

CHARTIST

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LABOUR: END REPRESSION IN SIX COUNTIES

WITHDRAW TROOPS NOW

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S DECISION to flood the south Armagh area with units from 'Spearhead Battalion' and the elitist 'Special Air Services' (SAS) regiment must be opposed by all sections of the labour movement in Britain. Mr Wilson has given the reinforced British army in the north of Ireland an extremely tough mandate. Included in the seven measures listed as the role of the troops in Armagh, the British Prime Minister has included:

- More personal identity checks.
- More surveillance operations on the border.
- More house to house searches in the area.
- Full use of powers to arrest and question local inhabitants.
- More check-points for vehicles and people.

harrassment

In stepping up the job of harrassment of the local population of south Armagh, the Westminster Government will be leaning heavily on the crack 'counter-subversion' squad, the SAS. In the blunt language of a 'Times' feature article in mid-January, the SAS will be "...told to do what the Army has so far failed to do — kill terrorists." But the problem which the new forces in Armagh confront is one familiar to all armies occupying a foreign and hostile population—how do they sort out the 'terrorists' from the ordinary people of South Armagh?

It was only in the previous month of December that Merlyn Rees was specifically denying (during 'question time' in the House of Commons) that any useful purpose would be served by pouring more troops into the South Armagh area. On this particular occasion, the Secretary of State for 'Northern Ireland' stated, in response to calls from Conservative MP Biggs-Davidson to step up Army action against the local population, that "We are operating in the sort of country where large numbers of forces are not needed." (Times 5.12.75).

sectarian

But the situation that has arisen in the wake of the fifteen sectarian killings which took place between 4-5th January (5 Catholics in Whitecross and Ballydougan, 10 Protestants at Whitecross) has clearly revealed that the policies of British governments' are blown like straws in the wind by the developing situation in the north of Ireland. The Westminster government staggers around from one situation to the next without any coherent plans or strategy. This has been revealed at every major turn in events in the Six Counties; from direct rule, through internment, so-called 'power-sharing', and the most recent efforts with the Constitutional Convention. And with every latest failure the same point is emphasised

Ireland.

Besides an increased physical presence of soldiers in the north of Ireland, the current situation holds extremely grave dangers flowing from the political dead-end of no policies and no plans on the part of 'Her Majesty's Government'.

Collaboration, and the exchange of secret documents and dossiers between Army officers and the Loyalist para-militaries has been reported in the British press. An article in the Sunday Times of 8 June last year revealed how the Army had been handing over photographs of "suspects", along with their names, addresses and telephone numbers to the very people who have claimed responsibility for scores of sectarian murders.

The collaboration between sections of the Army High command and the Loyalist ultra-right now appears to have spread to sections of the Civil Service that serve Her Majesty's Government in the Six Counties. The most prominent leader of the UUUC, the Rev. Ian Paisley, made use of some secret documents, which he claimed he received "through the post", in order to discredit any



moves on the part of the Westminster Government in the direction of abolishing sectarian discrimination against Catholics over council house allocation.

The policies of Army commanders are rapidly flowing into the vacuum left by the government's own paralysis. These commanders, establishment civil servants and right-wing Loyalists are increasingly taking initiatives and preparing the way for a bloody clamp-down against the Nationalist community in the north.

What happened in the period of the Carsonite 'Ulster Volunteer' movement, when the British Army revolted in the infamous 'Curragh Mutiny' of March, 1914, and declared that it would not obey Government dir-

ectives to act against the extreme Loyalists of the Carson movement, is happening once again.

The British labour movement must recognise that the Army in the Six Counties is nowadays the major prop of Ulster Orangism, sectarian bigotry, and a rotten corrupt statelet which is opposed by the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland.

The only alternative policy to that of permitting the Labour government to allow the Army to make this thoroughly reactionary and bloody contribution to Irish politics, is to demand the immediate withdrawal of all British troops. The building of a campaign to force Wilson to get the Army out must be a number one priority for socialists and activists within the labour movement.

SPAIN: DECISIVE HOUR APPROACHES

Chris Knight

NOTHING HAS CHANGED. Thousands of Spanish workers have demonstrated this in last month's massive strike-wave—the first test of the "sincerity" of the post-Franco regime.

Nothing has changed. Just as under Franco himself, the exercise of elementary trade-union rights has been met instantly with smoke-bombs, tear gas, baton-wielding riot police and the ruthless imposition of military discipline. In the first three weeks of this year, nearly 125,000 workers (72,000 railmen and 52,000 postmen) were technically conscripted into the army. The Madrid Central Post Office was occupied by riot police to prevent workers from meeting. The same thing happened at the Headquarters of the National Telephone Company. Striking clerks were forcibly ejected from a main bank in Madrid. In different parts of the city, thirteen companies in separate disputes locked out their combined work-force of 50,000. A women's demonstration was dispersed with tear-gas. A demonstration of 1,500 Chrysler workers

(where three arrested shop-stewards were appearing) was likewise dispersed. The entire eight-man postmen's strike-committee was arrested, as were hundreds of militants involved in other strikes. Churches were invaded to evict workers (and sympathetic priests) attempting to convene meetings. When a huge part of the crowd at a football match began chanting a slogan from the Portuguese revolution ("The people united will never be defeated")—along with "No to the wages ceiling"—riot police moved in there, too, with a volley of smoke bombs followed up with a baton charge.

Nothing has changed. And yet everything has changed completely. Although it has forced the workers back to work, the regime is now socially isolated and exposed as never before. Even the Christian Democrats are refusing to participate in the Government's phoney plans for "perfecting" or "reforming" the dictatorship and have been backing the workers' demands. The strike-wave has left

strengthened position. We are now seeing how the changed relationship between the classes is finding its reflection at the highest level within the state. Above all, this is taking the form of a growing political paralysis resulting from splits within the ruling elite.

A minor incident illustrates well how this paralysis is seizing the regime. The following passage from the British Financial Times refers to a high-point of the strike-wave in Madrid on January 21:

"Earlier in the day, political tension, heightened by the strikes, spilled over into the National Institute of Engineers, where five Government Ministers were at the centre of a furious row between members. During a lunch at which the Ministers were guests of honour, the President of the Institute referred to the growing demand for a political amnesty. As some members applauded, others rushed the top table screaming "Murderer" at the President and tried to turn the table over".

Since Franco's death, the regime has simply been postponing any

THE CHARTIST

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Nationalisation and workers plan only answer for Motor industry

THE IMPACT of the world capitalist crisis on the car industry has been a major test of the leadership and the official policies of the Labour movement in Britain. The issue that they have had to grapple with is jobs cut-backs on a massive scale. The British Leyland Ryder Report has hauled up nearly 20,000 jobs for the axe over the last few years. The proud and stately firm of Rolls-Royce is reducing its UK work-force by some 5,000-odd jobs over the next few years, as well as completely closing down the 800 jobs at the Dundonald plant in the north of Ireland. But the most drastically affected by the jobs rot are the workers at the Chrysler UK plants in Linwood, Stoke and Ryton, where 8,300 workers are expecting to be given their cards anytime in the next few months.

fight back

The need for the trade union and Labour movement to fight back against the danger of unemployment on a 30s scale is posed most acutely in the car industry. With a strong tradition of militant trade union action, for years car workers have shown a great determination to defend their living standards against the attacks of management. There can be no doubt that these same car workers would today be prepared to lead a militant struggle in defence of jobs which would be a beacon to trade unionists everywhere. If only, that is, their struggles were not sabotaged by trade union chiefs and Labour bureaucrats, at every single stage!

The record of the Labour government in dealing with the crisis in the car industry is the clearest case in point. The car industry is an extremely important barometer of British capitalism's economic standing. During the "mini-boom" in the economy in 1971, the industry's combined work-force of 700,000 in both motor and components production, turned

out 7.2% of the country's gross domestic product and 11% of visible exports. It is not surprising that the car industry should be described as of "symbolic significance as an indicator of national economic potency".

From the "mini-boom" of 1971 to the deepening crisis of 1976 the car industry has led the way. The Labour Government's attitude to the collapse of car firms and car production over the last twelve months is a very likely indicator of its attitude to so-called "lame duck" industries. If Wilson and company are not prepared to use socialist measures to deal with the devastating crisis within this industry, a part of the country's industrial backbone, then how much less likely are they to move against cut-backs and mass redundancies in other industries?

But far from using this situation as a chance to drive the capitalists out of an important sector of industry and to place all the plants under the management of the working class, the Wilson Government has worked hard to do precisely the opposite. After placing the British Leyland empire under the stewardship of National Enterprise Board chief, Lord Ryder, the Labour Government has proceeded to hand over £162.5 million to the Chrysler UK Corporation's existing management in order to avoid the question of outright nationalisation as the only measure that could save the 8,300 jobs now under the axe.

