

RED WEEKLY

17 APRIL 1975

No 97

ON TO FINAL VICTORY!

IMG PUBLIC MEETING

SPEAKERS:
PIERRE ROUSSET
ROBIN BLACKBURN

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQ.,
(Holborn tube) 7.00pm THURS.
17 APRIL



REVOLUTION LIBERATES CAMBODIA

The Americans have been defeated in Cambodia and the revolutionaries are victorious. In Vietnam the iron grip of the revolutionary forces is tightening around Saigon. After three decades of bloody entanglement and unmitigated barbarism, imperialism is heading for bloody defeat in Indochina.

Despair and pessimism is sweeping through the US administration. A bemused Vice President Rockefeller confessed to reporters: 'It is really too late to do anything.' As President Ford ran away from reporters it seemed as if he was carrying out a sick mimicry of the galloping retreat of his puppet-regime in Vietnam.

At his San Diego press conference on the Indochinese debacle it is reported that Ford's eyes moistened. But his tears were shed not for the American-butchered poor of Indochina but for the coming nemesis of the corrupt hangers-on who lead the Saigon regime.

He might well be upset. Right along the South China Sea coastline the major cities of Thieu's government have tumbled over like houses of cards in a wind. The ARVN generals have scurried away, abandoning their commands and deserting their troops. The puppets have staggered back to Saigon, the strings on which their imperialist masters made them dance having snapped.

In a last desperate throw Ford has now called for almost \$1,000 millions for South Vietnam—including \$722 in emergency military aid. The other \$250 millions he says is needed for 'humanitarian aid'. This 'humanitarian' aid is nothing more than a sinister pretext for opening the door to a possible US military intervention.

Ford made this clear when he asked the legislators to 'clarify immediately' the restrictions on the use of American military forces in Vietnam. He also asked that the 'law' be revised to allow American forces to be brought in to protect friendly Vietnamese as well.

Ford's intentions are clear. He wants to use the smokescreen of humanitarianism to bring in the B52s and the 4,000 marines who are already on standby.

The heroic struggle of the Indochinese liberation forces is nearing

and powerful military intervention by the US can delay that victory. The world working class movement



Routed 5. Vietnamese troops retreat before advancing liberation forces.

must not permit that to happen. It would be the grossest betrayal if the international workers' movement allowed the imperialists under the guise of 'humanitarianism' to once again unleash death and destruction over Indochina.

The people of Vietnam need aid. They need the threat of imperialist intervention off their backs. They need food and fertilizers to restore their land from the ravages of thirty years of imperialist war. They need machinery and technical equipment to rebuild their country which has been so cruelly ravished by the bombs and napalm of the US military.

In Britain the labour movement must insist the Government recognises the PRG. It must insist that no

without strings to the PRG—which is the only force capable of re-constructing South Vietnam.

A victory in Indochina will act like a beacon of hope to all the oppressed peoples of the world. It will show that the colossus of imperialism is not unshakable but can be defeated. The British labour movement must do everything in its power to ensure that victory is won. If it fails to do that it will write one more ignominious and shameful chapter in the sordid history of British Labour and Vietnam.

BENN BACKS WAGE CUT

Tony Benn, Secretary for Industry, has taken up the cudgels for the social contract where right-winger Reg Prentice and fellow 'left' Foot left off. He has warned the Post Office that state funds will not be used to subsidise the Corporation if it goes ahead with its present pay rise for 200,000 workers—which includes threshold payments of one per cent for every one per cent increase in the retail price index if the cost of living rises by more than 10 per cent this year.

Even a savage cut of 10 per cent in the real value of wages followed by a threshold agreement which in no way covers the full rise in the cost of living is not good enough for the Labour Government. No, the social contract means that the living standards of the



working people who elected the Labour Government must be cut even further, while hand-outs totalling thousands of millions of pounds are given to bankrupt capitalist firms like Ferranti and British Leyland.

As if is, Post Office workers—who suffered a crushing defeat in their seven week strike in early 1971—are one of the most poorly paid groups of workers. The increases in 'new money' in the current deal amount to only 90p to £3.10 a week for postmen and post-women; 83p to £2.95 for telephonists; and between £52 and £172 a year for counter clerks.

Similar warnings on wages and thresholds have been issued to British Rail, as well as local authorities who will be facing a demand from the local government workers' union NALGO for threshold payments of 60p for every one per cent rise in the retail price index.

Meanwhile, the Labour Government, in cahoots with the corrupt Labour controllers of Glasgow Corporation, are no doubt smugly congratulating themselves on their success in using troops to smash the Glasgow drivers' strike and defend the social contract.

