



SMASH THE CAPITALIST COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

BREAK THE NIRC BREAK PHASE 3

The representatives of the ruling class—like all predatory beasts—are the most dangerous when cornered. True to form, the threat by Sir John Donaldson and the National Industrial Relations Court to seize the entire assets of the AUEW goes beyond anything they have previously attempted.

By such a move Donaldson hopes to provoke a political crisis that will threaten the very existence of the Labour Government.

Donaldson's actions are a living-refutation of the absurd view that judges and the law are 'above' politics and the class struggle.

The state machine serves the ruling class—not the 'Government of the day.' It will obey the Government only so long as it considers it to represent the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. If the Government's ability to do the ruling class's dirty work is in doubt, then the state machine will go its own way.

This is the lesson of Chile. The policies of the popularly elected Allende Government were continually sabotaged by the courts, the civil service and the police. Finally Allende was overthrown by the army.

On a smaller scale, Donaldson's manoeuvres represent exactly the same thing.

Of course, the Labour Government has played right into the hands of the ruling class. Throughout the recent struggles they have misled workers about the nature of the state. They have insisted on the law being upheld, no matter what the cost.

Once in office, Labour actually turned to the Tories' armoury of anti-working class laws to back up their own policies.

Now one of these weapons has blown up in their face. The working class must mobilise on a massive scale to break the NIRC into tiny pieces. Only such a mobilisation can smash this present attack and prevent the Labour Government being brought down by its own bankrupt reformism.

Faced with a massive strike wave, the parliamentary manoeuvres of the opposition parties would melt away, and the Labour Government would be left with no excuses for inaction. It could be forced to scrap its Tory weaponry once and for all.

On the basis of such a victory, nothing could prevent the engineering workers going on to win their claim in full. This would mean the death of Phase 3: not only in its Tory letter, but in its Labour spirit as well.



Last August these members of the AUEW South London District Committee offered to physically defend union property against seizure by the NIRC. Scanlon refused their offer, preferring the road of passive 'non-cooperation'. The AUEW is paying the price of that policy today. The initiative of the South London engineers must now be taken up by the entire trade union movement, and the scheming hands of the NIRC kept off union property.

Sir John Donaldson has given the AUEW 19 days 'to reconsider its tactics.' Let's take the gallant judge's offer. Let's use the 19 days to organise the tactic of SMASHING THE NIRC.

*For a national, indefinite strike by all engineering workers. No matter what the AUEW executive decides, this must be got underway immediately in every district.

*For mass solidarity actions by every other group of workers: strikes, demonstrations and rallies in every area.

*For the physical defence of AUEW property from any attempts at seizure by the courts. London Trades Councils should summon an emergency conference to get this underway in London.

*Force the Labour Government to scrap the NIRC and block all legal proceedings under the Industrial Relations Act, pending its speedy repeal.

WILSON CHAMPIONS PROPERTY SPECULATORS

As Harold Wilson was busy attempting to explain away the various land deals involving members of his personal staff this week, Eddie Milne, Independent Labour MP for Blyth, was getting the boot from his local Labour Party.

Milne's 'crime' was to have fought for a thorough inquiry by the Labour Party into the seamy side of local Government uncovered in the Poulson affair.

The evidence that came out in the course of the trial of architect and building contractor John Poulson revealed the rampant corruption that pervades local government, and suggested that Labour representatives were deeply involved in this cess-pit.

Of course, there is nothing new about Labour MPs having extensive ties with the business world. Men like Harold Lever place big business interests in the very centre of the Labour cabinet.

But what is involved in the Poulson scandal—and in the current case—is something more. Are leading political figures in the Labour movement using the offices to which they are elected by the votes of working people to further personal business interests which have nothing in common with workers' interests?

Whatever may be the true facts about Wilson's direct involvement in these land deals, the political stance he has taken is totally indefensible.

His distinction between 'reclamation' and 'speculation' is a piece of verbal trickery. Why was the land being 'reclaimed'? As a generous contribution to

the social good? Or as a means of making profit?

Wilson has certainly become a far more devoted champion of the property speculators than he has ever been of the working class.

There is another question raised by all this: the motives of the Tory press. Is it a coincidence that two of the most reactionary Tory papers—the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*—broke stories about the involvement of Wilson's staff in land deals on the same day?

How did they obtain this information, much of which would normally be shrouded in 'business secrecy'? How is it that two of the main sources of evidence have suddenly disappeared? (Property dealer Ronald Millbench claims to have destroyed the original of the forged 'Wilson' letter, in response to telephone threats; and Alan Main, described by the *Daily Mail* as 'the property man whose tip-off ... led to the land deals affair,' claims that a file of 'important papers' have disappeared from his office.)

The workers' movement has a double interest here: to establish exactly what its so-called 'representatives' have been up to, and to expose the political manoeuvres of the Tory press.

The TUC should immediately set up a full inquiry into all aspects of the affair. Representatives of the building and print unions should be involved, observers from the tenants' movement invited, and all hearings conducted in public.

If Harold Wilson really has nothing to hide, if his attacks on the Tory press are more than just a smoke-screen, he would welcome such an inquiry.

Carl Owen

LABOUR TO DELIVER CHILE WARSHIPS

A few days ago the Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, declared that the delivery of ships to Chile was 'under review.' This review seems to have ended. The Labour Government is going to deliver two Leander-class frigates and two Oberon-class submarines to the Pinochet dictatorship.

Those Labour MPs and other Labour supporters who imagined that the present Government would be more 'sensitive' on issues such as Chile than the previous Labour administration was on Vietnam, will now have to decide how to act on this question.

Regardless of what their 'leaders' do, it is incumbent on those Labour MPs who oppose Callaghan's action to table a motion demanding the immediate break of all relations with the military junta.

What all this demonstrates is the absolute correctness of calling for a massive mobilisation on Chile on 5 May. Preparations for this are going ahead, and the first ad-hoc committee meeting last Wednesday was attended by a broad spectrum of the left and trade-union movement. *Chile Lucha*, a journal produced by Chilean socialists in exile in this country, was also represented and

have pledged support for the mobilisation.

Among the speakers will be Ken Coates, from the Nottingham Labour Party, who moved the emergency resolution on Chile at the last Labour Party conference.

An important south London trades council is to support the national Chile solidarity demonstration called for 5 May. Wandsworth Trades Council decided to back the demonstration at its meeting last Monday, 8 April.

Further details (posters, stickers, leaflets) from: *Chile 5 May Ad Hoc Committee*, 97 Caledonian Road, London, N.1. Phone: 01-278 9526.

Why Cowley workers backed down on speed-up fight

A mass meeting of 2500 workers voted on Tuesday to end the strike on the Marina assembly line at BLMC Cowley. The strike (described in the last issue of *Red Weekly*) was against the company's breach of the agreement on the use of industrial engineers—time and motion studies.

The vote marks a step forward for BLMC's drive to fully implement measured day work throughout the combine. The return to work on the company's terms renders the vital clauses in the industrial engineers' agreement into a virtual dead letter. It wipes out the right of the shop stewards to 'mutual agreement' on changes in track speed and manning scales.

TOUGH LINE

The company has taken a tough line throughout the dispute. It has been determined to make the workers pay for its growing cash crisis, swelling cost increases, and shrinking markets.

In a letter sent to workers' homes, BLMC asked: 'Do you wish to remain in our employment? If you won't work we must assume you wish to leave us and we will respond accordingly.' In other words—work harder or get the sack!

Faced with this all-out attack, the trade union leadership on the plant wavered. After the initial fragmented resistance had developed into a united defence of the agreement, a split opened up between the day and night shifts. Both shifts had agreed on three demands: no increase in the track speed until mutual agreement on manning; no industrial engineers to be used while conditions remained abnormal; and the movement of labour agreement—also broken by the company—to be enforced.

In negotiations, forced on the management by a demonstration outside the directors' offices, the company offered token concessions. They offered to delay for three days the track speed increase. They promised to sort out the movement of labour. They adamantly refused to withdraw the industrial engineers.

Deputy Senior Steward, Alan Thornett, a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party, prevented the first two offers as points won. This although the key question of mutuality had not been won at all. The night shift voted to go back.

Only when the industrial engineers turned up on the tracks at 2.45 am did the men spontaneously walk out.

BACKED DOWN

Later, with no mandate from the membership and against union policy, the senior shop stewards accepted a proposal from Alan Thornett and backed down again. They offered the company the right to use industrial engineers at any time. They made this conditional only on

obtaining mutual agreement before increasing the track speed. This was tossed out by the company.

It did, however, show the company and the workers that the stewards had no confidence in the men's determination to defend the agreement. It also confused the workers. After all they had already been on strike for a week against the use of the industrial engineers in abnormal circumstances.

There are many reasons for the return-to-work vote. Not least is the WRP leadership's attachment to the 'politics of catastrophe'. In a WRP leaflet published last December, they claimed: 'We face the danger of catastrophe in this plant. The Government has imposed a three-day week... This will create within the first week six million unemployed and then double that figure.'

'No one will buy cars under these conditions and the impositions in the budget must be the final nail in the coffin of car sales.' The WRP stewards concentrated on the unlikely event of an immediate BLMC bankruptcy and factory closure.

They did nothing to prepare the workforce for the most likely event, which was a run down in production and piecemeal redundancies. Their armageddon-like forecasts had the reverse effect of preparing for a struggle. When the day of imminent doom did not take place it led to a false sense of security among the workers.

When the workers themselves had taken strike action and the night shift had joined forces with the day-workers, the WRP stewards began to discover what a critical struggle it really was. This again introduced confusion in the ranks, who

began to wonder what to believe.

Short on policy but long on vituperation, the WRP launched into an attack on the IMG and its factory bulletin, the *Organiser*. Although the *Organiser*—produced twice a day throughout the dispute—had pinpointed the nature of the company's attack and propounded a policy of united struggle, the *Workers Press* attacked it as 'disruptive'.

SPLITTING

The management happily joined the anti-IMG bandwagon and denounced the 'extremists'. The *Workers Press* article could only serve one purpose—that of splitting the workers.

The defeat of this strike threatens not only the industrial engineers' agreement at Cowley. It also challenges the very existence of an effective trade union organisation on the shop-floor. Militants and revolutionaries will come under constant attack from the management, and that requires a political response—such as the publication of papers like the *Organiser*.

