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MAY 14 PROVED IT:



PROTESTS WON'T STOP THE TORIES

PREPARE A GENERAL STRIKE!

what next? after may fourteenth

By George White

May 14th has been presented as both a victory for the TUC and as a defeat for their idea of a 'Day of Action'. Before the event the TUC leaders, or at least, some of them, were talking in terms of the greatest 'protest' Britain has seen since the 1926 General Strike. Behind such deliberately loose imagery lay a need to frighten the working class with the enormity of even a one day strike in the current political situation in Britain. But the equation of the General Strike weapon, even for one day, with a mere protest, shows the fear that the TUC leaders themselves had of the implications of May 14th. The great demonstration in London on March 9th had already shown that large layers of the working class, and increasingly larger as the extent of the proposed closures in public sector and nationalised industries becomes apparent, see no alternative than a political confrontation with the government, using the unions as the vehicle. This mood is based on the memories of the fight against Heath, where the unions played the primary role. The chants on March 9th had nothing to do with making the Government change course, as the TUC placards urged; they had everything to do with bringing it down. It's a big step more to a General Strike from the point where elements such as the steel workers and miners are ready to fight the Government, but the May 14th 'Day of Action', itself called to divert and defuse the prospect of a General Strike in Wales earlier in the year, offered the appearance of a bridge from the traditional demonstrations of protest to more aggressive measures against Thatcher.

Even this appearance was too much for the TUC leaders. Long before the Tories stepped in with their court order making it illegal for unions to call out their members 'for a political purpose' the TUC bosses had made it clear that they would prefer token activities to an all out strike. They wanted wide-

spread token protest, true, but not to strike a really effective blow at the Government but to back up their own feeble 'pressure' for 'consultations'. The bourgeoisie and the working class both quickly picked up this mood of hesitation, which can more precisely be called a mood of acquiescence before the Tory assault, tempered by verbal protest. On the side of the ruling class a great campaign was opened up in the media and in the workplaces to isolate those militants who tried to make the 14th an all out strike. Once again the Tories had confirmed the old experience of the limits beyond which reformists will not go. Unless provoked by massive movements within the working class which threaten to take control of the movement from their grasp the TUC leaders will stop short of a challenge to the state. It was the knowledge that the TUC leaders would have to defuse the situation in advance of the day which allowed Thatcher a platform to lecture the working class on the role and place of unions in society. The so-called 'political' nature of the 'Day of Action' and the so-called 'non-political' role of the unions were counterposed in the bourgeois press ad nauseum.

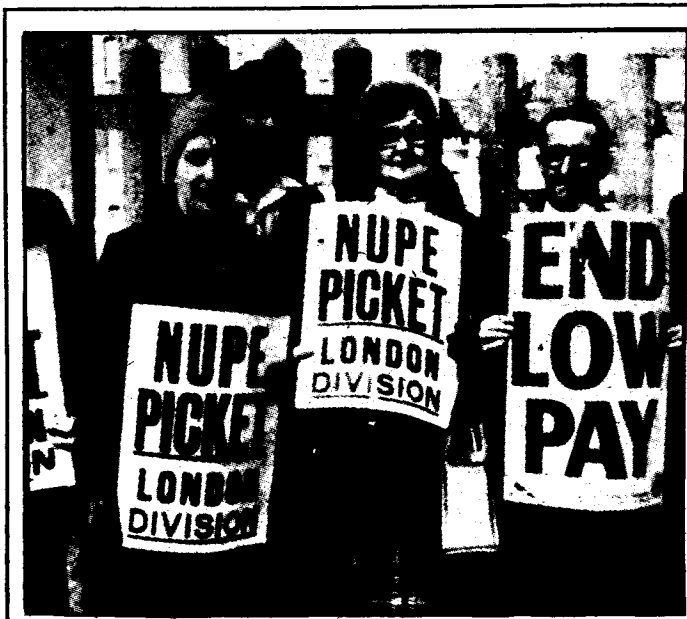
'NON-POLITICAL UNIONS'

Objective conditions have fostered for a number of years the myth that Trade Unions in Britain can be 'non-political', and collaborate with Labour or Tory Governments alike. These conditions were, first, the defeat in 1926, which defeated particularly the militant trade unionists and strengthened the trade union bureaucracy. But then came the added factor after the war that the boom provided for a time some room to manoeuvre in industrial relations. Neither of these has survived. The unions have played a blatantly political role when they brought down Heath, and in many other battles. The memory of 1926 no longer overhangs workers' minds.

At the same time, industry in Britain is so obviously collapsing that even the most sanguine forecasters talk in terms of 2 million unemployed and a recession of several years duration. Under these conditions the concept of a 'non-political' role for the unions is a mere illusion, fostered by the press and some union leaders themselves, to bind a section of the more backward elements within the unions to the ruling class and to place a block against the aspirations of the working class through the unions. But this block can exist only in the illusions of trade unionists. It cannot exist in reality. Heath was being brought down by the miners at a time when only a quite small layer of the miners themselves and other workers knew that a political confrontation was under way. Heath knew it: he fought the Election on the slogan "Who rules, the Government or the Unions?" But, the majority of the class, although it had sympathy with the miners and hatred for Heath, was not actively seeking to use the unions for a political confrontation with Heath.

UNIONS AND PARTY

It was the experience of the dramatic year of 1974 as a whole, with its two General Elections, its massive wage rises, its repeal of the repressive laws, which, in fact first and then in the minds of the working class, brought out the political nature of trade union activity. The fight against the Social Contract, which the working class undertook with a desire to maintain or improve its standards without bringing down the Labour Government, posed a link between the unions and politics in another



form. This took the form of a massive and complex question: how can rank and file trade unionists control the actions of the Labour Party and counter measures which a Labour Government takes against the working class without bringing down the government? The experience of the low paid workers forced a layer of trade union militants, particularly from NUPE, into the Labour Party to seek an answer to that question.

Then came the events which led to the election of Thatcher. It was the opposition of Callaghan to the unions which led to the downfall of the Labour Government. That has been said often enough. But it was in the conditions of the crisis of leadership in the workers' movement with the low paid and others driving Callaghan back, that Thatcher came to power. It is vitally necessary to remind ourselves of that now to understand what underlies the current political situation.



ACCOUNTABILITY

The question of 'accountability' which was posed under the Callaghan Government within the workers' movement, is the question of leadership in the unions and in the Labour Party. That question has not been resolved in the slightest. Callaghan still sits at the head of the Labour Party and the TUC has just presided over a deliberate debacle. But 'accountability' is specific only to the workers' movement, it does not extend to the

Tory Government. This is the great distortion with which Murray and others are trying to trick the unions - that the Thatcher Government can somehow, by pressure of one degree or another, be made 'accountable' to the unions. On the contrary, what really underlies this idea is a need on the part of the trade union bureaucrats to redraw the terms on which they participate in state bodies such as the NEDC and the terms on which they are able to keep control of the unions.

CLASS WAR

We must not quickly forget the talk by Weighell and others before May 14th about a movement towards a General Strike running out of hand. The pleas of the union leaders for 'moderation' on the part of Thatcher are pleas for room in which to prepare the working class for basic acceptance of the long term plans of the industrial barons to rip the guts out of British heavy industry in Wales, Scotland and the North. What lies against this wish is the pressure which the crisis of British capitalism, an unprecedented pressure, places on the ruling class and its government. It must act and act quickly and through attacks on the unions. It is not a question of the attitudes of the Tories, which are but a reflection in human terms, the political personification, of the economic crisis, it is a question much more fundamental by far: the historic crisis of capitalism. Leaders are not produced at random by history. The emergence of Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Tory Party signified a return to the open class war tactics with which Edward Heath commenced his Prime Ministership. But there are differences. Thatcher is both more unbalanced and more wilful than Heath. These qualities are a not inexact reflection of the moods of the whole ruling class. The backs of the British bourgeoisie are against a rather big wall. Under these conditions the trade union leaders' problems will not be resolved with the good grace of the Tories. After the Pentonville 5 incident in 1972 Heath leaned directly on the TUC for a further two years, inviting them for talks on many occasions. But that did not prevent the miners, in a rush of conflict, from bringing him down at the end of 1973. That lesson has not been lost on Thatcher. There may come a time when the Tories will once again have to lean directly on the union bureaucracy, but

this is not yet that time. The strategy of Thatcher is clear and simple: reduce the power of the unions. If the important unions are broken or contained then the apparatus will be diminished along with them. Such is the reasoning of the union bosses. Against the very real measures of the Tories, such as the impending Employment Bill, the TUC can only engage in tokenism. The trade union bureaucracy cannot defend the unions because to do so means opening an all out attack on the Government and to do that means an escalating crisis of leadership within the unions themselves. The working class on the other hand must defend the unions and defend its jobs. Even supposed 'right wing' sections of the class, those that have constituted the labour aristocracy in the past, can explode into militant action on the terrain of today's industrial conditions. This was one lesson of the steel strike. But the crucial and terrible problem for the steelworkers was the nature of their own leadership. As the strike developed the bitterness of the rank and file steelworkers to the treacherous negotiations of Sirs raised the need to find a new leader. By the end of the strike the men of the Rother Valley voted to have him removed. The whole strike was conducted with a leadership which wanted to trade wages against closures, only on slightly better terms than the BSC offered. The fruits of that are now being seen in the ongoing closure programme which has already ruined Corby and Shotton. But although wages and more fundamentally jobs, were the issue which brought the steelworkers out on strike, they were still not the real cause of the strike. The real cause was the fact that the Tories had chosen to break the ISTC as a prelude to attacks of the unions in the public sector. The truth was that the initial 2% offer was designed to make a strike unavoidable and then to defeat that strike. The steel strike was not defeated, the union was not broken. In the end the ISTC drove the Government back to a line somewhere near the pay norm. But the closures are under way. On that level the strike has not solved the problem, the battle remains to be fought. Yet the ISTC leaders bend and bend again before Thatcher. If May 14th was about anything it was about stopping the steel closures, yet the TUC went out of its way to obstruct solidarity action with the steelmen.

LEADERS REFUSE

Here we come back to the refusal of the TUC to take action against the Government. All through the steel strike the TUC refused to organise the full strength of the movement to win the strike. After an initial attempt by Murray to 'mediate' the steel strike was taken off the agenda of the TUC. Union leaders in transport and engineering quietly acted to prevent a crushing defeat for the Tories, once again knowing that the flood gates would be opened by such an outcome. On the other hand the working class, especially in an area like South Wales where the whole industrial base is threatened by steel closures, did want to act in support of the steelmen. May 14th came about because of the thrust towards united action in Wales. That thrust was by no means a crude militancy. The hesitancy of the miners, was not a hesitancy to take action but caution in the face of adventures under the hostile Thatcher Government. The feeling that nothing less than organised general action would suffice was engendered in the Welsh working class by the knowledge of the interlocking of all industry in that area. The knowledge that steel closures mean rail closures and pit closures. That all their jobs were tied together and all were under threat. South Wales and Scotland are the bastions, with parts of Northern England, of the old heavy industries of Britain, the bedrock of the great economy. They are also the places most hit by the decline of heavy industry, places where unemployment is highest and growing quickest. It was no accident that it was here where the protests on May 14th were biggest. But even here the problem of leadership stared the working class, out on the streets, in the face on the fourteenth. What did the speakers say, what way forward was offered? More protest, rhetoric against the Tories, wailing and gnashing of teeth.

POLITICAL STRIKE

When the initial call was made for May 14th the strength of the organised working class in Britain was invoked. The working class had not been called to action in such a fashion within the memory of anyone under 65. Although the class was not even and united in its support for the move, a concerted approach by the union leaders would

have enabled the more conscious elements to bring out the others. What was implied in May 14th was the introduction, under the authority of the TUC itself, of a specific tactic, the consciously political strike. Such strikes had been seen under Heath. The Communist Party led LCDTU had called them. But they were not TUC endorsed. May 14th posed a new threat. A threat to the union leaders themselves.

REFORMISTS SILENT

Why did no Labour or union leaders call for the bringing down of the Government on the 14th? Why did not proposals for tougher action rebound around the nation from speakers' rostrums? Because the finger, so far as the rank and file was concerned, whether out on the streets or not, was pointed at the leaders of the unions and Labour Party. The class naturally turned to its leaders for a lead. But the reformists could not give a lead in the bringing down of a government. All their thinking stops short at parliamentary legitimacy. All their day to day work takes place within the frame of reference of the bourgeois state. But precisely the problem is that parliament is in the hands of the enemy and the state is being lined up for attacks on the unions. The reformist leaders can do no more than allow the showdown to be arranged on the terms of the ruling class, with the rules being made by Thatcher in parliament. Even the 'lefts' fall short of their predecessors. Where is the Maxton to disrupt parliamentary business? Where is the Lansbury to go to jail for civil disobedience? Where is the A.J. Cook to lead trade unionists in battles on the streets? What did we hear from Eric Heffer? At a conference against the cuts in Liverpool not long ago he attacked the call for a General Strike as 'lunacy', with the approval of Terry Harrison long standing member of the Militant. No disruption of parliamentary business from Eric now that God has replaced Marx in his eyes. Where was Ted Knight in Lambeth? No fight by him to bring out the workers of Lambeth Council on the 14th. Now that Ted is but a closet Marxist it doesn't do to attack the right wing leaders too publicly or propose too much in the way of rank and file organisation. And what said Arthur Scargill? Even allowing for the well orchestrated silence and distortion by the bourgeois press about the

fourteenth it is clear that no move was made by Arthur in preparing for a General Strike to throw out Thatcher. The whole working class was greeted with the spectacle of the bankruptcy of its own leaders, left and right.



It was natural for the Tories to use the courts against the organisation of the fourteenth. This was nothing new. Heath had done it before. Only very recently Denning had ruled against the unions on picketing. Yet the haste with which SOGAT and the NGA used the excuse of the court order to retreat was a disgrace, and behind that a whole number of other unions made it clear that they were not in favour of a strike. A line was drawn by the ruling class and the union leaders scuttled to stand behind it. Truly the working class is heading for the biggest battles in its history with monumentally corrupt leaders at its head. The edifice of reformism is rotten, and yet, not so quickly can it be written off. It is rotten but it is still in charge of the mass organisations. In the course of each battle a new layer of militants is thrown up which can make the jump to revolutionary politics. The consciousness of the masses can rapidly be transformed under fire. But the concrete conditions of the unions and the Labour Party, the fact that the large mass of workers still vote Labour and look to the TUC for a lead, these are what will determine the forms of struggle as they open up. The working class is marching into battle with its existing organisations, into battles for which the Labour Party structures are not suited, for which the unions must be taken out of the hands of the apparatus.

May 14th was a debacle. According to the Tories because the bulk of the working class did not back the TUC in asking the government to 'change course'. In

other words because the majority of trade unionists support the methods of the Tories. Even Beaverbrook at his best could not have excelled that stance, taken in the blue press. Clearly the reality was elsewhere. It is true that the majority of trade unionists did not strike, but they were not urged to strike. On the contrary they were told by several unions not to strike. In fact they were not told to do anything except attend a few meetings in working time. But what was the point in that? The attitude of most trade unionists stemmed from the sure knowledge that this was not the way to confront the Government. Britain is not full of raving militants eager to bring down the Tories. But it is full of working people who know that confrontation is unavoidable, even to the point of a General Strike and who want to win that confrontation when it takes place. Among those millions are those who, like the steelworkers, are in the fire of battle very immediately and who need the solidarity of other sections to prevent closures. Then there are the unemployed suffering from the cuts, and the threatened workers in other industries. These elements must win the battles they are engaged in now and if they do not, then their defeat will be the ground for the next attacks by the Tories.

UNITY COMMITTEES

The British working class faces many tactical problems. Some sections such as the steelworkers rely on solidarity action to stave off the continuing attacks on their jobs. Others, such as the power workers, miners and waterworkers could bring the country to a halt on their own. But the tactics of the Tories, which clearly take into account these variations in strength of the sections of the working class, aim to make it much more difficult for even the strong sections to strike effectively. The Employment Bill will hit the NUM as much as the ISTC. The Government has one policy which they hope to be able to apply section by section. The TUC, in not preventing a section by section approach, is aiding them in this. The problem which was central to May 14th, again an aspect of the leadership question, is how to unify the class in struggle, on the ground, plant by plant, town by town and region by region. The TUC turned away from this. The SLG argued, long before May 14th that whilst we didn't believe that a 'day of Action' was a useful tactic or even that the slogan should be 'Make the Government Change

Course', if the day was to take place, then it should be prepared by unity committees of the unions and Labour Party in each area. The TUC and the Labour Party NEC adopted the very inverse of this method. Although there were Labour Party speakers on many platforms that day it was more or less as 'guest speakers'. On top of this there was not even any attempt to co-ordinate action across the unions, never mind between the unions and the LP. Thus the TUC contrived to have the day directionless, chaotic and sporadic. Once more the risk involved in setting up co-ordinating committees in plants and towns with the express aim of organising a strike against the Tories was a risk the trade union and Labour leaders could not take. Only the rank and file will take that risk, and at a rank and file level the effects of the combined demoralizing work of the union leaders and the bourgeois press made this virtually impossible.

