle to the cuts.

Executives from the British Steel Corporation were at Blackpool to get steel union leaders to agree

to cuts in their members' earnings of between £8 and £18. They are demanding an end to weekend shifts in South Wales, Sheffield, North East and Scottish plants.

Meanwhile representatives of the Daily Telegraph management didn't bother to make the tip to Blackpool but announced a cut in the workforce of between 35 and 45 per cent in any case.

Now the employers have the bit between their teeth they seem out to make the £6 limit look like a rash act of generosity. Ken Gill wasn't far wrong when he called this year, "The year of the stick". All he forgot to make clear is that after an initial flinching at the thought of the pain it might inflict, the majority of the trade union leaders are going to learn to

wield it themselves.

The 3,570,000 majority for the TUC-government proposal of a £6 flat rate maximum pay increase if smaller than the majority the General Council won for its support of the Social Contract. Nevertheless, in spite of the official opposition of the AUEW, UCATT, NUPE, ASLEF, CPSA, NUB, ASTMS, SCS and the Firemen's Union, it is unlikely that union leaderships will undertake any fight against the policy. But, as Ray Buckton of ASLEF said, "The first social contract was bent not by union officials, but by pressure from rank and file members, all with special problems."

The whole rank and file of the labour movement now has a not-so-special problem in maintaining

TUC VOTES FOR 'THE YEAR OF THE STICK'



living standards. We must see we bend the new "£6" contract, fighting to support

any workers coming up against the limit, and for a working class cost of living

index, with a zero threshold).

See also back page; Full survey - next week

"Don't step out of line" message in Labour's hounding of Clay Cross

NO WONDER the courts and the Labour leadership have decided to persecute the Clay Cross rebel councillors. To most labour movement activists, the ex-councillors are the heroes of the fight against the Tories' infamous "Fair Rents" act, they are the only council that proved as good as their word. But to the Government that is less important than the fact that when the Tories imposed Phase 3, the council at Clay Cross simply ignored it. They wanted to pay their council workers more and they did. Of the £63,192 they are being sued for, only £6,985 arises from the surcharge to cover the rent increases they would not levy. £52,209 arises from the rise they gave to the council workers.

So while the Government SITS BACK GLOATING OVER ITS SUCCESS IN GETTING THE TUC to impose another Tory-type wage freeze, they want to make sure that no-one gets any ideas from the Clay Cross councillors' stand.

Outside the Official Receiver's court in Sheffield, former council leader Arthur Wellon made it clear he was "looking to the rank and file of the labour movement for support". He could hardly be looking to the trade union bureaucrats!

N. IRELAND

SLIDING TOWARDS CIVIL WAR



Merlyn Rees

by John O'Mahony

In Northern Ireland this is the reaping season for the bloody harvest which Britain sowed when it capitulated to the reactionary Orange general strike in May 1974.

The ghastly communal/sectarian murders of the last few weeks may well be no more than the gentle and restrained opening of a holocaust of butchery. This will either take the form of multiple localised pogroms, or of a coalescence and escalation of these into civil war throughout Northern

Ireland in the immediate period ahead.

The weapon of strike action for a restoration of Orange racist supremacy, which last year proved successful, has already again been used in Belfast. Preparations for a new general strike loom over the Convention; the rustling drowns out the chattering of the political hucksters within it.

Mr Paisley feels himself in a position — or perhaps feels

smashed and demoralised. What Paisley is saying is that either the British Army does the smashing or the Orange para-military thugs will.

The Convention was — as *Workers Fight* explained — foredoomed, the balance of forces within it predictable, deadlock utterly inevitable.

When the United Ulster Unionist Council [UUUC] did not, in the first meeting, assert their majority and commit the Convention immediately to supporting restoration of Six County majority rule (Protestant supremacy) it became clear they were trying for a deal with the Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party [SDLP]. It is not impossible to imagine some deal, not excluding a possible "independent" Northern Ireland within the EEC and subsidised by Britain and the EEC, in which the ministerial portfolios now refused to the SDLP by the Orange politicians would be granted as a *quid pro quo* in return for the Southern Ireland government not vetoing Northern Ireland membership of the EEC.

CHARADE

When the politicians tried to escape public scrutiny by private confabs away from the Convention, in search of a "deal", the street power of the Orange gangs immediately asserted itself, in a clear and threatening veto.

The question always was: would the para-militaries allow even discussion of a deal, should the UUUC politicians — themselves divided on precisely what new arrangements they want and therefore likely to be vulnerable and indecisive — consider it. We have had our answer. The Convention is proving the predictable charade.

The Orange racists want their pound of "democracy" within the artificial Six County state: too bad that

for 40% of that state's population "Six County democracy" requires that they be thrown back into the dark night of Orange racist rule under which they lived for so many decades.

The impossibility of a solution within the Six County state is thus again demonstrated: this latest demonstration may cost tens of thousands of lives. The para military forces, backed by the industrial might of the reactionary Orange working class, dragging the politicians behind might now go for a showdown to assert their full "rights" — rights to which they can reasonably lay claim if the Six County state has a right to exist, but "rights" whose inescapable racist character prove that that state should not ever have existed.

Then the only alternative to the bloody crucible that the Six County state has become for all its population, is a united Ireland, free from British interference and from British troops. Since a Socialist Republic is unthinkable in the present political state of the Irish working class, almost certainly that would mean a federal bourgeois Ireland — exactly the immediate political programme of the slandered and much maligned Provisional Republican Movement.

SETTLER

The fact must be faced by the British labour movement that Partition created in Northern Ireland a monster best understood — crudely, but in essentials accurately — according to the model of a settler state like Rhodesia, South Africa, or 'Israel'. The inescapable communal conflict within that state, including within the working class, makes for an inbuilt logic, driving ever more right-ward when and to the degree that the rule of

Contd. on back page

SEPT. 20 MARCH TO SUPPORT PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS

Support is growing for the demonstration of solidarity with the Portuguese working class on 20th September. The Communist Party, in the "Morning Star" of 3rd September, has called for full support to the demonstration. At a planning meeting for the demonstration on 1st September, a representative of the National Committee of the Labour Party Young Socialists said they would also back the mobilisation. Judith Hart MP, who recently resigned as a Labour Government minister, will be speaking at the demonstration.