It is hard to imagine anything more absurd and futile than the Labour Government spending hundreds of millions of public money to enable the two ailing car giants, Chrysler UK and British Leyland, to continue to compete for the diminishing private car market. Meanwhile, the workforce in both companies is pared down and the dole queues inexorably lengthen. However, massive demand does exist for passenger service and commercial vehicles and spares. Clearly, the potential for a planned motor industry exists. The greatest barrier at present to bringing such planning about is the refusal of the Labour leaders to tear themselves away from the employers and their decaying system.

The labour movement must state clearly the alternative to the vacillation and jiggery pokery of our leadership. All motor industry firms planning redundancies must be nationalised at once, without compensation. A national plan for the production of cars, lorries, buses and other vehicles should be drawn up in relation to the needs of the population and the potential for trade on the world market. Using policies of a 30 hour week without loss of pay and work-sharing, socially necessary employment could be found for all the industry's present work-force, and a great many more unemployed workers besides.

Would the workers of Chrysler, Leyland, Ford etc. be prepared to fight for such a programme if it were

put before them by trade union leaders and the Labour Party? All the evidence points to the fact that they would seize this opportunity and turn it into a major offensive against all the capitalist classes' plans for unemployment. Look at the first response of the Chrysler work force to the Government's proposed plans for the loss of 8,300 jobs.

Just before Christmas, mass meeting after mass meeting reported heavy majorities against the proposed programme for job-cutting. But the indecision of the trade union official leadership, coupled with the refusal of the 'Tribune Group' of MPs to back the mass meeting opposing any redundancies in Parliament, meant that the workers were left without any effective leadership.

criminal failure

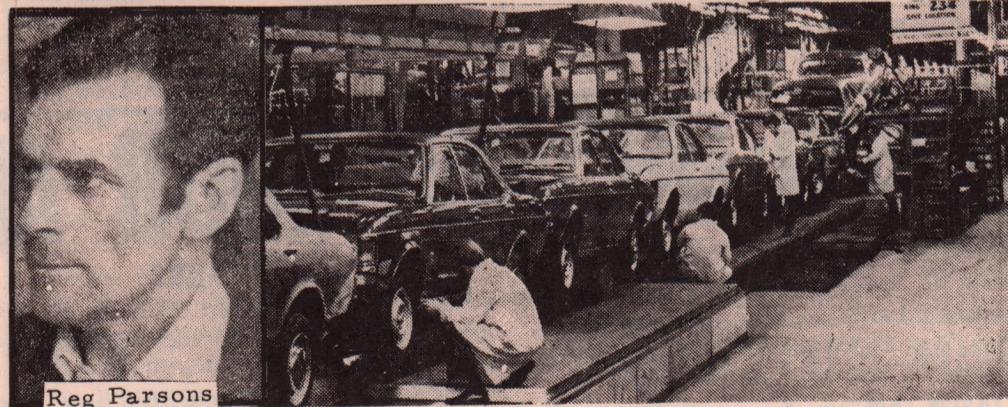
When Chrysler management set their "decision by the weekend" deadline on Monday December 29th, the criminal failure of the labour leadership to give a lead had done its work. Ill-attended meetings began to produce majorities in favour of acceptance of the sell-out deal. The bureaucrats must have been pleased about the prospect of a return to a "peaceful" life.

In the face of the refusal of the Labour Government to break with capitalism and the failure of the trade union leaders to take up the fight against the Government's policy, the fight-back must come at plant level. Here the lessons of the struggle against the Ryder 'participation' committees at British Leyland's Cowley plant show the way in the fight to defend jobs. The fight for the opening of the car firms' books, opposition to speed-up, union control over manning levels, and for the sharing of work through a reduced working week without loss of pay, can back the demand for nationalisation with an irresistible force.

Crisis in Motor industry

WITCH-HUNT AT LEYLANDS CANNOT SOLVE CRISIS

BY GRAHAM DURHAM



Reg Parsons

"I WILL PUT up with no nonsense from these jokers. There will be no anarchy, no Communism, no disruption."

So boasted senior shop-steward Reg Parsons to the 'Daily Mirror' the day after five out of seven TGWU deputy convenor posts had gone to 'moderates' at the British Leyland plant at Cowley, Oxford. The 'jokers' referred to were a group of shop-stewards — in particular the so-called 'Mole', Alan Thornett — who had dared to oppose Parsons' collaboration with management; Thornett had led opposition to the 'workers' participation' committees which were designed to increase production and reduce manning levels. Instead through the 'Open the Books' committee Thornett and others had popularised the idea of workers' access to the books of British Leyland as a prelude to the nationalisation of the company under workers' management.

WORRIED

As a result of this campaign of opposition to redundancy plans, Thornett had won the chairmanship of the TGWU 5/293 branch — part of the branch broken up 19 months ago following a TGWU inquiry into alleged, but unproven, irregularities. The recent press campaign against Thornett is a repeat of a savage witch-hunt carried out then.

At the beginning of January, senior witch-hunter Parsons — worried by his narrow victory over left-winger Bob Fryer in the recent senior stewards election — called a press conference in his parlour and warned of "a bee-hive of extremist activity" at

Cowley. Next day, most of the national press carried articles warning of the extremist threat at Cowley — the gutter press was especially vitriolic. The Daily Mirror carried a long article headed 'Beware of the Mole'. This press campaign, designed to avoid all the issues and isolate individuals, coincided with a management announcement that should Alan Thornett be elected to a deputy convenor post they would refuse to recognise him. In a clear breach of union democracy, Parsons' moderate slate — including Workers' Revolutionary Party member Tom White — received extensive publicity.

Behind the stage-managed sensationalism, it is important to understand why everyday union elections assumed such importance for British Leyland management, its collaborators in the union and in the press of the ruling class. The government

accepted Ryder report on British Leyland of April 1975 revealed that £2.8 billion aid would go to British Leyland over a ten year period. There would be no nationalisation but only majority shareholding with compensation paid above even stock market prices. Hidden behind phrases about 'a new and rationalised model range' the Ryder report implied mass sackings. There was to be no workers' involvement in supervising where the aid went — only 'participation committees' to examine ways of increasing production.

Nine months after acceptance of the report, the crisis in British Leyland has deepened. The company is losing £6 million per week. Despite 20,000 redundancies over the past year, the Leyland management has been forced to freeze capital expenditure — thus jeopardising the next £100 million aid due in the summer.

Using this aid as a carrot, the government and management hope to persuade the unions to co-operate, through the Ryder committees, in speed-ups and redundancies. Thus the government hopes to repeat at plant level, the acceptance by unions of the need to create redundancies, increase production and hold back wages. This has already occurred in the TUC agreement to the Wilson-Healey plans.

Yet despite widespread apathy in elections, only the Triumph plant at Canley, Coventry has boycotted these participation committees.

TOTAL OPPOSITION

The success of these committees is vital to the management's plans for rationalisation — organisations like the Workers' Revolutionary Party and the Communist Party, whose members participate in the Ryder elections, only confuse workers. Total opposition to these committees — such as that organised at Cowley — must be the first step towards a fightback. The plants need to unite to demand the opening of the books and the nationalisation of the entire motor industry under workers' management. Short-time working and lay-offs must be opposed by the demand for work-sharing with no loss of pay. No speed-ups must be allowed. All factories threatening redundancies should be immediately occupied.

Around these demands, workers at Leyland and other car firms can fight back against the rationalisation plans of the Labour Government. As such a fight-back begins, the number of witch-hunts can only be expected to grow.

RETAIL PRICE FRAUD

IAN WATSON

AS THE INCREASE in the Retail Price Index is announced each month, the figures inevitably spark off widespread concern at rises in the 'cost-of-living' and a gust of hot air in the House of Commons. Yet most workers feel, from their own day-to-day experience, that this highly-respected 'economic indicator' seems to under-estimate the extent to which rising prices eat into their wage packets.

Research carried out by various working class organisations over the last few years into the reliability of the official Retail Price Index (RPI) goes a long way towards explaining why the average worker seems to know better than government statisticians about rising prices.

threshold

The attention of trade unionists was particularly drawn to the RPI during 1973/74 when the Index was being used to determine the rate at which 'Threshold' payments were paid as the cost of living rose. The RPI was used at that stage as the definitive indicator of rises in the 'cost-of-living'—despite the fact that most economists AND the Government had recognised that the Index was not an accurate measure of the cost of living as long ago as 1947, when the name of the index was changed from the 'Cost of Living Index' to the present 'Retail Price Index'.