Benn's scabbing on the Post Office workers and Labour's scabbing on the Corporation drivers—this is the real and vicious face of the social contract, with its bare-faced lies about equality of sacrifices by bosses and workers to strengthen Britain's collapsing capitalist economy and supposedly defend the interests of the worst off.

Mick Gosling

Every cloud has a...

The Houghton Report did confer blessings. After last week's gift of £100 from an East London teacher, we got another £100 from a group of IMG teachers who have just got their back-pay. That is a good example which we hope teachers elsewhere will follow.

As always, money is desperately short. The worst thing that can happen is for our readers to say: 'Good—the teachers are rescuing the Fighting Fund so we do not need to send any money.' The teachers' donations must be an example, not a respite.

We could get near a record total this month. Please make sure that we do. If you need any incentive have a look at the rest of the revolutionary press. On the EEC they are all over the place. The Irish issue just delivers one unpleasant shock for them after another. Vietnam upsets all their schemes. Their simple line of 'bigger and better militancy' is shown to be more and more inadequate to confront the present crisis of capitalism.

That is why the Red Weekly is so essential, and that is why your paper needs your money. Send it now to Red Weekly Fighting Fund, 182 Pentonville Road, London, N.1.

*Labour and low pay—pp 10 & 11.

PORTUGAL

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

Last week *Red Weekly* reproduced a section from the LCI's Election Manifesto explaining their reasons for standing in the election. This week, we print a further section in which they put forward their programme for a revolutionary workers' government.

'Through the development of the unity and organisation of the working class in the fight against capitalist reaction, we know that it is possible to replace the present government of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie by a revolutionary workers' government, a government made up of all workers' and revolutionary organisations, supported by the mobilisation and permanent offensive of the working class against exploitation and the power of the capitalist state. Such a government would be capable of delivering profound blows to the economic and political power of capital.

'The programme of this government must involve:

'1. The expropriation without compensation of the most important industrial, commercial and agricultural businesses, along with the major means of social communication (TV, radio, cinema, newspapers), and their operation under workers' control;

'2. Establishment of the power of the workers' government over the entire credit system, and the establishment of a single state bank.

'3. The establishment of a monopoly power of foreign trade by the workers' government to combat economic boycott and aggression by the imperialist powers;

'4. Support for the poor peasants through the setting up of a system of credit and technical aid, with an agrarian reform that frees the poor peasants from all debts and mortgages, and, as far as tenants on nationalised lands are concerned, ensures that they receive the product of the land they work.

'5. Expropriation of all war industries.

'6. Creation of a central economic planning agency, integrated and under the control of the mass organisations (workers' commissions, industry committees, trade unions, cooperatives).

'7. A sliding scale of wages and hours; immediate creation of free social services and education; drastic reduction in the price of public transport, energy and housing.

'8. Repeal of all laws which defend the interests of the bourgeoisie and the replacement of bourgeois courts by judicial bodies democratically elected by working people.

'9. Participation of the mass organisations in all levels and forms of the running of social life. These mass organisations must be structured according to the principles of proletarian democracy, which demands elections at all levels, the regular presentation of accounts, and the permanent control and right of recall by the base of all elected representatives; the remuneration of these representatives not to exceed the average wage of a manual worker.

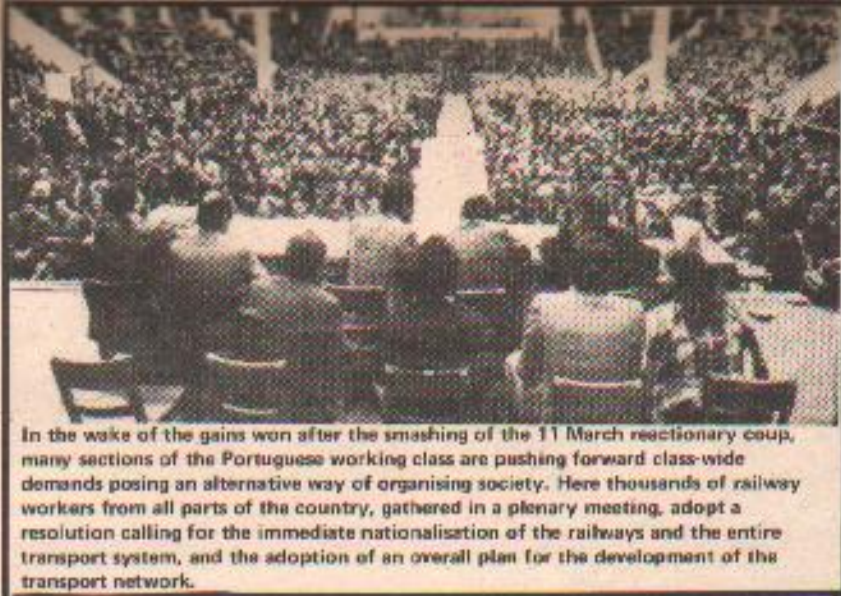
'10. The general arming of the workers and the replacement of the army and the police by a workers' militia and voluntary vigilance bodies integrated and controlled by the working class.