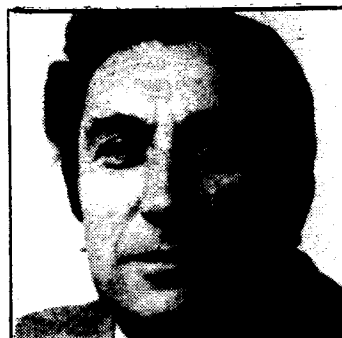
BLAME THE WORKERS

We have drawn out some of the elements which made up the debacle of May 14th, placing the blame for its failure squarely on the shoulders of the TUC and the union leaders. Let us stress once again that the working class was not responsible for the chaos. Millions of workers will not, off the cuff, take a step which may lead to a governmental crisis while their leaders back away. To prepare that day further sharp battles are needed. But, take care, what was Tony Cliff saying in a 'Socialist Worker' fringe meeting at the CPSA Conference? He was arguing that the working class has moved 'ideologically' to the right, that there exists a large measure of support for the Tories in the organised working class and that the failure to Confront Thatcher was the result of this. An old refrain. Trevor Phillips, then president of the NUS, was saying not very long ago that students were moving to the right and therefore militant action by students' unions was out of the question. Labour leaders were heard to remark that the Labour voters had moved to the right and that was why Thatcher was elected. This method does two things. First it removes the whole class struggle into the realm of ideology, whereas the conditions which radicalize or retard class struggle flow in the first instance from the pressures of the economic and political crisis of capitalism. Second, it provides an alibi

for the inaction of various elements in the workers' movement, by putting the blame for the inadequacies of the method on the working class as a whole.

RANK AND FILISM

The SWP put out a leaflet on May 14th which, behind the rhetoric of rank and filism, let the trade union leaders off the hook. Let us examine its method. Nowhere does it talk about bringing the Government down, it is simply not clear whether the SWP agrees with the TUC that Thatcher can be made to 'change course'.



FRANK CHAPPLE

While saying that "the Frank Chapple element in the movement is openly hostile to any effective opposition to the Tories", it does not call for the removal of Chapple. By avoiding the problem of leadership, the fight to remove Chapple, the SWP run the risk of providing him with a left cover. Indeed, far from posing the Labour and trade union leaders as the main block to a real fight being waged against Thatcher the SWP talk as if the working class can simply step round them. They say, "You cannot rely on the Labour Party Leaders or the TUC chiefs to carry this fight. Rank and file workers will have to turn the tide. It won't be easy but it can be done". As well as implying a quick bypassing of the TUC and the LP this sentence once again implies some left version of TUC's 'change course' policy, only the working class must 'turn the tide', Canute like. And we know what happened to Canute.

Rank and file organisation is crucial to the fight against the Tories. The SLG is far from trying to restrict every battle to 'official' structures, but there are two jobs to do, not one. As well as organising the practicalities of solidarity and industrial action it is necessary to organise to throw out these treacherous leaders, the Chapples and Callaghans. Moreover, as long as they are there and as long as the majority of the class have any illusions in them we demand that they lead, that they act in our interests, for

this is the way to expose their real role.

A perspective which ignores the problem of leadership in the unions and Labour Party is one which leaves the reformist betrayers untouched in the very positions they utilise to hold the rank and file in check. The method of Lenin and Trotsky was very different in relation to the problem of the existing leaders of the workers' movement, in the face of battle. Combined with an analysis of the treachery of the social democrats and others and with work to build a revolutionary organisation to take their place was the demand, 'you are in charge as of now, lead the fight against the bourgeoisie'. This demand did not imply for one second a belief that the reformists could consistently struggle against the ruling class to the point of taking power. It was, and is, an element in the fight for revolutionary leadership in the mass movement; the testing of the existing leaders to the limit. It is not enough merely to make general propaganda against the right wing. Indeed, there is more to the SWP line than their supposed militant 'rank and filism'. Combined with the attempt to build a national 'rank and file movement', which turns the minds of trade unionists away from the need to remove, within the union structures, the right wing, we can see in the SWP deep going illusions in the Stalinists. As well as the slavish attempts to patch up a deal with the LCDTU, which is no more than a CP front, the SWP never, in its publications or in practice, takes up the role of the CP within the union bureaucracy. For the Stalinists too, small and nearly invisible as they are, had their role to play in the debacle of May 14th.

THE ROBINSON AFFAIR

Let us go back a few weeks to what has become known as the 'Robinson affair' at BL Longbridge. It is well known that Robinson is a CP member. Indeed he himself pointed out that he had taken over from Dick Etheridge, a national leader of the CP. Adams, who has taken over from Robinson, is himself a member of the CP. It would seem that the CP has a bastion of support in Longbridge. Why then was the BL management so easily able to get away with the exemplary victimisation of Robinson? The lead into the 'Robinson affair' is a long saga of participation by Robinson and the other CP stewards in talks and arrangements with the management of BL. Talks which led to the 5% pay offer and the 'Edwardes Plan'. At the last minute Robinson, Adams and

others felt unable to go all the way with Edwardes, but the last minute was too late and Robinson, with his years of experience, must have known that was the case. Instead of building up a rank and file combine level movement against Edwardes and demanding that Duffy and Evans fight the redundancy plan, the CP in Leyland tried to play it both ways. The men at Longbridge had years of experience of disputes and strikes called by Robinson. Yet when it came to the crunch all the workers of BL were presented with was a pamphlet, telling them facts they already knew, extolling the virtues of the 'Morning Star' and telling them: "The time to stop retreating is now!" It also told them, "For far too long we in the trade union movement have accepted that jobs and industries can be sold for redundancy money". Here is the classic method of Stalinism: blame the working class for the Edwardes Plan. What is being said is that the BL workforce are in retreat and eager to take enough money to get outside the gate.

STALINISM

The truth is more complex and simple at the same time. In the first place it was the role of the union leaders in BL, starting at the time of the Callaghan Government, which led to talks with Edwardes and the redundancy plan at all. Robinson was part of that trade union leadership at the time and raised no real objections that we know of. Secondly, the kind of demoralization which makes workers look for redundancy money instead of fighting to save their job comes as a result of disillusionment with the ability of the unions to fight. In other words with their own leaders. Only by fighting the national leaderships of the TGWU and AUEW could Robinson have prepared the ground for a defeat of Edwardes. He chose not to do that. He instead prepared the ground for his own defeat and more importantly, behind him, for the imposition of the 5% and the 'Plan'. This in turn led into the mood of millions of car and ancillary workers on May 14th. Here we have the real role of Stalinism. The covering of compromise with left rhetoric. The refusal to indict the right wing leaders of the unions. It is to this method, with the added gloss of a spurious 'rank and filism', that the SWP inclines.

DIVERSION

Indeed the degree to which the SWP has carried its diversion from the prob-

lem of leadership in the unions and Labour Party was seen in the ridiculous spectacle of Roger Cox, long standing SWP member and 'Rank and File' leader, standing outside the Special Labour Party Conference on May 31st calling on delegates to join the Right to Work March on the Tory Conference later in the year! Not a word about the problem of Callaghan inside the hall! In terms of the general needs of the working class this is bankruptcy incarnate. The two largest organisations of the so-called 'far-left', the CP and the SWP, offering no perspective of action.

PSEUDO-MARXISM

In the case of the 'Militant Tendency', which claims to be the 'Marxist wing of the Labour Party', the method is somewhat different. For them there was no condemnation of the treachery and hesitancy of the union leaders in front of Thatcher. Instead, May 14th was 'The first shot' in the campaign. Not quite a one day strike but not bad. Now they call for a one day strike as the next step. This is gradualism taken to its dangerous ultimate. But there is more to it. 'Militant' was calling for a one day strike on May 14th. There was nothing like a one day strike. Why not? We look in vain for an analysis in the pages of 'Militant'. These so-called Marxist gurus long ago junked the dialectic, the Marxist method, which would enable them to understand that although May 14th was not a defeat in the sense of a major thwarting of the aims of the class or a breaking of its organisations, neither has it prepared the ground for a one day strike. The demands of the Militant are put forward in the abstract, irrespective of the turns in events. The debacle of the fourteenth will give the Tories an incentive to attempt attacks on the unions under the aegis of the anti-union clauses of the Employment Bill, when it becomes law later in the year. A one day strike will not stop that. In whatever form the next round of battle opens only an unlimited fight to bring down the Government will ensure the future for the working class. 'Socialist Youth' for May carries on its middle pages a long article by Jon Ingham, Militant supporter, with two banner headlines side by side: "GENERAL STRIKE 1926" and "DAY OF ACTION 14th MAY 1980". Such a juxtaposition is not only crass, it is politically mendacious. The 1926 Strike was a true insurrection of the masses, against and in spite of the limits their

leaders tried to impose on them. May 14th had at best the dimension of a large protest, certainly against and in spite of the leaders, but it was not a challenge to the Government as was 1926. Such obscuring of the issue is to debase the historic nature of 1926 and the General Strike weapon itself.

A FALSE QUESTION

'Socialist Challenge' of May 22nd carries an article by Phil Hearse which asks the question: 14th May - Victory or defeat? This is a question Hearse seems unwilling to answer. Indeed, it is a false question. May 14th, even if it had gone so far as a one day general strike could not have defeated the Tories, or even for that matter, made them change course, to use the parlance of the TUC. Hearse writes, "By raising the stakes of this conflict, the Tory offensive put the TUC leadership on the spot." This centering of an analysis on the events of May 14th is wrong. It was not the Government and press 'offensive' against May 14th which 'raised the stakes', but the election of the Tory Government itself. It is precisely because the stakes had been raised by the bourgeoisie, under the impetus of a massive historic crisis of capital that the TUC was forced to adopt the rather desperate measure of the 'Day of Action'. But that is only half the story. The working class too is being forced to 'raise the stakes', against the wishes of its own leaders. It was, let us repeat it, also under the impetus of a movement towards a spontaneous national strike in support of the steel workers, that the TUC was forced to call the fourteenth, no doubt timed to come after the steel strike had ended.

NOT A DEFEAT

Hearse half understands that the bourgeoisie has, through the Thatcher Government, issued a broad challenge to the mass workers' movement, but he fails to grasp that the preparation for a General Strike is anything more than an ideological campaign by what is called elsewhere in 'Socialist Challenge' the 'far left'. Hearse says, "Murray and the other members of the General Council...never wanted a one-day general strike or anything like it." Further on he states, "What is needed is mass industrial action leading to a general strike. That's the only thing which will succeed in throwing the Tories out." Surely the conclusion from these two correct statements is that the IMG should begin a campaign

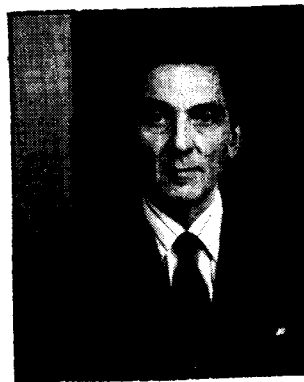
to remove Murray from the leadership of the TUC. Isn't Murray an enemy of what is necessary for the working class? Shouldn't, at the very least, the IMG be calling for Murray to organise a General Strike or get out and make way for someone who will? But all Hearse says is that we should build "an organised left wing in the unions...to fight the right wing and to commit the trade union leaders to action..." This is his momentous conclusion from the events of May 14th. The illusion of a perspective is given: build a left wing. What is this left wing, even an 'organised left wing'? Could it be the IMG's old celebrated monster, the 'class struggle left wing', raised to the level of a bloc between the IMG, SWP, CPGB, SCLV etc etc? We must await the next piece from Hearse to discover how left and how organised his conceptions run. As to now, what he tells us is that, "Without an organised left, 14th May will not be a beginning, but the precursor of more demoralization and defeat." Ah, in the very last words of his article we get an inkling that the fourteenth was a defeat. No! A thousand times no! It was not a defeat. It was not a defeat because the steel strike was not a defeat. It was not a defeat because the Tories came to power on the basis of a battle between the Callaghan Government and the unions. Not on the basis of a defeat of the unions but a situation where they were driving Callaghan back. It was not a defeat because, despite setbacks such as the victimisation of Robinson, no major section of the working class has yet been beaten by Thatcher. She has not had her UPW strike, as did Heath. Con-junctural defeats are not ruled out. But May 14th was not one of them.

MURRAY MUST RESIGN

What are the lessons of May 14th for the future? In our opinion the major lesson concerns the leadership of the trade unions. Frank Chapple condemned industrial action against the Government. SOGAT and NGA backed down in front of the Tories. The TGWU, GMWU and AUEW gave no lead at all to their members. As for the TUC, Len Murray claimed the result was sufficient. Clearly these people will not, of their own volition, lead the fight against Thatcher. It is necessary now to say: Murray was not even in the country in the week before the fourteenth, he was on holiday: Murray did not fight for a real protest: Murray helped to isolate the steel strikers. With this

record he is not someone we can trust to fight Thatcher. Len Murray must resign and make way for someone prepared to go all the way against Thatcher.

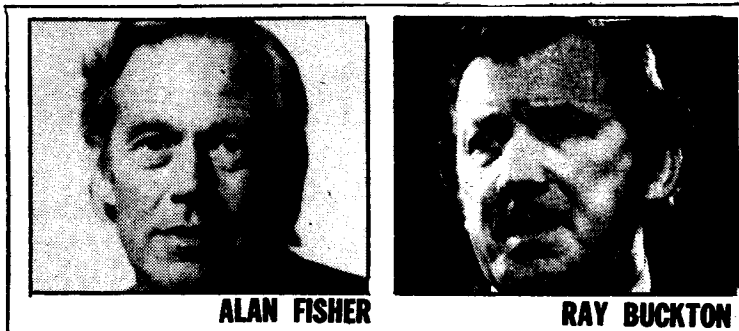
Six months ago supporters of 'Socialist Newsletter' who raised the need to force Callaghan to resign were being told by LCC, SCLV and others that policies not personalities were the issue. We argued then that the fight to remove Callaghan was not one of personality but flowed out of the fact that the political line of the Labour Party apparatus was implemented by human beings. The fight to change policies took the form of the removal of Callaghan. Now the Labour left is taking up the call for Callaghan to go.



The same problem arises with Murray. Vic Feather never caved in before Heath in the way Murray is with Thatcher. If the trade union movement is to organise itself to bring Thatcher down, and there is no other way to put a real stop to the Tory attacks on the working class, then it must demand an end to events like May 14th, which was widely predicted as a waste of time in advance.

It is necessary to say, in the workplace, in the shop stewards' committee, in the union branch and Trades Council: we have no confidence in Len Murray, he must resign. It is equally necessary to call for union and TUC leaders to prepare a General Strike to bring Thatcher down, beginning with a real and thorough campaign inside the workers' movement. Such a movement is not an abstract proposal. There is no shortage of issues. Every week brings new announcements of closures and redundancies. Not alone steel, not alone automobiles, but on the docks and in the South Wales coalfield. It is against this unprecedented onslaught, against the destruction of the Welfare State and education, against the anti-union laws, that the working

class must be mobilised. And mobilisation is the key. It is not enough for Labour MPs to make speeches in Parliament. It is not enough for demonstrations or even one day stoppages to be called. Thatcher is using the Government to strangle the unions. We must demand of the union leaders: use the unions to bring down Thatcher. We especially say to those leaders who claim a left wing stance, such as Fisher and Dix of NUPE, Scargill and McGahey of the NUM, Wright of the AUEW and Buckton of ASLEF: it is not enough to make rhetorical speeches against Thatcher, you must also raise the dilatory behaviour of the TUC General Council. You must lead the fight against the supporters of 'industrial peace' within the TUC, such as Frank Chapple.



ALAN FISHER

RAY BUCKTON

The problem of leadership does not remain on the level of calling for Murray to resign, or demanding that the lefts take up the fight, although it focuses on that level. In the workplace and at industrial level the experience of May 14th was that in those plants where well respected militants called for a strike then a strike took place. Not without opposition, for the working class is not a blank undifferentiated mass, the Thatcher Government has its supporters, but able to overcome the opposition. Clearly further conflicts with the Tories, or in the form of a conflict with an employer with the Tories behind them, are inevitable. This is most true in those industries threatened with closures, in nationalised industries and the public service. The lesson of May 14th and of the steel strike is that even when the union leaders refuse to make clear calls and clear demands, the rank and file can provide its own leadership, in the form of strike, factory and combine committees.