In November 1973, the Trade Union Research Unit at Ruskin College, Oxford published a critical report on

'The Limitations of the General Index of Retail Prices'. Some of the main criticisms made were:

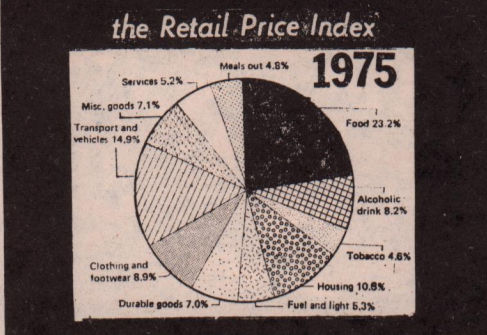
(1) "No account is made of income tax and social security contributions which have increased at a faster rate than prices, reducing the value of real take-home pay to a greater extent than revealed by a consideration of prices alone. Furthermore, for the average worker, over one third of any increase to compensate for the rise in retail prices will be taken away as direct deductions from the wage packet. For low-paid workers, practically all the increase might be eroded by the loss of means-tested benefits."

(2) "The treatment of housing costs is inadequate. It takes no account of changes in house prices and mortgage costs... Also the rent index fails to reflect the true increase in local authority rents."

(Indeed the Research Department of ASTMS in 1974 estimated that, if the RPI figures were to be applied in practice, the 'weighting' given to rent in the housing 'index' would mean that: "A tenant paying £5 per week rent should, according to the index, be receiving a disposable income of £60 per week. This implies a gross wage of about £80 per week." Tell that to working class families earning £30 to £40 per week and paying well over £5 a week in rent!)

The ASTMS document goes on to point out:

"The RPI assumes a common pattern of expenditure by different people. In fact, lower paid workers



spend a higher proportion of their income on precisely the things which have been rising in price fastest: food and housing."

They estimate that the RPI (in 1974) underestimated the rise in the cost of living by 2-3% for the average worker and by 3-4% for the lower paid.

Research by the Low Pay Unit shows that recent changes in the statistical make-up of the Index have disguised this fraud still further but, with inflation now running at around 25% a year, the under-estimate may now be even worse.

A graphic example of how this fraud works can be shown if we look at the 'weighting' system which operates on the statistics collected by the local offices of the Department of the Employment. Each group of items in statisticians' typical 'shopping basket' is given a 'weighting' according to how important it is in the family budget. These 'weightings' are reviewed each year by the 'Retail Price Index Advisory Committee' (22 people - in 1974: 11 Civil Servants, 4 professors of Economics and Stat-

istics, the remainder were representatives of employers, retailers, Women's Institutes etc. There was one trade unionist — Sir Sydney Greene) and are often changed.

For example, if, as working class living standards fall, the average family eats less meat (because of rising meat prices), meat consumption overall falls and this item is given less 'weight' in the Index. This means that the price of meat, a fundamental part of workers' budgets, is statistically 'adjusted' by the Government to disguise the effects of price rises.

rising scale

The CHARTIST has consistently argued for a rising scale of wages to allow workers' earnings to keep up with inflation. Threshold payments gave us an idea of the potential benefits of this demand, but we can see that it is no good relying on the ruling class 'Indices' to tell us the extent of rises in the cost-of-living.

If the rising scale of wages is to have any meaning for workers' living standards, a working class cost of living index must be drawn up by the trade union movement, assisted by local price committees of trade unionists and consumers.

Now is the time for these demands to be posed in union branches and the Labour movement as a concrete alternative to the Government's £6 pay limit and falling living standards.

'Make the Post Office pay?'

THE POST OFFICE besides being the biggest single employer in Britain — 434,000 employees — is also the biggest loss-maker with a deficit of £307 million (year ending March 31st '75). This year the loss is expected to be about the same size.

This situation has led Tory champions of "free enterprise" to crow about the "inefficiency" and "incompetence" of nationalised industries. Government ministers have joined hands with Post Office management under pressure from this chorus in attempts to "make the Post Office pay".

charges

Foremost in the schemes to make the Post Office profitable are proposals to increase charges — for mail and telephones, to cut services and cut the labour force. But far from making the Post Office pay, the increase in postal and telephone tariffs have actually resulted in a fall-off in use. For example, in the 12 months to this August, first-class deliveries fell by 20%, while second-class deliveries (60% of total) rose by only 6%. And that was before the 8½p letter and the projected 10½p letter!

So increasingly the Labour Government and Post Office management — over which the trade union membership have virtually no control — are emphasizing the need to cut labour costs. The ground is thus being prepared for a savage assault on jobs, in which the leadership of the main Post Office workers' union — the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) — spear-headed by Tom Jack-

son, is going hand in glove along with plans for redundancies.

But one vital question must be asked. Is the Post Office a public service providing for social needs like the Health Service or is it to be an industry run for profit? To the everyday consumer, communications and



TOM JACKSON

post will be considered as a crucial part of social services. But for the suppliers of equipment and machine-

INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPHS FIRST TARGET FOR SACKINGS?

BY A UPW (OTO) MEMBER

International telecommunications were dominated by Britain until comparatively recently. Until the early sixties telegrams were transmitted over "point-to-point" circuits. This meant that a number of operators handled a telegram at each stage of its journey. Increased efficiency and profitability involves reducing the amount of handling necessary.

With this in mind the Post Office introduced a semi-automatic system, OTRU, in 1963. Although the amount of jobs required was reduced, desperate understaffing concealed the dangers of redundancy inherent in further development of automatic systems. In the late sixties ORTU was replaced by a fully automatic system, MRC. But even the MRC failed to cope with the increasing flow of traffic.

Meanwhile the PO was fighting a vicious international competition for transit traffic. (Transit traffic is the most lucrative telegraphic work, involving no additional costs for reception or delivery of messages). The PO decided to re-open OTRU, but now met fierce resistance. Not only had Overseas Telegraph Operators

(OTO's) gained nothing financially from the implementation of automatic systems; their working conditions had in fact deteriorated. The UPW executive was forced to demand recompense for the re-opening of OTRU.

In the face of PO opposition an official strike of OTO's was called, in January 1969. After some days a national UPW strike was called, and the PO was forced to concede extra wages before the OTOs would man OTRU again.

In the following years conditions continued to deteriorate. Limited implementation of recommendations made in the Dept. of Employment and Productivity's report on conditions in International Telegraphs served management's interests. Work continued on the development of the Telegram Relay Centre (TRC), a highly sophisticated fully automatic system.

In return for procedural changes at work and the envisaged implementation of TRC, the International Telegraph Service (ITS) Efficiency Agreement was entered into, promising OTOs money on any savings made.

ry, like Standard Telephone and Cables (STC), a subsidiary of the giant monopoly ITT, profit must clearly come first. And it appears that the Labour Government and Post Office management are, quite ready to accept this philosophy.

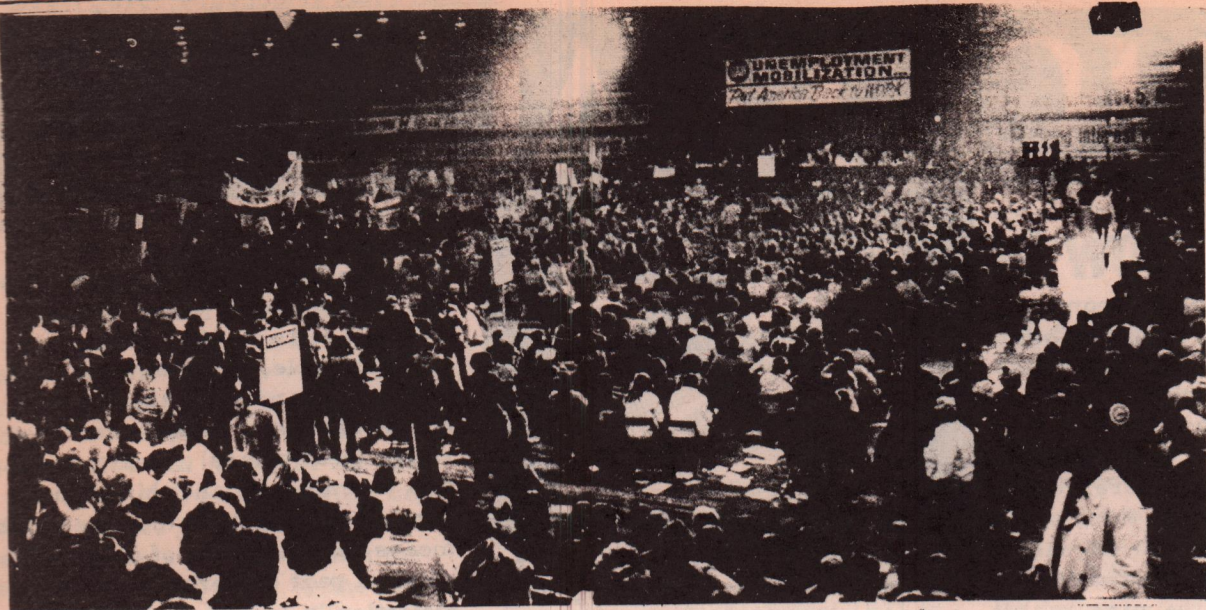
How is the "make the Post Office pay" policy affecting different sections of the Post Office?