'11. Withdrawal of Portugal from NATO, an end to the Iberian Pact [counter-revolutionary defence agreement signed between Portugal and Spain in 1942], repeal of all treaties with imperialist powers, abolition of secret diplomacy, and the launching of a foreign policy of anti-imperialist support for the former colonies and revolutionary internationalist support for the struggles of the workers of the world; against the Europe of the exploiters and the monopolies - fight for the Socialist United States of Europe.'

LCI Election Fund

The struggle of the Portuguese working class has increasingly posed the need for revolutionary solutions to combat the crisis of Portuguese capitalism and the manoeuvres of the capitalist class. This makes the election campaign of the LCI, which aims to popularise such solutions and the need for a workers' government to coordinate their implementation, so important at the present time.

The LCI is a small organisation and needs every assistance possible to carry out its tasks. For this reason *Red Weekly* has opened a public subscription for the LCI. All contributions to: LCI, c/o *Red Weekly*, 102 Pentonville Road, London, N1.



In the wake of the gains won after the smashing of the 11 March reactionary coup, many sections of the Portuguese working class are pushing forward class-wide demands posing an alternative way of organising society. Here thousands of railway workers from all parts of the country, gathered in a plenary meeting, adopt a resolution calling for the immediate nationalisation of the railways and the entire transport system, and the adoption of an overall plan for the development of the transport network.

Solidarity Campaign
with the
Portuguese Working Class

PUBLIC MEETING

FRIDAY 25th APRIL 7pm

Friends meeting house,
Euston Rd, WC1

Speakers from the PWCC
and the British labour
movement.

PORTUGUESE MILITARY STRENGTHENS ITS HOLD

By CHRIS BALFOUR

The Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (AFM), the effective ruling force in the country, scored a big victory last week in reaching agreement on its proposed pact with all the major political parties in the country.

This agreement, which effectively leaves political power in the hands of the military leaders for the next three to five years, has been accepted by both the capitalist parties, the Centre Democrats and Popular Democrats, the two mass reformist parties, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, and one group of the far left, the Popular Socialist Front.

The pact is designed to give the Armed Forces Movement the authority it needs to regulate the further development of the class struggle in Portugal, bring the workers' movement under control, and prevent any real fight for a workers state and a socialist Portugal. According to its provisions the AFM will have equal voice with any elected body in drawing up a new constitution and appointing the President. The President will have sweeping powers, including that of commanding the armed forces, appointing and dismissing the Government, and dissolving the Legislative Assembly and calling new elections.

At the same time the AFM-appointed 'Council of the Revolution' will remain in existence, with powers to overrule the government and the Legislative Assembly, exclusive rights to handle laws on military matters, and the right to authorise the President to declare a 'state of emergency'.

CLASS COLLABORATION

The pact also provides that the AFM will draw up, in conjunction with the parties that have signed the agreement, a 'common political platform' in order to 'carry out, in liberty, but without sterile and divisive party struggle, a common plan of national

reconstruction'. The nature of this 'platform' should be really something to see, since it will supposedly reflect the views of everyone ranging from the reactionaries of the Centre Democrats through to the advocates of 'socialism now' in the Popular Socialist Front.

In reality, whatever such a document may say on paper, it can only add up to one thing—a class collaborationist scheme to block the growth of workers' power and underwrite the continued existence of capitalist exploitation (tarted up as 'national reconstruction').

Some sections of the AFM want to carry this scheme even further and are now talking about the fusion of different political parties into a single 'broad front' which would provide civilian political support for the AFM. The resemblance of this plan to the set-up in many 'third world' countries where left-wing military regimes have come to power talking about socialism, only to direct their efforts to de-railling the mass struggle, is not accidental.

TROTSKYISTS

The opposition to the AFM's class collaborationist pact has been led by the International Communist League (LCI), Portuguese sympathising organisation of the Fourth International. The LCI was the first of the parties to publicly announce its refusal to go along with the pact, and it was at its press conference that the contents of the plan, which until then had been kept secret, were made available to the Portuguese people.