RENEW THE LEADERS

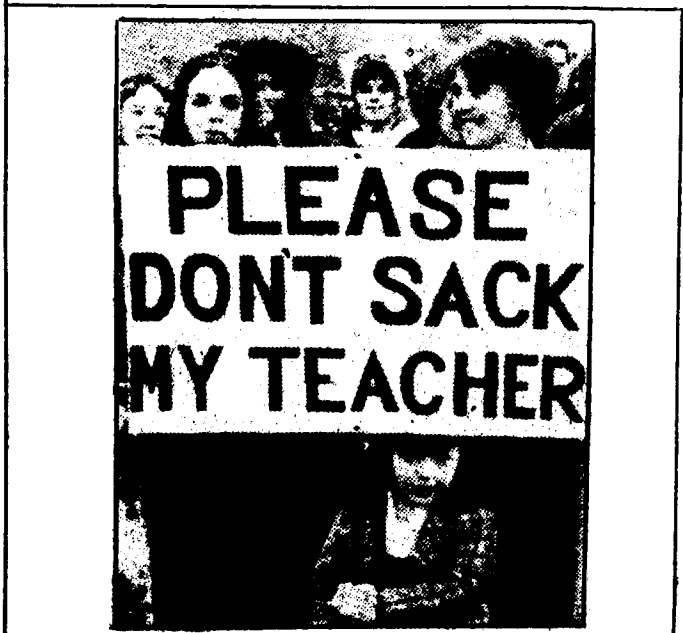
These forms of leadership are not without their own problems. In the first instance where largescale shop steward and combine committees have existed over a period, such as in the car

industry, they have been 'unofficially' co-opted into the union apparatus and partly bankrupted. That is not the type of factory committee we speak of. In such a circumstance it is necessary to get the committee out of the hands of the union bosses and the management. In the second place even wisepread and deeply rooted factory committees will not automatically dislodge the corrupt national leaderships of the unions from their places. For this a conscious fight to renew the leaders is needed, demanding that they take up the needs of the members, or in the case of a Chapple, calling for his removal.

The chatter of the TUC on the fourteenth about making the Government 'change course' obscured the reason for the ruling class giving such strong and open support to attacks on the unions, cuts and redundancies - the historic crisis of British capital. There is very little room for the Tories to 'change course' even if they wanted to. How then to defend the working class against the effects of the historic crisis of capital, expressed not only in the desperate actions of the Thatcher team but also in the deep collapse of basic industry in Britain? This is the strategic problem in the unions.

A NATIONAL FIGHT

Already the working class appreciates the need to fight redundancies on an industry wide, not localised basis, even if they do not immediately possess the means or the will to build industry wide movements. But as long ago as January 1979, in the low paid disputes, the tendency for whole industries to engage themselves was evident. Now



we see the South Wales miners, in delegate conference, pledge themselves to fight closures across the whole coalfield. The depth of the recession, enforcing redundancies at a national level, contributes to a change in consciousness among those threatened. But militants in the unions must not expect objective pressures, even those of a hostile Tory Government, to do the job of building industry wide actions. We cannot wait on the accidental course of class struggle to produce the elements of a general confrontation. We must argue the necessity of fighting redundancies on a national and industry-wide basis. Where shop stewards' committees exist we must work to link them up industry wide. We must propagandize against sectional deals with redundancy strings under the title of 'natural wastage'.

SECTARIANISM

On the last day the fight against cuts, the fight against redundancies and the fight for full trade union rights are one not three. And it is political. In this period all trade union activity has a political content. Thatcher at least understands this well, which is why she is seeking to break the big unions as part of her overall political strategy.

Yet once again, not only do we find the 'traditional' division of labour between the parliamentary reformist leaders and the TUC bosses, we see an almost ridiculous attempt by Murray to insist that the unions are not in politics. The Labour Party was virtually excluded from the March 9th demonstration, and on May 14th no national LP leader cared to find a platform for a major speech calling for the forcing of an election and a Labour Government.



It is for the working class to force the unions into the fight for a Labour Government. In doing so they will learn the same lessons that many NUPE militants learned last year: that the best way to get at the Labour traitors is from inside the Labour Party. The fight for a Labour Government is implied in every action against Thatcher, no matter how hard the self-declared Trotskyists of the WSL try to avoid it with talk of 'a workers' government' without reference to the Labour Party. In 1964 Gerry Healy, then leader of the Socialist Labour League, led his organisation out of the Labour Party and said that reformism was 'finished' in Britain. This sectarian turn led to the destruction of thousands of Trotskyist militants, but it failed totally to carry any section of the working class with it. The position of the WSL is not far away from that of Healy, although they are, up to now, more guarded about speaking of the end of social democracy. What does it imply to call abstractly for a 'workers' government'? This is a distortion of part of the Trotskyist programme, but the Trotskyist method is the Transitional method, the concrete application of demands leading toward the seizure of power by the working class. The method of the WSL is to avoid the awkward, but concrete, conclusion that there must be an unconditional fight for a Labour Government, by talk of an undefined 'workers' government'. Why this vague scheme? We believe the answer lies in the not completely broken cord between the leaders of the WSL and their Healyite past.

ACTION COMMITTEES

However, the mistakes of the WSL are not the central problem. That remains - under what organisational form can we build a movement for a Labour Government? It often happens that the Labour and trade union apparatus take an organisational form and, draining it of all working class content, make it a weapon against the mass movement. Such is the intention of the GMWU in its suggestion for a 'Council of Labour' composed of the affiliated unions, NEC and PLP. But the idea, although a bureaucratic travesty, is not wholly without merit. The problem is, instead of the apparatus constructing such an edifice at national level, the rank and file must do it at local level. To be precise: we must fight for Action Committees for a Labour Government in each locality comprising Trades Councils, CLPs, unions and

shop stewards. We must work for a national network of such committees.

BRING THATCHER DOWN!

What then of immediate demands? We reject entirely any variant, however left in tone, of the 'make the Tories change course' method. Whether it be the 'turn the tide' of the SWP or the 'stop the Tories' of Workers' Action it is wrong. We do not accept the right of this government to remain in office. The demand must be clear and unequivocal - Bring Thatcher Down! In our opinion the only appropriate weapon to use is the General Strike. After the steel strike, the BL events and May 14th it is probable that a strike wave, developing into a general confrontation, will not take place until the autumn, combining with the effects of the cuts and the anti-union laws. But in this political climate nothing is certain. The SLG calls for the preparation of a General Strike, at the level of propaganda, at the level of agitation on the demands of each section of the working class and by active solidarity with workers in dispute. The lessons of each action must be generalised to the one conclusion - The TUC must prepare a General Strike now, not wait until the savage Tory onslaught is under way.

CONTRADICTIONS

'Workers' Action' in one breath calls for a 'workers' government', which unlike the WSL, they care to define as a Labour government whose policies are decided by LP Conference, on which basis, "A workers' government fighting for serious socialist changes becomes a possibility and an option." We might think such an 'option' is wishful thinking or worse, but at least we can see, unlike the WSL call, what 'Workers' Action mean. But in the same breath, supporters of 'Workers' Action' say that it would be to betray a General Strike to the reformists to call for a Labour Government without conditions.

LABOUR TO POWER!

As Trotskyists we do not think, as does 'Workers' Action', that a Labour Government, even one "controlled" by annual conference, can be relied upon to "offer a socialist alternative to Thatcherism" (sic). To be straightforward, such a view is a centrist view. Only a mass revolutionary party, section of the Fourth International, can offer a "soc-

ialist alternative to Thatcherism" because that socialist alternative is not a government in the bourgeois British parliament, however radical, but the dictatorship of the working class, enforced after a workers' revolution. That is to put a sharp edge on the issue.

No, we don't equate every Labour Government with a workers' government, by which we would mean a government forced to break to some degree with the interests of the ruling class and carry out, (or attempt to carry out,) measures in the interests of the working class. We call for Labour to Power as a means to pose the movement of the working class to its own power, which is not the same thing as a Labour government 'on socialist policies'. Perhaps we are treating the subtleties of the 'Workers' Action' position a little too bluntly. If so, we are sure they will correct us.

CLASS STRUGGLE

The problem is to pose the governmental alternative to Thatcher, immediately, in terms of the mass organisations of the class. In Britain that means Labour to Power. At the moment there is no other way to pose the question which links with the experience and consciousness of the class as a whole. Nor does the formula 'socialist policies', which now seems common to the 'Militant', 'Workers' Action' and WSL, define a workers' government. 'Militant' explicitly and 'Workers' Action' by implication, seem to think that a Labour Government standing on 'socialist policies' would be able to put an end to capitalism.

For us the question of moving to a workers' government will not be decided by programmatic debates inside the Labour Party, important as they are. The primary arena is the class struggle itself. The way to a workers' government does not lie through a gleaming left wing programme of the Labour Party but in the preparation, and agitation for, a General Strike. Interestingly enough neither the 'Militant' nor 'Workers' Action' seem to have begun the work to force the Labour Party NEC to mount an intensive campaign to bring Thatcher down.

What then, must be done?

In the unions the lesson must be hammered home - one day stoppages or protests are not enough and are demoraliz-

ing. The need is for a General Strike to bring Thatcher down and the responsibility lies on the TUC to prepare it. Murray has proven his inability to confront Thatcher. Murray must resign!

At local level we must call for Action Committees for a Labour Government, saying that we cannot tolerate another four years of Tory rule. The agitation for the formation of these committees should be aimed at Labour Parties, Trades Councils, union branches, workplace groupings, tenants' associations, groupings of ethnic minorities etc..

We must work, within the unions, for industry wide battles against redundancies.

We call for no co-operation by MPs and Labour councillors in the plans of the Tories. Disrupt business, withdraw from debate in the Commons and council chambers, appeal to the working class for support.

We must seek to mandate all sections of the Labour Movement on a line of a national movement against Thatcher, with a TUC - NEC March on Westminster calling for the resignation of Thatcher.

We must prepare for the confrontations in the autumn around the anti-union Employment Bill, by demanding in advance that the union leaders - organise solidarity mass pickets every time the police are used.

- pay the legal costs of any victimised picket.
- cut off all supplies and the water, gas and electricity to any plant in dispute.

IRANIAN REPRESSION contd.

ing without comment, by the SWP in 'Inter-continental Press', of material by the HKE, an Iranian organisation claiming adherence to Trotskyism. Material which clearly takes the line of support for the religious mobs against the left in the universities. Are we to infer that both the IMG and the SWP now support the right of the mullahs to stir up reactionary mob violence against the Trotskyists and others? We have to ask the questions. We sincerely hope that the supporters of the IMG and SWP have not added support for the repression of the Iranian Trotskyists to that of support for the repression of Trotskyists in Nicaragua last year.

Our object lesson is the memory of the Pentonville 5 dockers, released from jail under Heath by the threat of a General Strike, called by the TUC.

May 14th resulted in a degree of demoralization and cynicism. In the absence of a mass revolutionary current to go on the offensive against the leaders this was inevitable. But cynicism does not, in itself alter the balance of class forces. We must base our analysis on the underlying turns in the class struggle, which are infinitely more powerful than the conjunctural mood of the masses. In this sense May 14th was not a defeat. Neither was it an effective action against the Tories. By autumn it will have receded into the distance. We cannot restrict our perspective to calling for a 'bigger and better' May 14th. What is necessary? For that only one answer will suffice - General Strike to bring Thatcher down!

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**NUMBER 2
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LP&7LEFTS contd.

In this lies the complete prostration of the SCLV before the perspective of socialism by reform, within the bourgeois state, which as anyone who has read the Communist Manifesto or Lenin's State And Revolution knows, is an anti-Marxist conception. To speak plainly, Bloxham and Mahony have adopted the political line of Kautsky. It was not necessary, in order to 'defend the gains of Brighton', to find political common cause, at the level of programme, with reformism. A working alliance between revolutionaries and principled reformists is both possible and necessary on the road to bringing Thatcher down. It is another question to speak of the achievement of socialism in a bourgeois parliament.

Leyland: the background to the robinson case

By Sam Stacey

The struggle of the workers of British Leyland against the Edwardes management is a struggle of historic importance for the entire working class. For if the Leyland management is able to impose the new conditions (of the infamous 92 page booklet), then this will mean the complete destruction of the shop floor organisation of the workers. The shop stewards movement would be rendered powerless and redundant. This would atomise the work force, opening the road to their increased exploitation, and even greater reduction of their numbers.

This is not simply the strategy of Edwards. It reflects the overall policy of the ruling class in Britain, represented by the Thatcher government, in attempting to grapple with the profound crisis of British capitalism; especially that of its ancient industrial base, which has been the bedrock of the British economy. To make these industries competitive requires a great 'shake out'; reduction of output levels, and the throwing of tens of thousands of workers onto the dole. In order to be successful in such attacks, however, the ruling class needs to smash the organised power of the working class. It needs to defeat leading sections of the working class in battle. In this sense Leyland is a test case for them and for the working class.

WILSON MODERNISES

The British Leyland Motor Corporation was a product of the policy of the Labour government of 1964-70; of its attempt to 'rationalise' British industry. A whole series of mergers, industry wide, took place, encouraged by the government in an attempt to restructure Britain's archaic industrial base; to place it on a better footing to compete with foreign capital. Hand in hand with this policy went the need for the ruling class to overcome the 'out of date' practices of British industry, to 'modernise' industrial relations. Hence the forlorn attempt of the Wilson government to introduce 'In Place of Strife' in order to

heal the 'British disease': to tie the trade unions to an edifice of legal structures which would weaken their power. As we know the opposition of the working class forced the government to back down. Later the attempt of the Heath government to overcome the same problem would be defeated.

Leyland is a good example of precisely what the bourgeoisie was attempting to overcome, i.e. the power of the shop stewards movement 'restrictive practices' etc. What the ruling class was unable to achieve through the Wilson and Heath governments, the Edwardes Management is now attempting to achieve side by side with the anti-trade union legislation that the Thatcher government is preparing.

MEASURED DAY WORK

The first great battle in Leyland was over the company's plan to introduce Measured Day Work instead of the piece rate system. They wanted a flat rate wage structure negotiated centrally by a Joint Negotiating Committee, to move the talks away from individual plants to the corporate level. The struggle against MDW was not only a struggle against the management. The leadership of the workers - the Leyland Combine Committee was firmly in the hands of the Stalinists - accepted the company's policy. As a result, MDW was forced through in 1970. There was no resistance from those factories under CP leadership. Two plants went on strike in opposition to the scheme: Jaguars, and the Cowley Assembly plant (which had a Trotskyist leadership). However, both the strikes were eventually defeated by the isolation, and through the role of the trade union officials.

SCANLON AND JONES

In 1972 the first closures took place. Two heavy transmission factories were shut down: Thornycroft's of Basingstoke and Maudsley's at Birmingham. An occupation at the Basingstoke factory was left in isolation and defeated.

With the reelection of the Labour government in February 1974, discussions opened up between the Leyland management and the 'left' leaders of the two main unions, Scanlon and Jones. They both appeared on the cover of the company paper under the headline "Keep Working", issuing a warning about the 'enemy without' and the 'enemy within'. Scanlon and Jones role would be crucial in supporting the policy of the Labour government - defence of the interests of British capitalism (the 'Social Contract'). Their role was equally important, equally perfidious within Leyland. In agreeing to back the management's attempt to restore the profitability of the company, they agreed to 'put their own house in order'. This would mean crushing the most militant sections of the shop stewards.

THORNETT AND FRYER

In 1974 the management forced stop-watch studies onto the tracks at Cowley. A three week strike ensued. It crumbled under the threat of plant closure. The management saw this as an opportunity to victimise the strike leader, Alan Thornett. His section came out in defence of him. Eventually his credentials as a shop steward were restored but the company refused to recognise him as deputy convenor. (This victimisation attempt was accompanied by red baiting in the bourgeois media against the 'mole' Thornett who was then a member of the WRP).

Complementing the attack of the management, the T & GWU apparatus, led by Jones, saw this as their opportunity to move against Thornett. The Regional Committee set up an enquiry to examine the company's 'case' against him (a precedent for the Robinson affair). Much to their regret the enquiry was forced to clear Thornett, but Bob Fryer (the convenor) was found guilty of bringing the union into disrepute, despite the fact that he was not subject to any investigation! This was a cynical device of the bureaucracy to move against the Oxford 5/55 branch (which was the base of the Trotskyists). Further it was recommended that new elections be held for all trade union positions, not as usual at branch meetings and stewards meetings but by secret ballot (setting yet another precedent that the company would take up to its advantage).

NEW UNION BRANCH

An unprecedented witch-hunt had been kept going in the press, and this assisted in the installation of a new right wing leadership under Reg Parsons, the darling of the bourgeois press, who declared he would 'drive the Trots out!' A new branch was set

up - the 5/293 - under the Parsons leadership. The counter-revolutionary trade union bureaucracy had played a leading role in attacking the shop floor power of the workers, and assisting the company in attacking the revolutionary leadership of the Cowley assembly plant. This experience gave clear expression to the fact that the trade union bureaucracy was an agency of the bourgeoisie within the workers movement.