The following article looks at the situation in the International Telegraph section of the PO.

During this period the PO deficit continued to grow. An ominous drop in traffic was becoming apparent as the world recession developed. The PO, nevertheless, continued to raise its prices. Transit traffic is now dealt with, unseen, by the TRC, which has a very small staff requirement. Business telegrams are increasingly replaced by direct Telex communication. Personal, and small business telegrams are being priced off the market. What then is the future for OTOs?

The ITS Efficiency Agreement is seen to be totally inadequate. It does not even guarantee a reduction in hours with no loss of pay, and the UPW executive's promises to fight for a 35 hour week have been broken. Meantime the PO has begun a deliberate policy of harassment in its dealings with OTOs.

The PO is now almost fully staffed — a unique situation — but are these staff still required? When the TRC becomes fully operational there will be virtually no jobs left for OTOs, and rumours circulate that what little there is could be performed by other staff. If, in an attempt to control its deficit the PO contemplates compulsory redundancy, it may begin on the most isolated members, the OTO grade.



TIGHTEN BELTS a little bit more, 'give a year or several for Britain', and the economy will have turned the corner. Chancellor Denis Healey and Prime Minister Wilson issue these honeyed phrases to cushion anti-working class policies, while the economic 'experts' the world over speculate on the prospects for an upswing in the world economy.

What truth is there behind talk of 'recovery'? If it is true, how long will it last? And what sort of recovery is it that consigns 15 million workers to unemployment in the industrialised capitalist world and millions more to starvation, poverty and drastically reduced incomes?

The international pundits are quick to use the relative upturn in the United States economy—an 11.2 per cent growth in Gross National Product in

the third quarter of 1975, a decline in inflation and a booming share market as evidence of a possible end to the global capitalist recession.

industrial production

It is true also that Japan with industrial production up by three to four per cent in the second and third quarters of 1975 and West Germany with a slight 2 per cent increase in industrial production between August and September 1975 are showing slight signs of pick-up from slump conditions of the past two years.

In Britain, the recent drop in the rate of price increase—an annual rate of 14 per cent over the last three months—has been held out as the first fruits of recovery. But as the old pro-

verb goes, one swallow does not make a summer. And it is necessary, above all, to explain how this particular swallow has been conjured up.

Internationally, the perk in the US, Japanese and West German economies is the product of an enormous reflation, which will soon reap its harvest in a new savage bout of inflation. State aid for company investment, and even to bankrupt cities like New York, a consolidation of stocks and tax-cuts have given a fillip to production. But in turn these 'artificial respiration' methods to stimulate a sick world economy build up more problems than they solve. Huge public and private sector debts—to the tune of \$70,000 million in the US for 1975, only stoke the fires of inflation preparing the ground for a more explosive collapse.

World recession still dominates

Above all the generalised recession still casts its dark shadow over the world capitalist economy. If any testimony is needed to show this it can be seen in the 15 million jobless in the 24-member OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. The US makes up almost two-thirds of this figure with over 8 million out of work and with the official figures in Britain nudging the 1½ million mark.

world trade

Another vital indicator of the continuing slump conditions is that the volume of world trade, according to GATT, dropped by 10 per cent in the first half of 1975 compared to the same period in 1974—the sharpest drop since the Second World War. Figures for gross national product (in real terms) for the whole of 1975 as of November show:

	%
United States	-4.0
West Germany	-3.5
Japan	+1.5
France	-2.0
Italy	-3.0
Britain	-0.7

Predictions are being made for improved growth rates in 1976 in the US, Japan and indeed all the major capitalist countries. There is enormous spare capacity in capitalist industry. In the United States manufacturing industry was operating at only 65 per cent capacity in the middle of 1975, and still only 72 per cent in October. The steel industries in Britain, Japan and the US are working between 10 and 20 per cent below capacity. But the

problem for capitalists is: in order to invest a suitable rate of profit in return needs to be guaranteed. And this simply cannot be done. The enormous debts breed insecurity and nervousness and mean that any long-term recovery is completely ruled out.

This is not to deny that there will be a temporary improvement in jobs, incomes and production in the US, West Germany and Japan in particular. But as these countries pass through an expansionary phase weaker states find it even more difficult to export and compete on shrinking national markets. In a generalised recession an upturn in one country reinforces the downturn in another. Thus all capitalist countries are gripped in a vicious circle.

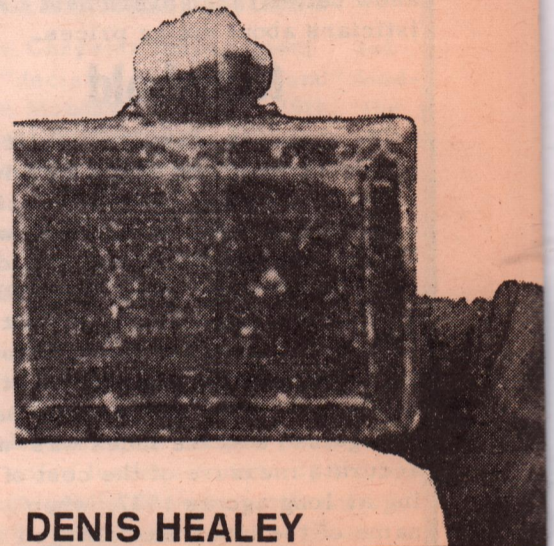
Aggravating still further attempts at recovery has been the lack of any stable currency foundation to lubricate and regulate world trade. The collapse in 1971 of the Bretton Woods monetary Agreement of 1944 and the consequent ending of the dollar as the stable gold-based currency on which world trade was based, has opened a reign of floating exchange rates. Thus the disparities in production and value between the capitalist nations means that world trade has no basis for equilibrium in the exchange of commodities.

overproduction

So in general terms the picture of the capitalist world confirms the Marxist analysis of capitalism as a system generating periodic and recurring crises of overproduction. A crisis not essentially of over-production of commodities which cannot

RECOVERY RECESSI

IN THE MIDST OF THE WORST WORLD RECOVERY SINCE THE 1930s THERE IS SPECULATION THAT A RECOVERY IS IN SIGHT. WHAT PROSPECTS ARE THERE FOR THE WORLD CAPITALIST ECONOMY IN THE MIDST OF THE CAPITALIST CRISIS AND THE



DENIS HEALEY

The crisis in

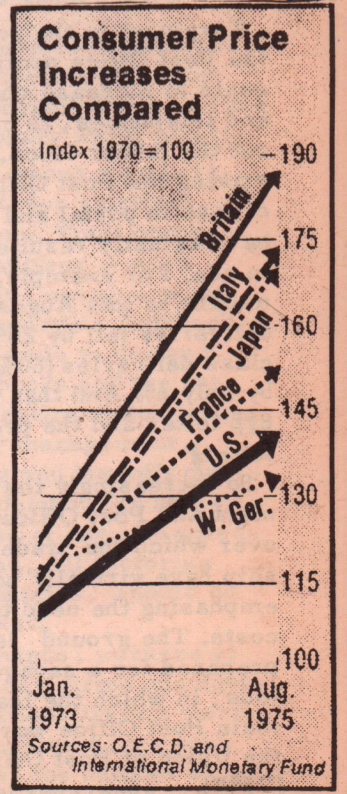
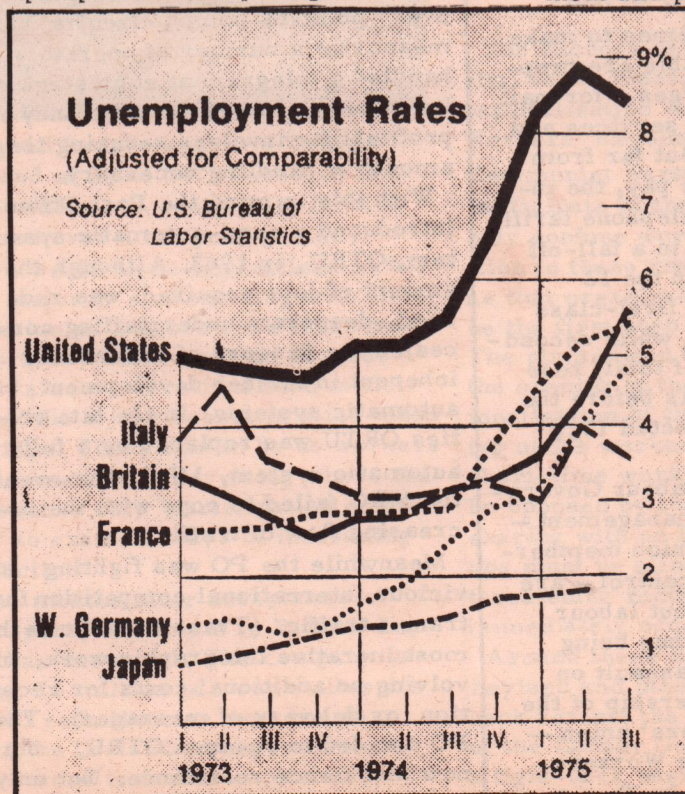
In turning to Britain we can see the profitability crisis of world capitalism expressed in all its severity. The Labour Government having rejected any shred of socialist economic policy is embracing thoroughly capitalist solutions to the crisis. Chancellor Healey, who in an article called 'Strategy for Survival', written with Industry Secretary Varley, blatantly states the Government's priorities in saying "The Government emphasises the importance of sustaining a private sector of industry which is vigorous, alert, responsible and profitable". Thus, the traditional anti-working class 'remedy' of deflation has been adopted in an attempt to restore profitability.