The offensive being waged by BLMC cannot be fought by 'pure trade unionism', and abstract calls to 'build the party'.

The vote of 180 transport workers to continue a strike over a breach of the lay-off agreement can provide the basis for re-unifying the work-force. It has led to the lay-off of 1600 Marina assembly line workers, but it is not yet a united struggle. The need remains for a policy that once again coordinates all the workers' struggles into a counter-offensive against the company's attacks.

JEFF KING

Armstrong blacking call by Defence Committee

The Armstrong Defence Committee, formed to fight for the reinstatement of sacked convenor Jean Jepson and other workers who have been dismissed and victimised at Armstrong Patents in Hull, held its first meeting on 27 March.

Over thirty attended, including workers involved in the dispute, representatives of the local labour movement, and delegates from IMG, the Communist Party, and the International Socialists.

The principal decisions concerned the holding of regular pickets on Wednesdays and a public meeting with the broadest sponsorship to be held at the end of April. A tour of Midlands car plants by Jean Jepson is to be arranged.

This follows the blacking of Armstrong products by 600 workers at British Leyland in Oxford. Armstrong manufactures all the shock-absorbers used in British cars other than those supplied by Girtings and Woodheads.

They can be identified by blue markings.

Last week, Jean Jepson held a factory gate meeting at the Armstrong plant in York, explaining the nature of the struggle and why they might be affected by the blacking.

Unfortunately, the Regional Secretary of the Transport & General Workers' Union, Dave Shenton, has not responded to these initiatives, in spite of the fact that his own Regional Committee has decided that Jepson was unjustifiably dismissed.

Shenton has written to all car factories telling them not to black Armstrong products, and not to touch the Jepson case.

The Defence Committee meets every Wednesday at 8 pm in the Park Hotel, Hull. 'Armstrong Trade Unionism under Attack', a pamphlet on the struggle, can be obtained from the Defence Committee, 7 Parkside Close, Park Avenue, Hull. Price 2p.

Socialist teachers fight for working class links

Delegates will be in an angry mood when the conference of the National Union of Teachers meets at Eastbourne next week.

Teachers have been involved in numerous actions over the last year—

against low pay, teacher shortage, and disproportionate pension contributions. In the coming year they will have to fight the proposed £200 millions cut in the education budget, a drastic reduction in places at teacher training colleges, and a pea-size pay increase of 8 per cent this year.

Feeling on the pay issue can be gauged from the fact that the Rank and File sponsored motion on salaries has been voted top priority by branches all over Britain. An emergency motion, initiated by IMG, which calls for a £500 award by 1 October has been supported by Hackney, Coventry, Colchester, NE Essex, and Birmingham branches.

DISCIPLINE

A much-shaken executive will be fighting to re-impose its bureaucratic control. It will oppose the motion calling for local association autonomy to be restored, and will try to obtain greater control over the union's disciplinary committee, which is at present 'trying' the Wandsworth Three for their militancy at the Central Hall meeting during last spring's struggle over the London allowance.

The Rank and File organisation has increased its prestige by getting two members, Beth Stone and Dick North, and a supporter, Betty Coates, elected to the executive. It will face the challenge of effectively moving the union to the left, instead of capitulating to the 'moderate' elements as the CP has done.

Socialist teachers must be clear about the need to strengthen their bonds with the rest of the trade union movement, at local and national level.

AGAINST CUTS

Education cuts and teacher shortages affect the whole working class, and they must argue for working class action through trades councils, local action committees, and conferences against all cuts in social expenditure.

Unfortunately, important issues such as Chile, Ireland, and the Brockwell Park Three are unlikely to be discussed, and this tends to isolate teachers from the rest of the working class by restricting them to educational issues.

At this conference socialist teachers will need to fight to break the NUT from its 'professional' aloofness from the working class. To do this they will need to defeat the line of the executive, and move wider layers within the union into militant action.

Paper workers punch a hole in Phase 3

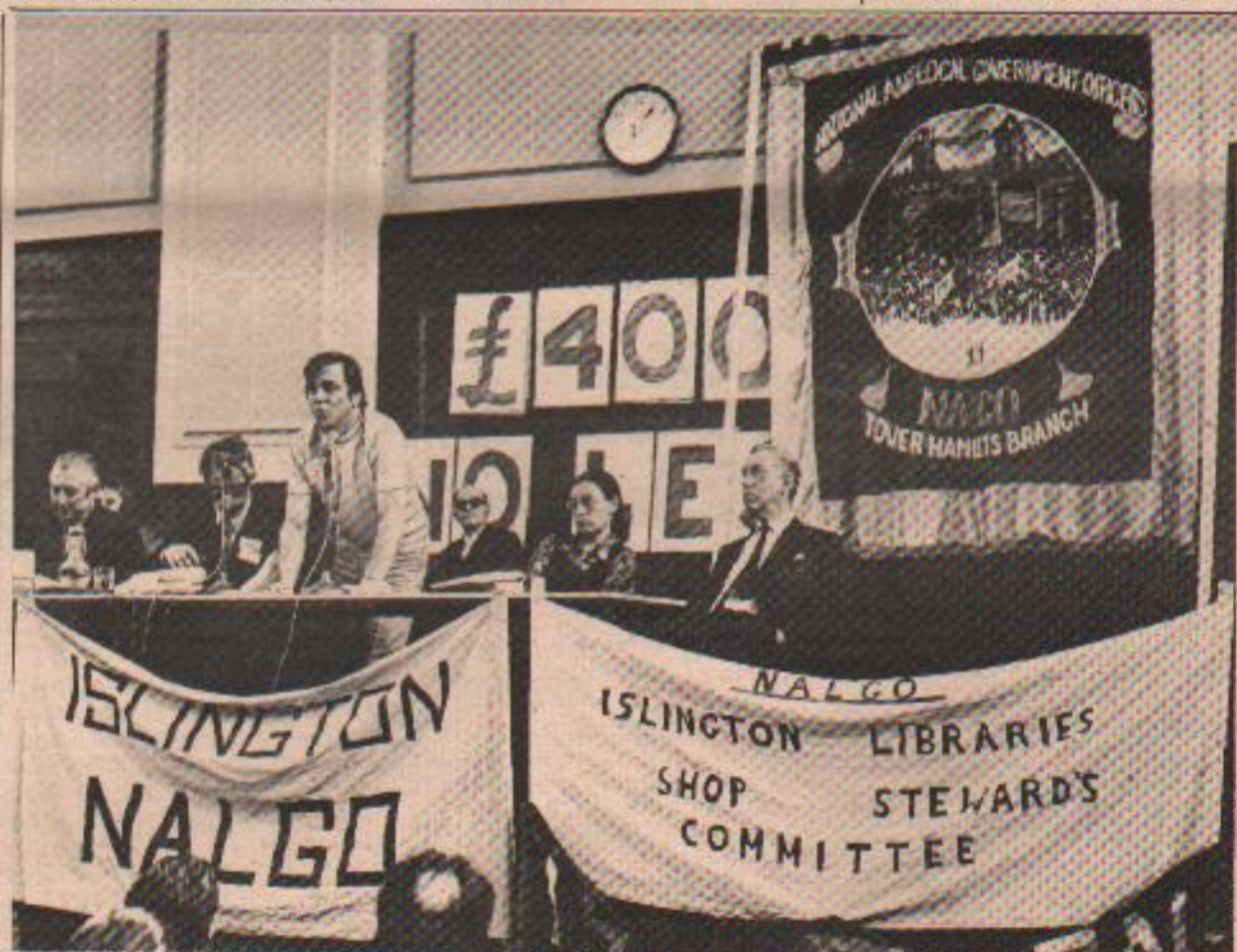
After a militant three-week unofficial strike, 250 workers in the Kilbagie Paper Mill near Alloa, Scotland, will return to work this Sunday with their employers, the international Gestetner company, committed to negotiating a substantial wage increase.

The demand of the strikers was for a £5 a week increase across the board, which represents £2.35 on top of the already negotiated national claim. The SOGAT Area Organiser tried to persuade them to go back, and the union refused to recognise the strike.

To this pressure was added management refusal to negotiate while the stoppage continued. But this previously non-militant workforce refused to budge.

However, a mass meeting on 8 April was told that, after contact between the union head office and the Gestetner company, the management was prepared to concede a substantial increase.

The meeting agreed to resume work, but bound their chairman and secretary who were to participate in negotiations in London, not to accept less than £4.



Bob Ford, secretary of Islington NALGO, speaks at a meeting to support the claim called by his branch on Wednesday.

NALGO workers step up action

The National Association of Local Government Officers is escalating its action for the £400 London weighting allowance, following Michael Foot's refusal to ratify an interim agreement on the claim.

Five branches have carried out selective strikes and on 17 April a further four—Wandsworth, Southwark, Newham and Havering—will follow. Meanwhile Lewisham, Redbridge, Hillingdon, Brent, and Lambeth will ban overtime, and refuse to work with agency staff. Strike action is being extended to about five electricity branches.

NALGO members are being asked not to work in polling stations or on counting votes during the forthcoming

local elections, and other unions are being asked to support this.

But although 25,000 members are involved in some form of action, the struggle remains fragmented. Strikes are only taking place in isolated departments or sections, and the union leadership is making no attempt to unite or generalise them.

LOCAL AGREEMENTS

A further danger of fragmentation comes from local agreements with individual boroughs. Islington branch has rejected such a deal, but Havering Trades Council is now pressing for the local council to pay £186 direct to the branch. This kind of manoeuvre could be used to prevent the development of an all-London struggle.

The IS-dominated NALGO Action Group has called a public meeting on the claim for 18 April at the Conway Hall. At this meeting militants will be discussing the way in which rank-and-file action can take the initiative away from the union bureaucrats.

If democratically elected strike committees were to be set up, these could form the backbone of an all-London organisation, and would create the basis for unity with other struggles, such as the teachers' London allowance campaign.

They would also be able to prepare action on NALGO's 20 per cent national claim, and would develop an alliance with other groups coming into struggle against Phase 3 and the Social Contract.

ALAN BENNETT

The Shrewsbury 6 have gained nothing from the recent general election except a new goal-keeper. Militants in East Kent have decided to do something about this despicable betrayal of these victims of class 'justice'. They are holding a Delegate Conference in Aylesham on 20 April to discuss the way forward in the fight to free the 6.