RYDER REPORT

In 1975 a commission of enquiry into BLMC was set up under Lord Ryder. The report which it produced resulted in the National Enterprise Board acquiring a 95% share in the company. The Labour leaders presented this as a 'rescue operation' in which they had come to the assistance of the workers. Ryder proposed an investment programme which would enable an increased exploitation of the work force. This investment was arranged in such a way that a continuous threat hung over the heads of the workers. Cash was to be given in six monthly doses, and could be withheld if the required productivity targets were not met, and if redundancies were not accepted.

At the heart of the Ryder plan was the 'worker participation' scheme, designed to break the power of the powerful shop stewards movement. Stewards and convenors were drawn into 'participation committees' with the management. These involved stewards in management problems! 'Participation' was supported by social democrats and CP alike. Supposedly a step towards workers control, it was in fact a means of the management controlling the workers. Participation in these committees considerably weakened the shop floor movement.

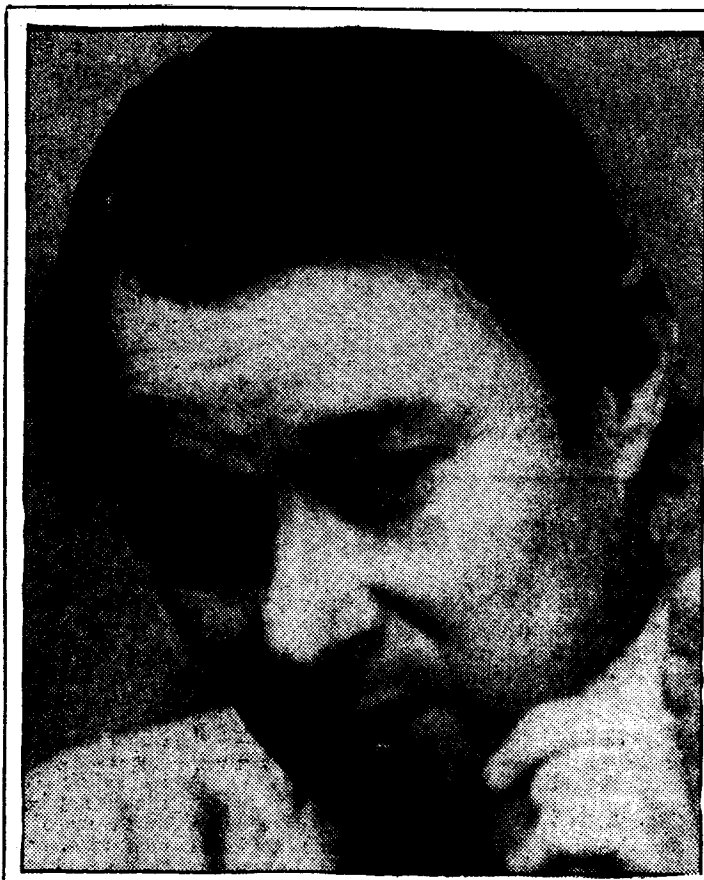
EDWARDES STEPS IN

Despite the successes of the management under the Ryder plan to renovate this particular section of British capital, the situation worsened. By 1977 Leyland's share of the home market had dropped from 40% to 25%. It was selling less cars than in 1968.

It was at this stage that today's doyen of the British ruling class, Sir Michael Edwardes, took over the management of the company with the full backing of the Labour government to run down production and manning levels. The convenors, following their policy of class collaboration, backed the abolition of plant level bargaining and its replacement by combine level negotiations.

At the beginning of 1978 the new whizz-kid called 'his' convenors to explain to them the

'Edwardes plan' to 'save' Leyland. This was a joint convenor-senior management assembly. The plan amounted to a restructuring of the corporation into a number of separate limited companies, the lowering of productive capacity, and 20,000 redundancies. A touching scene at the end of Edwardes speech saw convenors and managers rise to their feet, as one, to applaud the hatchet man. The manager chairing the meeting called for a vote (of managers and convenors!) in favour of the 'plan', and as an expression of confidence in Edwardes. Only Bob Fryer objected, pointing out that unions and management do not have joint votes. For this he was howled down and decried by none other than Derek Robinson, as a 'lunatic'! The assembled social democrats and stalinists thus expressed their support for the plan (20,000 redundancies and all) and their confidence in Edwardes the 'saviour' of Leyland.



As part of their work of clearing the way for the Edwardes plan, the T & GWU bureaucracy returned to the attack against the problematic Cowley Assembly plant leadership. In August of 1977 the 5/293 branch (the very creation of the bureaucracy) was disbanded, and a third one set up; the 5/837. Thornett had been elected chairman of the 5/293, as the left recouped lost ground. However, this attack was negligible for in December 1977 Thornett and Fryer were reelected to their positions (convenor and deputy convenor).

At this stage the Jones apparatus moved

against them once again. They, along with seven others were placed under disciplinary procedures, charged with 'disrupting' a meeting of the Oxford District Committee of the union. It was recommended that Thornett be expelled from the union, whilst the others were recommended to be banned from all union office for life. What better service could Edwardes receive from the bureaucracy? However, after a fifteen month battle, the T & GWU was forced reluctantly to drop the charges, in April of 1979. Despite this victory, however, the attacks of the bureaucracy had set a whole series of precedents which opened the way for the company to move against the shop floor organisation at a later stage.

CLOSURES

In September 1979 Edwardes announced the revamped plan which included 25,000 redundancies and closure (or cut back of the work force) of 13 factories. However, this was too much even for the Stalinist led Combine Committee which voted to oppose the plan (though it should be noted that they had done nothing to oppose the closure of the Speke factory). It announced confidently that it had the support of the T & GWU and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) in its opposition.

Faced with the opposition of the Combine Committee, Edwardes moved to a company ballot on the new plan in order to gain a mandate, and to undermine the position of the Combine. In fact the CSEU did not support the Combine but called for a vote in favour of the plan. Under threat of a collapse of Leyland, the Plan gained overwhelming support. Edwardes saw this as a clear sign to move to break up the shop floor organisation. He chose to move firstly against the head of the unofficial Combine Committee, Derek Robinson, whose name had appeared on the pamphlet against the new plan. His 'crime' was not something he had done, but merely a position expressed on paper. This was his reward for the history of class collaboration which was the policy of the CP - acceptance of 'participation', acceptance of the original plan, and a vote of confidence in Edwardes.

AUEW CAPITULATES

The attack on Robinson was a crucial test case. The attacks on Fryer and Thornett had been over recognition. But if they could sack Robinson and get away with it this would be a prelude to attacks on militants throughout the company. Very swiftly, in response to the attack on Robinson, nearly 40,000 men came out in his defence. If the

union leadership had been incisive and acted in defence of the interests of the workers, this response could very swiftly have been extended, closing down the entire company. But, faced with the threats of management about the future of Leyland, the AUEW leadership capitulated, postponing a strike pending an "enquiry". This, of course, gave credence to the position of the company and would make it extremely difficult to get the workers out again at a later stage.

When the report was issued on February 6th the bureaucrats gave Edwardes further ammunition. Although Robinson was cleared, it criticized him for "irresponsibility", and for being in breach of union rules on several counts. Whilst formally calling for a strike, this cynical device of Duffy and co. did everything to ensure that it would be unsuccessful. The company naturally cited the report's criticisms of Robinson and refused to reinstate him.

ROBINSON BLAMES MEN

It was no great surprise that mass meetings turned down the strike call. Typically, Robinson turned round and blamed the work force, refusing to place the blame where it lay, at the feet of the AUEW leadership. The membership of the union was clear on this count. More than 300 resolutions were passed, attacking the Executive's action. More than 200 branches passed a censure motion calling for a ballot of the union's membership on the question of sacking the whole executive. But the damage had been done. The counter-revolutionary reformist apparatus had once more played a crucial role in assisting the company to deal a major blow against the workers.

NEW WORKING PRACTICES

Whilst the workforce had voted in the company ballot, for the plan, in fear of their jobs, they voted down its derisory 5% offer and the new working conditions that went with it (for the skilled men it was 10%, in an attempt to split the workers). Edwardes consequently gave the ultimatum that those who returned to work on April 8th would be deemed to have accepted the wage offer and the new working practices. These included:

Abolition of lay off pay (80% of the normal wage).

Abolition of the principle of mutual-ity (in which the company have to obtain the agreement of the workers representatives before manning levels, speed of the track etc, could be changed).

Complete mobility of labour (at the discretion of the company - including the right to move workers to other factories in the vicinity).

Complete freedom of use of industrial engineers on the track (i.e. the stop-watch).

Acceptance of all this would mean the complete impotence of the shop stewards movement, in which resides the power of the shop floor workers.

The AUEW and EEPTU leaderships accepted this ultimatum, Duffy saying that 'we' should give the new conditions a chance, and see how they work! The T & GWU opposed this. However, any illusions that Moss Evans and co. were firmer than Duffy were rudely shattered by their capitulation to Edwardes. The only difference in the position 'won' is that the company has made the 'concession' of a 10 day period of negotiation. In fact this is nothing else than a stay of execution. With or without agreement the company goes ahead with its proposed changes on day 11. But even in the case of this 'concession' there is no clear specification of the circumstances under which the 10 day period of grace applies, for the company has stated that it will apply only in 'important' cases, and this interpretation differs from that of Evans.



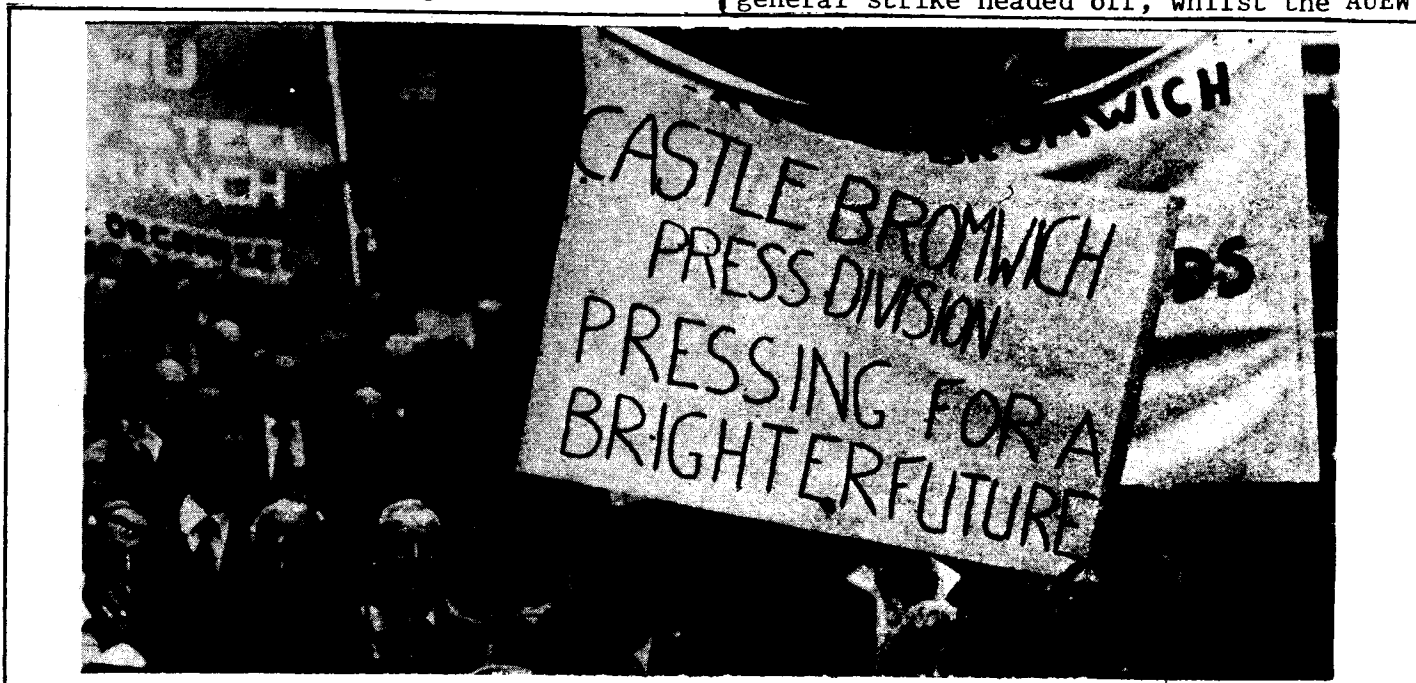
BETRAYAL

It would be correct to say that the betrayal of the AUEW and T & GWU leaderships flows from the counter-revolutionary nature of the reformist trade union apparatus, which is an agency of capitalism within our ranks. But it is not enough to remain at the level of a correct generalisation. For the action of these traitors of the working class is a craven betrayal, the likes of which we have not seen for decades. They have agreed to the destruction of the shop stewards

movement in the largest sector of the engineering industry.

We can only understand the root of such a craven sell out as a product of the extremely profound crisis of British capitalism. The Edwardes approach is part and parcel of the strategy of the Thatcher government. The ruling class clearly drew the ground on which it would take on the working class. Fairly large settlements were conceded to key sectors of the workers whom the government were as yet not prepared to take on in battle, e.g. the miners, whose increase was underwritten by the government. It consciously decided what it considered the weakest sections - the steelworkers and Leyland workers - choosing to take them on

The steel strike clearly showed the tendency inherent in the situation, for sectional disputes to become transformed into a generalised political confrontation with the Tory government, and to pose the possibility of a general strike. Such a confrontation has revolutionary implications which threaten the rule of capitalism. Naturally enough this frightens the trade union and Labour Party leaders to death, for it threatens their control of the labour movement and their privileged position. As defenders of capitalism they have done everything in their power to prevent such a confrontation, effectively defending the Tory government, prolonging its life. Thus the steel strike was consciously isolated, and the Welsh general strike headed off, whilst the AUEW



in battle first. Defeats inflicted on these sections, combined with the effects of mass unemployment, and the legal attacks on the trades unions, would, they hoped, shift the relationships of class forces and place the ruling class where they could take on the likes of the miners.

In order to come to grips with the deep crisis of British capitalism the ruling class needs to smash the power of the organised labour movement. It is within this context that the attacks of Edwardes are situated. However, the Thatcher government came to power in the wake of a series of defeats for the British ruling class ("In Place of Strife", the Industrial Relations Act", and the Callaghan wages policy). It was faced with a crisis of bourgeois rule. The working class had inflicted major defeats on it. The electoral victory did not represent a shift of relations between the classes in favour of the bourgeoisie, but merely posed the problem for them.

and T & GWU leaderships insured that the struggle of the Leyland workers was not linked to that of the steel workers.

It is within this context that the betrayal of Robinson and acceptance of the new working practices take on their real meaning. The defeat of the Edwardes management would be a great blow against the strategy of the Tory government and threaten its continued existence - a threat to the stability of bourgeois rule, and to the dilapidated capitalist economy of Britain.

Basing themselves on the profitability of Leyland, and of capitalism in general, the trade union bureaucracy subordinates the interests of the working class to those of capitalism. Faced with the danger of closure or dismemberment of Leyland they have taken the road of ever more craven betrayals of the independent interests of the workers, even to the extent of the break up of the shop stewards movement. This is at

one and the same time an indication of the depth of the crisis of British capitalism, and of the counter-revolutionary nature of the trade union bureaucracy (and of the need to replace it with revolutionary workers leaders).

COMMUNIST PARTY

Having discussed the betrayal of the bureaucracy, worth special mention is the role of the Stalinists of the so-called 'Communist Party', without whose assistance, the task of the bureaucracy would be considerably more difficult. The CP's policy and activity has facilitated these betrayals, assisting the management in attacking the power of the shop floor organisation.

The Stalinists accepted MDW at the beginning of the '70s. They accepted the 'participation committees' which represented a blow against the independence of the workers organisations from the management. When Edwardes first joined Leyland, it was none other than Robinson himself who led the standing ovation for Edwardes and his job cutting first plan in the joint meeting of convenors and managers. At no time has the CP challenged the criteria of the "viability" of the company - in this they are at one with the trade union bureaucracy - and hence, follow a policy of class collaboration which subordinates the interests of the working class to those of this particular capitalist concern.

When the attack was made on Robinson, and the AUEW initiated an enquiry, instead of launching an attack against the betrayal of Duffy and co. he accepted the postponement of the strike and the setting up of the enquiry. At no time whatsoever in the intervening period did the CP initiate any mobilisation of the union membership to bring pressure to bear on the AUEW executive. Indeed, at the Birmingham rally, called in support of Robinson, attempts to call for a mass lobby of the AUEW executive were quashed by CP chairman Len Brindle.

Opposition to the executive was great, yet the CP did nothing to build on it. They did nothing to link up the struggle of the Leyland workers with the Steel strike. The combination of those struggles would have threatened the existence of the Tory government. In refusing to fight for this they supplemented the role of the TUC leadership in isolating those struggles. In refusing to defend the independent interests of the workers in Leyland, the CP played an invaluable role for the company. In the end Robinson reaped the fruits of the CP's class collaborationist policy.