Other scheduled speakers include a representative of the Angolan national liberation movement MPLA, Portuguese textile union president Manuel Lopes, a revolutionary officer from the Portuguese armed forces, and a trade union speaker from one of the big international monopolies which have branches both in

Britain and in Portugal. The demonstration will demand an end to the economic boycott of Portugal. Despite the fact that many on the left such as the Communist Party and the "Tribune" group support import controls, the import controls recently imposed by the British government against the Portuguese textile industry are anything but left wing. Together with a whole series of other measures of economic sabotage, these controls are fuelling an unemployment rate of over 10% in Portugal.

Heinz, for example, have started buying tomatoes from Chile instead of Portugal. British Leyland are refusing to supply spare parts for buses unless they are paid for in advance. The British Tourist Authority has put a block on the tourist trade to Portugal. As with Chile, the imperialist forces organising this sabotage hope thereby to clear the way for a

comeback of right wing reaction. In northern Portugal — where the population is mostly small-holding peasants, and many offices of the CP, other left wing parties, and trade unions have been attacked in recent weeks — whole areas of countryside have been set on fire. No-one knows exactly who is responsible, but aeroplanes have been seen dropping incendiary bombs and disappearing over the border to Spain. Most probably right wing groups are trying to increase the chaos and the panic.

The conditions do not exist at present for a coup on the Chile model. Before the overthrow of the Caetano regime on 25th April, the Portuguese army was 200,000 strong. Most of those troops have

been demobilised. At present there are 60,000 troops in Portugal, of whom nearly half are recent conscripts. 20,000, however, remain in Angola, and if not demobilised on their return could add to the strength of the right wing.

Normal military discipline has broken down to a very large extent. Two weeks ago there was a demonstration, 80,000 strong, organised by workers' committees in support of the proposals in the Copcon document. The slogans included: "Against the super-powers, unity with the Third World"; "Against unemployment, for the right to work"; "Long live the peasants, brothers of the workers"; "Soldiers always on the side of the people"; "No to capitalism, no to state capitalism, no to social democracy; for socialist revolution"; "For Popular Assemblies of workers' and neighbourhood committees". Orders went out that troops were to remain in their barracks. Four units, including sailors from the frigate Joao Belo, disregarded the orders, broke out of barracks, hijacked army lorries, and joined the demonstration.

DEFAULT

ADUs — rank and file soldiers' committees — have grown up in the army, and often soldiers' assemblies exercise more real control than the official command hierarchy does. Some of the soldiers' assemblies, particularly in the north, have clear right wing leanings; and the military hierarchy still exists, and could, given a chance, tighten its control. However, at present the armed forces are in ferment.

An AFM [Armed Forces Movement] army officers' assembly has refused to recognise the new appointment by President Costa Gomes of Vasco Goncalves,

Right wing violence in Northern Portugal

former Prime Minister, as Chief of Staff. This move reflects the increasing discredit and loss of support of the Communist Party which backs Goncalves, caused by its bureaucratic manoeuvring. The Communist Party finds itself at the centre of the attempts to patch together a government almost by default. The big capitalists, chastened by the defeat of the coup attempts they supported in March and September last year, are in retreat, biding their time, probably working underground to build up the right wing anti-communist mobilisations. The Socialist Party, on which NATO and the EEC have banked their hopes, is scared of the wave of arson and riots which its anti-CP demagoguery helped to unleash.

Any one of the leading figures in the AFM could potentially come forward as a Nasser or a Velasco, as leader of a stabilised left wing nationalist state-capitalist regime; but at present none of them has the clarity of purpose and the assured support for such a programme. But the longer the present chaos and paralysis continues, the greater are the chances for such an outcome, or for a civil war launched by the right wing.

The 20th September demonstration will have as one of its

ALL ROADS DON'T LEAD TO SOCIALISM

IN PORTUGAL, where every party is 'socialist' and 'revolutionary', where even the leader of the main liberal-capitalist party declares himself a 'Leninist', it is as obvious as it ever could be that simple leftwing good intentions are not enough. No force or grouping is quite what it appears, and in any case it is likely to be different tomorrow from what it is today. To navigate a course to workers' power through this maelstrom requires the highest possible degree of political clarity.

And if it is difficult to understand events and respond aptly on the spot in Portugal, it is doubly difficult to get a clear view from Britain. Yet in recent weeks Socialist Worker, the paper of the International Socialism group, has shown an extra-ordinary picture of confusion.

Column after column has been filled with hymns to the joys and beauties of revolution in Portugal; scarcely any attention is given to sober analysis of the problems. In Socialist Worker of 23rd August, they proudly boast that the PRP — the Portuguese group with which IS has links — helped to write the programme recently issued by Copcon, the internal security wing of the armed forces. In 'SW' of 30th August, that programme is referred to simply as "the revolutionary programme".

It is certainly true that the Copcon document's support for setting up popular assemblies has helped to advance the development of local organs or workers' power in Portugal.

Nevertheless, if these Popular Assemblies are to go forward to workers' power, it is vital that they make a political break from left wing officers like Copcon commander Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. Carvalho is ready to make the most revolutionary declarations one day, only to league with the right wing of the AFM the next day, as recently, for a brief period, he attempted to combine with Major Melo Antunes and the 'group of Nine'.

By helping to write the Copcon document which Carvalho endorsed, the PRP were in fact just helping to give Carvalho a more presentable left-wing face.

For the PRP to do this is logical. A PRP leader told a Workers Fight reporter recently in Lisbon that he believed that 'Otelo' had "kept faith with the revolutionary left". Even now, apparently, PRP members are saying that 'Otelo' has assured them privately that he is still with the revolutionary left.