NUM SUPPORT

Launched from a meeting organised by the East Kent Shrewsbury Defence Committee, the Conference is receiving support from militants in the Kent NUM, UCATT, and Kent University Students Union. The Conference is being backed by Jack Collins, Kent Area delegate to the NUM Executive, and NUM militants are playing a leading role in its organisation.

With the local NUM giving such a lead, the conference should receive good representation from local union branches, trades councils, and political organisations (all of whom are being contacted) and will be able to provide a focus for militants from the scattered building sites in the area. This would make possible the establishment of a representative defence committee, and ensure that whatever action the Conference decides on will be fought for throughout the local labour movement.

POSITIVE LEAD

Clearly one of the first tasks of such a committee will be to educate trade unionists about the importance of this struggle. A speaking tour of local building sites would be a top priority.

But this must be centred around some positive lead for carrying the campaign forward. One important move would be to turn the traditional May Day Rally, not simply into a protest demonstration on the Shrewsbury case, but into a one-day strike. This would show the growing determination of trade unionists to force the Labour Government into freeing the 6.

Miners take lead in Kent Shrewsbury Conference



Miners' 81% vote for strike action is announced to the NUM Executive last January. (Kent Area Delegate Jack Collins is second from left).

The power and prestige of the miners, won in the fight against the Tory Government, puts them in the best position to give a lead in the fight to free the Shrewsbury 6.

If such a lead were to emerge from on a firm foundation and with a clear perspective for struggle. The the Conference—and if it received the backing of the NUM—it would strengthen the hand of militants in the building industry locally, and would set an example to the trade union movement on a national level. It is necessary and urgent to start rebuilding the Shrewsbury movement

East Kent Conference can be a

decisive first step in this direction.

FREE THE SHREWSBURY 6

East Kent delegate conference on 20th April—10.30-4.30 pm, Aylesham Working Men's Club (The Legion).

Credentials from: Snowdown NUM, Snowdown Colliery, Kent,

or at the door.

Delegate fee 50p. Open to observers. Open to all trade unions, trades councils, political organisations, National speakers.

Force Labour to free the 6. Support the conference.

Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Rugby II)

ENGINEERING STEWARDS SOFT-PEDAL ON CLAIM

A conference of shop stewards committee delegates from the engineering industry met in Manchester on Friday to discuss the struggle for the engineers' pay claim.

This was a recall of the conference held in December, but the only firm decision taken was full support for the national ban on overtime due to begin next Monday.

With such an undramatic conclusion one might have been confused as to why the sponsors bothered to call the conference at all. The answer to that is to be found in the speeches that they made, rather than the decisions.

DON'T RING US

It was clearly intended that the message which should emerge from the conference was the need for further action should the overtime ban prove to be inadequate.

One speaker made it plain from the outset that there must be no holding back on the wages struggle merely because a Labour Government has been returned. 'The best way to support the Government is through mass action on our wages and conditions claim.'

Speakers from Sheffield continued this theme by denouncing the fact that Phase 3 has not been erased. 'There must be no watering down of Labour's election manifesto, and dampening down of the wages struggle.'

After several 'war-like' speeches of this nature, the delegates agreed that the sponsors reconvene the conference when necessary to review the progress of the overtime ban. Then they went home.

RED-FACED CP

The main force behind the conference was the Communist Party. The CP has a very simple problem.

It has told us time and again that the way to advance the interests of the working class is through constructing an alliance with 'left-wingers' such as Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon.

It therefore becomes extremely embarrassing for the CP when these 'left-wingers' openly sell out the interests of the working class as Jones has already done by declaring his support for the social contract and agreeing to 'moderate' wage demands.

All that has prevented Scanlon from following the same path so quickly is the pressure from militants in the engineering industry. This is why the CP called last Friday's conference.

It was never intended to be a real springboard for launching 'mass action' over the claim. It was simply meant to be a message for Scanlon: 'Dear Hughie, please don't embarrass us by selling out.'

INDEPENDENT INITIATIVES

Nothing demonstrates more sharply the complete bankruptcy of the CP's whole strategy. *Red Weekly* has been explaining for months that the rank-and-file should place no reliance on Scanlon & Co. Only independent initiatives by the rank-and-file itself can hope to win the claim in full.

The Manchester conference could have done precisely that. If it had been serious about launching 'mass

action' in support of the claim, it should have called for a national engineering strike and elected a national co-ordinating committee to campaign for this throughout the industry.

But that would mean a direct conflict with Hugh Scanlon, and that is something the Communist Party cannot afford. However, holding back the struggle in the interests of unity with Scanlon is something which the working class cannot afford.

It is these two roads which now face militants in the engineering industry. The CP has made it clear which one it intends to take.

TERRY CRAWFORD

RIVER DON LOCKOUT COULD DETONATE ENGINEERING STRUGGLE

A pay dispute at River Don Stampings in Sheffield could act as an important detonator in the struggle for the national engineering claim.

One hundred and fifty drop-forge workers at the foundry have been locked out by the management for nearly three weeks, as a result of their decision to stop piecework in support of their claim.

DETERMINED

The workers are demanding a minimum of £45 for all stamp shop fitters and drivers, and £55 for all stampers. The lockout has made them determined not to go back until their demands are met.

The timing of this struggle is particularly significant. If the claim is won, it would plough through Phase Three and spur the struggle for the national claim.

However, the main preoccupation of the District Committee has been to attempt to get the men back to work, on the basis that they cannot smash Phase Three alone. The strike committee is resisting this pressure.

An important step in this direction may be taken at Firth Derihon itself, where there is a strong possibility that the stamp shop will

EXTEND STRUGGLE

IMG member Richard Stojak, who is secretary of Firth Derihon shop stewards committee and was invited to attend the strike committee meetings, has pointed out that if the District Committee feels that the River Don workers cannot win alone, then it should be aiming to extend the struggle.

adopt a similar claim to that at River Don.

CAMPAIGN

The IMG comrade is also pushing for a campaign to be conducted by the strike committee throughout the engineering industry in Sheffield. The outcome of the struggle will largely depend on their ability to link it to the general confrontation which is looming throughout the industry, and pull other factories into the battle.

TERRY CRAWFORD

The River Don strikers are getting no dispute benefit and need money urgently. Rush donations to: George Bullock, Senior Steward, River Don Stampings, 7 Beacon Close, Grimesthorpe, Sheffield 9.

RANK & FILE CONFERENCE DUCKS POLITICAL QUESTIONS

The *Morning Star* of 1 April accused the National Rank and File conference organised by the International Socialists two weeks ago of 'trying to split the LCDTU'. Unfortunately, the Communist Party has little to worry about.

Although some five hundred delegates turned up to the conference, held in Birmingham, not many were from the 'commanding heights'.

Of the 300 trade union bodies represented, only 15% were shop stewards committees, combine committees or district committees. The vast majority of the delegates came from union branches, more than one-third of them from white collar unions.

In most cases those present were from IS's existing base in industry. Still, you may say, very impressive. IS does seem to have a big lever in certain parts of the workers' movement. Just so, if it wasn't so difficult to figure out who was on which end of the lever!

The union bureaucrats are urging their members to stay cool and give Wilson his fifty ninth chance, lest the social compact prove to be written in disappearing ink. For a while many trade unionists will listen. But those who are stuck with miserable wage settlements, or are coming under attack in the factories, will not be so inclined to avoid 'rocking the boat'.

Everybody at the Rank and File Conference wanted to fight the bureaucrats, the social compact, the Shrewsbury jailings and Wilson. But there were few ideas offered on how to go about carrying out these commendable tasks.

One resolution was put forward (by members of the *Workers Fight* group) which tried to come to grips with some of these problems. It discussed how to win more permanent gains, how to overcome the political weaknesses of the trade union movement, and how to move towards workers' control. But it was thrown out. Too advanced, too complicated, said a shop steward from GEC Coventry. We must stick to 'minimal' demands.

So stick the conference did. Its approach can be summed up as 'do more and better what you have always done'. But it doesn't work. Two years later you have to do it all again. And in that time the ruling class has learned a few lessons and made preparations, even if the workers' movement hasn't.

What steps does IS propose now that the conference is over? To get everyone to campaign on the conference resolution in their branches and to build the rank and file papers. But the resolution contained few practical steps. Nothing about the NALGO claim and London weighting allowance struggle, nothing about the fight for the engineering claim.

As one delegate pointed out, to say 'oppose all forms of racism' doesn't tell you how to do it. Indeed, the National Union of Students' conference resolution on 'no platform for fascists' was a bigger step forward than anything decided at the Rank and File conference.

The resolution was weakest precisely where the bureaucrats are the strongest—on how to organise the struggle. 'Make all trade union leaders accountable' is an excellent principle, but it doesn't really tell the Lucas or Timex workers how to organise to avoid a sell-out.

The conference was not a real challenge to the power of the Communist Party in industry. IS is a long way off from being in the leadership of a mass rank-and-file movement.

What the conference did achieve for the IS was a considerable consolidation of its base. But, at the same time, it showed how weak are the political foundations it has given to that base.

IRELAND

How close to victory?

This Easter thousands of Irish people will take to the streets to commemorate the Easter Rising of 1916. They will be looking forward, in this year which the Republican Movement has named 'The Year of Victory', to momentous events which seem to be just around the corner.

The results of the general election, and the unprecedented escalation in the Provisionals' military campaign, have deepened the cloud that hangs over the Sunningdale Agreement, and many Republican supporters now consider that its demise is only a matter of time.

WHITELAWISM

This is despite the fact that they have not had much encouragement from Labour's new Secretary for Ireland, Merlyn Rees. The Labour Government seems to have taken on board the baggage of Whitelawism. Of the seven proposals put to the Commons last Thursday (4 April), only the seventh, the maintenance of the Sunningdale Agreement, is of any long term importance.

Labour adheres to Sunningdale not just because Merlyn Rees and Stan Orme are the only two

Labour MPs prepared to take on the job (although they are), or because both think that the sun shines out of Whitelaw's arsehole (although they do), but because Sunningdale is of immense importance to the British ruling class.