The LCI denounced the pact as 'an attempt to conceal, through an agreement between capitalist and workers' organisations, the contradictions which irreconcilably oppose the interests of the exploited to those of the exploiters on the political and economic scene.' They pointed out that 'only a workers' government based on the organisations and parties of the working class can effectively combat capitalist exploitation and the construction of socialism'.

The LCI called on the genuinely revolutionary elements in the Armed Forces Movement to 'reinforce their support for the anti-capitalist movement of the workers, to take part in the alliance between workers and soldiers, and on this basis, not to oppose the independent organisation of rank-and-file soldiers, their democratic rights of assembly, discussion and trade unionisation, and to refuse to repress the struggles of the workers in the factories and the streets.'

GROUP EXCLUDED

The LCI has been joined in its stand by the rest of the organisations of the revolutionary left, and after initial hesitation by the most important 'centrist' group (i.e. one that puts forward revolutionary ideas but often compromises with the reformists in practice), the Movement of the Socialist Left (MES). It remains to be seen how the AFM will treat those who have refused to go along with its plan, but an ominous sign is the denying to one of them, the Communist Electoral Front (an electoral federation of several Maoist groups), the TV and radio time to which they are legally entitled.

In other areas the LCI's election campaign has been going well. They have organised public meetings all over the country, stressing the need for the unity of the working class and a workers' government to carry the struggle for socialism forward. At one meeting a militant soldier spoke from the platform to stress the need for the arming of the working class, and called for the creation of armed pickets by the workers' committees and armed detachments of the mass workers' organisations.

In Lisbon a highly successful meeting took place in the Sports Pavilion on the theme 'For a Red Europe of the Working Class', with Ernest Mandel from the Fourth International. Several LCI candidates for the Lisbon area spoke, including Rosa Norberto, a trade union delegate from the important Plessey factory.

Mandel closed his speech by saying 'To each blow which international reaction seeks to deliver to the Portuguese revolution, the European working class must respond with active solidarity. Despite being only a modest organisation, the Fourth International is ready to work towards promoting this solidarity with the Portuguese people today, as yesterday it organised solidarity with the people of Indochina, and tomorrow will do so with the people of Spain.'

SOLIDARITY DEMO, 20th APRIL

A demonstration in solidarity with the struggle of the Portuguese working class will take place in London this coming Sunday. Organised by local groups of the Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP), the Portuguese Socialist Party, and the Liga Portuguesa (an association of Portuguese immigrants in Britain), it is being supported by the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee, and an invitation has been extended to British left groups to take part.

The demonstration will assemble at Speakers' Corner at 2.30. From there it will march to the Spanish Embassy, where the demonstrators will express their solidarity with the struggle of the Spanish workers against the Franco dictatorship, and then on to the Portuguese Embassy where a rally is planned.

Meanwhile plans for the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee's 'Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class' are going ahead. Last week some 120 delegates at the National Union of Students' Conference in Llandudno heard PWCC member Avaro Miranda urge support for the campaign

at a meeting sponsored jointly by the International Marxist Group and the International Socialists. Next Friday, 25 April—the first anniversary of the coup which overthrew the fascist regime—a public meeting is being planned for London, and two weeks later the Red Ladder theatre group will be putting on a benefit for the campaign at Conway Hall.

The PWCC has asked British trade unionists to support the campaign by inviting a member of the PWCC to speak at their trade union meeting, moving resolutions of support for the Portuguese working class in its struggle for socialism, calling on union national committees to invite PWCC speakers to national conference, subscribing to the PWCC bulletin, *Our Common Struggle*, and affiliating their trade union body to the solidarity campaign.

For further information on the campaign, tickets for the Red Ladder benefit (50p each), or subscriptions to *Our Common Struggle* (£1 for 10 issues) write to: PWCC, 18 Fleet Road, London NW3.

TRIBUNE RALLIES LEFT RHETORIC— BUT NO ACTION

Over 2,000 people attended the *Tribune* Rally against the EEC in Manchester last Friday. It was hailed as 'the largest political rally in Manchester since the defence of the Republican struggle against Franco'. It was also the biggest load of left rhetoric for donkey's years—and not at all interesting for revealing the current divisions amongst the Labour 'left'.

Right in these for 'defence of national Parliamentary sovereignty' were Bob Wright, Broad Left candidate for general secretary of the AUEW, and Labour Minister Peter Shore.