Angered and disillusioned with the betrayals of Evans and co., the T & GWU strikers have voted reluctantly to go back to work, obviously fearing isolation, and not trusting their union leaders to defend them should they be sacked. Does that represent the end of the struggle? Not at all. It is becoming daily more obvious what the new working practices mean. Production at Longbridge was halted when 48 welders and finishers walked out over a dispute on the payment of 'togging up' time. At Castle Bromwich the same question brought out 300 men.

As a period of guerrilla warfare opens up, as the company attempts to introduce new working practices from plant to plant, the threat of sackings will be their main weapon. Although the union leaderships have assisted the management by placing such struggles on terrain that suits the latter - isolated local struggles - the company has yet to implement the new practices, for the most part. Resistance such as that of the Longbridge welders will be multiplied at the national level. The combativity of the workers is unbroken. The problem of such struggles is to break out of local isolation. The central problem is that of the leadership of the working class.

TROTSKYIST LEADERSHIP

Only a leadership which bases its policy on the independence of the interests of the workers from those of capitalism, can defend those interests. The cynical betrayals of the trade union leadership at Leyland pose once more the need of a struggle to kick out the Evans's, Duffy's and their Stalinist servants, and replace them with revolutionary workers leaders - a Trotskyist leadership. Such a leadership will be built on the foundations of opposition to the criteria of 'viability' and profitability. In opposition to the supposed joint interests of workers and bosses must be counter-posed a policy which includes:

No acceptance of new working practices.

No closures, no redundancies - work sharing without loss of pay; sliding scale of hours.

Occupation of factories threatened with closure or redundancies.

No to secret ballots - shop floor votes.

A fight to kick out the Duffy's and replace them with leaders who will take up a real fight against the management of BL to stop the 'Plan'.

on the labour party and the seven lefts

By Alan Bridges & George White

At the Special Conference of the Labour Party on 31st May, the NECs draft policy, 'Peace, Jobs and Freedom', itself sounding like an echo of a Stalinist credo, was voted by different elements for differing reasons. But despite the apparent unity on the 31st, there has been no agreement between the factions in the leadership of the Labour Party since then. Denis Healey has made the clear statement that if elected leader he will ignore those sections of the document which he does not agree with. Benn and others have gone much closer to calling on Callaghan to resign. Barbara Castle has called for it openly. For the last six months the left talked of 'policies not personalities'. Now it has the 'policies' but the 'personalities' are refusing to bow. The bourgeois press has backed Callaghan for its own reasons and fed speculation about a right wing break from the Labour ranks under Roy Jenkins.

On May 31st Callaghan tried his utmost to wipe out the true record of his 1976-9 government in anti-tory rhetoric. But among the trade unionists who had to wear the 'Social Contract' memories live long. Callaghan was treated, and Healey more treated, to well deserved hostility by the majority present on May 31st. Yet so long as he, or someone like him, stays at the head of the LP, the great problem for the working class remains that of not being able to control their own so-called leaders.

The question of 'accountability' has arisen very sharply since the days of the wage-freezing 'Social Contract'. At the 1979 Conference of the LP in Brighton a number of apparent victories on this score were won by the rank and file.

The supporters of Benn and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy were then rather quiet for the next six or more months, in which time the right wing efficiently regrouped behind the line of

the Labour Party 'Enquiry'. Nobody in the LCC, SCLV, ILP, CLPD or NOLS judged it necessary to begin a campaign against the Callaghan leadership, the real architects of defeat in 1979. Added to this must be the almost total stifling of the first attempts of the working class to construct anti-cuts committees, under the weight of the apparatus, assisted by the Stalinists and the leftism of the SWP.

But the steel strike created a pressure within the class for a fight and for unity. Under the difficult conditions of recent defeat and left wing silence a slow building movement towards making the Labour leaders fight the Tories made itself felt, more by implication than in practice. It was to defuse this movement that the NEC chose to organise the 31st and pass a left sounding manifesto. May 31st has to be understood in conjunction with May 14th.

A fortnight after the 31st came the 'Enquiry'. Callaghan supported the 'Enquiry' as a diversion. The NEC took its chance to turn the discussion away from policy and leadership to beat the Tories into one about 'structures'. More than 200 submissions were made to the commission, which met for only 20 hours. In the end the apparatus met secretly to 'readjust' its clothes, as was to be expected. But the left has fallen for the diversion of structures and fallen for positions on structures which although on the surface a step forward from 1978 are not at all a step forward but a step back from Brighton. Without putting too fine an edge on it we must say, Benn, Heffer and the others have sold out. The key needs of the working class are a programme to oust the Tories and a leadership pledged to bring Thatcher down. The 'left' NEC has provided them with neither.

In the face of this we have the emergence of the 'Seven Lefts', claiming to stand for the defence of the 'gains of Brighton'. What does it mean to defend

the 'gains of Brighton'? The Seven Lefts were totally marginal at the Special Conference and their manifesto stands entirely within the framework of the programme of the left of the Parliamentary Party. For instance, they call for 'The Party to elect the Leader', by which we learn they mean an electoral college. But the 'Enquiry' has just found for an electoral college, the net result of which is an adjustment at the level of the apparatus and nothing more. Perhaps the most lamentable fact about the Seven Lefts is that the self-proclaimed catalyst was the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, which on occasion wears Marxist clothing. The SCLV now finds itself supporting an electoral college (along with many elements in the right) which will bring the working class not an inch nearer to controlling its own mass party.

As a result of the manoeuvres of the SCLV the cave in of the parliamentary lefts before Callaghan, using the vehicle of the new policy document and the Enquiry, has been masked for some Labour Party members. But not for the working class which awaits the inevitable clash with the Government. The very cover of the Seven Lefts' document betrays the unprincipled nature of the agreement. As well as the nonsense demand to "Defend the NEC", which includes Callaghan and Foot, and which has failed to support the steel workers, to call for Callaghan to resign and for the bringing down of the Tories, the cover says, "The Party must elect the leader. This, as we say above, is explained inside as an 'electoral college. As for the demand to "Make the PLP Accountable", this amounts to a blanket illusion that the bourgeois parliament can be made 'accountable' to the working class Brian Sedgemore has written a whole book showing how Parliament is rigged to prevent Social Democratic Governments, even if they wanted to, doing anything to alter the fundamental mechanisms of the bourgeois state and making members of parliament 'accountable' to anyone outside parliament is a proposal to make a historic alteration. If "Make the PLP Accountable" is to be taken seriously it means the end of Parliament, a laudable task but not one which can be entrusted for a second to the parliamentary social democratic British Labour Party. Behind the mask of radical noises the SCLV is creating a hybrid whose ultimate parents are leftism and opportunism in a familiar mixture.

None of the components of the Seven Lefts have done anything real to defend

councils which might defy Thatcher or to force others to take a principled stand. Under the conditions of Tory government there is no place for the argument, which some lefts were prone to use under the last Labour Government, that the boat must not be rocked. Each of the components of the seven lefts had, in their own way, reached an impasse. The LCC, amounting to little more than a crypto-stalinist talking shop, collapsed to a point where it could only get 40 people to a supposed national conference. This decline, so swift and sure, can be totally put down to its silence on the betrayals of Callaghan and its refusal to try to mobilize the ranks around a programme of action. The SCLV tied itself to left talking traitors like Ted Knight for so long that in the end he had to break with them, long after he had implemented Tory cuts in Lambeth. The eloquent but basically false diatribe of John O'Mahony in 'Socialist Organiser' has the ring of the hurt suitor rather than that of class indignation at Knight's betrayals. The ILP and the IWC are no more than clubs for refugees from Marxism down the years, which provide lustre for the activities of Benn and Heffer when needed and disarm workers into believing that workers' control can be gained by convincing the ruling class of its efficiency. These, and the CLPD, which sadly has sold its birthright for an electoral college, are the Seven Lefts. Not an alliance of the left, without conditions, around a single central aim, crucial to the class. Rather one which advances a pseudo programme behind which, in the name of accountability and democracy lurks a coherent political view: the idea that, as Derer and Norwood wrote, "significant gains for democracy and socialism" could be achieved within the Social Democratic framework.

* From anyone who regarded themselves as simple left social democrats such a view would be natural. But the SCLV regards itself as standing within the ambit of Marxism, or at least many of its leading figures so claim. Yet the SCLV contribution to the Seven Lefts is to say, "If what conference decides is really to determine what the movement does or tries to in Parliament and in the country...a workers' government fighting for serious socialist changes becomes a possibility and an option. To organise to stop the Tories and to replace them with a government that serves the interest of the working class is the most important question..."

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Repression, 'Detente' and the 'Peace Movement'

By Alan Bridges

On April 19th and 20th, a European conference was held in Paris, for the defence of free trade unions in the USSR and Eastern Europe. It drew 173 delegates from 12 countries, including many representatives of trade unions which have demanded the liberation of Edmund Zadrozynski, one of the editors of the workers' paper, 'Robotnik', which defies the Polish censorship.

The Conference set up a Standing Liaison Committee, which is chaired by Edmund Baluka, the former president of the strike committee in the shipyard at Szczecin in 1970-71. It will keep up the work for the release of Zadrozynski in Poland, for Khlebanov and Borissov in the USSR, for Parashiv in Romania and for Bernd Sobe in East Germany.

Zadrozynski is appealing against a 3 year sentence for petty theft. The Polish embassy in London is receiving numerous letters about him and is slandering him in its replies, as if it can anticipate that the appeal will be rejected.

However, the French lawyer who saw what went on in the courtroom has exposed the absurdities and contradictions in the official statements and enabled the political basis of the trial to become clear.

The question must now be opened up: why, 63 years after the October Revolution in Russia and 30 years after the bourgeoisie was overthrown in the satellites, do their regimes meet demands for free expression and organisation by efforts to "criminalize" men and woman fighting for the interests of workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities?

And, behind this question rises another how can militants in the West, who have learned to mistrust the advice of their own capitalist rulers, learn to beware also of that of the regimes in what are commonly called 'socialist countries' but which defend themselves internally by repressing their critics?

That these regimes are socialist, and that their critics place themselves in the camp of the CIA, is asserted today only by a few old hard-line Stalinists, because the argument is so dangerous to those who use it.

REGIMES OF CRISIS

Nearly 25 years have passed since Khrushchev acknowledged the appalling results of the so-called "cult of the individual". Millions of workers in capitalist countries have said: "If that is your idea of Socialism, we want none of it!". Stalinism has allied itself with capitalism. By its crimes it has strengthened the reformist allies of capitalism. Naturally the hypocritical bourgeois press makes the most of them.

Indeed, if the regimes in Russia or Eastern Europe really were the dictatorship of the proletariat, there would be no hope for mankind by the road of class struggle and the whole of Marxism would be wrong. However, in real life the working class rejects this counsel of despair. It is forced by circumstances to fight the class struggle and aim at making itself the ruling class.

These regimes are, in reality, the negation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. To recognise this truth is the first step towards defending the nationalised property against the counter-revolution which the bourgeoisie in crisis wants to inflict on the states where capitalism has been ended. They are also regimes in deep crisis. In the past seven years, in which world imperialism took the blows of the revolution in South-East Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, the pressure of imperialism on the Kremlin and its satellites has not been weakened, but has been strengthened.

The ruling caste in Russia and East-

ern Europe has politically expropriated the working class. The regimes serve the interests of privileged minorities who cannot rule otherwise than from above, because lying is no less necessary to them than to the bourgeoisie. The defence of the privileges of the minority means excluding the masses from the decisions which affect their lives. They cannot enjoy the great advantage which the dictatorship of the proletariat affords, that every worker has an interest in improving production because his own material interests and fulfillment as a human being are enriched thereby.

BORROW MORE

The only way by which the bureaucracy in USSR or Eastern Europe can try to raise production is to drive, to atomise and to terrorise the masses. They need, on the one hand, to raise the productivity of labour, while, on the other hand, they have to preserve intact the obstacles to output due to bureaucratic inefficiency and self-interest. Accordingly they have taken on enormous loans from Western bankers, to pay for imported food and for modern machinery. They have granted concessions to foreign capital, to allow it to appropriate surplus-values produced by workers in the East (who have no free trade unions to protect them), in return for finance. The Western bankers granted these loans only on the understanding that they would help to get more output from the masses, to pay the interest and repay the capital. The loans are spent but output does not rise. The regimes cannot match their achievements to their plans. They cannot raise the productive forces. They need to borrow still more... if the bankers will let them have it. Meanwhile the world crisis deepens, and the imperialist creditors of the Kremlin increase their pressure.

REPRESS THE VANGUARD

The Stalinist regimes, therefore, have no other course but to repress the vanguard of the masses. The bureaucracy has to confront the masses in the open and head-on. The bestial cruelty of the police and the psychiatric "hospitals", orchestrated by the Soviet apparatus of repression with its decades of experience, is not some "aberration" of Asiatic backwardness or of the "Russian soul". Nor is it a consequence or a continuation of the policies of Lenin and Trotsky. It results from the very methods the bureaucracy must use to keep control of the masses, who

are now striking back, given impetus by the defeats which the revolution has inflicted on imperialism in South-East Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Indeed, only regimes in desperate straits would act as they do. Repression has the effect of raising to the level, not merely of national but of international figures, otherwise quite unknown people, such as Khlebanov, Zadrozynski, Petr Uhl and most of the supporters of VONS and KOR - KSS or the signatories of Charter 77.

SHOW TRIALS

There were public trials, of avowed enemies of the Soviet regime, in Russia in the early 1920's, while Lenin was active. His regime did not even execute the Social-Revolutionary terrorist, Fanny Kaplan, who put two bullets into him, nor those who killed Uritsky and Volodarsky. In 1921 there was a public trial of Social-Revolutionaries who said that they believed their political duty to be to assassinate Bolshevik leaders. The Soviet Government admitted Vandervelde, the Belgian leader of the Second International, and Kurt Rosenfeld, a German Social-Democrat, to the court to defend the accused. When the court sentenced the accused to death, the Central Executive Committee commuted the sentences, on condition that the Social-Revolutionaries renounced terrorism against the Communists.

MOSCOW TRIALS

The Trotskyists and other critics of Stalin's regime began to be presented in the Soviet press as "saboteurs", "spies" and "wreckers" in 1929. However, frame-ups against them, in defence of the bureaucracy, did not begin until 1931, when the so-called "Industrial Party" and some Mensheviks faced framed accusations and "confessed" to crimes which they had not committed, namely to having falsified statistics. Stalin's group was trying to carry through the construction of heavy industry in the First Five-Year Plan, and the forced collectivisation of agriculture, by bureaucratic measures, in order also to protect the privileges in the sphere of consumption of the bureaucracy. Industrialisation and collectivisation could be carried through only by intense repression. The purpose of the "trials" was to present to the Soviet people the scapegoats for the shortcomings of the bureaucracy.

A similar "trial" in 1933 involved foreign engineers, employed on a Metro-Vickers contract. None of these defendants confessed to the charges of sabotage, which served to draw attention outside Russia to the inefficiency of the bureaucracy.

Stalin had already recognised, in 1932, that he would have to prepare to draw a river of blood between his regime and the Trotskyist Opposition (which also called itself the "Left Opposition" or the "Bolshevik-Leninists") if his regime was to survive. He heard of attempts to reach an alliance between the Left Opposition, the Right Opposition identified with Bukharin and elements in his own following who wanted to open a debate because they feared that his course was leading Russia to ruin. In a particular way, Stalin owed a great deal to Hitler. Hitler's victory in Germany scattered the exiled Russian Trotskyists who had earlier been able to keep open some kind of communications with Russian Oppositionists, via sympathisers in the Soviet Embassy and the Soviet Trade Delegation in Berlin.

'CONFESSIONS'

In August 1936 the GPU staged the first of the notorious "Moscow Trials", developing the methods used earlier to deal with internal oppositions in the hope of impressing the rulers of the Western "democracies". Former leaders of the Bolshevik Party, such as Zinoviev and Kamenev, appeared in the dock alongside Rykov, a former leader of the Right, Bukharinist Opposition, and various petty adventurers. All "confessed" to having plotted, along with Trotsky and Sedov and the Gestapo, to murder Stalin and other Soviet leaders and to turn the USSR over to Hitler. The leading prosecutor was Vishinsky, a former Menshevik, who had supported the Mensheviks during the Civil War and had found his place subsequently in Stalin's Civil Service. The accused vied with each other in acknowledging the grandeur of Stalin and the achievements of the Soviet Union under his leadership. All of the political figures among them were disgraced servants of the Stalin regime, and those who had earlier opposed him had renounced their opposition years before, some more than once.