British capitalism's prospects for recovery are virtually non-existent. The Keynesian concepts which guided policies of state intervention and credit provision to maintain employment and production are now collapsing.

be sold on the market, but over-production of capital which cannot generate sufficient profit to permit the process of capital accumulation to proceed. To be precise, the increase in the ratio of constant capital (machines, factories, computers etc) over variable capital (workers) leads to a diminishing pool of productive labour to exploit for surplus value. Thus the tendency of the rate of profit to fall asserts itself as the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist system.

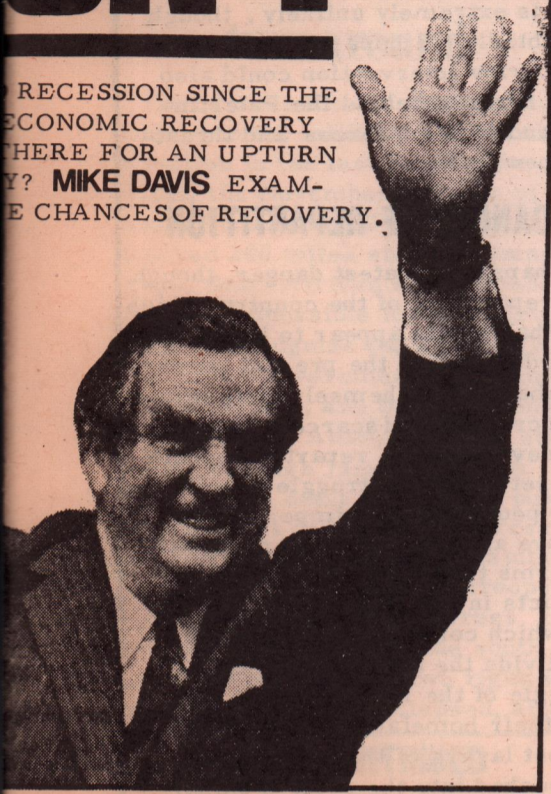
contradiction

This contradiction within capital itself and the attempts of the capitalists to offset it, assures the explosive character of class struggles in the coming period. Because the working class through its labour in industry creates surplus value (unpaid labour) from which profit derives, only a colossal increase in the rate of exploitation of the working class can postpone the deepening of the crisis.



Y OR ON?

RECESSION SINCE THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY HERE FOR AN UPTURN? **MIKE DAVIS** EXAMINES THE CHANCES OF RECOVERY.



in Britain

ing in the conditions of world recession. Britain is particularly badly placed when it comes to talk of recovery.

structural weakness

Firstly, there are the structural weaknesses of British industry. The problems of obsolete equipment and archaic production methods have been compounded by the disastrously low level of domestic fixed capital investment since the war. During the third quarter of 1975 capital spending fell by 6 per cent in manufacturing industry. This followed successive declines of 8 per cent and 7 per cent in the first two quarters of 1975. This situation has had severe effects in industries like machine tools, ship-building, steel and indeed most engineering industries.

From 1960 to 1972 investment in plant and machinery in Britain was only about two-fifths of total investment, that is about 7 per cent of gross national product. Such low domestic investment contrasts starkly with the levels of 30 per cent for Germany and Japan. It also contrasts with the relatively enormous amounts of British investment going overseas. Between 1962 and 1969 capital investment overseas—in a variety of forms—increased by £20,000 million. Capital export in search of short-term profits and cheap labour in African and other colonies now conspires to underline the competitive weakness of British capital on the world market.

Empire gone

Secondly, the loss of Empire and guaranteed markets and the immense combativity of the working class has further gripped British capital in a powerful vice. With the cushioning gone, the third vital factor which now militates against any prospect of recovery is the enormous burden of state debt which

hangs round the neck of British capitalism. The international banks and creditors are now demanding stringent conditions for any new loans to finance the budget deficit, of £9 billion for 1975.

This is the background against which British capitalism has entered the recession. The tasks now facing it—which the Wilson Government is clearly taking upon itself—revolve essentially around the need to increase the productivity of labour. This means the amount of



value extracted from the working class has got to be dramatically heightened in order to finance any continuation in the process of capital accumulation. This attack on the conditions of the working class is taking several forms.

rationalisation

Firstly, by rationalisation and direct attacks on jobs. This is being done through speed-up, manning reductions, closures, public spending cut-backs—especially aid to nationalised industries—and a deliberate policy of 'lame-ducks' to the wall. Even the largest state hand-outs of recent months have gone towards financing massive redundancies at British Leyland (20,000 throughout 1975), Chrysler (8,300) and British Steel (44,000 being demanded).

Secondly, related to the rationalisation strategy are plans for a widespread restructuring of British industry. Entry into the Common Market is intended to facilitate this along with a policy of selective state investment in 30 sectors of the economy "most likely to succeed".

In line with these plans for restructuring British capitalism—at the expense of the working class—is the forlorn attempt to create a climate for private investment. This is the primary reason behind the attempts to impose state wage control (currently taking the form of the £6 limit). This policy is coupled with the cynical expansion of the reserve army of labour (unemployment) to depress the real wages and bargaining strength of the working class on the labour market.

inflation

The rate of inflation for 1975 which amounted to around 25 per cent has eaten viciously into purchasing power. This inflation has been created essentially by the enormous state spend-

ing of the post-war period. Subsidies, grants, and compensation payments not only fuels inflation but eats into and distorts the average rate of profit by draining the private sector of part of its profits to finance a largely unprofitable state sector. These hallowed Keynesian policies on which post-war expansion was based are now turning in upon themselves. Chancellor Healey's plans to cut-back public expenditure by £3,750 million between 1977-1980, restriction on the supply of paper money and credit

and the reluctance to aid recession-torn private industries have more to do with attempts to cut inflation than any policies to curb wages, which are in no way a cause of inflation.

Thus wage control is to be seen as the ideological aspect of the strategy to cut inflation, encourage investment and restore profitability to British industry. In this treacherous work

Results and prospects

Undoubtedly a slight economic recovery is occurring in the most powerful capitalist countries at the expense of working class living standards and millions of jobs. But the recovery can be at best only short-term. The enormous burdens of accumulated debt which run into billions combined with a little reduced world inflation rate mean that any upturn will confront the problem of liquidity and the lack of ability to replace artificial value with real value.

In Britain, the Sunday Times Business News forecasters, along with other pundits, see no improvement in the numbers unemployed before 1980. Obviously, there is little chance of an upturn with such high jobless figures.

All talk of general recovery is a nonsense. The long post-war boom has gone, to be replaced by an era of crisis and slump. Of course, the set-backs for working-class struggle in Britain and America, highlighted by the biggest jobless figures since the Second world war, will buy a little time for capital. But capitalism needs more than time to offset its endemic contradictions. Without an immense increase in the rate of exploitation and a reduction in the real wages of the working class, the process of capital accumulation cannot continue.

The conditions of generalised rec-

the Labour Government is attempting to accelerate the integration of the trade unions into the state so that the bureaucracy can more effectively police these measures. The undermining of free collective bargaining, the arbitration and conciliation machinery, the expansion of the system of industrial tribunals are all to be seen in this light.

world market

Finally, to improve the position of British capitalism on the world market the enormous balance of payments deficit has to be reduced. In 1974 it was £4 billion and in 1975 it was still around £2½ billion. Healey has already predicted a borrowing requirement of £12,000 million for 1976. To obtain this enormous sum the International Monetary Fund (who have lent another £975m) are demanding stringent conditions, one of which the 'Guardian' 13th November reported as "evidence that Britain is prepared to make substantial public expenditure cuts."

By resorting to selective import controls alongside the battery of other anti-working class policies, Healey merely reinforces the moves on a world-scale towards protectionism and trade war.

recession and the sharpening of the conflicts between the various capitalist nations over the share of surplus value (profit etc.) in an increasingly cut-throat world market endows the crisis with a pervasive character. Already Britain, Finland and Italy have begun to introduce import controls on selected goods. And the US is responding by placing restrictions on the import of foreign steel. Thus the tendency towards protectionism, economic nationalism and trade war is accelerated.

The hope of a renewed and updated Atlantic Treaty has receded and the Common Market countries continue to squabble and fall out over attempts at common monetary, energy, agricultural and trading policies, with the fear of US competition as the major force holding them together.