"What is the point in the Labour Party winning an election if all trading agreements must be underwritten by Christopher Soames in Brussels?" moaned Peter Shore. The labour movement may also wonder what is the point of a Labour victory when they see the Shrewsbury pickets still lingering in jail; James White's proposed reduction of the right to abortion; and the Criminal Trespass Bill making occupations illegal—to mention but a few of the blatant anti-working class actions supported by the present Labour Government.

Barbara Castle, too, was on the same line, condemning the 'chemistry of fear' and the threats to jobs, trade, etc. used by the pro-Marketees. She went on to tell how 'Germany and France will walk into our markets under trading conditions that

serve their national interests and not ours'. Her defence of 'our national interests' implied that it is better to be thrown out of work by a British employer than by a European one. She had no alternative to the capitalist EEC other than to threaten that the 'basis of this campaign is to preserve our Social Democratic system—the "model for the world"—and if that fails cynicism would result and that would open the doors to communism.'

In comparison with this nationalist nonsense, Stan Orme and Eric Heffer decided to put on a distinctly left image. Orme declared stoutly that "We are not here as little Englanders", opposed collaboration with 'uncommon allies', and stressed the need for 'internationalism' because if Britain does pull out we will need agreements with the 27 countries of Europe and not just the Nine. Heffer stressed that he saw the campaign against the EEC as part of a struggle for socialism—although he was totally vague on how to achieve that desirable goal.

There is no doubt, however, that it was Benn who came in with the hottest line in rhetoric. He called for factory gate meetings and independent action of the trade union movement. In fact, to judge by his words, you would have thought

that a veritable whirlwind of socialist activity and semi-Bolshevik propaganda was about to be unleashed.

Unfortunately, when it came down to the meat to be contained in all this, his answers were pathetic. He bemoaned the fact that state intervention in the economy—supposedly to distort the market economy in the interests of working class people—would come under the scrutiny of the 'European bureaucrats'. For him it is essential that 'the labour movement be able to use the ballot box to remove wrongs'.

In other words, Benn remains adamant that it must be true-blooded British bureaucrats who operate in the interests of the capitalist market economy.

But most significantly of all, not one single one of the *Tribune* speakers proposed any real organisation at the base of the working class movement to campaign against the EEC. This is one of the real tests for the lefts. At the moment their campaign is just a damp squib.

Their refusal to fight for socialist policies is giving the economic arguments to the pro-Marketees. Their refusal to organise a campaign at the base of the working class movement is leaving the field open for Wilson. The *Tribune* rallies are doing nothing significant to combat this.

IN FOCUS

'LEFTS' & THE EEC

When at long last Eric Heffer got sacked from the Labour Government it was greeted as a breathtaking act of political principle by the *Tribune* left of the Labour Party.

We don't particularly want to seem to knock Heffer above others—at least he is out while all the other lefts such as Foot and Benn continue to grace the Government benches—but it was a little belated to say the least. After all he has sat quietly through the passing of the 'Prevention of Terrorism' Act, the sending in of troops against the Glasgow strikers, the refusal to release the Shrewsbury building workers, and many other vicious acts by the present Labour Government.

But Eric Heffer's previous thick skin, and his final display of principle, are as nothing compared to the bankruptcy which has been shown in the last week by the Labour Party NEC. Rarely can the load of fake lefts on the Labour Party leadership have had a more overwhelming line-up behind them. After all, Heffer and the NEC are not just speaking for themselves but for what everyone knows will be the decision of the Labour Party conference, the previous decisions of the TUC, the already taken decision of the Scottish Labour Party, the line of the Co-operative Party, and the policy of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

REFUSED

Despite all this the NEC has refused point blank to commit the resources of the Labour Party to a campaign for a 'no' vote in the referendum. Now, according to the latest reports, the 'lefts' are worried that they have gone too far! They have decided to 'cool it' when the next big test for Wilson's guidelines—the answering of Parliamentary questions—comes up.

The anti-Marketees, it appears, will agree that relevant Parliamentary questions should be answered only by pro-Market Ministers. This decision ties Benn, Foot and company even more closely to Wilson and his dictates. As for questions not so directly related to the EEC, the anti-Market Ministers are reported to have decided 'not to antagonise the rest of the Cabinet by their replies'—which should make the right wing truly grateful.

Wilson is bothered by no such lack of decisiveness. He didn't even go through the normal procedure of inviting the ex-Minister for Industry to submit his resignation. Within an hour of making his anti-Market speech, Heffer was out on his ear. Rely on Tory and Liberal votes in Parliament and chop down the left critics—that is Wilson's recipe for the EEC campaign.

