

# The Red Mole

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## WE STAND FIRM

It is not yet clear who organised the bombings in London last week.

If those who carried through the bombings were Irish Republicans, they had one aim: to free Ireland from British domination in order that the Irish people may decide their own future.

Every voice raised to condemn the bombings is a weapon in this imperialist war to beat down the heroic resistance of the Catholic masses in the North of Ireland.

### WORKING CLASS

The events over the last few days have proved yet again that the Irish war cannot be wished away.

The IMG has never made any secret of its stand on the fighting in the North of Ireland. It does not equate the violence of the oppressor with the violence of the oppressed. When the police and the troops try to crush struggle for civil rights and national liberation, we support the right of the Irish masses to fight back with everything they can lay their hands on. We do not say: you can use a protest march against the guns of the British, but you cannot use a bomb. How can anyone argue that, after Bloody Sunday in Derry last year?

Nor do we say: we support the fight of the Irish masses, but we refuse to support the IRA which has actually been organising that fight, providing some of the vital means for carrying it forward. Instead we seek to strengthen the hand of those organising the resistance.

But having made our unconditional solidarity clear, nevertheless our assessment is that it would be mistaken for a military campaign to be initiated in Britain. From a technical standpoint it would be untenable, without mass support for the guerrillas they would be smashed long before they could inflict such damage as to cause real problems for the British government. From a political standpoint it would be completely counter-productive. A military campaign would polarise British society in the wrong way. While the London bombings will probably increase the support for getting the troops out, this will be on an anti-Irish basis, and would enable the Government to dispell any build-up of opposition, by a manoeuvre which would ensure continued imperialist dominance.

### 'TERRORISTS'

On the day of the bombing the BBC used the occasion to attack the International Marxist Group and other revolutionary organisations. We know very well their intentions and those of the Government and the repressive forces. They wish to weaken the fight of the workers in Ireland and in Britain by spreading the lie that the organisations in the forefront of these fights are terrorists. The IRA is not a terrorist organisation. It is the armed organisation thrown up by the Irish masses in their struggle against British imperialism. Neither is the IMG a terrorist group. We do not believe that isolated violence against property or individuals is the road to socialism. The socialist revolution will be made by the great mass of working people. Our role is to assist and develop their struggle.

But it is no assistance to the struggle of the working people of Ireland or of Britain to run for cover when the Irish war moves to London.

As the TUC prepares for a one day protest,

## MASSIVE SHOW OF FORCE NEEDED

So far little or no serious preparation has been made by the unions for the one day protest called by the TUC Special Congress. Despite all the militant speeches, no real action has been taken.

A dangerous retreat has also been allowed to set in on the wages front. Left with uncertainty about official backing from the AUEW and T&G, the Ford's men have felt unable to take decisive action. Similar developments can be seen in the mines. Gormley struck a militant image at the TUC but the NUM executive has retreated from any real fight on the £5-7 a week claim. Instead it has followed a line of 'wait for the TUC'.

In this situation the ruling class is talking of things taking a turn in their favour. *The Financial Times* says, "a number of claims have been quietly settled within the guidelines of Phase Two. There are reasons for mild optimism." On the one day strike itself they claim, "the economic effects are of little lasting importance".

### INTIMIDATION

Meanwhile intimidation is being stepped up against less traditionally militant sections of workers. Members of the Civil and Public Services Association in Customs and Excise have been threatened with a lock out. Other members of the same union have been asked to fill in forms stating why they have taken part in industrial action. It has been stated that this form will be attached to the personal files kept on them by the civil service.

It is quite clear that the struggle against the capitalist offensive has reached a critical point. Phase 2 of the Freeze becomes law in a few weeks. The ruling class is hoping that this will force the unions to retreat further.

The TUC aims to carry through this retreat under cover of a one day protest. In this situation the preparation at a rank and file level for the TUC day of protest becomes vital. The actions taken then can either be the beginning of a massive fight back by the working class, or they can be just a mild one day of protest with a retreat at the same time on most key fronts.

### END IN ITSELF?

The decisive thing about the day of action is whether it finishes as an end in itself, or whether it is merely the first step towards more decisive struggles. Extreme right winger Stagg of the UPW put the question straight at the TUC when he said, "Do any of you believe that if you can get 10 million people out on strike you are going to shatter the Government to its foundations?" He is quite right, if all that is thought of is a one day protest. This by itself is not going to scare the employers or anyone else one bit. The ruling class paper, the *Economist*, is already talking of how sections of the trade union leaders intend to pass the whole thing off as a 'jolly lark'. This is precisely the aim of Gormley and others. They want to talk militant at the TUC but back out

At the same time, however, a move to a general strike, even a one day one, can be used by militants as a big step forward by the working class. It means that the old fears of 1926 can begin to be put to rest. An action taken on the same day by the whole working class can give a tremendous feel for the potential power of the class. If militants can in practice raise the slogan of 'Support the one day protest, first step to the General Strike', an important move forward can be made in the struggle to throw out the government and this, while it will by no means solve all the problems facing the working class, is the next big step forward that has to be taken to open up the way for the fight for socialism.

The important thing however is that the steps forward have to be practical ones and not just words. Every factory occupied, every mass demonstration held, every sign that a simple one day action is insufficient is going to be more important than a hundred pious resolutions.

### WHAT MUST BE DONE

The first thing which has to be done in every trade union branch and shop stewards committee is to pass motions supporting the one day stoppage but criticising it for not being enough. The demand for a General Strike and every other means necessary to get rid of the Tory government has to be raised. This is the vital first step against the ruling class.

Secondly the struggle has to be extended to include even wider sections than trade union members. The one day protest has to be turned into a vast action by every possible section of the population. Students must be called on to join the one day strike. Tenants Committees should organise one day actions, such as demonstrations. Absolutely every normal working of capitalism must be stopped on the day of action. Not one object must be produced, nothing must be moved or built, no work must be done in the government departments, no-one must be taught.

But resolutions are not enough. Practical actions to show dissatisfaction with merely a one day strike have to be taken. The greatest step forward would be the occupation of factories. A mass day of factory occupations would really terrify the ruling class and demonstrate to the bureaucrats that their words were insufficient. It would turn the strikes from an act of protest into a direct and open declaration of war against the capitalist class and its agents. As the trade union leaderships are scared of such decisive measures the greatest possible local initiatives have to be taken.

Also absolutely vital to organise are mass demonstrations. The day of protest mustn't be a day for going fishing but a day of the greatest mobilisation against the enemy. Teach-ins, public meetings on a massive scale must take place. Any prolongations of the strike, even local ones, will show the dissatisfaction with

### HOW TO PREPARE

In order to prepare for the day of action, to continue the fight for a General Strike, and to reverse the retreat on the wages front, the key slogan of the day is for organisation. In many areas action committees, councils of action, public sector alliances and the like are being set up. Trades Councils and other bodies are holding special conferences to discuss the struggle.

Unfortunately, due to the policy of the Communist Party, it seems that the most important of these organisations, the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, is unlikely to follow suit; it looks as if it is just going to have a one day conference without really playing the role in centralising action which it could. Nevertheless, even without this the task of organisation is going forward.



Ancillary workers occupy their hospital in Manchester. Such militant initiatives have been spreading throughout the country in spite of terror tactics by hospital authorities and timid union leadership.

The International Marxist Group, while it supports any and every step forward on this path, thinks that any such organisations should be clearly set up with a programme of getting rid of the Tory government and calling for a General Strike and every means necessary to achieve this.

The most urgent action to be taken by these organisations is to prepare for the one day stoppage, and to support the various wages struggles. A campaign of boycotts, strikes, and action against price increases is also being started in some areas. All these are the key tasks of the hour. They will open up the way for turning the one day action from a mere protest into the first step in a real war against the ruling class and its agents. Despite the hopes of the employers and the bureaucrats, the present struggle is not just going to stop

On Saturday 10 March, over 600 people took part in a march through Oxford in support of the struggles of the Gas and Health workers against the Wages Freeze and the Tory Government. The march was organised by the Oxford and district Council of Action, the Trades Council and the Gas and Health workers. There were delegations from the Hospital Branches of the four Health unions, from the local Gasworkers Branch of the G & MWU, from the stewards committees at the Cowley car factories, from local Branches of the CPSA, from the student committee set up in the Oxford Colleges to organise support for the march, and from the Oxford Women's Action Group (who gave out a leaflet against rising prices).

### A STEP FORWARD

Although the organisers had hoped for larger numbers, this march and rally was a real step forward. It successfully involved groups of workers who have never taken industrial action on this scale before, far less come out on the streets on a political issue. The march demonstrated the support that can be won for the struggles of the lower paid in the shop stewards movement in the car factories, with their traditions of militancy and strong organisation. In this way it countered the propaganda of the Tories, which is intended to get lower paid and weaker sections to blame the relatively higher paid for inflation.

The march was also important as the first time the Council of Action has initiated and organised united action of this kind. The Council was set up last summer on the initiative of the local Confederation of Engineering Unions and the Trades Council, when all working class organisations in the district were invited to elect delegates. The Council was to coordinate the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act and the Tory Government. The IMG welcomed this move and has been active in the Council of Action all along. But the Council was not convened when there was most need of such a body, during the strikes over the jailing of the dockers' leaders in July. It met several times during the following months, but apart from debates on its programme and constitution, the Council did nothing. It played virtually no role in the main struggles that took place in Oxford: the fight to defend NUPE in the unionisation of college staffs, and the strikes against the firing of the AUEW. But since the New Year the Council of Action has held a successful public meeting on the Industrial Relations Act and the Freeze, organised a large delegation to

## Oxford Council of Action Unites Struggles against Freeze



Above: Militants rally before Oxford Demo.

the lobby of the TUC special Congress, as well as organising the march and rally last weekend.

### THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Many of the problems encountered in building the Council of Action have stemmed from the behaviour of the City Communist Party Branch. They supported the setting up of the Council, and CP members were elected Secretary and Treasurer. But as soon as the Council looked like acting, the CP started to have second thoughts. CP members threatened to withdraw unless 'the Council returned to its original terms of reference'. To them this meant action solely on the issue of the Industrial Relations Act. When an IMG sponsored resolution was passed, which said that the Council had not gone outside its terms of reference (it had done nothing), and proposed solidarity action with workers striking against the Freeze, the CP members withdrew. Since they had no mandate to do so from their organisations they had to mislead these organisations into thinking that the Council had gone off the rails. Some organisations elected new delegates, but others remained misled.