The Sunningdale Agreement is distinguished from previous British strategies (the British Army intervention of 1969; the anti-IRA offensive of July 1970; and internment), by virtue of the fact that it does not seek to achieve an immediate solution to the problem of violence. Instead, it ties stabilisation in the North to Britain's long term aim of handing over control of the whole of Ireland to the most stable bourgeois force in the island—the Southern ruling class. All previous measures failed, not just because the violence continued, but because they postponed that eventual outcome.

Sunningdale has achieved the triple goals of creating a collaborationist force within the catholic community (in the shape of the SDLP), splitting the loyalist opposition to Britain's long term aims, and creating a medium term possibility of stabilisation. Because of this no British government, particularly a Labour one, will lightly throw it aside.

FLAWS IN THE DEAL

But this strong commitment cannot hide the flaws in the deal. For a start the two main partners in the Northern Executive have quite different aims. Like Ben-

jamin Franklin they hang together for fear of hanging separately.

Since direct rule Faulkner's aim has remained relatively consistent. He wants to keep as much as is possible of both aspects of Unionism—the link with Britain and the protestant ascendancy. He accepts power sharing and if it became politically possible, would accept the Council of Ireland—but only as necessary evils. His real interest in Sunningdale is to get sufficient political and economic concessions to weld together a new 'mark two' Unionist bloc. This would be a smaller and somewhat battle-worn version, but would embody the same multi-class sectarian character, and rest on the 'special relationship' with Britain.

The SDLP needs power sharing, so that it can appear to the catholic masses as the distributor of jobs, houses and opportunities for advancement. But no less important, it needs power sharing to build a political machine; and it is succeeding. The SDLP now offers a viable career to flocks of young, floral-tied, up and coming catholic professionals.

The catholic middle class has seen two examples of what can be achieved by a petty bourgeois political force which gets its hands on governmental power. In the South both the Free Staters in 1922, and Fianna Fail in 1933, succeeded in jacking up their section of the petty-bourgeoisie to full bourgeois status. Although the SDLP has only one handle of the

gravy bucket, it will hang on to it with grim determination.

For the Southern bourgeoisie the Council of Ireland, by seeming to offer unification, gives a shred of cover to its collaboration with British imperialism.

PROVOS REBOUND

But despite the determination of its adherents since the turn of the year, the balance has swung seriously against Sunningdale. Against all expectations the Provisional IRA has rebounded from last year's serious losses to launch the fiercest military campaign ever. On the weekend of 30-31 March they inflicted £10 million pounds worth of damage, with major bombings in Armagh, Bangor and Lisburn. This followed the major coup, the previous weekend, of blowing up the British Army HQ in Royal Avenue, Belfast.

It is worth noting that none of these explosions was accompanied by the politically damaging loss of life associated with previous campaigns on this scale.

The Republicans today are in their most powerful position since the summer of 1972—when they forced the British Government into a short-lived cease-fire. But there are some important differences.

In purely military terms the IRA is much stronger. Its actions are spread over a wider geographical area, including the smaller towns, and the border areas. A steady toll of lives has been exacted from the Crown forces. Equipment, training, organisation and discipline are much more developed than two years ago.

The aim of this campaign is to force the new British Government into another cease-fire and round of negotiations. Irish newspapers are full of speculation about this being imminent.

Rees's proposals have been interpreted as a hint that he would consider this. The reduction in troop numbers, the 'sign-out-a-terrorist' scheme, and the legislation of Sinn Fein could be taken as a step towards the Provos' demands.

(These are an end to internment, a phased withdrawal of troops, a firm date for complete withdrawal of Britain from Ireland, and an amnesty for all political prisoners.)

But the political base of the Republicans has weakened. The no-go areas are gone, and the SDLP has demonstrated that it can gain the electoral support of considerable numbers of catholics, even in the strongest Provo areas. The Provisionals remain unable to develop mass opposition to the deepening collaboration by the Coalition Government in the South.

This is serious. It means that the British Government, which still commands considerable military capacity, also has increased political elbow-room for manoeuvring against the Republicans.

But on the other hand, the British Government is opposed from both ends of the political spectrum. The huge swing to the anti-Sunningdale Unionists in the general election gravely weakens the agreement.

It is not clear how much this aids the Republicans. Although the election results discredit Sunningdale, they have slowed down other favourable developments within the protestant community.

Prior to the election a deep despair had gripped the protestants. The Council of Ireland loomed over them, and they saw this as the final sell-out to the South. All methods of resistance had become discredited, and there was serious political fragmentation. In this situation some of the protestant groupings began to think the unthinkable, and to consider discussions with the Republicans.

It is necessary to be careful about this development. No section of the protestants broke from sectarianism. All of them, the UDA *et al*, were trying to safeguard the protestant ascendancy.

A BRIDGE

They wished to make some arrangement with the Republicans, in order to more effectively pressurise the British

ASSASSINS!

How Britain's special forces operate in Ireland

When the *Times* revealed last month that a squad of the Special Air Service was in operation in the North of Ireland, two important facts were omitted.

The first was that, according to the Dublin newspaper *Sunday World*, the SAS has been used in the North of Ireland since 1970. The People's Democracy newspaper *Free Citizen* revealed that on 10 March, 1971, a D Notice had been issued, preventing publication of a Government decision to post units of the regiment to Ireland as a result of the killing of

three soldiers.

The second was the *Sunday World's* revelation that the particular group of the SAS referred to by the *Times* had been on stand-by in Britain in case of a possible confrontation with the miners. It was when the miners accepted the Labour Government's pay offer that they were transferred to Ireland.

The SAS was created during the Second World War. It was used extensively for operations behind German lines: cutting supply lines, general harassment, and creating havoc. The unit's personnel were

specially picked to be self-reliant and ruthless.

After the war the SAS was almost phased out. It was saved by the spate of counter-insurgency campaigns required in the British colonies. Faced with the task of crushing these freedom struggles, the Army high command realised the usefulness of a unit which could operate closely with the intelligence network.

In Malaya and Kenya, SAS personnel were used to lead 'pseudo gangs' of natives which carried out operations against the civilian population. In Cyprus, 'Q Gangs' were formed with SAS men disguised as Cypriots. They operated all over the island and helped to exacerbate the already high level of friction between the Turkish

and Greek communities.

Outside the chain of normal Army command, the SAS has remained the most active unit in the British Army, although it is one of the smallest.

The regiment is open only to serving soldiers who have reached the rank of sergeant and who transfer from other regiments. It operates from Bradbury Lines Camp, in Hoarworthy Road, Hereford, under the command of Lt-Col J.P. Watts MC, who is officially listed as an officer in the Royal Irish Rangers.

ABOVE THE LAW

Highly adept at skills like sabotage, assassination and infiltration, the SAS is the Army's elite counter-revolutionary force. As such it is controlled directly from Whitehall, and is above the law.

A former British Army Captain interviewed in the *Sunday World* revealed that in Aden two SAS men, who had been arrested by their CO after two people had been shot in the back, were released on orders from Whitehall. The Captain's regiment was to take the blame for the 'accidental' deaths, and the whole incident was to be hushed up. Two days of rioting followed this incident in which 30 people were killed.

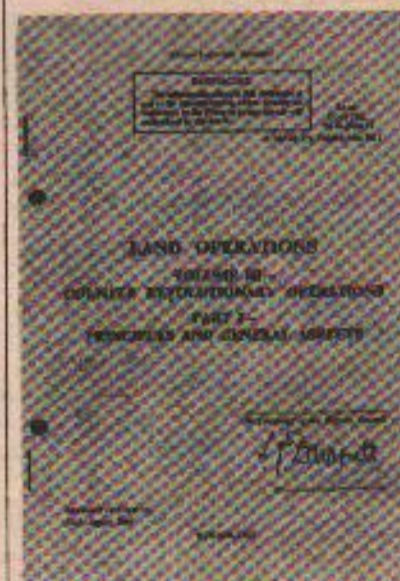
In addition to the North of Ireland, there are currently over a hundred SAS men carrying out operations in Oman.

The man generally regarded to be the 'theorist' of the SAS's methods is Frank Kitson. His postings read like a roll-call of British counter-insurgency campaigns—Kenya, Malaysia, Muscat, Oman, Cyprus and Belfast.

KITSON

Kitson has become the Army's expert in the tactics needed to defeat struggles in any given situation. In Ireland he commanded the 39th Brigade, in charge of the key area, Belfast. He was undoubtedly responsible for the build-up of special forces operating in the North.

With the deepening economic crisis in Britain, and the corresponding rise in working-class militancy, Kitson was quietly relieved of his post in Belfast, and promoted to be commandant of the School of In-



The above handbook outlines the special tasks assigned to the SAS. The *Sunday World* published the following extract from it:

- 'SAS squadrons are particularly well suited, trained and equipped for counter-revolutionary operations. Small parties may be infiltrated or dropped by parachute, including free fall, to avoid a long approach through enemy dominated areas, in order to carry out any of the following tasks.
 - '(a) The collection of information on the location and movement of insurgent forces.
 - '(b) The ambush and harassment of insurgent forces.
 - '(c) Infiltration of assassination and demolition parties into insurgent held areas.
 - '(d) Border surveillance.
 - '(e) Limited community relations.
 - '(f) Liaison with, and organisation of, friendly guerrilla forces operating against the common enemy.'
- In publishing this information, *Red Weekly* is contravening the D Notice regulations.

TROOPS OUT!

Trade Union branches are already showing great interest in the Troops Out Movement conference on the Army, Ireland, and Repression, only days after the circular advertising it has been issued.

The *Guardian*, NATSOPA chapel, and the Hammersmith Hospital branch of NUPE will almost certainly send delegates.

Nearly 500 letters have been sent out, and included in the mailing list have been every Trades Council in Britain, every women's group, every Claimants' Union, every community or left-wing newspaper, every students' union, and most of the university socialist societies, together with a

large number of trade union branches.

The conference takes place at the Collegiate Theatre, Gordon Street, London WC1, on Saturday 11 May. The first session, which starts at 10.15 am, will cover the British Army, its role, technology, and tactics. The second session will discuss repression and counter-insurgency in Ireland, and the third session is 'What can be done in Britain'.

This will be followed by a series of workshops which will deal with particular themes in depth. These include: 'The Press, TV, and the Army in Ireland', speaker James McCann; 'Internal Security, the Army and Police in Britain', which will also

deal with state spying on the trade unions; 'The Structure, Political Control and Morale of the British Army'; 'Women in the Irish Struggle', given by the Women on Ireland Collective; and 'What the Army has learned from its Colonial Wars', speaker Fred Halliday.