IS, however, mumble occasionally in Socialist Worker about the need not to have illusions in 'middle class officers' — while on other pages of their paper they spread those self-same illusions! What all this shows is that IS cares not two pence for political clarity, if there is a chance of doing a good 'publicity job' for "revolution" and for IS.

Socialist Worker of 30th August hails as "historic" (no less) the 'united front' between the Communist Party and various far-left groups that was

formed last week. Now certainly revolutionaries in Portugal should try to form a united front against the right wing attacks on the CP: to hold demonstrations and rallies, and organise united vigilante squads on the specific slogan of defending the workers' movement against reaction. By approaching the leaders and members of the Socialist Party to join this united front, they could heal the vicious divisions in the working class or at least win over some of the misguided workers who still follow the SP.

But the 'Revolutionary United Front' was not like that. According to Socialist Worker, the slogans agreed for its demonstration included some which, while not wrong were anything but precise in meaning: "For a front of popular unity"; "Workers, poor peasants, soldiers and sailors: together we can win"; "Against Fascism, Against Capitalism: Popular Offensive"; and one which in our opinion is very dangerous — "Dissolve the Constituent Assembly".

Such a mobilisation could have no concrete effect in repelling the right. Its political logic was that of Popular Frontism — unity on a vague and minimal programme for the sake of preserving a capitalist 'lesser evil'. That political logic would tend to make the 'united front' not a body which would defend the CP against the right while allowing revolutionaries to condemn the criminal class collaborationist and bureaucratic policies of the CP, but a body helping to give credit to the policies of the CP. And that's how it

turned out. The 'united front' demonstration was manipulated by the CP into a demonstration of support for the Goncalves government.

Since then the CP has been expelled from the 'united front'. MES and the FSP — two groups which up to now have been the CP's closest allies — have condemned the CP vigorously, and even the MDP, a satellite organisation of the CP, did not oppose the expulsion.

The slogan "Dissolve the Constituent Assembly" was especially dangerous. If a government of workers' councils were arising to replace the Constituent Assembly, the clearly revolutionary would favour the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly by workers' action. But Portugal is not at that stage, yet. The slogan "Dissolve the Constituent Assembly" can only help to throw more backward workers and peasants into the hands of the right (by making it appear that the left want to deprive them of what they see as their democratic expression) and to give assistance to any attempts to impose a more stable military regime of a left-wing variety.

In Portugal, the mistakes of the revolutionary left can have very immediate disastrous results. In Britain at the moment, IS can follow its course of tail-ending workers' militancy with no worse result than embarrassment at its frequent 180° changes of policy. But that makes it all the more important that we learn from the experience of Portugal the complete inadequacy of the IS method.

ANGOLA: 'UNITA' GANGS UP WITH FNLA

The Angola Solidarity Committee was formed on 8th August, carrying on some of the work previously done by the Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, Angola, and Guine. It is calling for support for the 'Hands Off Port-

ugal' demonstration on 20th September, which will have as one of its slogans, "Solidarity with the MPLA". In the first issue of their newsletter, they outline developments in the last couple of months as they see them.

The Nakuru agreement, signed by MPLA, FNLA and UNITA on June 21st was the seventh attempt this year to end the violence in Angola. For three weeks there was relative calm. An interim constitution was published, a draft electoral law was submitted to the Council of Premiers, and the first company of an integrated and unified Angolan army was formed.

A 'Week of National Unity' was initiated in early July, with the authorisation of the Transitional Government, and with massive popular support. There were meetings and rallies throughout the country, and representatives of the three movements also held talks at various levels. But before this week was over the FNLA had returned to its military offensive, seizing the town of Tango in Cuanza-Norte province and butchering MPLA supporters. (FNLA already possessed a strong military base in the two northern provinces of Uige and Zaire which it seized in May, thus controlling the northern border with the Republic of Zaire.) On July 9th an MPLA cortege in Luanda was fired on by FNLA troops, and that night FNLA attacked MPLA installations in the city.

MPLA retaliated and the conflict spread through the city, resulting in a resounding victory for MPLA. All FNLA's strongholds were captured, with the

exception of the Sao Pedro da Barra fortress where MPLA troops held out by threatening to blow up the nearby oil refinery if they were attacked. Inside the captured FNLA buildings MPLA found evidence of sickening atrocities. Torture chambers were discovered and when the grounds and floorboards were dug up corpses of MPLA members and supporters were found, some of them appallingly mutilated. Human hearts and other organs were found inside FNLA refrigerators, providing horrifying evidence for the persistent rumours that FNLA forces included cannibals.

FNLA President Holden Roberto reacted to the defeat of his forces in Luanda with a declaration of 'total war' against MPLA. MPLA, prepared for a long period of armed struggle if necessary, issued a call for a generalised popular resistance, relying not purely on force of arms but on the support of the Angolan masses, which had been a crucial factor in the battle for Luanda.

The conflict rapidly spread to other parts of the country, and in most of the clashes in mid-July MPLA emerged victorious. MPLA was, however, unable to take the town of Malange: here the fighting resulted in a grave risk of epidemic and a local ceasefire was negotiated in order to clear away the corpses.

The most serious threat posed by FNLA, however, was its decision to send a column, armed with US tanks provided by Zaire, and partly officered by Portuguese mercenaries — one of them, Alves Cardoso, a leading PIDE agent under the Caetano regime — to relieve Luanda. The first detachment of this column, through superior weaponry, forced MPLA to withdraw from Caxito where the FNLA forces are sitting tight awaiting reinforcements. To secure its military position around Luanda MPLA needs to retake Caxito and evict FNLA from the other strategically important town they hold, Lucala, on the Luanda-Malange road. Initially UNITA kept out of the conflict. It contented itself with offers to place its forces at the disposal of the High Commissioner,

and with tribalist calls that Luanda citizens born in southern Angola should return home. This sort of call raises the spectre of a balkanised Angola in which UNITA would rule the south under South African tutelage.