As the struggles against the Freeze developed

some CP members, particularly in the Health Unions, realised that the Council of Action was the only body taking any effective initiative for united action. And when the local Gasworkers endorsed the proposal of the Council of Action for a united march and rally, George Anderson, Regional organiser for NUPE, Chairman of the local coordinating committee of the Health Unions and a leading member of the CP had little alternative but to cooperate. In this he had to fight those in the CP who think that the Council of Action has to be smashed. To save face, Anderson insisted that the march be organised jointly with the Trades Council. This was accepted, but the joint organising committee never met. (In contrast, members of the University Branch of the CP played a full part in the student committee to prepare for the march.)

### THE NEXT STEP

A delegate meeting of the Council of Action is to be held soon to build on the success of last week-end's march and broaden the base of support for the Council. If this is successful the IMG will propose the organisation of a local conference of militants to discuss the way forward against the Freeze and the Tory Government.

## Compromise at Stirling

Red Mole Reporter

The campaign against the victimisation of students at Stirling University has come to a temporary halt. The occupation of the Administration Block has been ended after a compromise settlement by which Professor Asa Briggs, vice-chancellor of Sussex University, will be asked to nominate an 'independent' investigator to conduct an inquiry into the disciplinary hearings which followed the demonstration against the Queen last October.

But while this agreement obviously represents a limited victory for the students over the previously unyielding administration, it does nothing to resolve the basic issues at stake. This becomes clear if one looks back over the course of the struggle to its origin.

The original demonstration suffered from a lack of clarity about the politics of the action. The subsequent fury from the ruling class surprised the student body, and this has made it possible for a section of the leadership in Stirling to fight the victimisations on purely reformist grounds: the courts were biased, the press were biased, etc., and to see the issues as primarily internal to the university. There has been progressively less concern to defend the original demonstration itself as attack after attack has been made by the authorities.

The majority of students, and sections of the left, had not been prepared for such a ferocious attack, not understanding the serious function of the monarchy for the bourgeoisie. It is used as a card by the ruling class to rally wavering support to its side. Thus the Queen may soon be called upon to support 'our troops' against Irish 'terrorists', or 'our government' in the fight against the trade unions. To allow the students to show disrespect for the Majesty of her person without reaction, would reduce the effectiveness of a Royal appeal in the future. Thus it was necessary to discredit the student demonstration and show that it was just a few drunks and lefties who participated. Thus also it is necessary for all to side clearly with the Stirling students.

### 'SO LONG AS THERE IS IMPERIALISM, THERE WILL BE WAR'

Mick Gosling reports on the Yorkshire Indochina Solidarity Conference.

Well over 200 people attended the Yorkshire Indochina Solidarity Conference held in Leeds last Saturday, 10 March. As one of its first tasks in helping to rebuild the solidarity movement in this country, the Conference voted overwhelmingly to begin immediate mobilisation for the national ISC demonstration in London on 5 May. It also urged support for the Trade Union Conference on Indochina being organised by the BCPV in Manchester on 25 March.

### DOMINANT THEME

The dominant theme of the conference was the international significance of the Indochinese revolution, which for more than two decades has been in the front line of the worldwide struggle between imperialism and revolution. By building a mass solidarity movement we can materially assist the liberation fighters by tying the hands of imperialism in its homelands.

Fennis Augustine, former member of the National Executive of the Tobacco Workers' Union, stressed that it was not a case at all of somehow opposing activity on Indochina to the 'bread and butter' economic struggles of the working class. For as long as the working class remains dominated by chauvinist ideas, it will never be able to defeat its own ruling class: that is why it is so necessary to raise the issues of Indochina and Ireland consistently in the trade unions. These ideas were developed by Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group.

Other speakers included Lek Hor Tan, representative of the National United Front of Cambodia, who appealed for a redoubling of efforts in solidarity with the Indochinese revolution; and there were also workshops which discussed various aspects of the struggle in more detail.

### SOLIDARITY BASIS

The final session dealt with the basis on which the solidarity movement should be built. After discussion, a clear majority of the conference agreed to adopt the overall slogan of 'SOLIDARITY TILL FINAL VICTORY', on the basis that our position should not depend on the tactical shifts of the liberation forces, but should be based on overall support for the struggle of the Indochinese people.

# NEXT STEP FOR TEACHERS

A call for extended strike action in support of the original £300 p.a. London Allowance Claim, and for the building of real links with other groups of workers in struggle against the Freeze, was passed overwhelmingly by a mass meeting of over 2,000 London teachers on 27 February.

The resolution was passed despite opposition from CP executive members on the platform, who attempted to disrupt the meeting. A physical attack was made on Eric Porter, an official of the Wandsworth Association and Editor of *Rank and File*, who was reading out the resolution in response to a demand by the majority of teachers at the meeting.

### EXECUTIVE EXPOSED

The executive's subservient attitude to the Government's wage freeze policy was exposed for all to see at this meeting. They have accepted the £1 plus 4% formula for the national claim, and their opposition to a settlement on the London claim is solely due to the organisation and militancy of London teachers.

The whole balance of the struggle now lies with whoever makes the first initiative. One of the problems confronting the left in the union is the attitude of the majority of teachers towards the legal restrictions of Phase 2. It is necessary to show them a way forward through the building and extension of real links with other organised and non-organised sections of the working class in struggle against the Freeze. Teachers cannot win their salary demand and beat the Freeze unless they help to change the balance of forces in society as a whole in their favour and against the Government.

Such links are already being forged in many parts of the country through Public Sector Alliances, Action Committees, etc. Teachers must play their part in these - in particular, they must emphasise that it is *they* who are

defending the interests of the working class with regard to education.

### ONE-DAY STRIKE

Rank and File Teacher has already played an important part in exposing the bankruptcy of the NUT executive. Now it must provide an alternative strategy and leadership by systematically planning the next steps. At this point in time a one-day strike at the beginning of April (after Phase 2 becomes law) against the national claim and the London Allowance offer would be a big step forward; it would break with the executive's capitulation to the Freeze and reverence for the law, and would strengthen links between London teachers and national teachers.

By **JIM DONOGHUE**

Teachers will become demoralised if they are used as strike fodder either by the executive or by the left. While extended action is possible in certain areas, what will be decisive is to challenge the executive's capitulation before the 'law' and give a lead which can be taken up in the rest of the country. A one-day strike may appear modest, but it can act as an important focus for explaining that the Freeze will only be beaten if workers unite in action to defy the law which legitimises it.

Rank and File must therefore make strenuous efforts to mobilise nationally for action in April, before the executive has time to prepare the way for a sell-out at the Annual Conference at Scarborough in Easter week.

### ALL LONDON CONFERENCE AGAINST FREEZE, 14 APRIL

Following a call from East London Teachers Association for an All-London Conference

of Workers against the Freeze, a mobilising committee meeting was held on Saturday, 10 March. About 40 representatives from 15 different unions attended the meeting, including representatives from Kings College Hospital Strike Committee, Briant's Colour Printing Occupation Committee, and observers from Westminster and Hackney Trades Councils. A steering committee to begin arrangements for the Conference (to be held on 14 April) was elected, and it was agreed that another mobilising committee meeting to finalise arrangements and discuss the agenda should be held on Sunday, 25 March.

The necessity for the working class to unite in the face of the Tory Government's attacks was the theme of most of the speakers, and it was agreed that this must also include groups like tenants, students, women's liberation groups, etc. Bill Freeman of Briant's stressed the need to fight within the existing workers' organisations to get them to back the conference; especially important, he said, could be the role of the Trades Councils.

Eight Teachers Associations attended the meeting in spite of the efforts of the NUT Executive to rule that the East London motion was against the 'aims and objectives' of the union. Clearly the recent experiences of the teachers in their struggle over the London Allowance and the National Salary Claim have shown the rank and file, if not the executive, the necessity of uniting all those engaged in struggle against the Freeze.

For further details about the Conference, and the meeting of the mobilising committee on Sunday, 25 March, contact Jon Duveen at 480 6088 or 688 0750.

# TUC FAILS TO LEAD

by Alf Jennings



Faced with statutory pay laws covering the wage struggle for the next three years, with an option of a further two, the TUC General Council was forced at least to call a special Congress. What was the purpose of this meeting? It was called to rubber stamp a document, *Economic Policy and Collective Bargaining in 1973*, which tries to present an alternative set of policy options for the Government, "any Government", in the present economic circumstances.

It was *not* called to thrash out a plan of industrial action to get rid of the Pay Laws. It was not called to decide what practical steps should be taken to aid groups such as hospital workers and gasmen who have been fighting the freeze on their own for three months or more, and against whom the press and the Government are having a field day. It was not called to formulate any plan of action that workers could take to exercise control over prices, fight for higher pensions, and all the other matters over which the General Council says it is so concerned.

Indeed, the General Purposes Committee even went so far as to recommend at the beginning of the Congress that no recommendations, resolutions, motions or amendments be put from the floor. A simple yes or no was all that the General Council was asking for its document, a document which contains no proposals whatsoever for action.

## CONFUSION

When Gormley and Jones moved reference back of this procedure, the General Council was thrown into confusion. It adjourned for an hour: to discuss whether or not to continue with the Congress at all, a move only narrowly defeated by 18 votes to 16!

The resolution from the floor which was eventually passed in the afternoon session called upon the General Council to "organise and lead co-ordinated action in support of affiliated unions in dispute and who require such support". However, a second resolution which proposed a co-ordinating committee "to prepare immediately specific proposals to assist affiliated unions in attempts to improve wages and conditions despite the Government's counter-inflation laws", and to work out "a strategy for action in support of those unions which come into conflict with Government policy", was defeated.

Although this last resolution did not specify the type of "action" needed, it was the nearest the Congress got to hearing of anything *concrete* to aid the unions already struggling. Feather spoke *against* this on the grounds that it would alter the "structure" of the TUC. In other words it would open the way to a change in the role of the TUC. The role of the TUC, according to Feather, is not to interfere with the affairs of individual unions, and certainly not to violate their constitutional integrity. In other words, sectionalism and federalism were to be retained at all costs.

This demonstrated very clearly that the General Council's remarks about the "help" it would give to individual unions simply reaffirmed the existing state of affairs: i.e. a delegation to Downing Street to plead a union's "special case" in the hope of doing a deal in the "national interest", and perhaps also a small financial loan. Possibly even a "special levy" could be made to give more money to individual unions in the present emergency, suggested Feather. But the role of the TUC is not to lead the industrial struggle of the working class, or to work out a common strategy for industrial struggle. The role of the TUC is simply to present the "opinions of the movement" to the Government of the day.

Within this framework the TUC "invites" unions to engage in the one-day protest action proposed in the first resolution, even though such a policy failed to stop the Industrial Relations Bill becoming law, and even though it contradicted the TUC's own analysis that the Government was inflexible and takes no notice of TUC "advice" or protest.