The conference fee is 50p, and credentials—for individuals as well as for delegates from organisations—can be obtained from TOM, 28 Lammas Park Road, Ealing, London W5. There will be a canteen throughout the conference, and a social in the evening with Witches Brew, and a bar extension.



government. This was the case even with Desmond Boal, who seemed to move close to the Provisionals' views on Regional Government.

The Republicans were wrong to foster illusions in the nature of these moves. But they were right to see them as a positive development, and were right to respond favourably to them. They gained some short term advantages: for example, UVF/UDA backing for their accusations of British involvement in the sectarian assassination campaign.

In the long term such contacts could provide the bridge over which some sections of the protestant community could cross to join the

ranks of those opposed to British imperialism in Ireland. But this can only result if any last illusions that they have of saving the protestant ascendancy are destroyed.

The result of the election can only postpone such a development, since it opens up a new credible means of scuppering the Council of Ireland—through parliamentary means. The psychological importance of this is considerable.

Despite the savagery of the sectarian assassinations, and periodic pogroms, the political unity of the protestants has depended on 'establishment' leaders, and 'constitutional' methods. The existence of a strong

and united parliamentary expression for anti-Sunningdale Unionism will slow down the fragmentation, and lift the cloud of despair.

TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

The very complexity of the situation argues against any imminent resolution of the conflict, even if a cease-fire were to occur. The British Government still does not have enough strength to make Sunningdale stick, and the Provisionals do not have enough strength to get a settlement which would fulfil their minimum requirements.

The outcome still depends on whether or not the Provisionals can extend the base of the struggle, and

draw in new forces against British imperialism in Ireland. Their continued blindness to the need to fuse the struggle in the North with that of the working class in the South becomes daily more serious.

However, there is another possibility. The continued inability of the British Government to solve the Irish problem, and the possible breakdown of Sunningdale, could create a crisis in British politics sufficient to force a withdrawal of the Army from Ireland.

The indications are faint, but it is clear that such a crisis is on the agenda. At one pole individual bourgeois commentators broach the possibility

of a withdrawal (even the Army has been quoted as postulating that a withdrawal would not necessarily lead to a bloodbath), and at the other there is increased consciousness in the labour movement, and in civil liberties groups, of what is being prepared in Ireland for use in Britain.

These trends emphasise again the possibilities for building a movement in Britain for withdrawal of the troops from Ireland. That is why the message of this Easter to the British left must be to plunge into this task, and help to swing further the balance of forces against British imperialism in Ireland.

BOB PURDIE

fantry Training at Warminster in Wiltshire.

The operations of the SAS in the North of Ireland can be best understood from an examination of Kitson's book *Low Intensity Operations*. In it he points out that during the insurgency (armed) stage of any struggle: 'The problem (for the Army) of destroying enemy armed groups and their supporters consists very largely of finding them.'

He then details how ordinary uniformed units of the Army can assist in building up background information on the area in which they operate. He goes on to state: 'In some cases, however, groups are formed designed to develop information. By using special skills and equipment or by exploiting the characteristics of special people such as captured agents.'

One of the aims of the special force would be to provide 'contact' information, which could put Army units

in direct touch with insurgent units or their supporters. The Military Reaction Force (MRF) is just such a special unit. Set up exclusively in the North of Ireland to fit the conditions faced by the British Army there, its operational personnel are supplied by the SAS.

The MRF first came to public notice in October, 1972, when the Provisional IRA killed the driver of the Four Square laundry van in the Twinbrook Estate area of Belfast. On the same day the Provos raided a massage parlour in the Antrim Road, killing three more MRF operatives.

Both business were fronts for the British Army, run by the MRF. The Four Square laundry was used for surveillance work, and forensic tests were carried out on clothes taken for cleaning.

The intimate setting of the Gemini Health Studio, which advertised 'attractive massages' in the personal column of the *Belfast Tele-*

graph, was used to obtain information, and according to the *Scottish Sunday Mail* of 8 October 1972: '... there are claims that cameras were used by hidden agents to record people in compromising positions, and force them to spy on the IRA.'

Almost exactly a year later 'Operation Lipstick' came unstuck when the *Andersonstown News* broke the story that female British Army personnel with Irish backgrounds had carried out door-to-door sales of cosmetics, and had been running 'underwear selling parties' in West Belfast.

Another example of blackmail was in the summer of 1971, when the files of the RUC Drug Squad were taken by the Army, and soon after young people on these records were arrested, and offered drugs and immunity from further arrest, in return for information.

These operations are just the tip

of the muckheap. Any cover which provides contact with the local population—such as social workers, adventure playground helpers, or census gatherers—as well as any business which could provide a front is being utilised.

In addition to its information gathering operations, the MRF has a 'dirty tricks' department, which examines ways of improving operational efficiency, new ambush techniques, and methods of riot control. It also works on developing new equipment for use during operations.

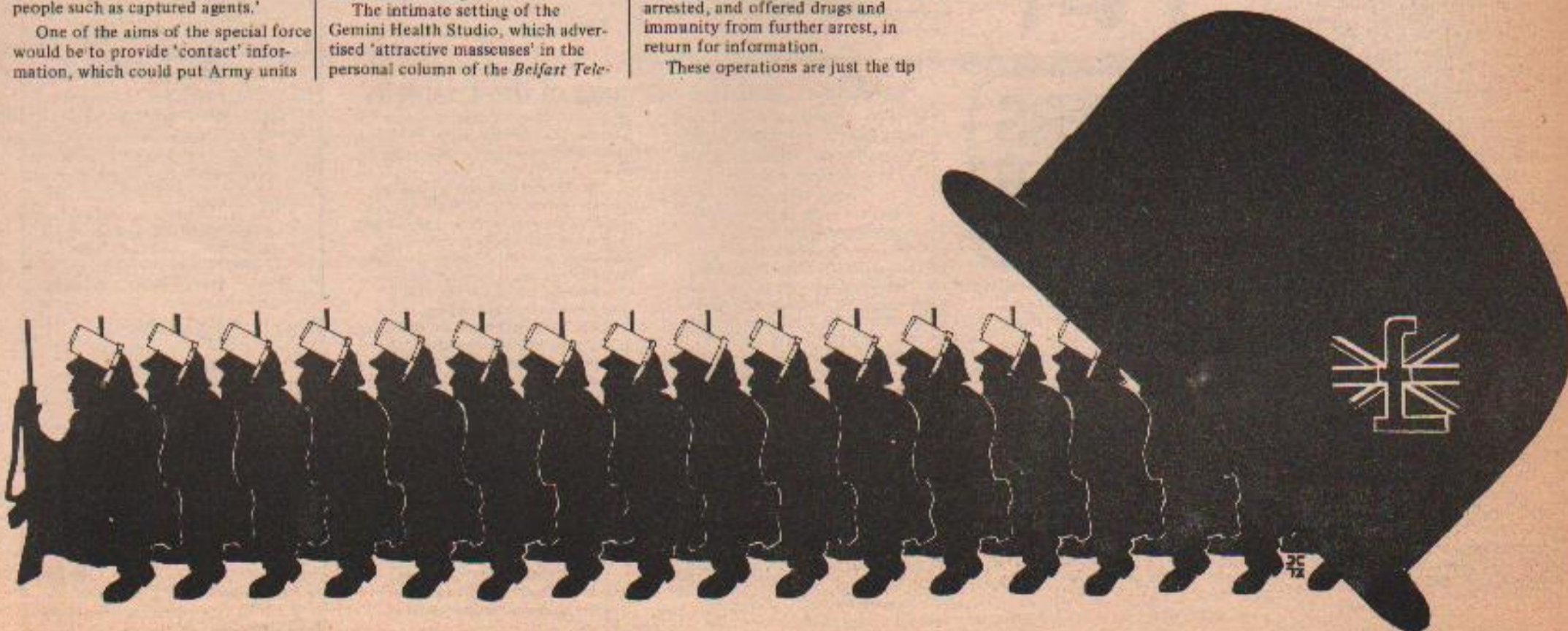
The joint Army-Police operations at Heathrow and elsewhere were in line with the view of the Tory Party—as outlined in a pamphlet called *In*

Defence of Peace, with a foreword by Lord 'Littlejohns' Carrington. This advocated that the Army should be trained in internal security techniques, for use inside Britain.

It is hardly accidental therefore that Kitson was posted to Warminster to teach his population control techniques to the Infantry—the Army's 'teeth'.

Kitson himself envisages that the Army will be called on to restore 'law and order' to areas of Britain in the mid to late '70s. The working class movement on this side of the Irish Sea will ignore what is happening in Ireland today at its peril.

ALASTAIR RENWICK



NO PLATFORM FOR FASCISTS

Left's statement AGAINST FASCISM AND RACISM

The National Union of Students' Conference, meeting in Liverpool between 1 and 5 April, must have left many students dizzy and confused.

After big struggles in the colleges to defend living standards or combat victimisations, student militants came to the Conference looking for a policy which would link and extend their struggles. In response they received from the Communist Party-dominated Broad Left executive a bucket-load of the same bankrupt

says NUS Conference

policies.

BROAD LEFT STRATEGY

Before the general election the Broad Left's strategy in the NUS campaign for higher grants was based on building an alliance of Vice Chancellors, Labour MPs and any other 'progressives' to put pressure on the

Tory Government. And the mass of students? Well, occasionally we were trotted out to provide lobby fodder for marches to Parliament, the Education Department, or Local Education Authorities.

The election of a Labour Government changed the Broad Left's emphasis, but the basic strategy has not changed. Now we are to politely request that Labour MPs honour their election pledges.

The pressure politics of lobbies, petitions, and rallies continue. But not too much! We might rock the Labour boat, and this would not do.

CONFUSION

The confusion at the Conference can be seen in the debate on the cuts in education expenditure. An amendment (proposed by an IMG militant from Portsmouth Poly) linking this campaign with that for higher grants was carried. Yet when this selfsame discussion occurred in the grants debate a similar strategy was rejected! Irrespective of what the NUS Executive think, do, or say, the cut in student living standards will continue. The fight-back against these cuts must be stepped up. But to be effective it will require a campaign of direct action—demonstrations, canteen boycotts, rent strikes, occupations—directed at those implementing the Government's policies.