NO BITTERNESS

Meanwhile the 'left' are doing everything they can to avoid a real showdown even when they are forced to make some fight. Heffer says that he 'feels no bitterness' about getting the sack. 'Harold is not the Ramsey MacDonald type. He will remain leader. The Labour Party holds Harold in the highest regard.'

Despite the fact that an unrepresentative clique of right-wing Cabinet Ministers are quite prepared to overturn every decision taken by the majority of the labour movement on the EEC, Mr. Heffer remains without 'bitterness'. Either he does not understand the magnitude of the issues involved, or he does not feel responsible to the millions of rank-and-file voters for whom he claimed to be the spokesman. In either case this statement is irresponsible and gives it to Wilson on a plate.

Mr. Benn and the other anti-EEC Cabinet Ministers 'regretted' Heffer's sacking. How touching. But they themselves took good care to remain quiet during the EEC debate. If they too had publicly broken the Cabinet's directive, the task of the right wing in disciplining its dissidents would have been a hundred times harder.

RETREAT

The retreat was taken a step further on 10 April when Michael Foot spoke at length and with great emphasis at the *Tribune* Rally in London on the need to maintain unity in order to preserve the Labour Government. No wonder Wilson and company can afford to treat these cardboard heroes with such contempt, when in the face of threats from the right wing all they do is curl up in the corner and whine.

The National Executive of the Labour Party has a majority against the EEC. Its majority will carry the backing of the Labour Party Conference and millions of trade union members. But the NEC can only defeat the pro-Marketees by insisting that all the resources of the Labour Party are used to fight for a 'no' vote.

That means open defiance of Wilson and a refusal to make any funds, printing, rooms or other resources available to the 'yes' campaign. All socialists must demand that the NEC and the Labour lefts take this line. Most important, they must demand that the lefts actually organise a campaign in the base of the Labour Party and trade unions.

A failure by the left to fight means that they will be acting in the open interests of British capitalism and trampling in the dust the democratic rights of the ordinary membership of the Labour Party.



Michael Foot speaks at *Tribune* Rally in London—far from proposing any real organised action by the labour movement against the EEC, he stressed the need to maintain unity with the right in order to preserve the Labour Government!

INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP SAYS:

NO TO THE CAPITALISTS' COMMON MARKET

FOR A UNITED SOCIALIST EUROPE

NF's 'honour guard' for Oxford

After their dismal showing in Islington, and their disruption of the Conway Hall anti-EEC rally, the National Front have now set their sights on Oxford where, on 12 May, they aim to hold a Town Hall meeting on their racist opposition to the EEC.

Their choice of Oxford is no accident. After the appearance of the NF in the town last year, the IMG called for a united front to fight any fascist threat. After an initial response from International Socialists, the Communist Party welcomed the initiative. An Anti-Fascist Committee was then set up based in the local labour movement, including representatives from trade union branches and ward Labour Parties.

The successful campaign conducted by the AFC reached a highspot during the last election, when two NF meetings were dispersed (one being transformed into an anti-fascist rally) and the NF candidate received only 572 votes—the lowest in England.

The NF, desperate to obtain a base, is making another effort. It applied to the Labour-controlled Council for a Town Hall meeting. Immediately the

same date, and launched a campaign locally, calling for the Council to ban the Front from public premises.

Muttering pious phrases about 'free speech', the Council Estate Committee accepted the Front's booking, taking the hypocritical position that to grant the AFC's meeting would 'produce confrontation'. The AFC then launched a public petition, calling for a ban, which was signed by 1400 people within ten days. When this petition was presented to a full Council meeting, the Labour majority had a twinge of conscience and referred back the Estate Committee's report. This august body, despite a Labour majority, reaffirmed their earlier decision!

The Oxford Committee for Community Relations, an organisation designed to 'promote racial harmony', have a long standing arrangement with the Council to hold regular meetings in the Town

there were 'problems' about their next meeting on 12 May. Although the Labour Council finally confirmed the booking, they also suggested that 'perhaps you might want to reconsider your decision.' They thus seem to find the NF distinctly preferable to an organisation which receives an annual council grant of about £5,000 in order to 'promote racial harmony.'

All evidence points to the importance which the Front are attaching to this meeting. An NF secret document in the AFC's possession shows that they intend to import their 'honour guard' into Oxford for the occasion.