## FIASCO

How can we explain this fiasco? Although its details were never debated at the Congress, the General Council's main aim was to get its document passed.

The present tactic of the TUC is to put forward policies for the economy which it hopes the Tories might accept, but if not, policies which could be acceptable to a future Labour Government. Its analysis of food prices is that they can be controlled with the reversal of the Common Agricultural Policy and Government subsidies. Pensions and family allowances should be raised, the Housing Finance Act repealed since it is a "disincentive to local authority

building", and more Government money should be earmarked for construction, as well as Regional Employment Premiums. The cost of this is carefully calculated, and the TUC suggests detailed taxation policies which could be used to finance it. All this is set within the framework of a growth rate which the TUC calculates the British economy could achieve. To round it off, various measures, including import quotas, are proposed to deal with looming balance of payment problems and import-flooding in particular industries.

## FALSE ASSUMPTION

Now there is nothing wrong with the TUC producing a plan of measures to deal with all the key economic problems facing the working class and its allies. But it starts off with the completely false assumption that the needs of the working class can be accommodated within the capitalist economy, an economy which only thrives on the exploitation of the working class. It has produced a plan which it hopes will be acceptable to both sides. If only the capitalists would consent to the TUC's measures, the latter would in return be prepared to concede a 'voluntary' incomes policy. The Tories are "mistaken". Wages are *not* the *prime* cause of inflation. It is wrong to put the blame all on one side. We must all make sacrifices for the sake of the country, but the bargain must be 'fair' to both sides.

The TUC therefore draws absolutely wrong conclusions from this approach. Firstly, because it thinks a solution to the economic crisis which is acceptable to both sides is actually possible, it proposes to use the *existing* state apparatus — that is the capitalist state — to carry through its plans. But a plan for controlling prices for example would have to organise *millions of workers* to deal by direct means with capitalists putting up prices. It could not be organised through the bureaucratic capitalist state, which *defends* those very same capitalists.

Yet the TUC argues that a government sympathetic to fair play — a Labour government — is necessary to wield this very same apparatus against the capitalists. Therefore to organise industrial action to get rid of the pay laws would prejudice the chances of Labour in the next election, especially if that election flowed directly from a general strike. Therefore, the only method for smashing the freeze must be

sacrificed in order to save the Labour Party from defeat in some future election.

Secondly, a general strike to get rid of the pay laws would undoubtedly upset the capitalists upon whose activity the growth rate of the economy depends. It would drive off investors and interrupt production, thereby upsetting the basis of the TUC's economic calculations, and making it less likely that the plan could be put into effect in future. So the interests of the workers are to be sacrificed to keep the capitalists in a good mood.

## BEST COMPROMISE

These arguments were advanced openly by the right wing in order to argue against any action at all. But the left wing of the TUC knew that those impatient workers could not be fobbed off with *no* action, therefore *some* action had to be taken. The best compromise was a one-day protest action. Even Feather finally saw the sense of this and endorsed the call. This could do no harm, and after all everybody, without exception, voted in favour of the document at the end of the day. That's the important thing, isn't it?

The job of militants is now to *utilise* the one-day action, to extend it into a general strike. But this can only be done if millions of workers are organised beforehand in committees of action which can take the movement beyond the strict limits laid down by the TUC. The first task for these organisations is to set in motion a plan for strengthening the existing strikes, which involves organising workers, housewives, unemployed, tenants, etc. in the localities on a practical basis.

## JOHN MACLEAN MEMORIAL YEAR

Dear Comrade Editor,

I recently had a letter published in many of the left papers appealing for support from all those who are interested in activity to mark the 50th Anniversary of the death of John Maclean, the courageous and beloved revolutionary, who was at the centre of the struggles on 'Red Clydeside', during and after the First World War. The response to this letter was very good, and a meeting has now been arranged to discuss and set in motion the activities that are decided upon. It is hoped that organisations will send representatives, but I would appeal for anyone interested to make a special effort to attend.

The meeting will take place at 'The General Picton', Caledonian Road, King's Cross at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 19th March.

Yours fraternally, Bob Purdie

## NUS PRESIDENTIAL HUSTINGS

For the first time ever, open hustings for the NUS Presidential candidates are to take place this year before the NUS Conference. The initiative has come from Southampton University Students' Union, where the hustings will take place next Tuesday, 20 March, at 1 p.m. Five out of the six candidates, including IMG member Piers Corbyn, will be taking part.

It is hoped by this means to begin to break down the restricted 'electoralist' approach which has always dominated NUS elections. Unfortunately the current President Digby Jacks and his Executive have refused to put out any publicity for the hustings through NUS channels. All students unions are, however, invited to send as many representatives as possible; phone the Students Union at Southampton (0703) 57991 for further details.

## STOKE NEWINGTON FIVE

A large protest march and mass meeting is planned by the newly formed Stoke Newington Five Solidarity Committee for 12 May in London, to coincide with the appeals of the four convicted last December and to act as a focus for the campaign to demand the release of all five (Jake Prescott, John Barker, Jim Greenfield, Anna Mendelson, and Hilary Creek).

The Solidarity Committee has been initiated by two of the defendants acquitted after the five month trial at the Old Bailey, Angela Weir and Kate McLean, and is supported by the other acquitted defendants, the families of those convicted, and the Five themselves. A national speaking tour of the acquitted defendants, together with local speakers from groups whose own experience of State oppression leads them to support the campaign, is planned to lead up to the demonstration.

A statement on the background to the trial has also been produced. Help is urgently needed to distribute this throughout the country, and also to arrange meetings for speakers from the committee, raise money to finance the committee's work, etc. All offers of help to: Stoke Newington Five Solidarity Committee, 54 Harcombe Road, London, N.16.

# Building Workers face Conspiracy Charges

by Paul Smith

Eighteen building workers, members of the T&GWU and UCATT, are appearing in court this Thursday (15 March) charged with 'offences' relating to incidents which occurred during picketing in last year's building strike. It has taken police five months to bring charges: which include intimidation, assault, and conspiracy. But the unions are dragging their feet.

## 'NEW AREA'

Shrewsbury, where the incidents in question took place, is a 'new' area for militancy in the building trade. The use of flying pickets in the strike was very effective in the area. But of course the biggest industry locally is steel. Shotton steelworks is being closed down soon, and with it a town will virtually die.

These conditions have been picked to try out the new attack on picketing. The Industrial Relations Act cannot be used for this job again. It would spark off too big a response in the rest of the working class. By selective and careful use of the law and police the Tory government hope to get round that.

## THE UNIONS

The picketing that took place was part of the

official policy of the local action committee. So the unions are concerned to get the conspiracy charges dropped, because it will remove their 'responsibility'. No doubt they want a deal with the police to drop that charge and plead guilty to the rest. Instead of using the strength of their membership, they offer lawyers to make this deal.

But deals will not do. Unless we make an all-out effort to defeat this attack, it will return time and time again. The use of the police flying anti-picket squad against dockers in Hull last Tuesday has already shown this.

## RANK AND FILE

The court appearance on Thursday is just the beginning. It is a good sign already that Shotton Steelworks is stopping for the day, and that the Merseyside dockers are also stopping work and sending a contingent to the demonstration. The Building Workers Charter conference last Saturday also pledged full solidarity with the Shrewsbury workers, and it encouraged Birmingham building workers to hold a one-day strike and send a coach to Shrewsbury. The International Marxist Group is sending a coach from London, and also holding a series

of building site meetings to mobilise support for the Shrewsbury 18.

But even all this is not enough. The charges laid against these workers are as dangerous an attack as the jailing of the five dockers last summer. But there has still been no real response in many areas in the labour movement.

## CAMPAIGN

What is necessary now is for every section of the labour movement to take up this attack. Resolutions should be passed through all union branches pledging solidarity and sending donations. The demonstration on 15 March must be only the start of a campaign of meetings, demonstrations and stoppages until the charges are dropped completely.

Rush donations to: Building Workers Social Fund, c/o M.R. Williams, Ilford Centre, Ocean View, Carmel, Holywell, Flintshire.

The report of the Building Workers Charter conference which took place last Saturday, 10 March, has had to be held over till our next issue.

# THE POLITICS OF PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY

Bob Purdie concludes our series of analyses of Irish political organisations

"The PD was created out of the initial response of the Queens University students to the October 5th 1968 events. As part of the reform programme the Unionists had already permitted a 'British' type higher education structure to be created in the Six Counties. Within Queens religious discrimination was merely a grim shadow of the world outside, a generation of young catholics went through a non-discriminatory education, and a generation of young protestants were educated alongside them. The sudden horrifying reality of Northern Ireland caught up with this generation on October 5th, 1968. In protest at the attack on the Civil Rights demonstration in Derry, 2,000 students marched from Queens University to the City Hall, but were blocked by a crowd of 50 Paisleyites who proved an immovable obstacle for the RUC. Following this experience, the Peoples Democracy was born, in the type of intense, endless and all-embracing discussion which marked the emergence of student vanguard after student vanguard in the sixties, and has been the means by which they moved from a recoil against the reality of society, through a critique of society, to action."

(Bob Purdie: *Ireland Unfree*, chapter 6)

## LITTLE RESEMBLANCE

The PD of today bears little resemblance to the original PD. The radicalised milieu in Queens was only a temporary phenomenon. Although it gave a base for action, independently of the reformist and stalinist leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, it nevertheless had shallow roots in Northern Irish society, and could not correct some of the more utopian schemes of its leaders. And while these leaders had been trained in Marxism, the rapid growth of the student movement, combined with revulsion at the stale dogmatism of British Marxism, induced a deep-going spontaneism.

Nevertheless they did carry over from their British mentors an "economist" method, i.e. a concept that every aspect of the situation in the North of Ireland had been manipulated in the interests of profit. Some examples of this kind of thinking can be seen in Mike Farrell's pamphlet, *Struggle in the North*:

"The history of the Northern State is this. At the end of the last century the industrialists and landowners of the North, fearing the economic consequences of Home Rule, formed an alliance with the Protestant workers and small farmers to oppose it. They bought their allies' allegiance with a combination of preferential treatment in the disposal of jobs and land-leases and the cynical whipping-up of religious bigotry. When they got control of their own state the same money-grabbing crew set up an apparatus of gerrymandering, discrimination, thuggery and repression. This had two immediate purposes. One was to put down any activity by the anti-partitionists — mainly Catholics — and to force as many as possible to emigrate, leaving the rest in poverty and without any political leadership. The other purpose was to divide the working class by buying the allegiance of Protestant workers and gulling them into believing they held a privileged position when in fact they merely had a smaller share of the general poverty and exploitation.

"Both immediate purposes had a common long-term aim: the perpetuation of the easy flow of money into the pockets of the Unionist ruling class. The conflict in N. Ireland is neither a religious nor a tribal war, but a struggle against those who have cynically used religious hatred to protect the profits of a privileged elite."