It is clear that the chronic sickness of British and world capitalism can afford no real recovery. The historic alternatives which Marxists have always stressed are now becoming increasingly highlighted. The choice is either a return to the conditions of the 1920s and '30s, depression and fascism with the inevitable prospect of a new world war and barbarism or the conquest of state power by the working class, the socialisation of the means of production and the opening of an era of a socialist planned economy as the only salvation for the human race.



Above left: Rally of unemployed workers in the United States last year called by the United Auto Workers union. Above: Part of the 20,000 jobs lobby in London on November 25th, 1975

Middle East flashpoint: Civil War in Lebanon

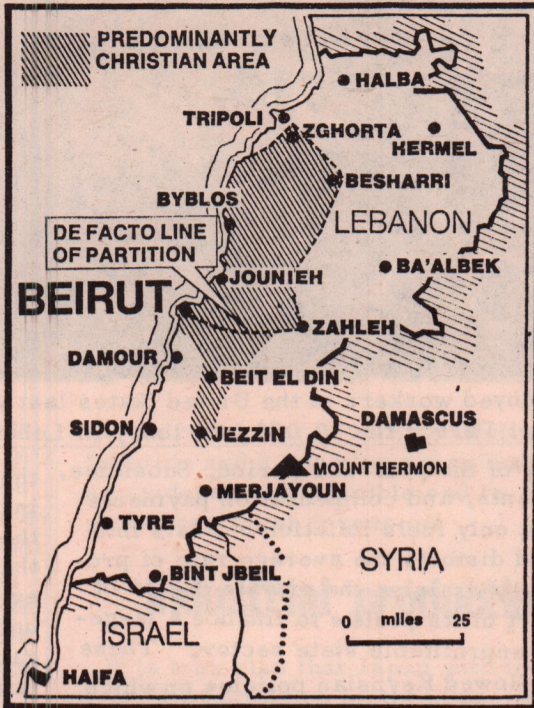
By Geoff Bender

AFTER 9 MONTHS of incessant fighting, broken only by a score of ceasefires, few lasting more than a matter of hours, the three major cities of Lebanon, Zgharta, Tripoli and Beirut, once the financial, commercial and tourist centres of the Eastern Mediterranean, now lie half-ruined, streets barricaded and raked with rifle fire. The once prosperous Lebanese economy has now collapsed, the gross national product slashed by two thirds while foreign businesses flee the country. Nine thousand have died out of Lebanon's three million over the past year in the bitter civil war. Not surprisingly, the Government of President Suleiman Frangieh, has been wracked with crisis after crisis, while the leaders of the Moslem community, like the wealthy Prime Minister, Rashid Karami, have desperately sought a compromise with the leaders of the Maronite Christian people who have for so long dominated the country. Finally, in the middle of January, unable to control either the Moslem militias or the Army and Airforce, who are more and more openly intervening on the side of the right-wing Christian Phalange, Karami resigned office.

FRENCH MANDATE

The conflicts which have torn the tiny country apart have their roots deep in the days of the French colonial administration, especially the period of the mandate established after the 1st World War, along lines already agreed in the Anglo-French carve-up, the Sykes-Picot agreement. Under the French mandate the Maronite Christian community were bolstered up, in administration and business & used as a bastion against the stirrings of Arab nationalism in the area. (The British used the Jewish community in Palestine in much the same way especially against the Palestinian general strike and armed revolt of 1936-7).

When in 1945 the present Lebanese state emerged, an elaborate structure of "power-sharing" was established. Certain key posts were reserved for Christian and others for Moslem poli-



iticians. The Christians, at the time the majority, were still clearly dominant.

This rigid but fragile structure, under the impact of the influx of the Palestinians and other refugees from the wars of '48, '67, '70, and '73 as well as those fleeing the frequent Israeli air-raids on the South Lebanese border and the relatively higher birth-rate of the Moslem population, could not respond to changed conditions. Today the Maronites are only 40% of the population of Lebanon. The divisions, go far deeper though, than the simple question of the proportional representation in Government. As the finance, commerce and tourist enterprises of Beirut flourished so, in their shadows, spread the sprawling slums of the Moslem poor. Not far from these, too, were the camps where the Palestinians lived, centres of the resistance to Zionist expansion.

During the 50s Lebanon came under the attention of the United States as a Cold-War risk. In 1958, 14,000 American Marines were dispatched

to Beirut to quell the civil war situation which had erupted as Christian President, Camille Chamoun, now Interior Minister, had sought to amend the constitution in order to run again for President. For the US, squeezing the complex Lebanese situation into the red-and-white world of cold-war politics, saw in Chamoun, and his Maronite Christian support a reliable ally against the leftward moving Arab National Movement brought about by the combined force of Nasserism in Egypt and the Syrian Ba'athists.

During the '60s the relatively prosperous Lebanese economy, to which the Palestinians made a considerable contribution, boomed. The social conflicts were smoothed over and the Palestinians' presence tolerated.

PRIVILEGES

But over the past few years, the fears of large sections of the Christian population of a Moslem takeover backed by the armed power of the Palestinians, have found expression in the growth of the right-wing Phalange. Their demands have been essentially for the defence of the privileges of the Christian community and the dismantling of the Palestinians. In furtherance of these, terrorist attacks have been launched on the Palestinian and Moslem people, which have led to the current civil war.

Though initially fighting was between the private armies of semi-feudal landlords on both sides, increasingly the war has assumed a class character. On the Moslem side the militias of the Socialists, Communists, Arab nationalists and the Revolutionary Communist Group have fought alongside the Palestinians. Whilst the Phalangists have been receiving covert support from the Israelis and the Army. Increasingly the 'respectable' Arab leaders have backed away from the fighting to

find a new compromise. In this they have had the support of globe-trotting PLO diplomat Yasser Arafat, who personally called off the recent seige of Chamoun's house.

The Army, 18,000 strong, has remained officially neutral. Any attempt at intervention would soon provoke a split between the Moslem third of the Army and the remaining two thirds including most senior officers who are Christian. Thus the recurrence of a "Black September" situation such as occurred in Jordan when Hussein attempted his "final solution" to the Palestinian problem, is extremely unlikely, though undoubtedly the hope of the Phalangists. Army intervention could also bring Syria in behind the Palestinians and Moslem forces and threaten a new war.

DANGER OF REPARTITION

Perhaps the greatest danger, though is a repartition of the country, which the Phalangists appear to be working towards. Though the present borders of Lebanon are themselves an imperialist creation and scarcely progressive, nevertheless, repartition could only set back the struggle to unite the Arab people against imperialism.

Above all, the Lebanese civil war confirms that at the core of all the conflicts in the Middle East, the issue which continues to both unite and divide the Arab people, is the struggle of the Palestinians to regain their homeland. Bit by bit, the richest layers of the Arab world are sucked into the orbit of imperialism and obliged to sell-out the interests of the Palestinians while, at the same time, the poor and oppressed of the Eastern Mediterranean countries rally round their banner. The alliance being formed in the streets of Beirut and Tripoli against the Phalange shows the beginnings of the way forward for the oppressed masses of the Arab countries. What the Lebanese experience also makes clear is that none of the myriad problems of the Arab peoples can be solved within the narrow boundaries of the various semi-nations carved out of the Middle East by imperialism.

Repression continues in Portugal

by Graham Bash

"It is not a particular man or officer that is being accused, but an integral part of a project that they wish to crush: the idea of socialism from below."

Within an hour of making this statement, Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, the radical ex-chief of the now disbanded Copcon security force, was arrested for his part in the abortive November 25th revolt.

PRISON

Whilst leftists such as Carvalho are thrown in prison, a number of open right-wingers have been released. These include General Kaulza de Arriaga, the leader of the Portuguese military campaign in Mozambique; Dr. Silva Cunha, the last Defence Minister under Caetano; Dr Santos Junior, the former Interior Minister who supervised the PIDE secret police; and Dr. Moreira Baptista, the former Information Minister who had been charged with corruption. In addition, about one fifth of the 1200 PIDE agents still held in prison have been released.

The first month of 1976 witnessed an escalating anti-Communist campaign in the North. The homes and premises of Communists have been

subjected to bomb attacks and machine gun fire, and even a Soviet freighter in Oporto had a bomb thrown at it from a speeding car. The attacks on the Left have not been limited to acts of individual terror. The forces of the state too have done their share. In early January the National Republican Guard killed three and injured seven when firing on a left-wing demonstration. And three weeks later, police opened fire on a crowd in Central Lisbon during a two hour strike of shop assistants, killing one striker and injuring four.