But at the beginning of August UNITA entered the war on the side of FNLA and engaged in battles with MPLA near the Namibian border, at the Ruacana Falls and at Pereira d'Eca. The outcome of these still seems uncertain. In the ports of Benguela and Lobito joint UNITA-FNLA forces have fought with MPLA — and in Lobito are reported to have driven MPLA FNLA army of approximately 32,000, backed with the full weight of Zaire. MPLA has not released figures for the number of people it has under arms.

UNITA President, Jonas Savimbi, has once again made it

perfectly clear where he stands in relation to the democratic organisations of the Angolan people, and in particular to the Poder Popular (People's Power) movement. He has denounced this as "MPLA's street soviet", and declared in the central Angolan town of Silva Porto that he would not tolerate their activities in "his" territory.

UNITA is still militarily the weakest of the three movements — but it is reported to be building up its armed forces and to have 25,000 men in training camps (these are presumably not armed, as UNITA is also reported to possess only 7,000 rifles). This compares with an FNLA army of approximately 32,000, backed with the full weight of Zaire. MPLA has not released figures for the number of people it has under arms.

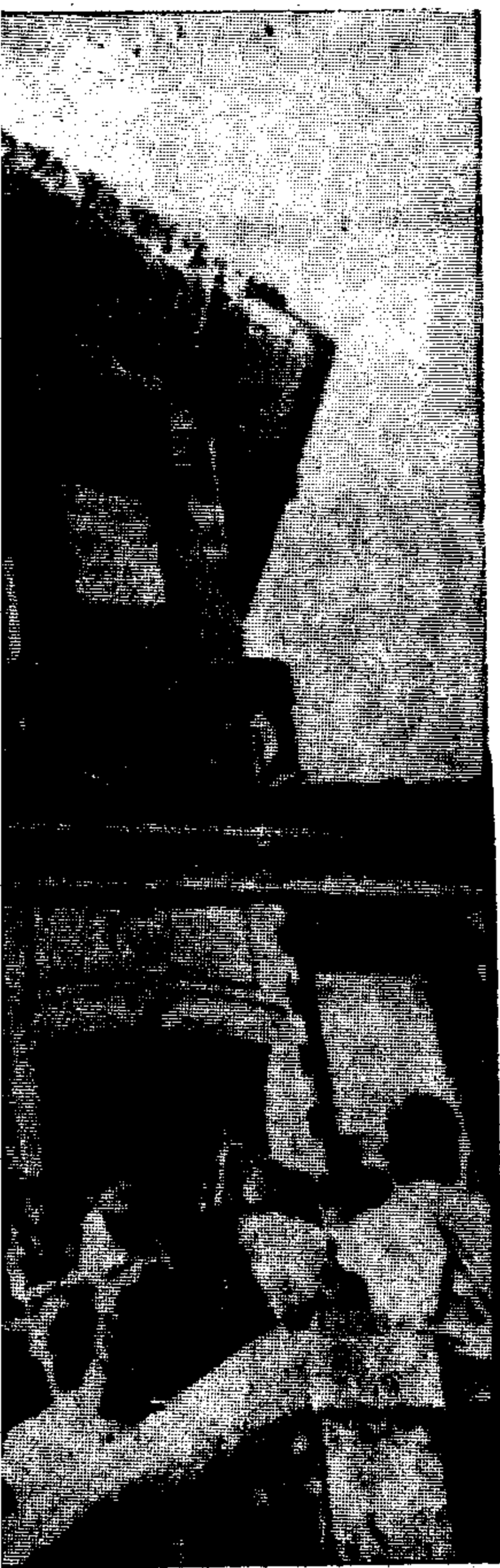
Major Melo Antunes, while he



MPLA leader Agostino Neto welcomed to Luanda last year

REPLACED

After Portuguese troops opened fire indiscriminately on July 27th killing 20 people in Luanda mainly civilians, a mass demonstration, 30,000 strong, was held in Luanda to demand the removal of Cardoso and Almendra. MPLA sent off a strong protest to Lisbon pointing out that Silva Cardoso was supposed to implementing process of decolonisation, but was in fact assisting neo-colonial interests. MPLA President Agostinho Neto said that decolonisation was being betrayed, that there was nothing further the Portuguese troops could do in Angola, an



...relished by the British press

...Solidarity with the Popular Assemblies, workers and neighbourhood committees, and workers' and soldiers' councils". The movement for Popular Assemblies is still in its early stages, but Popular Assemblies already exist in a number of districts, and in some cases wield a certain degree of control. Delegates are elected democratically, at open meetings, from workers' committees, neighbourhood committees, and ADUs in the area.

Those Popular Assemblies can, extended, linked together on a national scale with the other organs of workers' democracy, and equipped with a clear political programme, become the basis for the working class to seize power in Portugal. Socialists in Britain have to do all we can to help the fight against the right wing forces which could crush that possibility of workers' power.

demonstrate saturday 20 september

assemble 2.30pm
Charing X Embankment
march to Speakers Corner



Savimbi of UNITA

that they might as well leave. A military commission was sent out from Lisbon to investigate the situation, consisting of Admiral Rosa Coutinho and General Fabiao and Sacramento. Its report has not yet been published, but Silva Cardoso has been recalled to Lisbon and replaced by General Ferreira do Macedo. Cardoso's recall angered FNLA and UNITA, who saw it as a victory for MPLA, and FNLA and UNITA ministers said they would refuse to attend meeting of the Transitional Government until Cardoso returned. MPLA (who, at the beginning of August, exposed the FNLA minister of health as having stolen 10 million escudos from the government), then stated that FNLA had forfeited all right to be in government anyway and expelled the FNLA ministers from Luanda. Shortly afterwards UNITA withdrew its men from Luanda. The Transitional Government is now effectively dead.

THE efforts by the bosses' press to whip up an anti-left witchhunt inside the Labour Party get more and more frenzied. The Observer last Sunday continued what the Sunday Express, the News of the World, and the Sun began three weeks ago against Workers Fight. This time Ms Nora Beloff, the 'political correspondent' of this 'respected' and 'serious' 'quality' Sunday paper produced a very long article allegedly exposing and attacking the so-called Militant tendency.