Two essential elements were missed in this analysis: the ultimate role of the strongest factor in the situation, British imperialism, the moving force behind the setting up of the state, and the role of the state itself, which had sufficient autonomy from British imperialism, and the top layers of Unionism, to defy any attempts at reform, forcing British imperialism to choose between the maintenance of an unreformed state, or the smashing of that state by the catholic minority.

In turn this led PD into a form of political myopia. They saw only the North, and applied a completely voluntarist approach to the struggle there; under the misapprehension that exposure of the vested interests behind Unionism, and proof that the Civil Rights Movement had their interests at heart, would win over the Protestant workers: —

"The support of these men can only be won by an honest movement which makes clear that civil rights are here to stay and tries to explain why they were denied, and then campaigns on economic issues and tries to build a united working-class movement." (Farrell — *ibid*)

## ABILITY TO LEARN

But PD had one valuable asset, an ability to learn from experience, combined with a tenacity and seriousness of purpose which kept them going despite the drastic decline of their organisation, and their failure to maintain the political impact of 1968-9. While other tendencies talked, and still talk, about winning over the Protestant workers through economic demands, the PD actually tried it, not shrinking from the consequences of acting alone with small forces to support struggles like the Cement strike (which got some of them jailed). Their latter-day critique of economist and voluntarist approaches to the problem of working class disunity in the Six Counties is the more trenchant for having arisen from practical experience.

The re-orientation of PD after internment led to involvement in the struggle of the catholic minority, and PD gained political influence and credibility quite out of proportion to its small size. PD was able to sink deep roots in

the ghettos relatively quickly, and having shed their student base, found another smaller, but more solid one. The majority of PD members are teachers, lecturers, lawyers, white collar workers. They are an important segment of the generation of young catholics which was best able to take advantage of the concessions made in the educational sphere. Such is the nature of the minority that there is no middle class for them to become integrated into. The choice is between the barren, and increasingly insecure heights of the Malone Road, or the catholic ghettos.

At the same time the bulk of their generation is involved in the struggle of the minority through the Republican organisations. Their links with this generation are strengthened by the influence of some of the most active and important young leaders in both the Officials and Provisionals who have gone through an initial political training in the PD.

Having made a turn to the struggle of the minority, PD was able to play an essential role in determining the form which the struggle took. The interdependence of the military struggle of the IRA and the Civil Resistance of the masses needs no elaboration, but it is necessary to stress that to a large extent it ran counter to Irish revolutionary traditions. For Republicanism the responsibility of those involved in the armed struggle was not directly to the people but to the Irish Republic. Of course, in the North the IRA had always had close links with the people, in its role as a catholic "home guard", but this had not included any concept of the people as an element in the struggle. Had the elitist concepts of traditional Republicanism determined the form of the struggle it would have very quickly been isolated and defeated. PD's intervention was not the sole element in breaking from the past (to a large extent the mould was broken by the early Civil Rights movement), but PD was able, through its own interventions and through its influence within the Republican movement, to prevent a total re-assertion of the traditional forms of struggle.

## "INSTANT DEMOS"

But the other side of the coin is that PD is limited in its experience and outlook to the struggle in the North, and is essentially a product of that struggle. It has so far been unable to relate to the all-Ireland struggle in the same way as it relates to the North. Since ultimate victory cannot be won in the North, this weakness must be overcome.

Their activity in the last year has relied heavily on the "instant demo", North and South of the border. This technique is important; the willingness of PD to demonstrate when other, larger forces wanted to hold back action has enabled them to outflank them in action time after time. But such a technique has a very specific significance in a society like the North of Ireland. In a situation where the slightest flicker of independent action by only some hundreds of the minority population provoked a crisis in the whole of society such demonstrations were of historic importance. And today, when the catholics take to the streets in even limited numbers in face of the occupation forces, the inability of British imperialism to crush their revolt is exposed.



Above: the sit-down which gave birth to PD

But elsewhere demonstrations have a different significance. Specifically, they cannot play the same role in the South as they have in the North. It is true that from time to time demonstrations have rocked Leinster House, but these have been at times when the situation in the North has provoked a response in the South which has burst through the channels of Fianna Fail "Republicanism".

Also, given the right political situation even small demonstrations can have important political results; the PD march to the Curragh, which was met with fixed bayonets, is an example of this. But the political significance of this action could not have been understood by PD, since they shortly afterwards made a call for demonstrations at the Curragh every weekend; needless to say these were neither effective nor long sustained. PD was running the risk of allowing a specific form of struggle to so pre-occupy their forces that they could not pay attention to the longer term tasks of creating a revolutionary movement.

## A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?

PD, has understood this; a political statement issued at the start of this year states: "By the end of 1973 there must be active branches in every city and major town in Ireland. .... Without a revolutionary Party there can be no revolution. It is our task to build that party. To that we dedicate ourselves." (*Unfree Citizen*, 15 January 1973)

This statement is correct, but it contains a potential danger. The building of a revolutionary party does not consist of creating "active branches", but of leading revolutionary struggle; the organisational tasks of party-building are of secondary importance. So far the PD has not begun the job of extending itself outside the catholic ghettos in the North — the Dublin branch consists mainly of Northern exiles, and has not been able to intervene in any meaningful way in the situation there. The task before PD, if it is to build a revolutionary party, must be re-formulated or it will prove a pious and misleading platitude. That task consists of linking the struggle of the ghettos to the other struggles going on in Ireland, and centralising them around the main contradiction in Irish society, the unresolved national question, which is the springboard of the Irish revolution. Although this task has to be accomplished through leading struggle, it is interlinked with another task which at present has first place — the theoretical work of developing a strategy for the Irish revolution.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Since the mid-Sixties Irish revolutionaries have been confronted by a series of strategic opportunities, which were related to the new crisis then opening up. Their inability to grasp these opportunities was the direct consequence of their failure to understand that new conjuncture. While this was fairly inevitable, their failure has meant that the struggle is less advanced now than was objectively possible.

The nature of this new conjuncture can be sketched rapidly. The re-orientation of British capitalism from the American alliance towards Europe meant a re-structuring of relationships with Ireland North and South. In Northern Ireland the decline of traditional industry, and the failure of any alternative industrial take-off meant that the state was not only now politically outmoded, but a financial drain on the British exchequer. In the South the high point of Sean Lemass's economic miracle served only to point up the fact that the economic relationship between Britain and Ireland, outside North East Ulster, had not changed in any qualitative way since the Act of Union. Despite an important growth of industry, despite a growth of non-British investment, the area still depended on the export and processing of agricultural goods for the British market.

In the North this was to lead to the first substantial challenge to British imperialism and Orange supremacy since the foundation of the state: the Civil Rights struggle, growing over into an armed anti-imperialist struggle. In the South the bourgeoisie had to choose once and for all to accept their relationship with British imperialism and make the best of it. Thus the crisis in the North was merely the sharpest and most immediate aspect of a crisis which was gripping Ireland as a whole — any perspective for struggle in such a situation had to be an all-Ireland one. The factor which gave the Northern crisis such depth and power, the uneven development of North and South, is now turning into its opposite, isolating the struggle in the Northern ghettos. The development of a strategy for the struggle in the South is of prime importance now. The crisis in the South is developing on a more heterogeneous basis, and at a slower rate than in the North. Already experience has shown that forms of struggle drawn from the Northern experience are quite inadequate for the South. For example, the Dundalk and Mountjoy "riots" last year, far from polarising society in the South and weakening the base of Fianna Fail, strengthened the hands of the Lynchs and Collees.

## THE GENERAL ELECTION IN THE SOUTH

A more recent example is the General Election in the South. Here the lines of PD and the Revolutionary Marxist Group (Irish supporters of the Fourth International) were very different. The RMG put forward the slogan "Against Repression, Vote Republican", while the PD had a totally abstentionist position, not even supporting the Official Republican candidates.

For PD the main task in relation to the election was to break the electoralist illusions of the masses in the South. This was a notorious example of failure to transcend the Northern experience. Electoral illusions are practically non-existent in the Northern ghettos; a gerrymandered parliament and a permanent minority status do not breed trust in the possibility of change through the ballot-box. But in the South the experience of the masses is quite different. The abstentionist position of the Republicans in the early years of the state was an expression of weakness and futility: with the election of Fianna Fail in 1933 important changes *did* take place, and the continued abstentionism of Sinn Fein ensured that it was effectively by-passed by

First of all, can you say something about the vote for the candidates of the Ligue?

You have to remember that we decided to field only 92 candidates out of a possible total of more than 450. We stood in places where we already have a group of militants. Our purpose was to increase our influence and strengthen our forces so as to be able to organise new 'Red Committees' after the campaign.

The big difference with the result of the presidential campaign [in which Krivine stood in 1969] is first of all the figures. This time we got just a little less than 2%, although this was not evenly spread, ranging from a little less than 1% to more than 5%. The best results for us and Lutte Ouvriere [another revolutionary group with whom the Ligue had an electoral agreement] were in the working class areas, especially where the Communist Party is well implanted.

That was the case in the East of France, in the Ardennes, where our candidate was a worker well known after four strikes in four different factories last year. In these four strikes there were strike committees, support committees and so on. We intervened in each of these strikes, both inside the strike (because we had one or two comrades in each of these strikes) and outside, organising support, etc. And what is interesting is that in this town, where we got more than 5%, the branch of the Ligue is very small — six or seven comrades, all workers, with a few students and high school students around us. I think that result was clearly produced by the experience of the workers during these strikes, and by the activity of the Ligue within them.

Take another example, Sète, a town in the South where the CP is strongly implanted and where in the past not a single revolutionary dared to enter. Here we wanted to make a test, and so we sent a candidate. In the course of the campaign we were able to debate with the CP mayor in front of 400 workers—who insisted on staying till 1 o'clock in the morning until they were clear on the issues at stake! And we got nearly 2% votes which could have come only from the CP. We also now have in this town, where before we had no-one, a Red Committee of 14 militants, including the former leader of the Young Communists who brought with him five other workers.

Then you have other examples: in Tours in the centre of France, in Caen, and so on, where there have been strikes, and where the CP is strong but where the working class has had new experiences of struggle. This is the most important thing for us.

You also have to understand that this vote was a very political vote; it was all the more difficult because it was not an 'efficient' vote at all. This election was not a 'normal' election — there was a big political polarisation, and for the first time many workers had the impression that they could change something by voting, even in the first ballot, for the Socialist Party or the CP. We did not expect more votes, but the result is that the vote did not accurately reflect our real influence.

During the campaign the Ligue held more than 500 meetings. What was most significant about these?