But despite the growing repression, the working class is far from defeated. Massive increases in prices at the same time as a three month wage freeze, have forced sections of the working class to resist. Thousands of workers marched through Lisbon on a demonstration called by 13 Communist Party-led trade unions, which collectively accounted for 70% of the estimated 800,000 workers directly affected by the wage freeze. There was a national two-hour stoppage of construction workers, and the shopworkers action was a further move against the Government meas-

ures. In a separate demonstration, thousands of workers from the national airline TAP and the Lisbon telephone system, defied a Government ban and marched on the Ministry of Labour in support of demands for a 40-hour week and workers' control.

BACK-PEDAL

Under this pressure, the Socialist Party-dominated Sixth Government has been forced to back-pedal. It has announced that the price of a number of basic foods will be strictly controlled, and that moves will be taken to introduce a form of wage indexation to compensate for price increases. But the Government has also bowed to the pressures of the right-wing farmers of the North who have been mobilising their forces against the Government's agrarian reform programme and have threatened to cut off Lisbon's food supply.

The working class enters this present wave of struggles once again with no clear leadership. The Communist Party, the leading party of the organised workers, has stepped up its campaign against the organisations of the revolution-



OTELO DE CARVALHO

ary left, as it attempts to prove its respectability in time for the April elections. Preparations for these elections are now in full swing, and there is every danger of big gains for the capitalist parties, the PPD and the extreme right CDS.

The Portuguese working class has not yet been decisively defeated, despite all the setbacks the revolution has suffered. But its struggles to defend living standards in the period immediately ahead occurs in conditions that are probably less favourable than at any time since the coup of April 25th, 1974.

Imperialism on the run in Angola

by Martin Cook

AS WE GO to press, it seems certain that Vorster has withdrawn South African armed forces from most of South and Central Angola, where they have been fighting the war for their UNITA allies. The alternative would have been a colossal escalation of the war, producing a lot of trouble at home and lining up most of the African states on the side of the MPLA's Popular Republic of Angola.

turnaround

This comes after a dramatic turnaround in the military and political situation in the last couple of months. First, the November advance of South African and UNITA forces was blocked 200 miles short of Luanda. Then, South African involvement made it impossible for any African state to recognize the FNLA-UNITA coalition "Government" in Huambo (Nova Lisboa), and the OAU conference at Addis Ababa ended in stalemate. Through January, MPLA forces have dealt a series of punishing blows at the FNLA forces in the North, capturing their capital at Uíge (Carmona). FNLA troops are fleeing north in chaos, across the frontier into Zaire. In the south, the coalition between the two right-wing groups has openly collapsed, after

in-fighting, and the FNLA remnants are escaping back to South Africa. With the enemy virtually smashed in the North, the MPLA are now turning their attention to the South. The "front" is strung out over a thousand miles from Porto Amboim on the coast to Texeira de Sousa on the Benguela railway. UNITA forces are trying to capture the latter town so as to be able to re-open the vitally strategic railway, essential to the export of copper from Zaire and Zambia. However, in the last few weeks MPLA forces have advanced at several points towards Huambo and UNITA's military headquarters at Silva Porto.

Part of the military victories have been due to the jeep-mounted 122mm rocket batteries and other heavy military equipment supplied by the Soviet Union. This includes lightweight amphibious tanks, crucial in crossing water-logged country in the present rainy season. The presence of several thousand Cuban troops has of course also been decisive in countering the South Africans and their Western-armed allies. With the exit of the South Africans, the defeat of UNITA (inevitable once the major towns on the railways are captured) seems only a matter of time. However, UNITA is a relative-



M.P.L.A. SOLDIERS PARADING IN LUANDA

ly efficient force which has managed to gain a fair amount of popular support from the Ovimbundu people in the South. It grew largely because the CIA decided to shift some of its support from the discredited gangsters of Holden Roberto's FNLA, around 1967-8

The MPLA has not merely owed its support to military advantages. On the contrary, all along it has maintained itself against the CIA and Chinese backed FNLA and UNITA by its

mass popular support among workers in the big cities, cutting across the tribal divisions exploited by the other groups. Socialists have no need to be shame-faced about the USSR's support for the MPLA— it flows logically from the situation. Likewise it was only natural that the US, South Africa and NATO generally should side with the FNLA and UNITA pro-imperialist forces who would only set up a neo-colonial "Uncle Tom" regime if they came to power. The MPLA on the other hand, as a genuine popular liberation movement, was not going to be a pliable puppet of imperialism, whatever its deficiencies. Thus the USSR's support is to be welcomed, even if they are only using Angola as a pawn in their "power politics".

Outright military defeat for the MPLA is not likely to be on the cards, especially as most of the ruling class in America is anxious to avoid "another Vietnam". The main danger is that some sort of compromise or partition solution might be cooked up by the West through its stooges in Zaire and Zambia, Mobutu and Kaunda. We should call on the Labour Government to recognize the Peoples' Republic of Angola immediately and supply it with all the aid it requires.

SPAIN CONTINUED

decisions on fundamental issues. The internal deadlock is complete. Although the extreme-right is on the retreat (with King Carlos leaning on supposed "liberals" like Interior Minister Fraga Iribarne to engineer "reforms"), not even the smallest constitutional change can be "legalized" without ratification by the hand-picked Franco men who comprise the bulk of the Cortes. These men are not expected to sign, as it were, their own death-warrants. Although most industrialists, pinning their economic hopes on membership of the EEC, are insisting that at least some semblance of democracy must be introduced, it is clear to other sections (including most Army and Police tops) that the working class is far too strong.

At present, the plan is to legalize, not parties, but "groups" of Socialists, Christian Democrats and others, whilst continuing to ban the Communists and those to their left. As theory has to be turned into practice, however, it

is certain that the splits in the regime will deepen until the whole edifice is blown apart.

The immense power of the Spanish workers is at present under the domination of the Spanish Communist and Socialist parties. In the case of both parties, the working class is being told that the coming "rupture" will be democratic, not socialist. Instead of linking arms with EACH OTHER, each party is basing its whole strategy on an alliance with the political representatives of Spanish capitalism and the Monarchy. Instead of preparing the working class for an immediate struggle for state power, the leaderships are disarming their ranks by preaching the need for a whole period of subordination to capitalist rule, on the understanding that the capitalists will be "democratic". In this way, all the tragic errors of the Spanish Civil War (and, more recently, of the revolution in Portugal) are being repeated. If the Spanish workers can learn these lessons they can become the vanguard of the European Revolution.

THERMOS WORKERS FIGHT FOR UNION RECOGNITION

WORKERS AT Thermos Ltd., Brentwood, Essex are currently engaged in a struggle with management for trade union recognition.

Thermos, makers of vacuum flasks, are 100% American owned, a part of the Household Finance Corporation of Michigan, Illinois. They control 70% of the home market, exporting 60% to 180 countries including Chile.

Thermos' 1000 strong work force work a 40 hour week, shift and day work, for average earnings of £28 a week. Some single workers take home as little as £21. Due to the 52 year-old machinery constantly breaking down, productivity bonus is frequently lost. Yet Thermos made over £13 million last year.

The Transport and General Workers Union have recruited about 60 members and are trying to establish

BY GERRY BENDER

an effective branch to demand basic trade union rights. All previous attempts, made by the General and Municipal Workers Union to set up a branch in the plant have been foiled by pressure exerted by management.

Management claim that the "Works Council" is sufficient representation. It comprises of: the Managing Director, the Works Manager, the Personnel Manager and Officer, Representatives from Personnel and Security and even a few workers. Potentially contentious issues are vetted and blocked by lower management. Management state, "It is a truly democratic body (!) We have an excellent record of industrial relations (!)"

Messages of support to: Len Hanks TGWU District Officer, 19b, High St., Chelmsford, Essex.

SIX COUNTIES

BILL OF RIGHTS DIVERSION

by John Quirke

IN THE WAKE of the recent sectarian killings in the North of Ireland the Labour Government has stepped up its imperialist military repression by despatching more troops and the special assassination squads of the SAS. Tories and Loyalists alike have welcomed these brutal measures. Orange demagogue Ian Paisley is demanding "outright war" against the nationalist community and Tory spokesman Airey Neave said "the troops decision was good news but I would like to see drastic steps taken by the army in South Armagh."

In response to these imperialist policies, organisations like the British Communist Party have attempted to take the heat off the British Army, diverting the attention of the Labour movement away from demanding immediate withdrawal of British troops towards struggle for a so-called "Bill of Rights" for "Northern Ireland"! Following recent events, articles and editorials in the Communist Party paper "Morning Star" have called on the Westminster Labour Government to legislate for the "right to work, the right to free assembly, the right to advocate change by peaceful means, the right to be left in peace." Or as an editorial on January 6th stated, the Labour Government "should introduce far-reaching democratic reforms and an end to all forms of discrimination against the anti-Unionists."

Thus the British state which created the very existence of the Six Counties statelet, artificially separated from the rest of Ireland, maintained a built-in Loyalist majority, and cemented the institutions of sectarianism and discrimination is now called upon to undo this work.