The headline set the tone: "Trot' conspirators inside Labour Party: Revolutionary Plot is Exposed". She went on to allege that the weekly publication 'Militant' is the organ of a secret, centralised organisation called the 'Revolutionary Socialist League', which has 'infiltrated' the Labour Party. Transport House officials, according to Monday's Guardian, are convinced that there is an organisation around Militant, whether or not it calls itself the RSL. They are now investigating it and will possibly act against it. That would mean the possible proscription of Militant and no doubt the expulsion of some of its supporters. It is therefore a serious threat to Labour Party democracy, which must be fought tooth and nail.

Jargon

Militant is in fact a left reformist paper, its politics in substance more or less like the left wing of the Tribune tendency. What distinguishes Militant is an addiction to some shreds of Marxist jargon, a hangover from the distant past of some members of its Editorial Board, leading to rigid and very boring verbal dogmatism, and a habit of giving two or three stock answers to any and every problem. Whatever the problem, the immediate 'nationalisation' of the '250 monopolies' will solve it. And, so says Militant, a Labour Government armed with a special Act of Parliament to ward off anything like a Chile-type coup, is the agent that will expropriate the '250 monopolies'.

The publishers of Militant insist that they are not an organisation, that no RSL exists, and that the only British organisation of that name merged with other groups to form the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1944. They describe themselves as "a current inside the Labour Party like Tribune". When we phoned their office and asked them if it would be accurate to describe them as an "organised tendency", they told us, no: they describe themselves as nothing more corporeal than "a body of opinion".

Those familiar with Militant's record over the last dozen years, a record including helping to expel other dissidents, will appreciate the irony of a witchhunt against Militant. As late as the press campaign against Workers Fight, leading "elements" in this "body of opinion" disgraced themselves in their indecent haste to jump clear. They didn't defend our right to organise to fight the £6 norm. But that hasn't saved them.

Revolutionaries who know the actual politics of Militant will also smile bitterly at the description of its supporters as either revolutionaries or Trotskyists, or even militants.

Those who know the fact that Transport House has long lived with Militant, the best ally in policing the LPYS to keep it just half-alive to be useful in elections and not too much of a nuisance, will ask the central question: why?

Purge

With rising unemployment and falling living standards, the ruling class desperately need the Labour Government to succeed in controlling the working class. The Tories failed and are in a shambles as a result. The Labour Government has worked minor wonders from the ruling class point of view. But it is by no means certain that the working class will allow itself to be controlled indefinitely. A major problem is the Labour Party itself, and the prospect of serious struggles inside it.

That's why the bourgeois press is stepping up pressure for a Labour Party purge. Not that they want to smash the Labour Party, but to stabilise it and stiffen the right wing. The most blatant "organised" "conspiracy" against the Labour Party is that of the capitalist press itself.

Nor is Militant or the alleged RSL the target. It is simply a convenient scarecrow to raise the alarm. It is far from being the most

left, not at all combative — and very unlikely to be behind attempts to get rid of certain MPs. Supporters of Militant were the main saboteurs of an attempt in 1965 to arraign the Home Secretary, Frank Soskice, before his local labour Party on a charge of instigating racist immigration legislation.

Nevertheless the defence of Militant is vital, because any attempt to stifle Militant by Transport House under pressure of the press or of the contradictions in the Labour Party now, will set the scene for an auto-da-fe of democracy in the Labour Party.

Militant itself is unfortunately not likely to be its own best friend in defending itself. When the dogs come snapping at your heels it's not the best policy to panic and run. It is necessary to openly and aggressively assert the right of organised tendencies in the Labour Party. Why should not socialists, including those who, rightly or mistakenly, consider themselves revolutionaries, have the right to argue for their position in the Labour Party, the party of the main organs of the working class, the trade unions?

The right wing organise.

enced YS members. Some of them sell Militant: that is an incontestable fact, and it is an outrageous scandal.

But the name — the RSL? Even according to Beloff no one has heard of the RSL since its alleged disaffiliation from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in December 1965 (that was the 8th, not, as she says, the 9th Congress). The association of people who produce the Militant should know their own name, and they call themselves Militant. Here too, however, any scurrying before the witchhunters is to risk putting the heads of Militant supporters in a halter.

Hyena

It is utterly unimportant and entirely their own business if those who associate to produce Militant and argue for their politics collectively describe themselves as "The Bernstein Monument Society" — or "The Revolutionary Socialist League"! By their panicky response to the baying of the Observer's hyena, the Militant Editorial Board have laid themselves wide open.

Mr E. Grant's solicitors wrote a

OBSERVER STOKES UP WITCHBURNING FIRES

William Rodgers MP spoke on BBC Radio on Monday denouncing the 'left wing conspiracy'. Who is Mr Rodgers? A main organiser of a semi-secret right wing organisation, the 'Campaign for Democratic Socialism, set up after the Scarborough Congress in 1960 to fight those favouring unilateral nuclear disarmament of Britain! And there are very good grounds for believing that the CDS was financed wholly or partly by the CIA.

Nor is it enough to say "We are no more than a body of opinion". It is not possible to produce a non-commercial newspaper without a network of organised supporters. To deny the right to organise such a network is to deny the right to publish their views to those not in receipt of subsidies from rich MPs and advertising revenue such as Tribune subsists on (and even Tribune has an organised network of sorts); it is to deny free speech and exchange of opinion in the Labour Party. To defend oneself by asserting it is possible and that Militant is a mere body of opinion in the ether is to accept the first premise of the witchhunters and the anti-democrats. It is more: it is to open up an escape hatch for the Tribune majority on the National Executive Committee.

Panic

Given evidence — if such exists — of the existence of an organisation to circulate Militant, they can then throw up their hands in hypocritical horror, and, according to the premises accepted by the Editorial Board of Militant, kick them out of the Labour Party. There is little honour among social democrats, of the Militant or the Tribune sort, and the reaction of both to the anti-Workers Fight witchhunt can hardly reassure Militant that Tribune will support them!