Likewise, the repression directed against militant student activity will carry on. The attacks on students at Kent, Oxford and Essex are only the foretaste of what's in store whenever students try to fight back.

If the ability of students to resist these attacks is not defended, then all future student struggles to defend

their living standards are in jeopardy. At the present time, this means mobilising to build the picket line of Essex University and get as much support as possible by 24 April, when students return.

STOP FASCISTS

The most significant decision of Conference, one that upset the capitalist press no end, came with the vote to stop racist and fascist organisations from meeting on campus 'by whatever means necessary'. A similar step forward was the joint statement on this matter adopted by the entire left at the conference.

But when the IMG initially proposed such left unity to combat the growth of the right, we wanted more than mere words. We suggested that a joint, open meeting of the left be organised at Conference to discuss and organise against fascism and racism. This proposal was rejected by the other tendencies.

The fascists will not be defeated by resolutions or statements alone. There are three specific issues which face us *immediately*: the activity of the right in the colleges, the campaign against the reactionary anti-abortion group, SPUC, and the fight against racism. The other groups of the left rejected joint actions around these issues. But it is *only* by such joint mobilisations, by confronting the right wing head-on, that the fascists and racists will be routed.

Nevertheless, limited as they are, we welcome these first steps towards left unity against the far right, and will fight in the colleges for their implementation.

Student struggles will not cease, but to be successful they must be given a national lead. Although the IMG candidate in the Presidential election received only 25 votes, and we did not win a position on the Executive, most of our candidates got good votes (Ed Waller, 142 votes for Deputy President; Gordon Gibson, 147 for Vice President; regions; and Val Coultas, 133 for Vice President without Portfolio).

The IMG will remain in the forefront of the struggles in the colleges, and will work to build a leadership among the rank-and-file that can fill the gap left by the NUS Executive's bankruptcy.

The upcoming student rally of the IMG will be a major step forward in the fight to build a revolutionary leadership in the colleges.

STEVE WEBSTER

The following statement was adopted by the Left at the NUS Conference.

Despite the large differences between the Left in the National Union of Students the following organisations pledge that they will work to win students to ban fascist and racist activities in colleges. Where direct action is necessary to stop such organisations the Left declares that it will seek to involve the largest possible number of students in this action and will not resort to individual terrorist acts.

We declare our absolute opposition to the aims of the Federation of Conservative Students. The Left recognises the right of the FCS to politically organise. However we fully support NUS policy which denies that right 'by whatever means are necessary' to racists and fascists.

The Left is also united in affirming and defending the sovereignty of general meetings as opposed to referenda, and in order to secure mass involvement will fight for the NUS position on fascism and racism through these meetings.

SIGNED BY: National Organisation of Labour Students [Labour Party Students]; Militant; Clause 4; International Marxist Group; International Socialists; Communist Party; Socialist Alternative; Broad Left.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Blood donor row exposes racism in Health Service

Racists in this country, from politicians like Enoch Powell to scientific 'experts' like Professor Hans Eysenck, usually deny that their ideas are based upon racial prejudice.

But every now and then facts come to light which break through the continued cover-up of the Nazi-like attitudes towards black people which exist throughout our society.

Just such a story has erupted this past week. It appears that the director of the North London Blood Transfusion Centre, Dr Tom Cleghorn (who is also a medical director of the National Blood Transfusion Services), regularly prevents large quantities of blood from being used in transfusions—because the donors are black. Their blood is considered to be fit for research purposes only.

Cleghorn is quoted by the *Sunday Times* as saying 'Coloured donors are not really welcome as donors.' But, he added, 'It's impossible to bar them. If you said "No black donors wanted" you can imagine the headlines.'

Cleghorn, of course, denies racial prejudice. In the tradition of genteel racism, he has a worked-out medical excuse for this incredible policy.

According to Cleghorn, there is a greater risk of infectious hepatitis—a disease that can be transmitted through the blood—from black donors than from white. Since the greater risk is supposedly connected with the tropics, the blood of black donors is labelled 'TA' (tropical area) and shuffled off to the laboratories.

However, as the *Sunday Times* has pointed out, routine tests for hepatitis are regularly conducted on all blood collected by the transfusion centres, and several medical experts confirmed that they had never encountered a case of hepatitis being transmitted through blood transfusions. The Department of Health and Social Security has stated that it does not consider hepatitis to be a sufficiently big problem in this country to require special safeguards.

While there has been no suggestion that the blood from white donors who come from tropical or semi-tropical zones is receiving similar treatment, the *Sunday Times* did reveal that the blood of black donors born in this country (who may never have been closer to the tropics than Brighton) is labelled 'TA'.

This incident is a powerful reminder of the influence and destructiveness of racism in this country. It is a scandal that a man of Cleghorn's outlook should hold any position in the health service, much less be allowed to translate his attitude into official policy.

CARL OWEN

IMG Rally - Sat. 4 May - Conway Hall



In the face of mounting attacks on students struggling to defend their living standards, many activists are looking for political solutions which the NUS leadership is failing to provide.

The IMG is organising a Rally next month with the aim of bringing together student militants from all parts of the country to exchange experiences and discuss more generally the contribution students have and can make to the struggle for socialism.

Leading representatives of the student movement from France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Chile will be speaking.

Workshops will deal with the anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-repression struggles.

For further details, tickets, or material produced for the Rally, contact: IMG Student Commission, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.



The curt ease with which you dismiss A.J. Cook in 'The Dilemma of the Trade Union Lefts' [RW 37] was rather painful to read. Any miner, any son of a miner, would tell you how wrong you are.

You really cannot wave aside a man's life as a revolutionary with the ill formed criticisms you make. Cook was a man of the stature of Larkin or Connolly. Indeed, Cook *did* see the need of a revolutionary organisation—the SLP which he was still talking of in 1936, ten years after you say he turned into the pet poodle of the TUC right.

Cook, a man on the right of the TUC? What sheer rubbish. He

A.J. Cook and the dilemma of the T.U. lefts

was a fine revolutionary, an honest pitman. No man is without faults, we know, but he certainly *did not* have the faults you mention.

Dave Douglass

Hatfield Main Branch, NUM Far from dismissing out of hand the contribution of A.J. Cook we stressed in 'Dilemma of the Trade Union Lefts' that 'There can be no doubt that both Cook and Smith were devoted fighters in the cause of the working class.' But we must not let this important fact blind us to their serious political faults.

Comrade Douglass is misinformed about Cook's later political activity. After leaving the Communist Party he joined the Labour Party, and was associated with various left-wing social democratic currents: first James Maxton of the ILP and then, very briefly, with the left reformist ideas of Oswald Mosley (before the latter's conversion to fascism, of course). Cook died in 1931.

The fact remains that Cook walked out of the struggling young Communist Party (the organisation which, albeit in embryonic and distorted form, embodied the

principles of the Russian Revolution and Leninism) in 1920 because of a relatively minor disagreement over trade union tactics.

The political criticisms we made of Cook's conduct of trade union affairs—his failure to go beyond the bureaucratic framework of the official trade union movement and use his tremendous influence and prestige to mobilise the mass of workers in the face of the TUC's treachery—are founded in fact.

Cook's principles may never have been tarnished by such treachery, but he was not able to show the working class—or even his own members—a way out of the dead-end into which this treachery led them. This was a direct product of his lack of revolutionary political perspective for the class struggle.

This dilemma led Cook into a series of compromises with the TUC right, some of them extremely humiliating (such as the withdrawal of his own pamphlet on the lessons of the General Strike from circulation).

It is no use pretending that these things never happened. We can never learn the lessons of the past in this way.

WHAT'S ON

LONDON RED FORUM: Every Tuesday at 8 pm in the General Pictori pub, Caledonian Road, N1. (5 mins Kings X tube).

LIVERPOOL RED BOOKS: Revolutionary literature—Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Eastern Europe, Third World, Ireland, Women's Liberation. 81a Renshaw Street, Liverpool. Tue-Fri: 12.30-3 pm, Sat: 11 am-3 pm.

FREE IRELAND FORUMS: Friday 12 April—'The Orange Monolith—the Question of the Protestants'; Friday 19 April—'The Provisionals—Have they Contributed to the Struggle for National Liberation and Socialism in Ireland?'. 8 pm in the General Pictori pub, Caledonian Road (5 mins Kings X tube).

ANTI-FASCIST COMMITTEE in Liverpool wishes to contact sympathetic individuals and other groups engaged in anti-fascist activity. Please contact us at: Liverpool Anti-Fascist Committee, c/o Transport House, 39 Islington, Liverpool 3. All donations to the above address.

CEYLON SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN: Picket Saturday 13 April, 6-7 pm at Ceylon Tea Centre, Lower Regent Street (Piccadilly tube). To protest at cheap tea, cheap labour and cheap lives in Sri Lanka, and to demand an end to the repression.

KINGSTON TRADES COUNCIL: Shrewsbury 24 meeting, Friday 19 April, speakers—Steve Lynch (GMWU), Alan Tatten (UCATT). Starts 8 pm in Surbiton Assembly Rooms (5 mins from Surbiton station).

ANTI-APARTHEID: Public meeting 'Free All Political Prisoners in South Africa'. Speaker: George Peake. Thursday 18 April, 7.30 pm in Brixton Town Hall.

SOCIALIST WOMAN FORUM: 'Women's role in housing struggles', panel of five speakers, Wednesday 17 April at 7.30 pm in Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road (near Warren Street tube).

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER: Meeting for all interested in campaigning round this. Saturday 20 April at 11 am in University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1.

RED LADDER perform their play on women's oppression for the first time in London on Monday 22 April at 7 pm in the LSE Old Theatre, Houghton Street, WC2. Organised by London ad hoc committee against SPUC.

Millions of Africans starve so that imperialism may prosper

From Mauritania in the West, where nearly 90% of the cattle herds have been lost, to Ethiopia in the East, where last year at least 100,000 people died of starvation in Wollo province, every country in the sub-Saharan belt of Africa is now threatened with still worse conditions.

Once again the rains have failed, and the rivers are now at their lowest recorded level. After six years in which every country in this area—known as the Sahel—has been gripped ever more firmly by widespread drought and famine, the situation is

now at long last beginning to receive substantial coverage in the media.