The nature of the attendance at these meetings:

On Wednesday, 7 March, between the first and second rounds of voting in the French elections, Alain Krivine, a leader of the Ligue Communiste (French section of the Fourth International) and one of its candidates in the elections, came over to London to speak at a public meeting of 400 people organised by the IMG. After the meeting, Oliver Macdonald interviewed him for *The Red Mole*.



Left: Alain Krivine

## "Now we are going to fight"

we found that only the most politicised of even the revolutionary students came to our meetings — or rather, they came when the meetings were organised in the universities themselves, but not for the most part to the central meetings. But we had new people, in particular many workers; in Rouen, for example, there were approximately 800 workers at our meeting. Another example: we organised a meeting at 6 o'clock in Nilvanches, which is a steel town in the East of France, and 90 workers came to the meeting from a big factory called Vendel Sidelay, which is one of the biggest steel trusts in France.

I think the majority of these people probably voted for the Union of the Left in the first ballot. But the fact that they came to our meetings shows that they do not have complete confidence in the Union of the Left. More and more have begun to be critical of the fact that the Union of the Left retreated in its speeches and so on as the elections approached, and so they want to know what is our position.

That means that for these people we are losing our image as a student group and beginning to appear as a serious political organisation. The questions they asked us were very important, too: about the kind of socialism we want to build, what is workers' control, what is the relationship between the vanguard party and the trade unions, how to fight in the economic struggle, the problem of strike committees, the problem of self-management in the factory, and so on. All these problems were touched upon in the discussions.

Apart from this, we even organised some meetings of peasants in the South — small meetings.

One of the most striking things has been the growth of the Socialist Party's influence. Why have even working class militants been turning towards this party in the elections?

It is due to many things. The majority of the votes for the SP are coming not from the work-

ing class but from the middle class — people who in the past usually voted more to the right. That is a sign, perhaps not of radicalisation but of a shift to the left if you like; the more so in that because of the SP-CP alliance it means they are not afraid of working with the CP.

The second thing, which concerns the intellectuals and even a small section of the working class, is the effect of Stalinism. After 1968, many workers were completely disgusted by the policy of the CP, its sabotage of the strike movement and so on, and today they feel that maybe the Socialist Party is changing. This is, of course, generally false, but it is true that today there is a left wing in the SP called the Centre for Socialist Studies. This is a big fraction with perhaps 20% of the votes inside the party, led by young men who were not involved in the organisation in the past, many of them coming from the United Socialist Party (PSU). Because of the public image of these people — some of them are members of the national leadership and so on — sections of the working class feel firstly that this organisation has changed, and secondly that as it's stronger than the revolutionary groups it may perhaps be an effective counter-balance to the obstacle of Stalinism in the factories.

In your speech tonight you said that there was a prospect of very big class struggles in the coming months. Why is this likely?

First of all, because there is now a new combativity among the working class which has grown up in the last few years: in new fights and very hard, long struggles. Secondly, the demands of the working class are increasing. There are now almost 800,000 unemployed; the speed-up in the factory is more intensive; in the nationalised industries the new policy of what they call 'profitability' is destroying security of employment; and so on. Problems of housing and even of pollution are also being taken up; not only economic demands, but the

'way of life' in the factory and in the housing estates, the question of transport facilities and similar problems.

All these things taken together lead us to expect big struggles, especially because in the last few months the CP has attempted to block all strikes. In each strike it has explained the need for a 'peaceful climate', that we mustn't frighten the bourgeoisie and so on. The workers have been told that all their demands will finally be settled by a new government. And when the workers see that they have gained nothing substantial from the elections, they will say, 'we have waited for months and months because of the elections, and now we are going to fight'.

What are the principal tasks that the Ligue puts forward in preparing for this upsurge?

Today we are launching many campaigns against the army, against militarism, etc. This is very important now to educate the vanguard. The CP has completely abandoned this work, and it is very important to educate people in action against the army and against the repression. But as far as the development of the working class movement is concerned, we have three main axes.

The first of these is the problem of workers' democracy and the experience of workers' democracy through the strike committee. The second is the problem of making an alliance in specific strikes, preparing for what will happen in a General Strike and in the fight for socialism: this means the support committee, with peasants, high-school students, teachers and so on. Thirdly, we have to develop the habit of self-defence when there are strikes; to show the workers that they do not have to capitulate when the police occupy their factory, or the 'yellow' workers — the fascist workers who try to smash the pickets and enter the factory.

One of the most important problems for the revolutionary left in France must be how to achieve unity in action in the face of the CP and SP?

We think that today, especially because there is a new vanguard, the united front is possible not only when you have the reformists but when you have a strong revolutionary force able to intervene in the united front. When Lenin talked about the united front it was not a united front between two reformist organisations; there was also the revolutionary organisation. We think that today we are too small to build a real united front from the top downwards. If we limit ourselves to asking the reformists for a united front it will never take place. So we prefer to apply the English phrase: do it yourself; we have unity in order to outflank, and we outflank in order to have unity.

Concretely, this means that when there is an action which is necessary and which we have the forces to initiate, then instead of demanding that the CP do it we do it ourselves with our own forces. Then we ask the CP to continue the action with us. They usually refuse, of course, but some of their members now accept the need to take part in such actions, e.g. the Young Communists in some places over Vietnam. And then of course if we can reach unity in action with them, then we try to go further with them.

Fianna Fail. The electoral illusions in the South have a material basis, and will not be broken down through propaganda but by the development of concrete alternatives to electoral action.

Again the Northern experience does not provide an answer. Since 1969 the self-activity of the minority, organised in the ghettos, has been sufficient to offset reliance on the old Nationalist Party system of local MPs and councillors with a personal base of support built up through patronage. The problem in the South is to create such self-activity. And such mass action in the South will have to throw up more solid and powerful organs of dual power than the street committees in the North, if Leinster House is to be by-passed.

In such a situation intervention by revolutionaries is very difficult. There are no material alternatives to which they can point, and the temptation is either to lapse into "lesser evilism", and call for the election of the less reactionary political alternative, or to substitute for an intervention with abstract propaganda about why the masses, who are not going to break from electoralism, ought to.

The RMG's position was correct, because it proposed a form of action, within the electoralist framework, which nevertheless brought out the main question in the political conjuncture (resistance to anti-Republican repression) and if followed it would take the masses into struggles which would face them with the necessity for transcending their electoralist consciousness. It is true that there was no objective possibility of the masses following the RMG's lead, but this was a result of the weakness and lack of influence over any section of the population of the revolutionary vanguard in Ireland. The RMG strengthened that vanguard by demonstrating a viable course of political action. By supporting the Officials' election campaign, and at the

same time projecting their own independent slogans, agitation and propaganda, the RMG was able to intervene within the ranks of Sinn Fein, and explain the weaknesses of their election campaign, pose an alternative political methodology, and at the same time get close to that rank and file. If Dublin PD had supported the RMG in this, the forces of revolutionary Marxism in the South would have emerged from the election campaign with a proportionately greater influence and political impact.

### PARTY-BUILDING AND INTERNATIONALISM

The necessity for PD to transcend the experience of the North is the more urgent since they are in the best position to regroup those young Republican volunteers in the North who are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the political limitations of Republicanism. If a viable revolutionary organisation emerged from this process then the prospects for the Irish revolution would be greatly enhanced. Even if the uneven development of the revolutionary crisis in Ireland breaks, and the North is stabilised before the Southern masses are drawn into the struggle, the interregnum could be not only shortened, but used as a very necessary breathing space while the revolutionaries prepare themselves for the next round of struggle. *But PD has a long road to travel, and a very short time scale if it is to achieve this task.* If it is inadequate to the task, the young Republicans will be diverted into the pattern of previous generations: a brief military campaign, soon smashed, and the de-politicisation of the majority, while a small number go over to reformism.

The history of the Irish revolutionary movement shows that it cannot haul itself up by its own bootstraps. It has never been capable of understanding the dynamic of the uneven development of Irish capitalism, and has thus been divided and weakened by it, rather than acting to deepen the contradictions for capitalism and imperialism caused by

that uneven development. As we have argued, PD has not been able so far to integrate the experiences of the struggles in the North and South of Ireland. Moreover Irish Marxists, while needing to develop a precise analysis for the Irish revolution, have not had the analytical tools necessary, and they have not been able to integrate forms of action, tactics, strategy, etc., appropriate to Ireland, but developed elsewhere. That is why the Irish revolutionary movement has to be Irish, *but also internationalist.*

PD has a very strong internationalist consciousness, and has helped in stimulating interest in the international class struggle amongst young Republicans. But PD has not progressed beyond an internationalism which solidarises with struggles elsewhere, but does not incorporate the experiences of these struggles in developing theory and strategy. An interest in the international class struggle will inevitably be one-sided and haphazard if it is seen as a question of general information about other struggles, combined with the development of friendly relations with revolutionaries in other countries. PD's relationship with Lotta Continua in Italy, for example, does not enable PD to understand the powerful industrial struggles there, which are very relevant to the South of Ireland, while Lotta Continua's devotion to direct action reinforces some of the less broadly applicable aspects of PD's experience. The Fourth International has a completely different concept of internationalism, and one which is much more appropriate to the problems faced by Irish revolutionaries. That is why, while the FI works independently of all other forces in Ireland, the development of a discussion between PD (and other Irish revolutionaries) and the FI would be a valuable contribution to more effective action, jointly or independently; and could have very positive results in developing the necessary forces to lead the Irish revolution, which both the FI and PD recognise as being a key to the European and World revolution.

# REVIEWS

## The Black Jacobins, by C.L.R. James (Vintage Publications, 95p)

One of the bigger deceptions perpetrated by the bourgeoisie is to try to deny the history of working class revolt. This is particularly the case as far as blacks and women are concerned.

*The Black Jacobins* is an exception to this pattern. A Marxist classic, first written in 1938 and now republished, it deals in depth with one great event in the long tradition of struggle of black workers and peasants — the revolt from 1792 to 1805 of the slaves in the French West Indian colony of San Domingo (renamed Haiti).

This revolt was, numerically and politically, the equivalent of the Vietnamese revolution today. The slaves defeated in turn the local whites and the soldiers of the French monarchy, a Spanish invasion, a British expedition of some 100,000 men, and a French army of 60,000 led by Bonaparte's brother-in-law, LeClerc. The latter was proved very wrong in his racist prophecy that, "All the niggers when they see an army will lay down their arms. They will be only too happy that we pardon them."