The only principled defence is to rally support for the right of free speech, which demands free circulation of literature, which in turn demands an organised network. To argue that way will put a gun to the heads of the Tribuniters; to accept the premise and cry in panic 'we are not an organised tendency' is to put a rope round the neck of Militant and its supporters, with the option of pulling it in the hands of Transport House and the Tribuniters on the NEC.

It is also to lose credibility with all other than the very new, the very young, or the very stupid. One of the few precisely accurate facts in Beloff's witchhunting piece is that no-one in the Labour Party believes that Militant is not an organised tendency, except a number of young, raw and inexper-

letter in response to an earlier reference to E J Grant and the alleged RSL by Beloff, insisting the RSL disappeared in 1944. It did, and Grant was never part of it. But one shouldn't rely on the ignorance of the bourgeois press. It's bad Leninist policy to base oneself on an assumed weakness or indifference on the part of the opponent.

And people who call themselves Marxists should not falsify history. The history of the Trotskyist movement is the property of those of us who want to continue it and who must, amongst other things, explain the emergence away from but out of it of a tendency like Militant.

There was an organisation called the RSL founded in 1956. It had a public existence, an open press, after 1957 was openly the section of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International — and at least someone called Ted Grant was associated with it. If the members of the Militant Editorial Board rest their defence on such panicky petty lying, they take their stand on a trapdoor.

Expel

There was an RSL in the '50s and into the '60s. But it wasn't just a name and people, it was certain politics. The best defence Militant could use to provide irrefutable proof that it is not that organisation, nor anything other than its negation, is to compare what the RSL then stood for politically with what Militant stands for now. Then even if it can be shown that this or that individual who was in the RSL is now a left reformist round Militant, so what? They can

hardly expel Ted Grant for what he was 15 years ago!

The RSL was set up by the Pablo-Mandel faction of the Fourth International (International Secretariat). It was a rather shaky and feeble organisation which quickly began to disintegrate. We hold no brief for it. Nonetheless it did have the rudimentary marks of a Trotskyist organisation. At least enough to make plain to anyone with an ounce of political sense that the Militant couldn't be the RSL. Apart from in comic books and the paranoid world of the Monday Club, organisations don't have one identity and set of politics privately and preach the opposite publicly for over 10 years.

The RSL gave outspoken support to the Algerian freedom fighters who had to deal with the French army and also with the one million French settlers, including elements of the working class — which the Algerian FLN was obliged to subject to a bombing campaign massively more terrible than the Provisional IRA's campaign, which has been mainly against economic targets.

Ireland is not the precise equivalent of Algeria, but the basic issues are similar. The Militant is against, and condemns, the IRA. It is against immediate British troops withdrawal. It supports, and has its supporters within, the Orange sectarian so-called Northern Ireland Labour Party. It has nothing to say except to advocate a nonsensical solution of a workers' defence force based on

The RSL believed, with Trotsky, that nationalisation separate and apart from a working class conquest of state power was a middle class demand, though socialists could use it provided they opposed compensation, demanded workers' control, and above all insisted that the working class could rely only on itself, not on any existing state apparatus. The Militant calls for the nationalisation of almost the entire British economy — and expects it through a Labour Government! In Parliament! Armed with an "enabling act"! The state, workers' control, workers' power — everything is forgotten in this "maximum" programme ... of Neo-Fabianism.

The RSL would have been incapable of attacking immigrants who are scabbed against, as many have been in recent strikes, as ... 'disrupters'. Militant has done that.

The RSL opposed the right of the racist Zionist state of Israel to exist, and supported the Arabs and the demand for a multi-racial secular state of Palestine. Militant accepts the right of the Zionist state to exist and was neutral in the 1973 war.

Ceylon

The RSL had some regard for the name of Trotskyism. In Ceylon renegade ex-Trotskyists of the LSSP have been in a government responsible for slaughtering tens of thousands of revolutionary youth in the JVP uprising. To anyone who knows and lives by the truth that Trotskyism is the revolutionary communism of our epoch, there are few human beings alive today who are more odious than the traitors and murderous social democratic scoundrels such as Goonawardene, Pereira, and De Silva, the leaders of the LSSP. Mr Grant continues to be on speaking terms with them!

The RSL was an open, ostensibly Trotskyist organisation, not all of whose members were in the Labour Party. The Militant has aided the expulsion of dissidents from the Labour Party and is super-loyal. Indeed it is loyal to all "Labour"-type parties, believing that socialists should join the Northern Ireland Labour Party, the German Social Democracy, the Portuguese Socialist Party, etc. On principle! The obvious source of Nora Beloff's witchhunting article is a certain ex-Trotskyist, now known as Gavin Kennedy and in the Scottish National Party. Mr Kennedy was formerly the leading organiser of the SLL (WRP) faction in the LPYS, before working briefly with Militant. Irony of ironies, he broke with Militant because he considered it a scandal that Militant supporters' zeal for the legal niceties of the Labour Party could allow them to collaborate in expelling SLL supporters in conditions where the police were called in!

The examples could be multiplied. But why go on? No: Militant is not the RSL. Militant's connection with Trotskyism was best summed up by a booklet which its supporters sold at the 1974 LPYS Conference: a portrait of Trotsky as the cover of a wad of blank pages — a memo pad!

War

Because Militant is not a revolutionary organisation it has not responded to the witchhunt in a principled way: its spokesmen have wriggled, weaseled, and evaded the issue — quite stupidly from their own point of view. Because some of its supporters probably have bad consciences they aren't simply contrast the politics of the 1957 RSL and their own politics: that might make some of their supporters start to think about real issues, instead of mouthing a few platitudinous instant solutions to every problem.

OTHERS must fight for the right of these reformists of the Militant Editorial Board to continue in communion with their Labour Party brethren. Others must defend their right to organise to produce their paper and to call themselves any name they like.

And supporters of Militant who believe themselves to be Marxists or revolutionaries would do worse than investigate just what was the RSL of 1957 and what did it stand for.