This coverage, however, has been mainly distinguished by its ability to gloss over the real deep-rooted causes of this disaster. Of course the immediate reason is to be found in the weather. But what makes the area so universally vulnerable to unfavourable climatic conditions is the way in which its economic, social and political structures have been distorted to serve the interests of imperialism.

CASH CROPS

Virtually every state of the region

is dependent on a single crop for the greater part of its cash exports. In Chad, cotton makes up 85% of exports. In Niger and Senegal, groundnuts account for 70%. In Ethiopia, the figure—for coffee—is 56%.

This dependence on a single commodity makes these countries very vulnerable to the ups and downs of the world market price. Hence they are unable to plan any stable, autonomous economic development.

But a second effect has also been exposed by recent events in the Sahel—namely, that the land area available for subsistence cultivation by

the peasantry has been dangerously cut away in order to concentrate on cash crops. This was achieved quite cynically—either by direct physical ejection, or through economic restraints such as taxation (so that smallholders had to desert their land in order to earn the necessary cash).

Furthermore, the rapid clearance of the land, destroying forest and plant cover in order to extend the area for export crop cultivation, removed natural protection and opened the way to wind erosion of the soil.

VESTED INTERESTS

Some governments of the region are now beginning to echo the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation experts in talking about the need for co-ordinated programmes of afforestation and similar schemes in order to stop the encroachment of the desert. But this would merely be an attempt to reverse seventy years of distorted, imperialist-imposed development.

In any case, the likelihood of these particular governments coming together in any effective way to deal with the problem is very slim. For the most part they represent the section of the population whose interests are most deeply vested in the maintenance of the status quo—those engaged in agriculture for export, marketing, transportation, etc.

Thus in an interview conducted by the magazine *African Development* with Kenneth Stevenson, director of the UN FAO Organisation for Sahel Operations, we read that 'even during the drought . . . commercial crops have done well'. In Niger last

year, exports of meat rose by 30%. Ethiopia's record is reminiscent of Ireland during the Great Hunger of 1845-48: 100,000 died last year while the export of foodstuffs (including grain) increased by 92%.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Of course the clue to the situation in that country lies in the land-holding system itself. Agricultural experts reckon that Ethiopia is potentially capable of being the grain bowl of Africa; yet vast areas of the land lie untilled. This is because ownership is highly concentrated in the hands of a tiny class whose position is similar to that of the nobility of medieval Europe. Emperor Haile Selassie is himself the largest of these landowners.

No incentive has existed to increase production or the efficiency of farming methods, since rent is paid on the classic share-cropping system, with 50-75% of the produce going to the landowner. Thus once again adverse climatic conditions inevitably bring about widespread disaster.

It is vital in this way to cut through some of the myths currently being propagated about the Sahel. It is quite wrong to say the present disaster is an inevitable result of the irresistible onward march of the desert.

Those who put forward such distortions are covering up the true situation. Today the sub-Saharan belt is paying the price for a century of imperialist-imposed distortion of its economic development, and by doing so tragically illuminating yet another aspect of the brutal logic of capitalism.

TONY SOUTHALL



The once-proud nomads of Mali are now reduced to scratching in the dust for grains scattered after an air-drop

NEW 'LOAN' TO BAIL OUT THIEU

Over £124 million worth of military supplies have been sent to the Thieu regime in South Vietnam by the US since the signing of the Paris peace accords fifteen months ago.

Now the Defence Department is pressing for a further emergency 'loan' of no less than £200 million to bolster up Thieu's crumbling position. In answer to Congressional mutterings, Henry Kissinger issued a public statement on 31 March emphasising the Government's commitment to continued military and economic support for the regime. And in Vietnam itself there are more than 7,000 US 'advisers' to prove it.

As well as being directed at the US Senate, Kissinger's statement was obviously also intended as a warning to North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG). Coming shortly after the 'leaked' news that the US is offering £1,000 million in aid to the North, it clearly shows that the US is trying a 'carrot and stick' tactic to try to prevent a further erosion of Thieu's position.

RECONSTRUCTION

US hopes have been raised in this direction by the low level of aid given to the Vietnamese by their 'allies' in China and the USSR. Furthermore, the devastation caused during the war coupled with their relative isolation has forced the Vietnamese leadership to put con-

siderable emphasis recently on the tasks of reconstruction in the North.

But speculation that this would lead the North to wind down its support for the insurgents of the NLF in the South received a sharp blow less than a week after news about the proposed deal had been 'leaked'.

In a series of stunning raids, NLF gunners bombarded South Vietnamese (ARVN) bases in the Central Highlands and along the Cambodian border; while in a previously quiet sector of N.E. Kantum the biggest confrontation since the signing of the accords took place when NLF units attacked another ARVN base. At the end of March an ARVN base only 30 miles from Saigon was captured, and since then a big push has been launched all over the South to force back Thieu's troops.

The proposed deal has also been denounced repeatedly by Hanoi radio and the official newspaper *Nhan Dan*, and to complete the picture the PRG put forward a new set of concrete proposals on 29 March for implementing the Paris accords.

THIRD FORCE

These proposals were not aimed primarily at either the Thieu regime or Nixon, but rather at the Third Force—the urban opposition in the South—where they have found a ready response.

The opposition in the cities is

now a growing threat to the hold of the Thieu regime. Only a few weeks ago the students held their first organised demonstration for three years, and felt strong enough to make their point with smoke bombs. Trade union activity is increasing, and recently a number of pickets and demonstrations, as well as the distribution of leaflets, have been organised by a united front calling itself the 'Organisation for the Implementation of the Paris Agreements'.

Conditions in the cities are going from bad to worse. Corruption and repression is rife, and thousands of people—including tiny children—wander the streets as homeless beggars. Food costs are soaring as the economy plummets (the piastre was recently devalued for the fourth time this year), and there is massive unemployment.

Under the impact of these hammer blows, and stimulated by the military strength of the NLF and the high standard of living in the liberated areas, the urban workers and intellectuals are now becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition. Known loosely as the Third Force, they are undoubtedly the key to the present situation in Vietnam.

Of course this movement in no sense offers a 'third way', despite the statements of some of its spokesmen, and despite the hopes of some representatives of world imperialism. There is no middle way between an economy based on private ownership and one based on collective ownership and planning; and the whole history of Indochina is living proof that any vision of a capitalist economy independent of imperialism is utopian.

MASS BASE

Nevertheless the Third Force is important, because no matter how liberal the statements of those such as Mme Ngo Thanh, it is doing part of the NLF's job for it by isolating Thieu. Moreover, the mass base of the Third Force—the students and workers—have strong historical links with the liberation movement which are being directly reformed at the moment.

It is also important to understand that the Third Force is incapable of

toppling Thieu without the backing of the NLF—and the opposite is also true. Without the organised activity of the urban masses, and the demoralisation of the army and the police—processes which are being hastened by the Third Force—the Thieu regime could not be smashed in its city strongholds.

Conditions are thus rapidly ripening for the final push, but preparations are being held back both by the continued US aid to Thieu and by the lack of aid from the USSR and China for the insurgents.

Of course the successes of the

Laotian Patriotic Front and the Cambodian Red Khmers are doing much to keep the overall balance of forces still very much in favour of the revolutionary movements. Nevertheless, the continued solidarity of militants in the imperialist countries will be vital, too—in breaking the isolation of the Vietnamese insurgents, in providing the support needed to halt any tendency to concede gains won in the struggle, in limiting imperialism's room for manoeuvre, and finally in forcing the US to stop its aid to the puppet regimes.

DAVID JOHNSON

Argentine Trotskyists denounce repression

The following communique was recently issued by the Red Fraction of the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party) and ERP (People's Revolutionary Army), a sympathising group of the Fourth International in Argentina:

The Red Fraction of the PRT and ERP (sympathising organisation of the Fourth International) denounces to the workers' organisations and democratic opinion the disappearance of comrade Nancy Magliano (known as 'Chiche').

Comrade Magliano, aged 27 years and an optician, was seized on 15 January 1974 by agents of the 35th Commissariat of the Federal Police in Buenos Aires, in a cafe at the corner of Cabildo and Republicas. This Commissariat claims to have released her within 48 hours.

We know that this is not true. The comrade was brutally tortured, in spite of the fact that her life was in danger because of her state of health. Today, two months after being taken away by the agents of the Federal Police, comrade Magliano has still not reappeared, in spite of numerous requests by members of her family and lawyers.

We fear that she has been tortured to death for refusing to betray her comrades and the struggle for workers' power and socialism.

The use of such methods by the police is becoming a common occurrence in the Argentina of Peron. This government, which claims to defend the people's interests and bourgeois constitutional democracy, is filling up with revolutionary militants the very

prisons used not so long ago by the military dictatorship; is trampling on democratic freedoms (by closing down newspapers, banning public demonstrations, banning political activity in the University, limiting the right to strike, scandalously reforming the Penal Code, etc.); is using repression to crush the workers' and people's struggles; is stirring up MacCarthyism and ideological discrimination; and is covering up the terror of the para-police gangs, who carry out assassinations, robberies, and bombings at will.

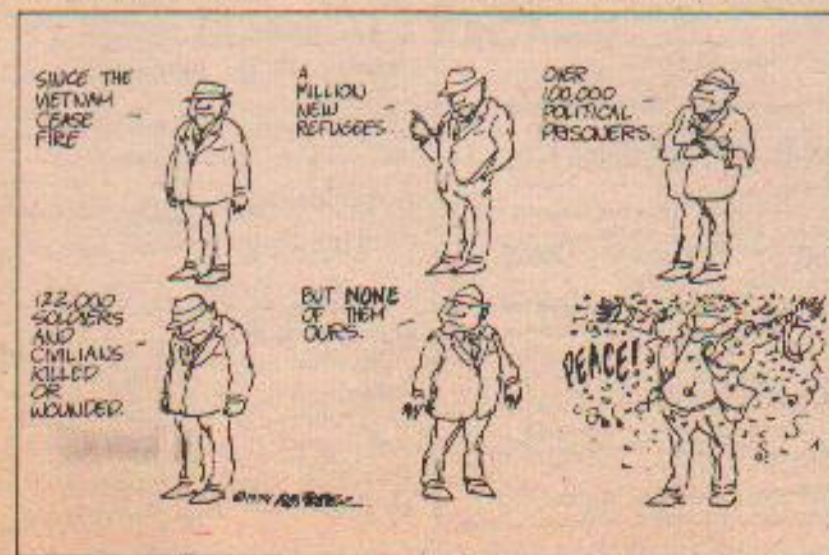
The farce of this bourgeois democracy reached its height with the overthrow of the government of the Province of Cordoba by the local chief of police. It was the Peronist militants, guilty of remaining loyal to the struggle, who were themselves the first target of the bourgeois and bureaucratic leadership of Peronism, which is trying to impose its own solutions to the crisis of Argentinian capitalism: a wage freeze, super-exploitation of the working class, and a negotiated relationship of dependence with imperialism.