The three "show-trials", in which former opponents of Stalin, from Left and Right, were "amalgamated" with accidental figures and with the Gestapo, had been

preceded by numerous executions, at the end of 1934, following the assassination of Kirov, the party "boss" in Leningrad, about which some GPU officers at least had prior information. The trials were followed, in 1938 by a wide-spread "purge" of senior officers of the Red Army.

POPULAR FRONTS

The Trotskyists outside Russia had forecast, before 1936, that Stalin's course would lead him to try to justify exterminating every opponent in Russia and to try to isolate the Trotskyists from the Labour Movement of the bourgeois world. The "Moscow Trials" were intended to achieve these two objectives. They were to present anyone who opposed Stalin's policy of buying an alliance with "democratic" Western imperialism at the price of subordinating the working class to the "progressive" bourgeoisie in Popular Fronts as - allies of Hitler!

The Trotskyists had, at the same time, to counteract the effects of the "Moscow Trials" in discrediting the Soviet Union, enabling Lenin, Trotsky and the Russian Revolution to be presented as the source of a monstrous tyranny and strengthening tendencies to reaction, mysticism and pessimism among the intellectuals of the Left. The Popular Front in Spain, indeed, resulted in the victory of Franco. In France it exhausted the fighting capacity of the working class and in the end surrendered to Petain and to Hitler. In 1939 the bourgeoisie was able to plunge the world into war without being hindered by the opposition of the working class on either side.

LIES EXPOSED

The "Moscow Trials" were exposed by the Trotskyists in two ways. First, the inherent discrepancies in the "confessions", which provided the only basis for the execution of all the accused, were traced and made public and then checked as authentic by the Commission of Enquiry headed by Professor John Dewey. Let us quote one example of many. A defendant named Holtzman in the first trial, of August 1936, previously unheard-of, "confessed" that he had met Trotsky and Sedov at the Hotel Bristol in Copenhagen during the eight days which Trotsky was able to spend there in November 1932, (to give his well-known lecture "In Defence of October" celebrating the 15th anniversary of the October Revolution.) In fact, Sedov proved that he was not in Copenhagen at

the time, but was in Berlin, attending his classes, at the University, in physics. That he met his father and mother in Paris on their way back from Denmark to Prinkipo was also proved. Moreover, the confession of another accused, one Olberg, let slip that Sedov had not gone to Copenhagen when Trotsky was there.

Then, on September 1, 1936, six days after the "defendants" had been silenced for ever by a firing squad, the official newspaper of the Danish Government, "Socialdemokraten" published the sensational announcement that the Hotel Bristol, where Holtzman was supposed to have met Sedov before they went to see Trotsky in November 1932, had been demolished in 1917!

How could the GPU make such a blunder? Alexander Orlov, who was at this time a senior GPU officer, and later defected to Washington, suggests an explanation in his book, "The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes". He says that the chief of the Secret Political Department in Moscow, whose job it was to handle the "technical" side of the trials, was told to find the name of a suitable hotel in Copenhagen, to figure in the confession that was being prepared for Holtzman. This official did not want his colleagues in the Foreign Department to suspect why he wanted the name of a hotel in Copenhagen, and he made up a story for them about needing the names of a number of hotels, in Copenhagen and in Oslo, for a group of prominent comrades visiting Scandinavia. They supplied the information, but a secretary made the mistake of typing the names of hotels in Oslo under the heading "Copenhagen", and vice versa. This, says Orlov, is how the GPU came to believe that there was a Hotel Bristol in Copenhagen!

The imaginary Hotel Bristol was merely a tear in the fabric of a large-scale political design by the Soviet bureaucracy. The Trotskyists did not limit themselves to catching out the accused or the GPU. If they had done so, they would have ended up with many humanitarian people, who lamented that it all proved what a wicked world we live in, but what else could Stalin do in the circumstances? Whether there had been tears in the fabric or not, the Trotskyists' task was to denounce the trials politically, by every means, as part of the strategy of the Soviet bureaucracy aimed at subordinating the working class to the bourgeoisie in the coming world war.

They could also deal with those who wanted to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" and identify Stalinist Russia with Fascist Germany, under the illusion that the counter-revolution had already taken place. They could deal as well with those who admitted that the trials might be frame-ups but argued that they showed what you could expect from Leninism and Communism. Explaining how the trials were an essential component of the policies by which the bureaucracy sought to preserve its privileges and, in doing so, made itself the enemy of Leninism and Communism, they could answer the chatter of such as Fenner Brockway that "Trotsky's opposition to Stalin was personal". They refused to allow the whole content of the Soviet workers' struggle to be written out of history, to allow history to be rendered useless as a source of experience and reduced, in the words of Edward Gibbon, to a chronicle of the "crimes and follies of mankind".

POST-WAR TRIALS

The technique of "show trials", based on extracted confessions, which began to be worked out in the early days of Stalin's supremacy, reached horrifying levels in the first decade after 1945. There was the so-called "Doctor's Plot" against Stalin's life, which was accompanied by a pogrom against Jews in the Soviet Union. There was the trial of Slansky in Czechoslovakia, that of Rajk in Hungary and that of Gomulka in Poland. All of these trials bore witness to the extreme tensions within the bureaucracies of Russia and the satellites, expressing their inability to get the masses to produce, or to find an accommodation with imperialism on terms of live-and-let-live. The central aim of the trials remained the same; to destroy politically, morally and physically any force in the world which may de-stabilise its rule - or that of imperialism.

DEAL WITH IMPERIALISM

It was clear that a deal had been made with imperialism when, in June 1941, the imperialists supplied arms to enable the USSR to repel Hitler's invading armies, in return for which the Communist Parties of the world became the principal defenders, in the workers' movement, of the war-aims of US imperialism and its supporters.

'CRIMINALISATION'

Even during the "Cold War" of 1947 - 1953 the Soviet bureaucracy never suggested for a moment appealing to the revolutionary traditions of the past associated with the early years of the Comintern, or reviving it.

The present trials of, for instance, Khlebanov, Zadrozynski or Uhl differ in important respects from those of 1931 - 1953. As always, they are planned political operations, but they present greater difficulties to those who have to mount them.

The Kremlin is in no position today to challenge world public opinion with more political "show" trials. We had to drag a statement out of the Polish Embassy in London. The Stalinists burnt their fingers badly enough over the "Moscow Trials" of 1936 - 38. Khrushchev's speech in 1956 discredited the trials of the late 1940's and early 1950's. The risk that political trials will generate embarrassing arguments is now too great. The Stalinists must adopt the same course as Roy Mason in the Six Counties and try to "criminalise" their political opponents or even their scapegoats.

Secondly, the victims are quite different. The generation of Old Bolsheviks, destroyed by years of capitulation to Stalin, came to an end in the 1930's. No one "confesses". Anyone who admits what he has done shows that he is proud of it, that he not only feels himself to represent a progressive, rising force in society, but really does so.

Thirdly, there is the sinister aspect that the repression seeks the deliberate physical and mental destruction of its victims, as British imperialism seeks that of its victims in H - Block. These people, not broken when they come to trial, have to be broken afterwards.

Again, the Kremlin can no longer count on the support of people like the English lawyer D.N. Pritt, to come back and report convincingly that the trials are in order. On the contrary, it is the Trotskyists who send lawyers to monitor the trials and report on the illegalities which take place there!

STALINISM IN DECLINE

Here are illustrated at one and the same time the relative weakness and the ferocity of Stalinism in decline. These features also can be seen clearly when

we look at the frame-work of international relations in which the present-day trials are set.

In the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's, the trials presented the regime as the defender of the conquests of the working class and its opponents as traitors who betray those conquests to imperialism. Any contact with the West was distorted in this way. Today the top bureaucrats themselves are so involved in international finance that they hesitate to make foreign contacts a source of accusation. Many oppositionists do have personal contacts with the West, even if only to the extent of lending their flat for the Master of Balliol to lecture about Aristotle in Prague.

On the one hand, Stalinism cannot be reformed and is fighting the demand for the democratic right of free speech and free trade union organisation, which is politically incapable of being reconciled with the present regime. On the other hand, the only remaining basis on which the bureaucracy can repress its opponents is to accuse them, unconvincingly, of petty crimes or... of insanity.

INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Hitherto these trials in recent years of "dissidents" have served to intimidate the Russian and Eastern European people. Now, however, they are assuming an international importance, which can be gauged if we ask whether the forces which saved the Kremlin in the 1930's can do so again in the 1980's. What saved it in the 1930's was, on the one hand, that the movements of workers and colonial peoples outside the Soviet Union were defeated, and the Soviet masses had few allies with whom to fight to defend their conquests in struggle against imperialist counter-revolution. On the other hand, the imperialists learned from the siege of Leningrad and the battle of Stalingrad that conquering Russia would not be a walk-over and that they had better come to terms with the Kremlin, even though the forces which would "peacefully co-exist" had to be armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons in order to arrive at a deal.

DESTABILIZATION

Today it is the existence, on the one hand, of the social movements in Russia and Eastern Europe of which the trials are evidence, and the proletarian revolution in South-East Asia, the Middle

East and Latin America, which destabilises the collaboration between the Kremlin and imperialism to maintain a reactionary status quo.

DEMANDS OF MASSES

That the relation of forces has moved against the Kremlin is obvious from the fact that the Trotskyists can now lead the fight against the crimes of Stalinism. We express the combativity of the masses and on the basis of getting Annette Bahner and Bernd Dietz released we are working to build up a formidable anti-Stalinist movement.

Every fact that has been mentioned here so far is well known. Together they point to no other conclusion than that the Soviet bureaucracy desperately needs a new, comprehensive deal with imperialism. Meanwhile, the demands of the Soviet masses for the police regime to be relaxed signify that they no longer feel that they need to tolerate it and the privileged bureaucracy which it protects. The apparatus can no longer exploit the excuse that it is protecting the nationalised property and Soviet society against imperialism. Particularly in Eastern Europe, no one believes it.

In this period of history, of what Lenin called "wars and revolutions", the immediate problem of the imperialists and the Kremlin alike is to repress revolutionary movements in order to maintain the status quo in the world.

Any agreement between imperialism and the Kremlin, whatever label it may carry, must really consist of a deal, by which they agree jointly on measures to suppress the opposition in the capitalist and in the Stalinist countries.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

The tumult and the shouting about Afghanistan, the Olympic Games, hostages and all the rest of it show the contradictory pressures under which the counter-revolutionary alliance is forced to operate. The USA voices military threats of a most alarming kind. Britain steps up anti-Communist propaganda at the same time as Carrington goes through the motions of "restraining" Carter and, at the same time, of "warning" Giscard not to negotiate separately with the Kremlin. This is all no more than a division of labour.

Even after a new deal has been negotiated - if, in the end, any new deal can be negotiated - the mutual abuse will

continue, as a formal ritual. For there is not the slightest evidence that the Kremlin today can take over a leading role in world affairs to replace US imperialism which is having increasing difficulty in doing so. Imperialism knows this perfectly well. On the contrary, Stalinism is stretched already to the extreme by its internal problems and the demands which imperialism places upon it. The Kremlin felt obliged to invade Afghanistan, under pressure of the events in Iran. Then the bourgeoisie exploited the invasion against them.

STALINISM NOT A MYTH

But there are areas of the world where neither imperialism nor Stalinism feels able to intervene immediately, such is the dimension of the movement of workers and peasants. Peru is one of these areas. Iran is another and Nicaragua yet another.

The Stalinists will be quite willing to try to sell the Provos. and the H - Block prisoners to British imperialism. This betrayal is already being orchestrated. The "Troops Out" Movement, the leaders of which, including the IMG, found their movement being liquidated under their feet into the "Labour Committee on Ireland" under the tutelage of the Stalinist Connolly Association, are politically naked before such moves.

There is a cynical symmetry between the way in which Stalinism toys with the H - Block case and reports the crimes of the British bourgeoisie on Soviet TV, and the way in which Carter and his like take up "human rights" in the Soviet Union.

Neither shows any intention of doing more than "exert pressure" on the other, by threats to help the repressed. The exchange of threats is part of the manoeuvring. In Britain the Communist Party and its fellow-travellers have taken the "Troops Out Movement" and the remnants of the "Chartists" in tow, to engineer the "Labour Committee on Ireland". The "Chartists" would once have called themselves "Trotskyists", but they now veer in towards praise for "Euro-Communism" just when "Euro-Communism" is exhausting itself and revealing itself as a servant of and not an opposition to the Kremlin. This is where their theoretical weakness, their refusal to discuss fundamentals, their allegation that "Stalinism is a myth", is leading them in practice. They are now in danger of becoming the tools of a counter-revolutionary element in the

workers' movement, which will liquidate them when their usefulness to it has ended.

Even when Peter Uhl was being harassed by the State Security forces in Czechoslovakia, he found time to solidarise with the demands of the H - Block prisoners. This was no accident. Uhl has reason to understand that any support which imperialism may give in words to "human rights" in the East is a worthless pinchbeck.

'NEW DEAL'

It may be one thing to hope to sell the national struggle in Ireland as part of a counter-revolutionary dealing, in which Haughey is the broker. But it is quite another thing to be able to deliver, to make the deal stick. Does anyone believe that the workers in Zimbabwe will fail to rise against the collaboration of Mugabe's Government with imperialism, and that they will resist his efforts to repress them? And if his efforts fail, who knows what "de-stabilisation" will follow, in Zambia, in Tanzania, in Angola, in Namibia and in The Republic of South Africa itself?

Likewise in Iran, the revolution would have to be taken in hand. Already we hear the proposal to divide Iran into two zones, one to be occupied by United Nations forces (not "imperialist" forces, you understand, but "peace-keeping" forces like the British troops in the Six Counties) and the other by forces of the Warsaw Pact, equally devoted to exploiting the oil resources of Iran.

When the monstrous terms of the "new deal" between the great counter-revolutionary forces in the world are spelt out, the problem of selling them to the masses is obvious. Already the campaign to do so has started. It is based on the promise of restricting nuclear and chemical weapons. The promise that "protest" and "pressure" will "force" the powers to disarm is not a new one. In the early 1960's we had the earlier Campaign for Nuclear Dis-Armament. It is far enough away for the younger people in the Labour Movement not to know about it. When they see the churchmen at the head of the new CND, they will perhaps not ask why Canon Collins led it to failure last time. Will the Catholic cleric who leads it this time be more successful? He will not, because he cannot.

Those whom we must call "peace-mongers", because they exploit people's long-

ing for peace and lead their energies down paths which cannot lead to peace, are talking now about a "nuclear-free zone" in Europe. This would suit the strategy alike of the Western imperialists and of the Kremlin, without in the slightest reducing the risk of nuclear destruction of the human race, if the Kremlin agrees to help the imperialists to hold in check the revolutionary movements which are bursting out all over the world. Indeed, the basis for such a "nuclear-free zone", under current conditions, could only be the continued division of the German people, with all that that contains for future upheavals in Europe. But people who hope and try to sell such a deal to the masses in Britain are to be found in the British Labour Movement, where many of them regard themselves and seek to be regarded as "Lefts" or even as "revolutionaries". The Labour Party itself adopted on May 31 a policy close to this position.

THE DECEPTION OF PEACE

To achieve such a deal, the desire of the masses for peace is to be exploited. The masses are to be deceived. They are to be told to place their confidence in the goodwill of the bourgeoisie and of the Soviet bureaucracy, by which peace can be secured by agreement. To promote the deception has been the role of Fenner Brockway for many decades, during which armaments have continued to increase, despite all the negotiations, and the crimes of the imperialists and of the Kremlin against the workers and subject peoples have been played down. Today, those who began by appealing outside the American Embassy in company with the Stalinists against intervention in Iran can soon find themselves playing down the crimes of the imperialists and the Kremlin, as if "negotiations" in some way whitewashed them and made them no longer counter-revolutionary. It conceals the counter-revolutionary role, not only of the Kremlin, but of British imperialism also.

Nor will those who take that particular road be able to stop half-way. They will be forced to try to sell to the masses a deal which involves supporting repression East and West. Some, like the adherents of the Communist Party, will be prepared for that. Others, such as the IMG and those who tail Stalinism, will be caught by surprise. But alike they will join in baiting the working class militants, the representatives of the oppressed peoples, and those who express their

historical interests - the Trotskyists. This is what happened in the years 1936 - 39, in the struggle about the H - Bomb in the 1950's and in the years of CND, 1959 - 1961.

No Reliance on Imperialism or Stalinism, separately or together, to defend the peace of the World!

Defend the Independence of the Working Class! Defend the victims of repression by Stalinism - Khlebanov, Zadrozynski and the others!

Today for us this means rejecting the lingering expectation that Stalinism can act in a "progressive" way, or is in some way "superior" to Social-Democracy. It means rejecting the illusion that Stalinism can take over world leadership from imperialism and, in some way, have a new role in history.

It is the combination of these two theoretical mistakes which opens the road for militants to find themselves tailing Stalinism and defending the "nuclear-free zone" plan, which is to be paid for by the repression of the working class and the oppressed peoples.