To demand that Westminster and its sectarian creatures in the north of Ireland, which have beaten and repressed the nationalist population

for over 50 years CEASE this aggression and enact a Bill of Rights is the height of utopianism and objectively gives support to the maintenance of imperialist rule in the north: Of course, if a Labour Government did enact such a Bill of Rights who else but the British Army would be called upon to implement it in the teeth of Loyalist opposition.

This is really the nub of the matter. All the talk in the Morning Star which equates the Republican struggle for a united Ireland with the Loyalist para-military thugs is merely a cover to hide the fact that the leaders of the British Communist Party refuse to fight for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army as the only basis for class unity in Ireland.

Uncritical reporting of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) who request that the Army "provide adequate protection for all citizens of Northern Ireland" and state "If the army spent more time on this and less on harassing people," the violence could be reduced, is to support the imperialist idea that the troops can play a "peace-keeping" role.

The root cause of sectarianism is the existence of the Six County statelet itself and it is this which breeds these sectarian murders. The main prop for the existence of this state is the British Army and for this reason it is a disgrace that the furthest the British Communist Party is prepared to go is to demand troops be "withdrawn to barracks". This is an attempt to appear both respectable and revolutionary at the same time. As Bernadette McAliskey said in a recent interview, "If you are going to withdraw troops to barracks then why not be honest and say you don't want the troops withdrawn at all."

London Squatters face G.L.C. challenge

by
Mark Douglas

A BUILD UP towards confrontation between thousands of squatters "illegally" residing in Greater London Council estates and the Labour GLC is underway.

Following the success of the well-publicised Elgin Ave. squat in NW London last October when the GLC were forced to 'rehouse' over 200 squatters, the right-wing Labour leaders have been planning the tactics of removing upwards of 5,000 persons now occupying semi-derelict and rundown housing right across London.

At the centre of the anti-squatting 'crusade' is Cllr. Tony Judge, Chairman of the GLC Housing Management Committee. He has applied for, and no doubt will get, a court order to remove 400-500 squatters in the biggest squat in the country at Hazelville Rd, Hornsey Rise in North London. From mid-February



onwards the action is planned to clear this ex-derelict estate which the occupiers have refurbished and turned into an 'alternative community' over the last few months.

Unlike on the continent, squatting is not a criminal offence, so it is usually unlikely to expect an army of police/bailiffs to fall on estates and eject everyone onto the street—but it is inevitable which such large numbers of people involved at the present time.

CRIMINAL TRESPASS

As the housing situation in London moves from a state of collapse into one of chaos for thousands of families and students—the organisation of a unified and centralised campaign in support of squatting is an urgent task.

The first step in this struggle is to ensure the defeat of the present proposals to make 'illegal trespass' a CRIMINAL offence, in law. The maximum participation in the 'Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law' by local Labour Parties, trade union branches and housing action groups is necessary, particularly the planned demonstration called for Saturday 28th February, assembling in Belvedere Rd, London SE1 at 1:30pm for a march to Trafalgar Sq. and rally. Info; Contact -CAMPAIGN AGAINST A CRIMINAL TRESPASS LAW (CAC TL) 6 Bowden St, London SE11. Tel. 01-289 3877.

Info. on Squatting action in London area contact SQUATTERS ACTION COUNCIL, c/o. 2 St. Pauls Rd, N1. Tel. 01-359 8814.



AS THE TRIVIA about the Equal Opportunities Commission being based in "Personchester" dies down it is time to consider whether the implementation of recent legislation will be of any benefit to working class women.

The Equal Pay Act of 1970 which has provided many employers with an additional five years' of cheap female labour states that equal pay must be given where the work carried out is the same, or of a broadly similar nature or of equal value. The Sex Discrimination Act which complements this piece of legislation was drawn up to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status.

LOOPHOLES

Traditionally women have been employed in the semi-skilled and unskilled areas of the manufacturing and service industries or in offices, which may be small enough to slip through one of the many loopholes in the Acts. These jobs have always been classified as women's work and are often little more than an extension of housework. Because men have never been employed in these areas it is impossible to give equal pay, and employers will argue whether a woman's dexterity is of more value than a man's physical effort. This has been done by many employers using job evaluation schemes and regrading.

In 1972 the average woman's weekly wage was 51 per cent of the average man's, and in October 1975 it was still only 55 per cent of the man's earnings. Domestic responsibilities force women to accept unskilled employment which is often part-time and poorly unionised. While the man's official role as the breadwinner does not permit him to accept lowly paid "women's work", the state's failure to recognise women as independent citizens, where social security and

by Von McClarey

benefits are concerned, together with the inadequacy of nurseries and other social facilities, means there is no alternative but for women to allow themselves to be exploited in these sweat-shops, without any form of organisation, as a means of existence.

Family commitments do not end out of working hours and women are unable to claim bonus for shift work; pregnancy and lack of child-care facilities can put a stop to bonuses for long-term service. The woman's role as family doctor/nurse will mean she looks after the sick family and loses the attendance bonus. High unemployment may mean she is the sole wage-earner in the family, so gaining a living wage is more important than ever.

Arguing that equal pay will force prices up and cut productivity, leaving no alternative but redundancies and short-time, the employers attempt to divide the working class. In 1975 women were losing their jobs at a rate of 106 per cent faster than in 1974 while men lagged behind with an increase of 50 per cent on the previous year. To save jobs women in a Norfolk mushroom factory volunteered to remain on 87½ per cent of the male rate as laid down by the Agricultural Wages Board.

If the Equal Pay Act is to mean anything to working class women it is necessary for all wages to be brought up to a national minimum of £40—irrespective of the £6 pay limit. The Labour Government should ensure that all loopholes are closed and that job evaluation frauds are stamped out. Above all to work towards Equal opportunity the domestic burden must be transferred from the woman's shoulders to the state in the provision of nurseries and necessary social facilities.

MORE HOSPITALS TO CLOSE

EVERYONE KNOWS there is a crisis in the National Health Service—that the present service is inadequate to meet the needs of working people.

Everyone knows there are long waiting lists for 'non-emergency' operations—well over ½ a million at present. Everyone, that is, except of course the Department of Health. On the contrary, Barbara Castle and co are arguing that in some parts of London there are more beds than are needed and therefore there is a need for 'rationalisation'. This means in reality the closing of small hospitals and relocating some of the larger ones. St. Bartholemew's in the City may be moved to Hackney and the Westminster Hospital to Croydon.

Certain information on closures has come to light. For example, in West London the District Management Team (DMT) for North Hammersmith are planning 'major changes' at Acton Hospital. This means ending most of the services now provided and some time in the unspecified future opening a geriatric and psychiatric hospital. The net effect will be a reduction in staff employed.

If the DMT sees the need for a geriatric and psychiatric hospital in the area then why not build a new one rather than create one at the expense

Clive Pullinger (ASTMS)

of present services.

The ASTMS London Health Services Advisory Committee is monitoring cut-backs in the London area and is producing a regular information bulletin. The latest issue lists the following cutbacks:

- The Brentford and West Middlesex hospitals could soon both be shut.
- Four hospitals in the East End are in jeopardy—including the Poplar, the Metropolitan, the Eastern, and the Invalid and Crippled Children's Hospital.
- The new Royal Free is to go on a five-day week.
- The Middlesex Hospital could be closed.
- There is to be further 10 per cent cutback in the NHS in the Camden and Islington area.
- It is proposed to close four hospitals in the Greenwich and Bexley area—including the Dreadnought Seamen's hospital, the Royal Herbert, Bexley and Welling Hospital, and the Eltham and Mottingham. This will mean a reduction in at least 700 beds.
- Overtime has been cut at the London hospital, particularly amongst ancillary staff.
- The Lister Institute in Chelsea is closing.

'Defend NHS' Motion at London Labour Conference

AN IMPORTANT motion from ASTMS London Division is going to the London Labour Party Conference on March 7-8th. It calls for no cut-backs, expansion of the NHS, for an immediate injection of £1,000m for nationalisation of the drug and medical supply industries, for an end to private practice and for Labour councillors to take up a real fight for increases in NHS funds.

The National Coordinating Committee Against Cuts in the NHS is planning a lobby of the conference to support the motion.

CHARTIST PUBLIC MEETING STOP LABOURS CUTS

SPEAKERS: Ken Livingstone (GLC councillor) and Paul Moore (Lambeth Council and Socialist Charter). PLACE: Stamford Hill Library, Stamford Hill, N16. START: 8.00pm. WEDNESDAY, 18th FEBRUARY.

● UNEMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE HORNSEY CLP. Sunday, 29th Feb. 11am-4pm. Speakers include Labour MP and T.U. leaders and shop stewards. Details/delegates credentials: Ian Watson, 12 Denton Rd., Hornsey, N8.

NORWOOD LPY-S. Defend the right to work. Monday March 8th 7.30pm Brixton Training Centre (opp Lambeth Town Hall). Speakers: include Tony Banks (GLC Councillor)