We call on you to struggle in solidarity with the victims of the bourgeois repression. Around this aim can and must be built the largest possible unity of all the workers' and democratic sectors.

FOR THE REAPPEARANCE OF NANCY MAGLIANO!

FREEDOM FOR CARLOS CARIDE, PEDRO CAZES CAMARERO AND ALL ARGENTINIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS!

DOWN WITH THE BOURGEOIS REPRESSION!



FRENCH CAPITALISTS SPLIT OVER ELECTION

The death of President Pompidou has really set the cat among the pigeons for the French capitalist class.

Despite much wheeling and dealing, there is every sign that no less than three major figures from the Government parties—ex-prime minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, finance minister Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and ex-prime minister Edgar Faure—will be candidates in the first round of voting on 5 May.

There is even speculation that the joint candidate of the Left, Socialist Party leader François Mitterrand, could win an overall majority in the first round, given the divided state of the opposition. If no candidate gets more than 50% of the votes in the first round of voting, then there will be a second round on 19 May between the two most successful candidates.

DEEP DIFFERENCES

These divisions in the ranks of the Government represent much more than personal ambition for the fruits of office. Rather, they indicate the deep differences among the capitalists, faced with the basic question: how to maintain the rule of the class in the years ahead.

Since de Gaulle rode in on a white charger in 1958 to save the capitalists by setting up the Fifth Republic, France has

had a system of government in which power is mainly vested in the figure of the president. The latter has been portrayed as above class differences, the guardian of the 'national interest'—while, of course, the employers and State's repressive forces have got on with the job as before.

But the right man is needed to go with the job. And while de Gaulle and to a lesser extent Pompidou filled the bill, there is now no candidate of remotely similar stature in whom the capitalists can invest their trust.

Hence the present confusion in the ranks of the Government parties—and the resultant opportunity for the parties of the working class.

'COMMON PROGRAMME'

Mitterrand, however, is far from putting forward the necessary, decisive solutions to the problems faced by the French working class. On the contrary, he and his Communist Party allies have presented a 'common programme' which consists simply of a series of reforms—increased minimum wage, nationalisation of certain corporations, etc. This amounts to nothing more than tinkering with the worn-out machinery of capitalism, when it should be thrown out altogether.

It was in this situation that our French comrades of *Rouge* proposed that the forces of the revolutionary left—as well as the Unified Socialist Party (PSU; the largest political group to the left of the Socialist and Communist Parties) should mount a united campaign around a single candidate.

Such a candidate would symbolise the necessity for the organisation of independent working class struggle to overthrow capitalism, in contrast to the 'parliamentary' approach of Mitterrand and his allies. In this respect the name of Charles Piaget, leader of the epic struggle at the Lip watch factory, was suggested.

But although this idea received strong support from a large number of groups and individuals. It has proved impossible to organise in practice.

First of all the Workers' Struggle group (Lutte Ouvrière) announced independently that it would be putting up its member Arlette Laguiller, a leading figure in the bank employees' strike. Then, last Sunday, the PSU (of which Piaget is a member) voted to fall in behind Mitterrand.

Unless there are any last-minute changes of heart, therefore, *Rouge* will be putting forward Alain Krivine as its own candidate.

IMPACT WEAKENED

These divisions will undoubtedly weaken the impact of the revolutionary left in the elections. This is all the more unfortunate, since a victory for Mitterrand would open up a situation of unparalleled class conflict, in which the influence of the revolutionary left would be a vital factor in enabling the working class to march forward.

But even if Mitterrand doesn't win, there can be no doubt that the election will mark a watershed in the history of capitalist rule in France, leaving everything up for grabs in the years ahead.

Red Weekly

Police ask firemen to help them evict squatters - and get two fingers

Firemen in North London have refused to help police in an attempt to evict squatters in 220 Camden High Street.

Superintendent Lockyear, of Kentish Town police station, asked the local fire brigade on Wednesday for the use of their ladders to put policemen on the roof of a house in adjoining Hawley Crescent. From there they hoped to break in and oust the squatters.

The response was short, and to the point. Said fireman Dave Challoner afterwards: 'The lads refused to do it. There is a great fear among firemen that they will be used in this way. But we just don't want to know. The next step would be getting us to use water cannons for crowd control.'

The Camden High Street squatters are not the only ones in London defying High Court eviction orders. Squatters at the Dover Street luxury flats in Mayfair are also defying the legalised 'right' of speculators to make people homeless. Instead, they are demanding 'Decent Homes for ALL.'

They have set about organising themselves for resistance. Barricades have been erected, a rota of supporters from other squatters and tenants groups will stay in the squats, and an anti-eviction flying picket has been organised.

If an attack occurs, support will be drawn in through a network of phones. Any attempt to evict the squatters will be

turned into a demonstration against the speculators.

The squatters took this stand—and in the case of Dover St., they include families—despite advice from some supporters to 'avoid a confrontation.' Their defiance has already paid off—Levy Associates and Co., who own the building, seem to have postponed their started plans seem to have postponed their stated plans to impose the High Court order on Dover St. on 1 April. They obviously want to keep a low profile.

Camden Tenants Federation is supporting the call for a public enquiry into the activities of Levy and Associates. As reported last week, this demand has support from various sections of the labour movement. They will press Camden Trades Council to take up the demand.

CANDIDATE

As another way of winning support for the campaign, Maida Hill squatters—actively involved in Dover St.—are to put up a candidate for Westminster City Council. The candidate is to be IMG member Piers Corbyn.

He will demand that the Labour Government reimpose the statutory obligation on Councils to house the homeless, and will put forward ways in which the labour movement can fight against speculators, and local councils, to achieve housing for all.

Paper sellers harassed

Police harassment of revolutionary groups continues to mount.

After last month's raid of the Coventry IMG offices, which were systematically wrecked in the process, it is now evident that in at least two areas there is a determined attempt by the police and local authorities to force left newspaper sellers off the streets.

In Sheffield, three sellers of *Red Weekly* have recently been arrested in Castle Square on different occasions and charged with 'obstruction'. The IMG has sold its paper in this square for many years, yet one of the sellers has been fined £3. An appeal has been lodged against this sentence.

Tariq Ali, who contested the Attercliffe constituency of Sheffield in the general election, has written to the local bodies of the labour movement asking them to take up the vital question of principle which is involved—the right of all working class organisations to distribute their literature, which is 'backed' by the big retail newsagents. The AUEW district committee is already taking up the issue with Sheffield's chief constable.

In Brighton, the town council and local police are planning to put an end to a practice which is causing them considerable irritation. Both the IMG and the International Socialists have regular Saturday sales of their newspapers on two streets near the main shopping centres which are not covered by bye-laws on 'hawking' and 'touting'.

Repeated harassment and threats have already forced a number of socialist paper sellers off these streets, and the council now aims to put paid to the IMG and IS by extending the bye-laws.



Over 1,000 Asian workers and their supporters marched through central London last Sunday in protest at police repression in the Indian states of Bihar and Gujarat. The demonstration was organised by the Indian Workers' Association. Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Revolutionaries hounded in UnFree State

Revolutionary socialists in the Dublin area have faced a concerted campaign of harassment by members of the Special Branch, and Garda Síochána (police) in the last few weeks.

On Friday 29 March the Special Branch raided a flat in Dublin occupied by Fintan Vallely, a member of the People's Democracy. Fintan was arrested for 'being a member of an illegal organisation', and posters, envelopes, a handkerchief painted in

Long Kesh, personal diaries and papers were taken. However even the Dublin Specials could not rig up a case, and he was released.

Then on 1 April a member of the Revolutionary Marxist Group (Irish Section of the Fourth International) was picked up and taken to a Garda Station, where he was put in a cell and held for over two hours. Later another RMG member was stopped in his car and questioned.

In each case the questioning was about the Political Prisoners' Repatriation Committee, a local organisation active in Dun Laoghaire, near Dublin. The PPRC recently held a successful public meeting in the town, and has broad support. RMG, PD, and Provisional and Official Republicans are involved.

The arbitrary nature of the laws against Republicans and their supporters in the Free State was indicated recently when a judge warned that possession of the pamphlet 'Freedom Struggle by the Provisional IRA', could be construed as evidence of membership of an illegal organisation. He warned law-abiding citizens, who might want to read about the views of the Republican Movement, that if they had a copy they should burn it.

Ernest Mandel to tour Britain

Ernest Mandel, leading spokesman for the Fourth International and Marxist theoretician, will be touring Britain between 22 and 28 April. He will be speaking on Europe in Revolt.

The following meetings have been arranged:

GLASGOW: Monday 22 April. McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St., 7.30 p.m.

LEEDS: Tuesday 23 April. Bakery Hall; off Tribute, Leeds Polytechnic, 7.30 p.m.

MANCHESTER: Wednesday 24 April. Small Hall UMIST Students Union, 7.30 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Thursday 25 April. Digbeth Civic Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Meetings are also to be held in the following towns. Time and place will be announced in *Red Weekly*.

COLCHESTER: Friday 26 April.

OXFORD: Saturday 27 April.

CANTERBURY: Sunday 28 April.

We keep getting these phone calls...

We keep getting these phone calls... Remember a few weeks ago, when we got a call from the House of Commons Library? It seemed that the members kept demanding to read *Red Weekly*. Well last week the Department of Trade and Industry phoned; Tony Benn's copy was late—could they send a car round to collect it?

We don't claim to have much influence in such circles, but if Benn comes out in favour of nationalising the aircraft industry under workers control, you'll know where he got the idea.

But much more to the point, if we are to increase our readership amongst really important people—like trade unionists, student activists, militants in the black community etc.—we need a better paper. Help us to improve it—send us a donation NOW! Unless we improve, the next thing will be a call from 10 Downing Street.

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