One thing it certainly stood for was full and total war on the politics of the Militant Editorial Board.

PAUL MEYER



Militant's Grant, pictured in last week's Observer

Cammell Laird get injunctions against sit-in workers

On Monday and Tuesday, 1st and 2nd September, boilermakers from the Cammell Laird shipyard, Birkenhead, picketed the gates and sat in some of the directors' offices. They were implementing a decision of a boilermakers' mass meeting on the previous Sunday — to take militant action to get a government enquiry into "mismanagement" at the yard; to get a guarantee of full work; and to get redundancy notices withdrawn from 100 boilermakers.

These redundancy notices had been the spark for this particular action. They had been issued the previous week when 100 of the yard's 150 boilermakers refused to do staging work (ship scaffolding).

The bosses' reaction to the events of Monday and Tuesday was both to get injunctions against Union officials, shop stewards and those workers sitting in, and also to try to split the Lairds Workforce by claiming that the workers taking action were only a "splinter group". The granting of injunctions has had the effect of getting the sit-in called off. However, a mass boilermakers' picket on the Lairds' gates on Wednesday morning showed up the lie about "splinter groups" for what it was.

Much of the boilermakers' propaganda and action has appeared to concentrate on just five of the Cammell Laird management, whom they accuse of "mismanagement" and of being responsible for many problems of the company. Incompetent those five may be: but Arnold Weinstock, for example, who is generally recognised as a highly efficient manager, has been responsible for thousands more redundancies than the five Cammell Laird managers could ever be if they tried. The answer is not to pick and choose between "mismanagement" and "better" management, between incompetent and competent exploiters, but to demand work or full pay from the bosses whoever they may be. If, because of the insanities of the capitalist system, the bosses can't give the right to work and a decent standard of living, then we should demand they step aside and let the workers take over.

Another major demand at Cammell Lairds is for a

"government inquiry" into the firm: an inquiry by a government who, through their statutory wages policy and other attacks on the working class, have already shown where their interests lie — with the bosses. The only reliable inquiry, which will show up the real culprits, is one by the workers themselves. And such an inquiry would have to look not only at Cammell Lairds itself, but also at how it fits into the industry and relates to the rest of the system.

JOHN BLOXAM: 3-9-75

Demonstrators face threat of police

MARIE PATTERSON, chairperson of this year's TUC Conference, threatened to call police to "restore order" after observers in the gallery howled their protest at a delegate from the ultra-right EEP TU. The observers, supporters of the Shrewsbury pickets, and including Eric Tomlinson, one of the jailed pickets now out on parole, were infuriated by a disgusting reference to "the Shrewsbury pickets bandwagon".

When Eric Tomlinson tried to speak and was refused by the chair, his supporters chanted "We want Tomlinson".

The resolution before

Congress on the Shrewsbury pickets marked a step back compared with a year ago. In all details it was the same as the resolution presented to last year's conf-

erence, with the sole difference that this one declared against the 1875 Conspiracy Act (which was not the Act the pickets were jailed under, and the repeal of which would make the legal situation worse). No wonder George Smith could wriggle out of any responsibility by claiming "I imagined that the misconception about the Shrewsbury pickets had been cleared up at last year's

TUC".

No. Here we are one year on and the TUC still is not "clear" and still will not use all the forces at its disposal as the resolution says; to free Des Warren, the one picket remaining in jail.

The morning after the uproar at Blackpool, Tory MP, Andrew Bowden, cited the disturbance as grounds for ending Eric Tomlinson's parole and throwing him back into jail.

1975 TUC CONFERENCE

Women's Charter defeated by dishonest arguments

ON WEDNESDAY the Trades Union Congress voted for statutory wage curbs. On Tuesday

Congress voted against the 10-point Working Women's Charter — on the grounds that the Charter involved statutory wage controls!

This baffling argument was based on the Working Women's Charter's support for a statutory national minimum wage. Apparently in the TUC's book it is all right to keep wages down by law, but wrong to keep wages up by law....

The other arguments used by the platform to persuade Congress to reject the Working Women's Charter were equally dishonest. The call for "working conditions to be, without deterioration of previous conditions, the same for women as for men", was said to be "open to the interpretation that the Factory Acts' protective legislation would be removed from women"; but the Charter says in so many words, "without deterioration of previous conditions".

IMPOSE

Further, Audrey Prime of NALGO, speaking for the General Council of the TUC, said, on the Working Women's Charter demands for free contraception and for free abortion to be readily available, that "there may be Unions who might not consider these as appropriate matters to place before the Trade Union movement". In other words, if some trade unionists have moral or religious objections to abortion for

themselves — which is their right — they are to be allowed to impose those moral or religious opinions on the trade union movement as a whole, by preventing the movement from fighting for abortion rights.

The Working Women's Charter was rejected by 6,224,000 to 3,697,000 votes. But that represents considerable progress in trade union support for the Charter since it was launched by the London Trades Council in March 1973. Four unions — ATTI, TASS, CPSA, and SCS — now officially support the Charter.

Despite the General Council's objection to the Working Women's Charter on that issue (and the fact that the TUC Charter for Women has as one of its most important differences from the Working Women's Charter its failure to mention abortion), a Tobacco Workers' Union / Medical Practitioners' Union motion on abortion was passed. The motion opposed restrictive legislation such as the James White Amendment, and called for the right of all women to adequate services for contraception and abortion on request.

What is important now is that the TUC vote for abortion rights, and the degree of official union support for the Working Women's Charter that exists, be turned into action by rank and file initiatives.

200 SHOW SUPPORT AS ELDON SQ. TRIAL OPENS

THOSE MILITANTS who mobilised for the Shrewsbury 24 and later the Shrewsbury 2 will no doubt have been disturbed at the trial of 10 scaff-olders which began in Newcastle on Monday. The ten scaff-olders, members of the T&GWU, were arrested in January after police heavies weighed into their picket line at the Eldon Square site in the centre of Newcastle.