If the Oxford Labour Council continues with its unprincipled cowardice, then the AFC will call for and organise the biggest possible picket of the Town Hall on 12 May.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL RALLIES

Speakers

ERNEST MANDEL

& SPEAKER FROM PORTUGUESE SECTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

OXFORD Wed Apr 28 8.30pm
LONDON Wed Apr 25 evening
BIRMINGHAM Thurs May 1
MANCHESTER Friday May 2
BRISTOL Sat May 3
SHEFFIELD Sat May 4
EDINBURGH Mon May 5
GLASGOW Tues May 6

Tensions mount as Convention elections near

As the date for the Constitutional Convention on 1 May approaches, tensions in the Six Counties are mounting. In a statement almost unprecedented from a leader of the British armed forces on active duty, the army commander in Northern Ireland last week delivered a sharp attack on Labour's policy in Ireland.

Echoing the most reactionary paramilitary organisations, General Sir Frank King lambasted Merlyn Rees for being too soft on the Provisionals and the minority. If only the British army could be let loose, things would soon be put in order! He said: 'We were making such good progress, my own view is that the campaign would have been over in two months.'

It was for this reason that King criticised Rees's policy of releasing internees. Last week Rees released the magnificent total of five internees—leaving only four hundred still to go, as well as over 2,000 political prisoners.

No more Loyalist internees remain, of course. The last two, the killers of Senator Paddy Wilson, have now been released. The Loyalist sectarian violence continues to escalate. Last weekend the latest sectarian pub attack claimed a further five lives and 30 injuries. This time the attack was carried out in the Short Strand district of Belfast, a small Catholic enclave, hemmed in on all sides by Loyalists. The pub is immediately opposite an army observation post. No-one was caught.

Two Catholic priests, after investigating several sectarian assassinations, had this to say: 'It can be asserted that the British Government and the British Army-RUC look upon sectarian assassinations as a useful political weapon to crush the legitimate aspirations of the Catholic community and their complaints about internment, brutality and torture by the army and the RUC.'

ian assassinations as a useful political weapon to crush the legitimate aspirations of the Catholic community and their complaints about internment, brutality and torture by the army and the RUC.'

BEGINNING OF END

The situation in the Six Counties is, then, a far cry from that demanded by the Provisional leadership when they agreed to the truce with Rees just over a 100 days ago. Not even the most optimistic leaders of the Provisionals could find any evidence that the so-called concessions by Rees have taken them even one inch along the road that they had demanded.



Army GOC Sir Frank King

It is because of this that the Provisionals have revised their policy of a blanket ceasefire. They have now moved to a policy of defence. 'The action of IRA units will be related to the level of violent and hostile activity by Crown and sectarian forces. If there is no such activity, there will be no operations other than against truce breakers.'

This spells the beginning of the end of the ceasefire. For without doubt, as the statement by General King indicates, the British Army will continue to violate the truce. The sectarian assassins, too, will continue to operate—unchecked by the security forces. And this situation will be accelerated when the UUC take a majority of the Convention seats.

SELF-DEFENCE

This situation is potentially positive for the minority. It is clear for everyone to see that violence is endemic in the Six County statelet, that the British Army is totally committed to the side of the Loyalists. It is also clear that the Provisionals are by no means the cause of the violence—but are a 'legitimate' response of the self-defence reflexes of the minority.

This sentiment could be developed by the Provisionals to stimulate the minority into organising for its own self-defence. The consciousness of the minority could be developed to reject totally the Convention and the SDLP for participating in it.

The re-opening of the bombing campaign would only destroy all this. It would allow the imperialist forces to be regrouped and give the extreme Loyalists the focus they need to call off their internecine warfare and rekindle the doubts of the minority as to the source of the violence in the Six Counties.

But whatever the Provos' decision, one thing is clear—as the North of Ireland teeters on the brink of civil war, the solidarity tasks of British revolutionaries become doubly urgent. The Troops Out Movement Conference on 24 May must be the biggest gathering so far of British working class representatives to demand British withdrawal from Ireland.

Brian Grogan

While the Provisionals have no worked out policy for the present situation in the North of Ireland, they and the Irish Republican Socialist Party are absolutely right on one thing—the need to boycott the elections to the 'Northern Ireland Convention'.

These elections are part of the concessions made to the Loyalists by the British, and they serve no progressive role whatever. As the Provisional Sinn Féin statement on the elections puts it: 'The only possible outcome of the Convention is a Loyalist takeover and a complete endorsement by the British of the most intransigent Loyalist demands.'

These facts about the Convention elections are in fact so obvious that even sections of the reformist Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP) are under pressure not to participate in the farce. Jim Sullivan, a member of the Republican Clubs—supporters of the Officials, whose right ward shift is underlined by their own decision to take part in the elections—has made some very interesting revelations about the goings-on in the SDLP.