### IMPORTANT POINTS

A number of important points emerge from James's account of the struggle. Firstly, the analogy with Vietnam also extends to the *method of warfare*; the defeat of LeClerc, for instance, was accomplished by a combination of orthodox pitched battles and guerrilla activity. These forerunners of General Giap attacked the French columns on all sides, without respite, disappearing suddenly only to reappear a few miles further on. They hung enormous stones over the roads and dropped them on the troops passing below, rolled rocks down the precipices and mountain sides to spread confusion amongst them. They dug ditches in the roads and covered them with branches so that the French horsemen fell in.

James shows that the slaves, although working on the land, were organised in many ways like a modern working class. In fact they were equivalent to a 'rural proletariat' — working and living together in groups of hundreds on the huge sugar-factories which covered the country. Consequently the eventual rising was a thoroughly prepared mass movement. An appreciation of this can perhaps lead to a better understanding of the great 20th century revolution in the West Indies — in Cuba.

James also demonstrates how the so-called 'humanitarian' condemnation by the British bourgeoisie of slavery and the slave trade was in fact a question of material self-interest. It was an attempt to replace French San Domingo (which took more slaves than any other colony)

with British India as the world's chief supplier of sugar and cotton which led to British opposition to the slave trade. For the same reasons, the French bourgeoisie supported it.

### RESEMBLANCES

There are some interesting resemblances between the problems of the black revolutionaries in Haiti and those faced later by revolutionaries in another underdeveloped country — in Bolshevik Russia. Thus the slave leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, recognising the vital need to keep the economy functioning during the course of the revolution, was forced to militarise labour — sending the labourers back to the plantations 24 hours after he assumed control of a district, and authorising the military commandants of the parishes to take measures necessary to keep them there.

Again, just as the Bolsheviks were forced to rely on members of the old bureaucracy to help administer the country, so L'Ouverture recognised the need to use members of the former white slave-owning class. As in Russia, this forced necessity led to counter-revolutionary forces emerging within the revolution. L'Ouverture's successor was obliged to kill the last remaining whites at a cost to the future development of Haiti.

### INTERNATIONALISM

As with everything else, the Haitian revolution can only be understood in its international context. It was the existence of the slave economy in the first place which strengthened the position of the French bourgeoisie so that in 1789 it could launch a violent onslaught against the old feudal order in Europe under the slogan of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' (a slogan which it finally tried to deny the slaves). Again, it was L'Ouverture's fight against the British between 1792 and 1798 which tied up a large section of the British army and hence played a hitherto underestimated role in protecting the revolution in Europe. Toussaint himself was a conscious internationalist, and before his capture by Bonaparte had deposited vast sums in American banks to raise an army to liberate the slave towns of the African coast.

What is, however, lacking in the book is an explicit analysis of how Trotsky's understanding of the laws of 'combined and uneven development' can be applied in this context. This is doubly unfortunate since at the time the book was written James was a co-thinker of Trotsky. This is not an academic point — precisely because what happened in Haiti was a revolution in a pre-feudal slave economy tied to French imperialism, at the same time as the bourgeois revolution was taking place in France itself. It is obviously relevant to know, for example, how the revolutionaries tackled the problem of dividing the land — though presumably what emerged was a new aspiring black bourgeois class.

A final omission is that James, even in his postscript written in 1963, makes no mention of how Haiti eventually became tied to U.S. imperialism. For example, George Padmore in his book *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers* shows how during the 1920s the General Sugar Company, the largest American concern in Cuba, imported tens of thousands of blacks from Haiti to work on the sugar plantations in virtually slave conditions. Again, during the banana strike in Colombia in 1928 The United Fruit Company, a U.S. corporation, imported thousands of Haitians to break the strike of the Colombian workers. In such ways does imperialism attempt to destroy and subvert any movement aimed at freeing the masses from their oppression and exploitation.

Steve Cohen

### 'La Salamandre'

Reviewed by Brian McGregor

Occasionally a film appears which, despite the trendy, pretentious way in which it is presented, actually begins to come to grips with social reality in a simple and largely understandable way. Such a one is Alain Tanner's 'La Salamandre', a small budget (£26,000) black and white feature now on at the Academy Cinema in London and hopefully due for a wider showing.

### VEHICLE

The film is ostensibly about a journalist, Pierre, and a writer, Paul, who together write a story about a working class girl, Rosemonde, accused of shooting her uncle with his army rifle. In an attempt to place the incident in a context, they proceed to investigate her past and the way she lives her day to day life. This becomes a vehicle for an examination of the repressive nature of bourgeois social relations.

The film uses Rosemond's experiences to explore the problems that confront workers in a capitalist society because of the very position they occupy in that society, i.e. as mere sellers of labour power. This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the sequence showing Rosemonde working in a sausage factory performing a repetitive, tedious, alienating task. Her eventual reaction is, as it has been in the past, to walk out of the job.

Such a reaction is, by its very nature, defeatist and incapable of breaking the vicious circle in which she inevitably finds herself; the very drabness of her life broken only by the occasional visit to the swimming baths, "when she doesn't feel too tired", and her mental escape from reality through the medium of rock music. This is set against the fact that to eat and to provide a roof over her head she must submit to the degradation and discipline imposed upon her by the factory and shop.

### NEGATIVE

Rosemonde's reaction to her situation is negative because it takes place on an individual level. However the film, while making this clear, only touches on the alternative — when Rosemonde eventually realises (with the help of Paul) who her real enemies are. This realisation enables her to begin to examine her position in an entirely different light and to begin to react accordingly.

As for the writers, faced with the realities of Rosemonde's life they are forced to reconsider their attitude towards the working class. Starting with a perspective of writing Rosemonde's story from "the facts" (with all the bourgeois assumptions of "objectivity" and non-involvement), they conclude that the only way it can properly be told is by Rosemonde herself.

The film, unlike many that purport to examine the social relations of capitalist society, is unpretentious and noteworthy for its lack of obscure symbolism. Finally, the fact that the film was made in black and white, in conjunction with its winter setting, creates a cheerless, grey, negative medium that serves to highlight the actualities of capitalist society upon which the film successfully focuses our attention.

### MILITANT DEBATE

On 2 March a debate between the IMG and the 'Militant' group took place in London on the question of the Irish struggle. Owing to lack of space, we are unable to include a report in this issue of the paper. A full report will appear in the next issue of *The Red Mole*.

### ANTI-INTERMENT LEAGUE

'The White Paper and the Situation in Ireland' Public Meeting Friday, 23 March, 8.00 p.m.  
Main speakers: Mike Farrell and Gery Lawless  
Conway Hall (Holborn tube)—all welcome.

# Economics and Ideology

Paul Morel

## 6. WHAT IS ECONOMISM?

A major distortion of revolutionary Marxism is to be found in the practice of almost every group that claims to be marxist. They assert that revolutionaries should involve themselves *only* in those activities which relate to the economic struggles of the working class, and political activities which aid these economic struggles. This exclusive emphasis on 'the economy' is known as economism. Solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles, and work against the forms of oppression that do not relate directly to 'the economy', such as the oppression of the housewife and the homosexual, are either ignored or approached within a purely economist framework.

In addition, economism regards the economic struggles of the working class as a sufficient basis for the development of revolutionary class consciousness. In other words it is implied that the working class will *automatically* 'learn from practice' and develop a revolutionary consciousness as a by-product of the economic struggle.

### DETERMINIST

At the root of the economist approach is the vulgar economic determinist view that 'the economy' is some sort of self-regulating machine which determines the passive response of the entire social and political life of individuals in society. Marxists, according to the economist view, have two entirely distinct tasks. One is understanding and explaining the workings of the economic machine — 'theory'. The other is becoming involved in the day to day economic struggle — 'practice'.

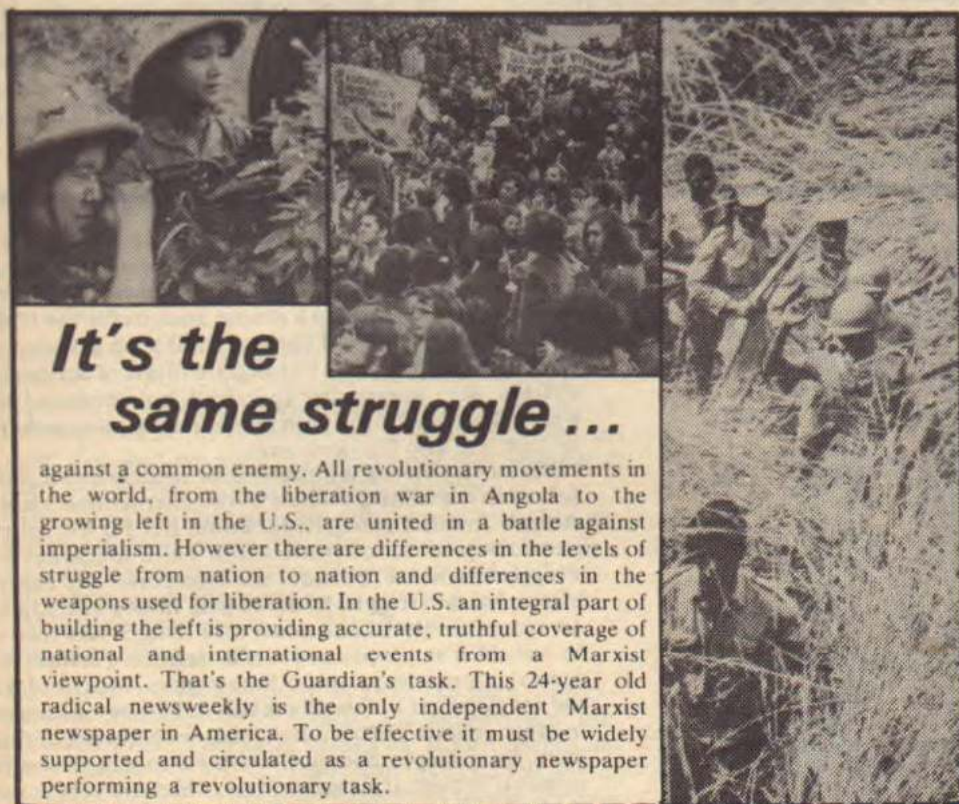
Economism severs the link between theory and practice because it does not appreciate that a necessary task of the revolutionary party is to provide the proletariat with a *new vision of the world*. This vision must be based on a scientific understanding of capitalist society, its origins, and the historical role of the proletariat. This is not abstract 'preaching' or 'passive propaganda', because a scientific understanding of the world enables revolutionaries to point out that the oppression of the masses cannot be relieved by economic struggle alone.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks never confined themselves to struggles for better wages or conditions. Consistent and patient attempts were made to *explain* to the working class that the struggle must be directed against the *capitalist system as a whole*. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, wrote: "Vladimir Ilyich (Lenin) was interested in the minutest detail describing the conditions and life of the workers. Taking the features separately he endeavored to grasp the life of the worker as a whole — he tried to find what one could seize upon in order to better approach the worker with revolutionary propaganda ... Vladimir Ilyich read with the workers from Marx's *Capital* and explained it to them. The second half of the studies was devoted to the workers' questions about their work and labour conditions. He showed them how their life was linked up with the entire structure of society, and told them in what manner the existing order could be transformed. *The combination of theory with practice was the particular feature of Vladimir Ilyich's work in the circles.*" (*Memories of Lenin*, page 21).