Strike action began after 14 men were victimised by the employers, none other than McAlpines (whose connivance in the Shrewsbury 24 case is now well known). A meeting had been held to discuss safety on the site. Despite being given the OK by management for an extended dinner break, the 14 were dismissed for allegedly fiddling half a day.

SCABS

All along the line, the strike has received little official help from the Union. David Shenton, T&G Regional Secretary, even went so far as removing credentials from branch officials when the strike started. Scabs had to be brought in from London as the site was blocked throughout Tyneside. They were paid £200 a week, with hotel expenses at £9 a night.

The dismissed men went to a tribunal, but their case was dismissed, and picketing continued.

In January, the police arrested 10 of the men. All

the available evidence indicates that the arrests were premeditated. As a van full of scabs raced out of the site, one of the pickets was hit. This caused an outcry, and some of the men rushed at the van in anger. The police now had the cue they had been waiting for, and laid into the men. The exuberance of the police in execution of their duty is illustrated by the fact that one of the pickets was charged with possessing an offensive weapon — namely his own shoe! Though this charge was dropped at a preliminary hearing, the cop in charge of the case, Sergeant Hutchinson, still has the shoe in his possession, and even had the nerve to present it to the court as

evidence on Monday morning.... This was greeted with hoots of laughter by everyone in the courthouse, including the judge.

Proceedings are still under way and the trials of the 10 are expected to last two weeks.

A demonstration of 200 turned up to support the men on the first day. Rover Solihull and the Hamstead (Birmingham) branch of the AUEW sent delegations, and a British Leyland contingent arrived later. It was clear that most of the picket was local.

Support the Defence Committee, prevent another Shrewsbury: contact Eddie Barty, 86 Benwell Lane, Newcastle 5. J.B.

N. IRELAND AND CIVIL WAR FROM PAGE 1

the supremacist community is threatened. The state will not be remodelled and reformed; it will be smashed either by civil war or an abandonment by Britain of the role it and its army plays in buttressing and supporting the Six County set-up. Then the whole Irish people can arrange their own affairs.

The sinister development of anti Protestant sectarian assassination — the shootings in South Armagh, where Catholics outnumber Protestants five to one — marks a further stage in the disintegration of the situation. Until very recently sectarian assassinations were almost exclusively directed against Catholics. It is only too easy to understand — though in no sense to approve, endorse, or justify — why Catholics, incredibly patient victims for so long of sectarian murder gangs, could see a logic in striking back, fighting sectarian fire with sectarian fire. It is a terrible illustration of what the Six County state is doing to all its people.

These are not Republican assassinations. It is the restraining hand of the Republican organisations that has previously prevented Catholic sectarian retaliation. To the ideology of Republicanism, for which the Orange people are misguided Irishmen (to the Orange forces, the Catholics are racially inferior beings....) sectarian assassinations are as alien as to the

ideology of socialism. It is to be hoped that the Republican movement controls and puts a stop to this eruption of sectarianism.

However, anyone who imagines that a civil war situation in Northern Ireland will not involve sectarian action by elements of the Catholic population is living in dreamland. We should not allow such facts to obliterate from our minds the fundamental reality that the Catholics are, have been, and, if the Orange racists have their way, will be gain, slaughtered and terrorised; that justice in this situation lies entirely with the Catholic people locked against their will inside and under the vicious rule of a racist state.

In any civil war situation the Catholic forces, including the IRA, will be the forces fighting to smash the framework without which the tragic communal conflict in Northern Ireland would not exist. They are thus entitled to the support — the active support on every front — of the British Labour Movement. In any sectarian strike action by the Orange working class, the movement here must remain neutral between the British authorities and the strikers, refusing all appeals for solidarity — and do its utmost to aid the Catholic population and trade unionists in the south of Ireland to break such a racist strike.

JOHN O'MAHONY

Rent rise protest in Liverpool

200 Liverpool tenants lobbied the City council on Wednesday 3rd September to protest against the August rent rises in the City — rises that were as large as £2. Tenants in different

areas of the city have been withholding the increase. On Thursday August 22nd, Liverpool Trades Council, recognising that a rent rise is a wage cut, voted to support the tenants in their fight.

MEETINGS

London Workers Fight SOCIAL: Saturday 13th September, at the Sols Arms, 77 Hampstead Rd, London NW1. Bar till lam, buffet, disco by Sounds Incredible. Tickets 50p.

London Workers Fight readers' meeting: "THE COLLAPSE OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE TASKS OF WORKERS' FIGHT". Speaker: Sean Matgamna. 7.30pm, Sunday 21st September, at the 'George', Liverpool Rd, N1.

Rochdale Workers' Fight readers' meeting: Bas Hardy (Bermondsey LPYS) on "Where is Portugal going?" 7.30pm, Monday September 8th, at the Labour Party Committee Rooms, 14 Smith Street, Rochdale.

Manchester Workers Fight readers' meeting on Portugal. Speaker: Bas Hardy. 8.30pm. Thursday

11th September, at the Ducia Arms, Great Ducie St (near Victoria Bus Station).

Solidarity with the Portuguese Working Class! meeting, 7.30pm, Friday September 12th, at Hulme Labour Club, Bonsall St, Manchester 15. Speakers: Alvaro Miranda (Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee) and a leading trade unionist. Sponsored by AUEW (TASS) Stretford branch, 6222 T&GWU British Gypsum, and the Manchester combine of stewards for the electricity supply industry.

Chartist public meeting: After Newham, What Next for Labour Left? Speaker — Tony Kelly (Newham North East CLP, in personal capacity). 8pm, Thursday 18th September, at Hulme Labour Club, Bonsall St, Manchester. Adm. 10p.

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Permanent Revolution 3

Summer 1975

Communism and Philistinism: the two souls of the Comintern

(An obituary article on J.P. Cannon and R.P. Dutt)

Editorial: The Left and the Common Market

IS and the Common Market (A document of the struggle of WF inside IS)

Bukharin on the Economics of the Transition Period

Polemical

Chile: drawing out the lessons? A letter and a reply

30p