When leaders of tendencies believing themselves to be to the "Left" make these mistakes, they are not just random or accidental. These mistakes have a root. Their root is an incorrect assessment of Stalinism itself. This incorrect assessment particularly characterises those

who claim that "the split in the Fourth International in 1953 was not a split from Pablo-ism", or "we are all Pablo-ites", or that Stalinism is only a myth".

The bitter fruits of a new "deal" between imperialism and the Kremlin will not take long to ripen. The ILP collapsed in the late 1930's, because it thought, under the leadership of Fenner Brockway, that it could intrigue with the Stalinists without denouncing their policies as counter-revolutionary.

CRUSHED BY STALINISM

The same road is being travelled today, consciously or not, by those who hesitate to take up the cases of the workers' opposition to the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe and the USSR. However they think of their own politics those who bend the facts about the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, for the sake of a place within a false "peace movement", whose very platforms enshrine the deal between imperialism and Stalinism, will go the way of the ILP, the German SAP and the Spanish POUM in the 1930's, and will find themselves crushed in the embrace of the Stalinist apparatus as Trotsky correctly warned the leaders of the ILP, the SAP and the POUM at the time.

socialist newsletter



SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER, the journal of the Socialist Labour Group, British section of the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International and adherent of the largest regroupment of Trotskyists in the world, the Parity Committee, has, from the last issue, number eight, been changed in format. Up to number seven, SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER was in bulletin format and appeared about every two weeks. The editors have now decided to change to a magazine which appears every two months. In the month of August a special reduced edition will appear and the larger size will resume for the months of September and October.

SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER in the new format will be more expensive to produce and this requires the Editors to initiate a two monthly fighting fund of £100. In the first instance we are looking for regular readers to take out a solidarity subscription of £10 for a year. After that sales of the SNL will be accompanied by a request for a donation to the fund.

Our target for subscriptions is 50 new subscribers by the end of August. Regular sellers of SNL will receive details of this campaign.

Forms for subscriptions in the new format are enclosed with this issue. Subscribers at the old rate will receive SNL magazine until the residue of their sub runs out. Please return the subscription form with cheque or P.O. made out to 'Socialist Newsletter'.

Iran: With the Oppressed- Against Imperialism

By Micheal Keene

Nearly eighteen months ago, in February 1979, the Iranian revolution overthrew the Shah. The oppressed masses of workers and peasants came out onto the streets and physically tore down the regime.

According to the ruling classes of the world, Iran has collapsed into "anarchy". The likes of David Owen, as Labour Foreign Secretary, supported the murderer Palahvi and SAVAK. They upheld the Shah's regime as a "civilising" influence. Now they rant about "violation of human rights", and in particular the "mob rule", which have resulted in the occupation of the US Embassy in Tehran last November and the taking of the US hostages.

The statements of imperialism reveal not only their hypocrisy, but their acute fear. The Iranian revolution has torn apart the stability of imperialist "order" in the whole region of the Near-East.

ISLAM INTO THE BREACH

The eruption of the Iranian masses threw down the main bastion of imperialism in that region. The Shah's regime was built up militarily and supported politically to act as a direct policeman in the service of imperialism, against the proletarian revolution and the struggles of the national groupings such as the Kurds. For that reason not only imperialism, but also the bureaucracies of Peking and the Kremlin, gave direct political support to the Shah, even during the final period when the regime was tottering under the blows of the masses.

The fall of the Shah unleashed the strength of the masses and the demands of the national minorities within Iran. It meant the collapse of whole sectors of the machine of state. The SAVAK sec-

ret police had to disappear. The army virtually collapsed. The accomplices of the Shah scurried for cover. The struggle of the minorities, above all that of the Kurds, for their national rights, became a powerful force, dislocating the bourgeois state.

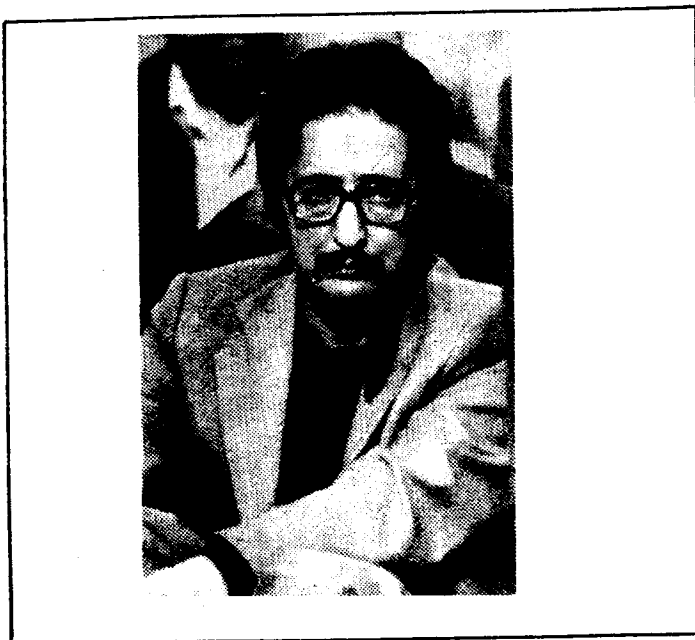
Into the breach stepped Khomeini and the Islamic clergy. Their role has been to strive, under the cover of "Islam", to divert the course of the revolution, to suppress the self-organisation of the masses. Their policy has combined attempts at direct repression (such as the butchery in Kurdistan), with attempts to subordinate the mass movement to the Islamic church by means of "Islamic" councils, headed by mullahs, whose function is to destroy the revolution in the name of the revolution.

Khomeini has projected various referenda and elections, which included the "election" of a "Council of Experts" which drafted a constitution of the "Islamic Republic". Then there was the election of a "parliament", and of Bani Sadr as president, earlier this year.

Linked to all this, the Islamic Republican Party, a bourgeois party of which Bani Sadr is the head, has been propelled by Khomeini and the mullahs and articulates the needs of the dominant section of the Iranian bourgeoisie. All the bourgeois have today become "good Muslims".

NO DEMOCRACY

These developments were heralded by imperialism as "positive" steps, opening the way to replace "anarchy" with "democracy". In reality these measures have nothing to do with democracy, since they are founded on the suppression of the movement of the masses and suppression of the right to self-determination of the oppressed peoples of the Iranian State.



MASS MOVEMENT INTACT

Through these measures Khomeini, Bani Sadr and the IRP are seeking to do nothing else than reconstruct the bourgeois state and create the framework to turn back the revolutionary movement of the masses. But is not the clergy or the Government as such, who, for the past eighteen months, have been in control of the situation. It is the revolutionary mass movement, which although forced to tread diverse paths, has not been quietened. This has limited and even forced back measures which could reconstruct a stable bourgeois state.

Firstly, the militias of the Kurdish people delivered a bloody reply to Khomeini's attempt to crush Kurdistan, which, after many battles, remains uncontrollable with the Kurdish masses retaining their arms and their militias.

Secondly, there are continuous mass mobilisations, which end up pressing the demands of the oppressed. In particular the working class has organised itself and in the factories' workers' councils (shoras), has probed towards a pre-sovietic form of organisation.

NO TO IMPERIALISM!

The mass of the oppressed, even those in dispute with the Teheran regime, have stood resolutely against imperialism, centralized around the demand for the Shah to be returned for trial and the return to the Iranian people of the assets he and other members of the ruling class took abroad when they fled. The occupation of the American Embassy in Teheran articulated this feeling and found a ready response among the masses in

their millions. Perhaps the most important is the demonstration organised by 127 shoras in Teheran, against imperialism, for the return of the Shah and for the demands of the working class.

BANI SADR RETREATS

It is this movement which has forced the government to retreat. One of Bani Sadr's first acts was to try to get hold of the hostages from the students. He denounced the 'parallel power' to that of the government being exercised in this affair. At the same time the government put out feelers, seeking to normalize its relations with imperialism. The bourgeois press of the world began to talk of Bani Sadr as a 'democrat'. But the government was unable to get hold of the hostages.



APRIL 25TH

On 25th April US imperialism launched a military operation against the Iranian Revolution. Carter, announcing the failure of the mission said:

"The Iranian authorities cannot or will not resolve this crisis themselves. The fact of the constant deterioration of any authority in Iran, the increasing danger for the security of the hostages, themselves and the increasing certainty that their quick release was highly improbable, led me to make my decision."

This statement clearly indicates the frustration of imperialism at the failure of the economic and political pressure it had applied since February 1979, with the aim of turning back the revolution.

Bani Sadr and Carter alike fear the growth of the 'parallel power' of the masses which is the central obstacle to the reconstruction of the bourgeois state. The military initiative of April 25th was taken precisely because Bani Sadr could not impose any authority, even with the holy blessing of Khomeini for his government. The masses have dislocated the instruments of state.

Whatever 'technical' failures occurred on April 25th, the almost farcical collapse of the operation is an indication of the immense contradictions with which imperialism is beset. When it tries to intervene in a country where a revolution is in progress, it is faced with the opposition of millions under arms and is hesitant to launch another VietNam scale war. The debacle of April 25th earned for Carter the ridicule of the oppressed masses of the world. Cyrus Vance advised that to try such an operation would be 'inopportune'. However, Carter was under such pressure to intervene that he kept the whole thing secret from his number one diplomatic aide! Naturally Vance resigned. His resignation points to massive divisions among the top echelons of imperialism as to how to deal with the international rise in the proletarian revolution. None of the problems which the defeat of imperialism in VietNam brought to a head have been resolved through the defeat of a revolution by the forces of imperialism.

REAL THREAT TO REVOLUTION

The movement of the Russian army into Afghanistan, itself a product of the revolutionary pressure of the masses in South Asia, gave the US government an alibi for its attempted intervention in Iran. The Kremlin itself mortally fears the revolutionary movements of the masses in this and every part of the globe. Not the least impact of the revolution in Iran and the rise of the oppressed nationalities will be the effect in the Soviet Asian Republics, generating the seeds of the political revolution against the bureaucracy.

Despite the debacle of April 25th the US imperialists will try again to defeat the aspirations of the Iranian masses. They are not 'paper tigers' and nor will the prayers of the mullahs stave off the threat of military intervention. Indeed right after the failure of the Green Beret mission experts from the Pentagon were discussing the relative merits of mining the harbours of Iran and bomb attacks on Teheran. The Pentagon now has



plans for a "short-term intervention force" of 50,000 men to be based in or near the Middle East. It counts on the help of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kenya. This plan represents a new and real threat to the workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities of the area.

Meanwhile we will see renewed pressure by imperialism to ensure the proper degree of counter-revolutionary support from Stalinism. The effects of the revolution in Iran and the destabilisation of South Asia has been to make the Kremlin take front line action in Afghanistan, and no doubt to make contingency plans in general. But this is not the intention of imperialism and the whole importance of the economic sanctions taken by Western Governments against the USSR and the row over the Moscow Olympics is as part of the pressure to make Moscow toe the Washington line in counter-revolutionary strategy.

DEFEND THE REVOLUTION!

The SLG stands against the counter-revolutionary alliance of imperialism and Stalinism, for the defence and extension of the Iranian Revolution, for its completion in the dictatorship of the proletariat. With the Parity Committee for the Reorganisation-Reconstruction of the Fourth International we say:-

- * With the Iranian masses, we fight unconditionally for the extradition of the Shah!
- * Unconditional solidarity against imperialist economic, political and military aggression!
- * The defence of the Iranian Revolution is indissolubly bound up with mobilisation of the working class, peasantry and oppressed masses against imperialism!
- * Unconditional solidarity with the struggles of the Kurdish, Azerbaidjani,

- Turkmeni, Baluchi and Arab peoples for their national and democratic rights!
- * Defence of all democratic, working class and trade union rights!
- * For a United Front against imperialism and for a democratic, sovereign Constituent Assembly!
- * For the building and defence of workers' shoras!
- * For the convening of a national congress of workers and peasants committees, of militias and defence committees!

a question of solidarity

On the 8th of June, the SLG wrote to the IMG on the basis of an article which appeared in 'Socialist Challenge', stating that a supporter of the HKS, one of two Iranian organisations in support of the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International, which the IMG supports, had been executed by Islamic thugs in the southern Iranian city of Ahwaz. The SLG letter stated, "We noted with interest and concern that in the middle of April a militant of the HKS was executed by the Khomeini regime in the town of Ahwaz. We consider this event to have at least the same importance as the earlier arrest and subsequent release of other HKS militants. The Parity Committee, at a recent meeting, agreed the need to defend the Iranian Trotskyists against further attacks, which are clearly on the agenda, given the current climate among the rulers of Iran....."

In fact the Parity Committee stated, "Armed attacks are being made on the universities to prevent students from organising independently of the state, or forming groups attached to parties which stand for the working class and for Marxism. Their purpose is to try to bring to an end the freedom to organise which the workers and peasants won through the struggle against the Shah. This murder can only serve the interests of imperialism. At this moment the trap is closing on the Iranian revolution. The aborted military operation reveals the lengths to which imperialism will go against the Iranian revolution....."

Since this statement was agreed, 'Intercontinental Press', published under the

auspices of the SWP of America, which is politically linked with the IMG, has carried the following piece, "The May 22 issue of the British Trotskyist weekly SOCIALIST CHALLENGE, erroneously reported that a member of that a member of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party (HKS) had been arrested and executed following clashes at Ahwaz university last month. This information was later picked up by the newspaper of the sectarian US Spartacist League. The editors of SOCIALIST CHALLENGE have informed us that its information was not correct and that no HKS member had been killed!"

We find this sequence of events very strange and disturbing. In the first place, even though the student may subsequently have turned out not to be a member of the HKS, neither the IMG nor the American SWP, called for a campaign of solidarity when they thought he was a member of their Iranian sister organisation. Are we to understand that no such campaign was contemplated? Surely this cannot be the case. Secondly, even though the young militant concerned, Ahmad Moazan, may not have been a HKS member, is it not the case that the left-wing students in the universities of Iran, who do not oppose the revolution, but seek to extend it, are deserving of our solidarity as Trotskyists against the brutal attacks of the religious mobs, whose only intention was to destroy the base for independent political action provided by the universities? In the third instance we wonder what is the connection between the lack of any call to defend the students and Trotskyists, from the IMG and the SWP, and the publish-

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nicaragua: the fsln and the 'patriotic' bourgeoisie

By Sam Stacey

For the first time since the overthrow of the Somoza regime, a rift has occurred in the FSLN led Government of National Reconstruction. The leading representatives of the bourgeoisie, Violeta de Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo have left the government. Chamorro ostensibly for "health" reasons, Robele over the restructuring of the Council of State. Signs of a possible rift emerged in March. Robelo, the millionaire landowner (and a member of what the FSLN ironically describes as the "patriotic bourgeoisie") relaunched his Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN) at a rally in Managua - March 16 - which attracted an audience of 5,000 people. He had previously made a 'personal visit' to the United States, where he held discussions with the US State Department, obviously on the subject of what course the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie should take. The MDN demanded that the "Programme of Government" agreed on prior to the overthrow of the Somoza regime should be adhered to. The FSLN had agreed with the bourgeois opposition to set up a Council of State in which bourgeois forces would be dominant. The council would have the power to veto actions of the GNR (through a two-thirds majority).

DISAGREEMENT

This was clearly a source of disagreement within the FSLN, for its daily paper 'Barricada' had announced that the Council of State would be convened in September (of last year). However, it was decided to put off its convening until May of this year, and its composition was to be radically altered, in order to give the FSLN domination of it. Naturally this was a cause of grave concern for the bourgeoisie.

On May 4 the Council of State was opened. It is to "function as a consultative and legislative body subordinate to the FSLN-led Junta of National Reconstruction; it may not evade the junta's decisions (sic)." (Intercontinental Press) In other words it is a rubber stamp for the decisions of the GNR, with a built-in FSLN majority. The bourgeoisie is divided over how it should respond to this situation. Robelo's MDN has announced a boycott of the Council of State, whereas the employers' federation COSEP, although screaming against the composition, made a last minute decision that their six delegates would participate in the opening session. The Social Christian Party had chosen its delegates but refused to participate in the first session.

The course of Robelo is also the product of opposition of the bourgeoisie and landowners to measures taken by the GNR and FSLN in attempting to reactivate the Nicaraguan economy from the state of chaos and destruction it suffered in the latter part of the struggle against Somoza.

BOURGEOIS RESISTANCE

In December '79 there occurred a re-organisation within the Cabinet of the GNR. Roberto Mayora (a bourgeois technocrat) was removed from his post as Minister of Planning, to be replaced by Henry Ruiz, member of the National Directorate of the FSLN. The Minister of Defence, Bernardino Larios (a defector from the camp of Somoza) was replaced by Humberto Ortega, commander in chief of the 'Sandinista Peoples Army (EPS) and FSLN National Directorate member. Eden Pastora, another FSLN leader took over the post

of vice-minister of Defence in charge of organising the People's Militias. Jaime Wheelock replaced an anti-Somoza landowner as head of the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MIDA) - henceforth combined with INRA.