### NEW SYSTEM OF CONCEPTS

Theory and practice can only be linked if it is first realised that the role of Marxist theory is not just to passively describe the workings of the capitalist system. Theory must also *challenge the bourgeois 'common sense' view of the world* with a new system of concepts. But, secondly, this revolutionary way of looking at the world must be patiently shown to the workers in relation to their *concrete conditions*. This can only come as a result of the active involvement and assistance of revolutionaries in all forms of struggle against oppression.

This fusion of theory with practice is a precondition of effective revolutionary activity. And for this reason the economist approach will repeatedly fail to generate the conditions for a revolutionary transformation of society.



## It's the same struggle ...

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Faced with the choice between the devil they knew intimately and the devil they hadn't known for a long time, a majority of those citizens of Southern Ireland who had a vote rejected the biggest bribe ever offered to an electorate, and chose the Fine Gael-Labour Coalition.

Fianna Fail's first preference vote was up from 45.6% to 46.3%. Fine Gael's first preference vote was also up by 1% from 34% to 35.1%. Labour slumped from 17% to 13.7%. Sinn Fein (Official) and Kevin Boland's Aontacht Eireann both did disappointingly badly, getting 1.1% and 0.9% respectively.

The distribution of seats was as follows: Fianna Fail 69, Fine Gael 54, Labour 19, Independents 2.

But these results only scrape the surface.

#### KEY TO UNDERSTANDING

The key to understanding the results can most easily be found by examining exactly why Lynch went for the election, why the electorate, when broken down by classes, voted the way it did, and the problems facing the incoming Coalition.

Lynch went for the election in an attempt to get a mandate before the White Paper, because he knows that the White Paper will offer little of significance to the Northern minority. He intended to suppress any element, i.e. Republicans, likely to protest against this; but his majority in the old Dail would not allow him to do this.

If the other parties, Fine Gael and Labour, combined in voting against him, he had to depend on the votes of the expelled Blaneyites\*. Inside the Party, he was aware that the Haugheyites\*, numbering up to 16 Deputies, were waiting for an opportunity to safely carve him up. A crucial part of his election strategy, therefore, was not just to get Fianna Fail back with a majority, but was to change the compo-



sition of his majority by dropping the Blaneyites and the Bolandites\*, i.e. those formerly in Fianna Fail who had already voted against him in the Dail; and, taking advantage of the Proportional Representation system of election, to use his personal following and charisma to drop the 16 dissidents still in the Party, and replace them with his young men.

His first defeat came in the nominations in the Fianna Fail Party, where, with the exception of Dublin — where branch members could be switched around at will, new branches recognised, etc., etc. — he was unable to dislodge those dissidents who had remained inside the Party. He did have some success in having new candidates adopted to run alongside old candidates. But, except in West Mayo and Roscommon, he failed to push these candidates up the list in the Irish preferential voting system. Finally he failed to get enough Fianna Failers returned.

#### LABOUR

The decreased vote for Labour can be explained by three main factors: firstly, there is a traditional pattern of trade-unionised workers shifting their votes from Fianna Fail to Labour in periods of anti-Republican repression (this explained the increased Labour vote in the elections before the two previous coalition governments), and then to react violently when Labour enters coalition with Fine Gael, after the election, which is seen by large sections of the older working class as the party of counter-revolution.

This time the Labour Party was committed to the Coalition before the election. Therefore this crucial section of the electorate divided: some voted Labour despite the Coalition; some refused to move from Fianna Fail; some gave their vote to Sinn Fein or Aontacht Eireann, with a sizeable chunk staying with Fianna Fail but giving their first preference to known

Fianna Fail dissidents. This factor, as much as his personal following, explains the large vote for Charlie Haughey.

In the countryside, the ranchers' vote had over the last few elections been moving from its traditional party Fine Gael to Fianna Fail, which was newly coming to defend its interests. In this election, they saw a possibility of getting their old traditional party back into office, and switched back to Fine Gael. To this must be added an urban middle class vote for "honesty in politics" and Law and Order, which was reflected in the vote for the traditional Lawyers' Party, Fine Gael. Some sections of the younger working class vote not imbued with the traditional anti-Blueshirt attitude of their fathers switched to Fine Gael as a sure way of bringing down the Fianna Fail of Union-Jack Lynch.

#### FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION

In a nutshell, the shift in this election to the Parties of coalition represents a fundamental contradiction which will be resolved in practice inside the Coalition government. Labour, with the exception of Conor Cruise O'Brien, Barry Desmond and Michael O'Leary got the votes of those who want an end to repression. Fine Gael got the Law and Order vote.

The coalition government will therefore be faced with the problem of implementing repression without provoking a division inside the parliamentary Labour Party between the "Republican" elements and the pro-imperialist Conor Cruise O'Brien elements.

*This problem will be intensified by the inner-party struggle inside Fianna Fail.*

Two deputies who achieved their purpose in this election were Haughey and Blaney. Blaney was the only Fianna Fail dissident to be returned who went to the election without the Party label. His election was described by the

anti-Republican *Irish Independent* as a "Sack Jack" vote.

For Haughey, it was the first short step towards the carving up of Jack Lynch. One of the major factors contributing to the defeat of Haughey by Lynch in the 1970 inner-Fianna Fail power struggle was that Jack Lynch, with the patronage of state power, was able to frighten off or buy off Haughey's potential supporters. Haughey's strategy since then has been to bring about the removal of Fianna Fail from office in such a way that the maximum blame for this rested on Jack Lynch, while none rubbed off on Charlie.

He has succeeded.

Now will begin the process of squaring accounts. This battle, or the prospect of this battle inside Fianna Fail, will mean that the Party attempts to regain some of the mantle of Free State "Republicanism".

#### SHORT RESPITE?

This is in itself should be enough to ensure a refusal by Fianna Fail to give full support to the Coalition when it attempts to implement the *Fianna Fail* repression policy, and therefore to increase the need of the Coalition Government to carry the whole parliamentary Labour Party with it in any repressive legislation.

What this probably means is a short respite in repression. If Republicans — Provisional and Official — can now take advantage of this period to re-examine the politics of their respective organisations, or if revolutionary socialists and republicans can take advantage of the same period to fight for a Socialist-Republican regroupment, the possibility exists for a rolling back of the repression.

*\*When Fianna Fail split after the arrest of Haughey and Blaney the dissidents also split. Haughey opted to remain inside Fianna Fail to the point of voting confidence in Lynch. Boland left to form Aontacht Eireann. Blaney remained inside until expelled.*

# CHILEAN CUL DE SAC

The results of last week's parliamentary elections (which had fallen due by the constitution) have left the future of the Chilean Popular Unity government in the balance. The Right wing coalition of Christian Democrats and Nationalists was unable to undermine the mass vote for Popular Unity and secure the two thirds majority necessary to impeach and overthrow the government. Yet Popular Unity still has no majority in the legislature; although its share of the vote has risen from 36% in the 1970 presidential elections to 43%. Already the CP is calling for a renewed 'dialogue' with the opposition.

Throughout the past two years in which Popular Unity has been in office, the Christian Democrats and Nationalists have used their congressional majority — for example, in October last year, to threaten the impeachment of ministers for violation of the constitution and so deepen the crisis which Allende merely postponed by bringing the military into the government and meeting most of the demands of the reactionary lorry owners' boycott. They have also been free to mobilise their supporters on the streets in massive demonstrations — not even the fascists have been driven from the streets.

#### SYMPTOMATIC

The freedom of operation of the bourgeois parties is symptomatic of the course of Popular Unity. General Prats, the army chief who has become a leading figure of the government, effected a 'gentlemen's agreement' to ensure

the 'peaceful' conduct of candidates at the hustings. But Allende is attempting to make deeper concessions to the Chilean bourgeoisie: his government is now attempting to 'stabilise the situation', i.e. to re-stabilise capitalist production.

At the end of 1972, 70% of Chilean industry was still in private hands. The government has already begun restoring to the capitalists, industries expropriated through workers' struggles: some firms in Arica, a retail consortium, the main concrete firm, Ready Mix, and the big paper producing trust, Papelera Sud. In the pre-election period the CP Economics Minister, Millas, introduced a bill to bring the bosses back into the administration of expropriated firms, restore some firms to the capitalists, and give guarantees to parts of the private sector (just as guarantees were given to the transport industry after the lorry owners' boycott last year).

#### DEEPER RIFT

This threat has driven deeper the rift between the Popular Unity leadership and the most combative sections of the labour movement. Demonstrations against the bill were organised by the MIR (the main force on the revolutionary left) and by the Workers' Council of the industrial suburb, Cerrillo de Santiago. The Political Committee of the Socialist Party denounced Allende and the Stalinist economics minister; and on 24 January the Socialist Party secretary, Altamirano, spoke against the measure on a public platform of the MIR (it was

significant that most of the increase in the PU vote went to SP and not CP candidates).

In the face of the threat from the Right, the watchword of the Stalinists wish to give to the workers of Chile is 'Produce, produce, produce': produce more for your capitalist masters, produce more to stabilise capitalism in Chile. The 'peaceful road' leads not to socialism, but back into the arms of the bourgeoisie. The response to the Millas bill is an indication that the workers of Chile will not allow themselves to be led in that direction.

Jane Frazer



#### INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

(British Section of the Fourth International)

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

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## WOMEN PRISONERS BRUTALLY BEATEN



Liz McKee

#### Red Mole Reporter, Belfast.

Women held in Armagh Prison were beaten up and had five hoses turned on them by male warders and British troops on Monday, 5 March. The attack followed an unsuccessful escape bid by five Republican prisoners, including Elizabeth McKee, the first woman to be interned, and Theresa Holland, a 17 year old school student.

Falls M.P. Paddy Devlin has accused the Prison Governor of panicking and trying to cover up what happened: "The escape attempt was used as an excuse to batter Republicans". Mr. Devlin wants a public inquiry into the incident and demanded immediate visits to the prison by a team of doctors and solicitors. A statement smuggled out of the jail said that one prisoner, Collette McCann, was batoned by at least nine of the staff; and that another, 17 year old Christine Clarke, was hauled down a flight of 15 steps and hurled head first into a cell where she was left unattended. The warders then hosed the prisoners in their cells. Messages of solidarity with Liz McKee and the other women imprisoned in Armagh should be sent to: Liz McKee, Armagh Prison, Armagh, N. Ireland; the Irish News, Belfast; and the Editor, An Phoblacht, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1.

ANTI-INTERMENT LEAGUE  
STATEMENT ON THE

# London Bombs

At the time of the issue of this statement, no section of the resistance movement in Ireland has accepted responsibility for the bombs which were placed in London on Thursday, March 8th. It would therefore not be correct to enter into speculation about who carried out this action. The possibility remains open that it was a provocation carried out by British Imperialism, or Orange reaction, and our attitude to these bombings will be determined by the nature of the organisation which carried them out.

But we defend unconditionally any action carried out by the organisations fighting to free Ireland from British Imperialism, our responsibility is to struggle for self-determination for Ireland, and to force the British Government to withdraw its Troops, not to instruct the Irish people on how to carry out their fight. There is no qualitative difference, from this standpoint, between actions carried out in Ireland or Britain, and we scorn those who run for cover when there is any suggestion that the war in Ireland could be exported to the streets of London. We refuse to condemn any action carried out in Britain by the IRA or any other force fighting on behalf of the Irish people; including the Aldershot explosion, and the recent London bombings, if they were the work of such a group.

It would not be in the least surprising if the situation in the North of Ireland were to result in such actions. Whitelaw's policy of 'the carrot and the big stick' combines concessions to the Southern bourgeoisie, and the Northern Catholics middle-class politicians, with the most ferocious repression in the Catholic ghettos. A statement made by Ivan Cooper of the SDLP, and reported in the Belfast review *Fortnight* (2.3.73) gives some idea of the situation:

... Mr. Whitelaw was still 'leaning' on the Catholic population. He stated that in the 7-week period ending Jan. 31st, 551 Catholics were arrested, and 60 Protestants. 2,600 lbs. of explosives was discovered in searches of Protestant areas compared with 1,200 lbs. in Catholic areas. In spite of this only one-ninth of all searches took place in Protestant areas where 13,700 out of a total of 19,000 rounds of ammunition had been found.

The latest issue of the NICRA paper *Civil Rights* (10.3.73), reports a recent upsurge in the incidence of brutality and wanton shootings by the British Army. One example given is that of the death of 12 year old Kevin Heatly in the Derrybeg housing estate, Newry. Kevin was shot by a British soldier, part of a group reported to be running wild through the area. The British Army claimed that troops had been returning fire, but a tape recording taken at the time recorded only one shot - the one that meant death for Kevin Heatly.

This upsurge of Army brutality follows the worst period in the campaign of sectarian murders by Protestant extremists. The sectarian Border Referendum gave a seal of approval to the status quo, and a denial of any concessions or way out for the Catholic minority. If therefore a section of the oppressed minority choose to take action in Britain, in an attempt to force some let-up in this repression, the responsibility is entirely that of the British Government, which has chosen to escalate the repression, and therefore the counter-violence.

The London bombings will be used to stir up anti-Irish feelings, and to import Police State techniques from the North of Ireland. Whitelaw's recent statement, linking Irish resistance fighters and British industrial militants, shows that they do not distinguish between the forces engaged in either struggle. The AIL points out the serious situation precipitated by Police action over these bombings. No-one not blinded by Press-induced chauvinism can fail to speculate about the serious inadequacy of Police warnings; and the treatment meted out to the 10 people arrested at Heathrow, has shown once again that the principle of innocence until guilt is proved has little meaning for the British Police or Press.

The AIL is taking action to ensure that defence of these prisoners is co-ordinated, and will continue our work of raising the Irish question in Britain, trying to win support from the British working class, and exposing the root cause of the violence in Ireland and Britain - British Imperialism.

## Right Wing rallies against Abortion

On Sunday, 25 March, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and other forces are organising a demonstration in Manchester against abortion. This follows a similar one in Liverpool last year which attracted nearly 20,000 supporters. The organisers encompass the whole spectrum of right wing and clerical reaction, and their slogans glorify the 'beauty' and 'naturalness' of 'motherhood'.

It is important for socialists to oppose this demonstration on the streets. Counterposed to the mystifying slogans of the organisers must be an explanation that under this system 'motherhood' for working class women is frequently the passport to a life of drudgery and financial hardship, and that women ought to be able to opt out of this 'beautiful' experience if they wish. All socialists should support the demands of the women's liberation groups for free contraception and abortion on demand - and fight for the acceptance of these amongst men as well as women.

But it is very easy - especially for men - just to be parasitic on the women's movement in the sense of confining support to the abstract 'Right on, sisters'. In particular, support remains abstract if there is no comradely attempt to contribute to the discussion through which the movement must develop, and thus criticise past errors.

### ILLUSION OF 'CHOICE'

One of these errors has been the explanation given by many women's groups of the slogan 'abortion on demand'. This is frequently posed in terms of 'a woman's right to choose' or 'a woman's right to control her own body'. Unfortunately, words such as 'right' and 'choice' are just as confusing as 'motherhood is natural'.

It is actually untrue to say that abortion on demand will give the majority of women a meaningful choice whether or not to have children. This is because the majority of women are often unable (for financial reasons) or unwilling (because of ideological as well as financial oppression - as in the case of the single mother) to have children. This, of course, is precisely why many women want abortions. To talk in terms of 'choice' does not tackle the question of why the system is such that many women feel compelled to need abortions - in short, why the system cannot provide for children.

International Womens Day Demo in London.



The class boundaries are drawn very clearly here. Whereas for working class women any choice is illusory, many bourgeois women do often have a comparatively real choice inasmuch as their family situation does allow them if they wish to bring their children up in materially decent conditions, send them to decent schools, etc. Moreover it is a utopian solution for working class women to aspire to a bourgeois family relationship when the objective function of the nuclear family is the oppression of working class women. It is the nuclear family which provides the essential organisational and ideological framework for the lack of socialised housework and the justification for unequal pay, and this is why it is reactionary.

### WOMEN WHO WANT CHILDREN

This argument as to choice is important, because it makes it possible to face up politically to the problem of those women who actually want children. It is true that many are imbued with the mystifying ideology of motherhood, and many are directly influenced by the church. Likewise it is an obvious truth that these women want children in the context of the nuclear family which is essentially reactionary (and indeed this is often the source of their 'want'). But it would be utopian to expect these women either individually or collectively to renounce their family relationships (and this sort of utopianism has to be argued against in the women's liberation movement itself).

Instead, revolutionaries have to face up to the long term struggle of winning these women - who comprise probably the majority of working class women - to the revolution. To talk of abortion giving 'the right to choose' means nothing to these women - they already want children, but inevitably find the economic reality quite daunting. Socialists must face up to this situation, and give such women a perspective for struggle - one explaining not only why we consider the family to be oppressive to all within it, and motherhood not to be a necessary virtue, but also how under capitalism there is no way that children can be brought up except under conditions of poverty, deprivation, oppression, etc.

### BOURGEOISIE

This is all the more necessary in that the bourgeoisie - or a section of it - is also becoming anxious on an international level to provide abortion and contraception facilities. Thus in

Britain, for example, there has been a steady progression from abortion being illegal, to its legalisation within limits, to the provision by at least some local authorities of free advice and contraception. In Denmark (more or less independently of any activity by the small women's movement) there is already a form of free contraception and abortion on demand.

The mere fact that the demand for free available abortion is thus on the one hand being demanded by the women's liberation movements and on the other being championed by certain elements of the bourgeoisie, is in itself nothing to be perturbed about. What would be perturbing would be if these two forces not be actually coincided temporarily but were actually to merge in class-collaboration. That is the potential danger the women's movement must avoid.

### INDEPENDENT CLASS POSITION

That is why it is so necessary that the class boundaries be clearly drawn. It is not enough to speak of 'women' (or 'men') in the abstract. Women, as women, have no unified, homogeneous, classless interest. They have class interests and these class interests differ. They have either bourgeois or proletarian interests, and those women from intermediate layers of society can be won either way depending on the relationship of forces - which is partly determined by the clarity of the presentation of proletarian ideas.

As regards abortion, this means arguing that not only are working class women at the moment unable to opt out of having children, but also that the majority only 'opt in' in the most oppressive, poverty-stricken sense - and that the main institutionalised framework for this under capitalism is the nuclear family.

A counter-demonstration against the anti-abortion rally in Manchester on 25 March, is being organised by an Ad Hoc Committee - meeting at 2.00 p.m. on the open ground opposite the Women's Liberation Centre at 218 Upper Brook St. For further details contact the Ad Hoc Committee c/o Manchester Women's Liberation Centre, 218 Upper Brook St., Manchester 13 (061-273 2287).

## FIRST NATIONAL STUDENT STRIKE

Wednesday, 14 March, saw the first national student strike in history. As we go to press it look as though it is being extremely well supported. In the context of militant rank and file activity through rent strikes, refectory boycotts, and occupations, there is clearly a firm basis for a rapid student politicisation of the kind not seen since 1968. In the present situation it is also clear that this could play a role in strengthening the working class struggles against the Tory pay laws.

Unfortunately, the NUS leadership are so far following the traditions set by the trade union bureaucracy. As far as they are concerned, students are a 'special case'. Rather than presenting to students a plan of action against the bourgeoisie and its state, and for solidarity actions with the working class which students could immediately implement, they rely on assaulting 'public opinion'.

The one day strike, then, is presented as a protest; not as a day to organise the mass of students and to fight to explain to them what their role can be in the present social crisis, and how their grants campaign can be integrated into a united struggle with the working class. Such an approach can only lead to disaster and demoralisation; it can only play into the hands of the ruling class in its attempt to solve its problems through winning all sections of society to support of the pay laws against the organised working class.

Jim Clynes

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## What's On ?

IRISH CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION - Public Rally in Camden Town Hall (Euston Road, nearest tube Kings Cross), Sunday, 1st April. Preceded by march from Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, starting 2.30. Speakers invited include Neil Blaney T.D., Eamonn McCann, Gery Lawless, P.J. McClean. All Irish and British organisations who support the Irish struggle welcome.

BUILDING WORKERS: ORGANISATION AND THE LUMP - a new pamphlet by Paul Smith which assesses the developments within the building trade during and since the national strike. Available from Red Books, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.; price 2p plus 3p postage.

CENTRAL LONDON A.I.L. Forums - March 30th: Gery Lawless on 'The White Paper'. All meetings are held at General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (Kings X tube) at 8pm on Fridays.

25 SONGS OF REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE - International, IWW 'Wobbly', Irish, British; including Internationale, Red Fly the Banners, First Cork Brigade, etc. 15p plus postage from P. Cooper, c/o 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. All profits go to Fund Drive.

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