In an interview in relation to these changes, with 'Barricada' on December 30th, Ruiz explained that if the private sector takes a "wait and see attitude" with regard to reactivating production then

"the revolution will take measures, and here the unproductive latifundio will disappear. If the private enterprise does not understand that the secret of harmony consists in all of us working for the benefit of the people, they will have made an enormous mistake (my emphasis S St.)

This gives a good indication of the root of the changes. The attempt of the GNR and FSLN to reactivate the economy was coming up against the resistance of sectors of the bourgeoisie who did not trust the GNR and were holding back investment (hence the reference by Ruiz to a "wait and see attitude"). Furthermore, the bourgeoisie by various devices has carried out all manner of sabotage. A process of 'decapitalisation' has begun i.e. sending of money and plant out of the country. It has also been endeavouring to keep production levels down. The GNR has been forced, as we shall see, to counter this sabotage.

GNR PLAN

The economic reactivation plan of the GNR gives a clear indication of its policy, and the contradictions in which such a policy is caught. The Plan aims to restore 1978 production levels (aiming for a 22% increase in Gross Domestic Product). It sets aside 62% of the budget for expenditure on health, education and housing (cf 17% in 1968). It proposes the creation of 90,000 jobs (15,000 in construction) to begin to overcome the problem of unemployment which is estimated at 32%. In 1979 inflation reached 60%. The Plan aims to hold inflation down to 19% this year. It includes the raising of the minimum wage, but the government is 'encouraging' employed workers to limit their demands for higher pay. Henry Ruiz explained this policy in 'Barricada' (December 30th):

"...we have outlined a policy of

maintaining real wages as the most adequate way to avoid the creation of a great mass of currency that would lack a counterpart in consumer goods. That would provoke an uncontrollable escalation of prices. Inflation only benefits the capitalists and merchants, who speculate by taking goods, hiding them and waiting for better prices.

So real wages means maintaining the market basket or improving it to the extent that the economy permits. But if the economy does not permit this the answer is not to raise wages. If the working class and campesinos understand this we shall have solved one of 1980's thorniest problems."

(As we shall see later, the workers will not "understand" this). This policy includes the keeping down of wages. However, under conditions of the continued existence of capitalism, this can only mean one thing: increased exploitation of the working class. For the Plan incorporates the 'utilisation' of private enterprise.

"As part of the plan the revolutionary government is pressing for cooperation from private capitalists, who still retain control over a considerable portion of Nicaragua's industry and export agriculture. The implicit trade off is simply (sic) that the property of those capitalists will not be seized as long as they keep up production and follow the guidelines of the economic plan. The plan seeks to subordinate the capitalists to the government's overall social goals and investment priorities, calling for the maintenance of a "mixed economy" in 1980. The Sandinistas hope to enforce the subordinate role of the capitalists through taxation and government control of bank credits and foreign exchange" (Intercontinental)

This, of course, is the utopia of "control" of the bourgeoisie. But the bourgeoisie is not susceptible to such a policy, for it conflicts with its class interests. Hence, the sabotage, lack of investment, hoarding and so on.

Ruiz explained in Barricada, in relation to the 'austerity' which the 1980 budget called for, that

"When we talk of austerity we have to understand who is to get less and who is to get more. Clearly, we are telling the bourgeoisie to consume

fewer luxury goods, moderate their way of life...demand fewer cars, less cosmetics, fewer imported televisions, all those things that have been indispensable to them owing to the abundance in which they have lived....

We ask private enterprise to be moderate, to limit itself, to make sacrifices in their manner of living as a demonstration of patriotism and commitment to the revolution...."

Ruiz thus asks the bourgeoisie to change its spots, to express its "commitment to the revolution"! How? By lowering their consumption. But the problem of the development of Nicaragua in the interests of the workers and peasants is hardly the problem of the level of consumption of the bourgeoisie! The Plan continues the class collaborationist policy of the FSLN, which expresses the need for a continued alliance of the workers and peasants with the 'patriotic (sic) bourgeoisie'!

ALLIANCE WITH BUSINESSMEN

'Poder Sandinista', the organ of the FSLN's National Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education, explained (December 27) that the new plan would make it possible "to regulate the participation of private companies in the economic revival". It would "promote the participation of the sectors involved in the revolution: the working class, common people, and patriotic businessmen".

"We need to develop links with all revolutionary organisations and points of support that allow us to build national unity. We need to seek avenues of unity with private business - a necessity for the economic development of this revolution." (my emphasis)

Nothing could be clearer. While the bourgeoisie carries on its acts of sabotage, sends money out of the country etc., the FSLN tells the Nicaraguan masses that they need an alliance with "patriotic businessmen". The problem according to "Poder Sandinista" is to "redistribute and reinvest surpluses" rather than expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

Of course, the bourgeoisie can only act according to its class interests which stand opposed to the interests of the Nicaraguan masses. The "harmony" that Ruiz talks of, is a social democratic

pipedream, as if the exploitation of the proletariat was a question not of its position in the production process, but of an insufficient share of the wealth of a particular firm. It is the old song of 'control' of capital as opposed to its expropriation.

INTERVENTION

All this is plainly evident since the FSLN has found it necessary to take measures against those sections of the bourgeoisie who are openly "unpatriotic" and fail to "serve the interests of the revolution". (The FSLN differentiates between the 'patriotic bourgeoisie' and the 'traitorous bourgeoisie'). On March 2 a decree against decapitalisation of enterprises (sending money or machinery out of the country) was issued. Violators of the decree face the penalty of 'intervention' i.e. putting the company under state administration, plus fines of up to three times the value of capital removed from Nicaragua, and the possibility of a one to three year jail sentence.

For the FSLN to talk of the need to unite with 'patriotic businessmen' etc., is to disarm the working class: to offer a perspective of class 'harmony': to create illusions in the bourgeoisie serving the revolution.

WAGE FREEZE

As we have seen, part of the 1980 Reactivation Plan was the restriction of wage increases. At the beginning of the year a strike wave emerged, for wage increases. The FSLN sought to convince the workers of the 'need' to forego wage increases "in the interests of the class as a whole". However, such efforts were largely unsuccessful and the government was forced to grant these increases. One of these strikes was at the San Antonio sugar mill (which is the largest factory in Nicaragua). The produce is sold on the international market and taxes on the sales produce considerable revenues for the government. Hence the FSLN urged the workers there to resolve their dispute with the owners, without striking. Henry Ruiz went to speak to the workers but was shouted down, and had to leave the platform. At a later rally organised by FSLN supporters at the mill, Ruiz explained the need for dollars (which the exports from San Antonio would produce) to pay for imported commodities "vital to the betterment of the masses". But of course, while under private ownership

much of the wealth created by the workers at the plant goes not to the Nicaraguan masses but into the pockets of the mill owners. The FSLN policy is a recipe for increased exploitation of the labour of the workers.

The most important strike was that of the 4,000 Managua construction workers on January 14th. The government decided to cut the hours of the workers on the Managua Park project and hence to cut their wages, with the excess funds going to employ more workers on the project. The workers struck, opposing this action, and demanding that they be paid the daily wage established by contract prior to the overthrow of Somoza. The FSLN argued at mass meetings that the government's wage cutting policy was in the best interests of the Nicaraguan workers as a whole. However, they once again failed to convince the workers and were forced to accede to their demands or else face an extended strike.

FACTORY OCCUPATIONS

In response to the sabotage of the bourgeoisie (including their deliberate restriction of production levels) a whole number of occupations of factories have taken place. The workers have opposed this sabotage and demanded that their factories be "intervened" by the GNR. On February 19, the workers at El Carecol industries occupied their factory (a food processing plant). They prohibited the owners from entering and called on the government to investigate charges by union members that the Campos family, the owners, were trying to bankrupt the company by reducing production and decapitalising the plant. The company was 'intervened' by the government and the workforce pledged to keep production at maximum capacity during the investigation. This case provides a good example of the tactics of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie. Ten delivery trucks were off the road because the owners had refused to buy spare parts, whilst many of the machines in the plant were only still working because the workers fixed them themselves.

During the Somoza era the company gave supermarkets eight days to pay their bills but now they demand payment on delivery. Last September twenty nine women workers were sacked as surplus to requirements and a speed-up was imposed.

Most of the Campos family left Nicaragua before the insurrection but the two who stayed behind were intent on stripping their several factories of their ass-

ets and to send as much money as possible abroad. Immediately after the revolution they received a \$400,000 government loan to help restart at El Carecol. Needless to say, none of the money has found its way into the factory. The GNR has thus subsidised these entrepreneurs in asset stripping and attacks on the workers.

Since the workers took over the factory, production has risen by 60% and all the distribution trucks are back in use. Some of the sacked workers were re-employed by the workers themselves.

WORKERS' CONTROL

On March 13th another occupation occurred at Polymer SA (a plastics factory and subsidiary of a US firm). The management were locked out and the government asked to intervene. Production was continued and the union demanded that the company adhere to its 1979 agreement to raise wages in line with inflation (30% was promised but never given). The workers also demanded the removal of Polymer's general manager and two other executives, the right to hold union meetings in work-time more often than once a month and demanded a halt to anti-union practices. Other occupations have taken place at Standard Steel, Nicargo and the Hurtedo Tannery.

To prevent the sabotage of the ruling class the FSLN has been forced to rely on the vigilance of the workers, since there is no institution to enforce the decree against decapitalization. "Poder Sandinista" has described this workers' control "as more important than legal measures taken to control the illegal practices of various unpatriotic businessmen". However, the FSLN leaders pose workers' control purely as a means of defending production and not at all as a transitional phase, leading to expropriation of the bourgeoisie and to workers' management.

REPRESSION

Soon after the overthrow of Somoza, the FSLN began a policy of repression of elements within the workers' movement who opposed the line of the FSLN and the GNR (see "Socialist Newsletter" No 4). This repression was opposed by elements of the working class, and the campaign against 'ultra-leftism' became muted. The supporters of MAP/FO and the Trotskyists were released from jail. However, the strike wave of the early months of the new year saw the MAP/FO

play a leading role, especially in the Managua construction workers' strike. For this reason the FSLN moved against them once more.

On January 23 security forces took over the offices of FO's newspaper "El Pueblo", arresting seven leaders. Charges were brought against the detainees of violating Article 4 Section C of the Public Order Act and Security Law, which prohibits distribution of propaganda "that seeks to damage the popular interests and abolish the conquests achieved by the people". "El Pueblo" was banned, its printing equipment turned over to the Education Ministry. The FSLN launched a campaign to explain the closure. It explained that the "sectarians" were either "counter-revolutionaries" or at least "objectively tied to the counter-revolution". In encouraging strikes they had "sabotaged production" and tried to "divide the working class". While the revolution guaranteed freedom of the press, they insisted there could be no such freedom for those who engage in counter-revolution or practice "destructive criticism".

MAP/FO LEADERS JAILED

While "El Pueblo" was closed down for "destructive criticism" the bourgeois daily "La Prensa" continued freely to be allowed to act as the mouthpiece of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and landowners. Obviously "freedom of the press" applies to the bourgeoisie but not apparently to papers of the tendencies in the workers' movement who might promote strikes and oppose the policy of the FSLN and GNR!

On February 11th sentences of 2 years at public works were given to four leaders of MAP/FO: Melvin Wallace Simpson (editor of El Pueblo), Juan Alberto Ennquez Oporta, Carlos Domingo Cuadra, Isidro Tellez Toruna. The summary of the judge who committed them is of note as regards their "crime". As reasons for their conviction he said:

"They attacked the revolutionary process and the authorities of the Junta of the GNR and the FSLN, without taking into account the profound social transformations that have been carried out to the benefit of the great majority, using the distribution of their press to attack public order...

They cautiously proclaimed their intent to disobey the line of the Junta and the FSLN, with the aim of defending very individual interests..."

Crime of crimes, they went so far as to "disobey the line of the Junta and the FSLN". Clearly the real reason for the attack on FO/MAP was the influence it has amongst certain sections of the workers. In reference to its role in the strike wave, this was cited by the judge as "harmful to the popular interest".

February 22 further charges were filed against seven MAP/FO leaders for violation of Article 1 Section D of the Public Order and Security Law which gives 3 - 10 years imprisonment for anyone who attempts to depose...local authorities or to prevent those duly elected from taking office", or who "try to prevent the authorities from freely carrying out their functions or enforcing compliance with their administrative or judicial measures". The charge against these seven also cites Article 4 of the same law in relation to "illegal" possession of weapons.

'TACTICS'

The FSLN has insisted that unity with the "patriotic bourgeoisie" is essential for the "economic development of the revolution", and appealed for them to "serve the revolution". It has been said by some that this is a tactical stance which takes into account the realities of a dire economic situation. Concessions to the bourgeoisie, it is said, are necessary in order to reactivate the economy and prevent the masses from starving. However, it is one thing to make concessions to bourgeois elements: it is quite another to create illusions of "harmony" between workers and "patriotic businessmen", to tell the workers that they must seek unity with the bourgeoisie, and that the latter can play a role in serving the revolution.

CLASS COLLABORATION

A socialist revolution isolated in a single country may have to make numerous concessions in order to survive. It may have to manoeuvre between different imperialisms. For instance the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was forced on the Bolsheviks. They had to accede to this "brigandry" (the Germans took territory from them) in order to survive. And, of course, the introduction of the New Economic Policy represented a concession to the petty capitalist elements, allowing the resurgence and growth of the kulaks and merchants.

However, it is the worst sleight of hand to utilise such concessions and com-

promises as carried out by the Bolsheviks to justify the class collaborationist policy of the FSLN. The Bolsheviks never had a national conception of the revolution, and never created any illusions in "harmony" between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Such concessions as were made were emergency measures, necessary for defence of a workers' state in imperialist encirclement.

'NATIONAL UNITY'

In contrast the FSLN consciously opposed the road of a workers' and peasants' government, refused to break with the bourgeoisie, and sought "national unity". It has given the bourgeoisie warnings, it has even taken measures against their sabotage, but it refuses still to take the road of struggle for a workers' and peasants' government. Even when Robelo had made his private trip to the US, and relaunched the MDN, the FSLN expressed its confidence that "comrade" Robelo the "revolutionary" landowner would continue to work "within the framework of the revolution". It further appealed for continued unity among the ranks of the "revolutionary democratic and people's organisations" - an appeal to the bourgeoisie to 'serve the revolution'.

BREAK WITH THE BOURGEOISIE!

What then of the situation in which the Council of State has been convened? The bourgeoisie, divided in its response, is posed with a dilemma. Should it continue to cooperate with the GNR or take the road of Robelo - a complete break, and boycott of the Council of State? The profound weakness of the bourgeoisie is that it has no apparatus of repression in its hands. The People's Army, police and militias are firmly under the control of the FSLN. The bourgeoisie's policy of sabotage, of holding back investment, sending money out of the country, has forced the GNR to take measures against it, while the workers have resolutely opposed such action by the bourgeoisie, occupying factories, to prevent such activity. The bourgeoisie has no significant base of support among the populace. Its hesitancy is based on the weakness of its position.

Should the bourgeoisie take the course of a break with the GNR, then a showdown would ensue. The stepping up of its actions of sabotage and decapitalisation which would result from such a course would force the FSLN to take measures which could drive the remnants of the

bourgeoisie and landowners out of Nicaragua. But even if this eventuality occurred, the problems of Nicaragua could only be tackled through the extension of the revolution beyond its borders. Even if the FSLN (despite its line of class "harmony") is forced to smash the remnants of capitalism, the tying of the revolution to a national course offers no road forward. And, of course, the so-called "Sandinista revolution" (in reality the proletarian revolution) which the FSLN has held back from destroying the bourgeoisie, is posed by them as a national revolution, and not as a component of the world proletarian revolution.

BREAK WITH THE COUNCIL OF STATE!

The departure of Robelo once more raises the question of a workers' and peasants' government, and the struggle for a Socialist Federation of Central America. The road of the Council of State is that of 'national unity' - that is of the containment of the revolution within bourgeois limits. For this reason support for the Council of State is inconceivable for revolutionaries. The so-called "worker-peasant majority" in it is a fraud. Only an assembly of their own organisations, independent of the bourgeoisie (even in its "patriotic" colours) offers the possibility of the workers and peasants controlling their own fate. The problem for Nicaraguan revolutionaries remains that of breaking the masses from the grip of the FSLN, demanding of the latter that they break with the bourgeoisie. Those elements among the workers and peasants who have opposed the policy of the FSLN and the GNR have suffered repression at their hands. It is the duty of the British working class to assist the Nicaraguan revolution: unconditionally defending it against imperialism, certainly, but also defending those workers, and organisations of workers and peasants being repressed by the FSLN and GNR for defending their class interests and for the crime of opposing 'Sandinista' policy.