According to Sullivan, SDLP right-winger John Hume proposed a boycott unless there was a guarantee of ministries for the SDLP in any future government. In other words, he wanted to make 'power-sharing' a precondition for participating in the elections. Hume, however, was defeated by an even more right-wing fraction who wanted to run the SDLP campaign in alliance with the puppet British-backed Alliance Party, and Brian Faulkner's Unionist Party of Northern Ireland (UPNI).

As this last group not merely fully

Provos, IRSP call for boycott



SDLP members Paddy O'Hanlon and Paddy Devlin get down to business with Merlyn Rees, Labour Minister for 'Repression' in Northern Ireland.

supports the union of the North of Ireland with Britain, but is made up of supporters of an ex-Prime Minister of the Orange state, it is very easy to judge in what direction the reformism of the SDLP is inevitably continuing to go. They are not putting up any struggle whatever for their own paper proposal of an all-Ireland Convention.

In the end the proposal for a joint campaign with the Alliance and the UPNI was abandoned—not because it was wrong, but because the SDLP leaders knew it would totally isolate them amongst the Catholic population. The SDLP now,

however, has no realistic policy whatever except to hope and pray that the British will produce a miracle.

Already a spokesman for the SDLP has been forced to admit that 'power-sharing' is not on, and the only question is when they will be forced to withdraw from the Convention. Yet the whole reason the SDLP are participating in the elections is because they want to fight for power sharing! Such is the farcical position any group based on the oppressed Catholic minority finds itself in if it decides to participate in the Convention farce.

TOM PRESS STATEMENT

Two weeks after the announcement of the National Labour Movement Delegate Conference on Ireland, organised by the Troops Out Movement to take place in London on 24 May, applications for delegate credentials are already flooding in. Among the Trades Councils which have sent in are Barnet, Leeds, Harrow, Hackney, West Ham, Greenwich, Yeovil, Luton, Oxford and Southwark. In addition applications for over forty delegates have been received from trade union branches up and down the country, and four constituency Labour Parties will be sending representatives—so far.

Among additional individual sponsors are Senator Michael Mullens, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union—the Union of which James Connolly was once General Secretary; John O'Connell (Labour TD, Dail Eireann) and Leo Abse M.P. This is in addition to William Wilson MP, Jeff Rooker MP, Maureen Colquhoun MP, Syd Bidwell MP, Joan Maynard MP, Frank McGuire MP, Dennis Canavan MP, Jo Richardson MP, Andrew Bennett MP, Stan Thorne MP and Marcus Lipton MP; Councillor LP O'Connor (GLC Alderman); and David Thornley (Labour TD, Dail Eireann).

The guest speaker at the Conference will be Senator Michael Mullens, who will speak about Ireland's right to national self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. Eamonn McCann (author of *War and an Irish Town*) will be giving an up-to-the-minute report of the situa-

tion in the Six Counties; Dr Tim Shallice (Neurologist at the National Hospital in London, and executive member of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science) will give an account of the role of the British Army in Ireland and its projected role in Britain—giving the results of his detailed study of the Army's use of sensory deprivation torture techniques in the North.

Other speakers will include Joan Maynard MP, who will describe the current state of British Government thinking and planning on Ireland, and recent developments in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in the labour movement; Gery Lawless—London correspondent of the Dublin *Sunday World*; and Harry McShane, veteran of Red Clydeside and a close comrade of John MacLean in his attempt to build a mass anti-imperialist movement among the Scottish working class on the Irish question, after the First World War.

We would emphasise that this conference is only open to delegates from Trades Councils, trade union branches, Labour Party branches, LPYS branches and branches of the National Union of Students. We urge all socialists with influence in the labour movement to intensify their efforts to get labour movement delegates to attend this vital conference.

Letters of sponsorship and the Conference Programme, together with a letter seeking delegations from trade union/Labour Party branches, etc. are available from TOM, 103 Hammersmith Road, London W.14.

What's On?

ABORTION CAMPAIGN: Meeting for all women in London interested in either joining or forming a NAC group in their area plus those that have already been set up. To exchange ideas and co-ordinate activities to mobilise for the National Abortion Campaign. Thursday 24 April, 8 pm, Panel Room, Collegate Theatre, Gordon Street, WC1.

FREE DESMOND TROTTER Campaign: Picket of East Caribbean High Commission, Haymarket, SW1—Friday 18 April, 4.30–6 pm.

ERNEST MANDEL public meeting in Sheffield will be at the Memorial Hall, Sunday 4 May at 7 pm.

PRESTON WOMEN'S GROUP meets at the Moorbrook Hotel (North Road) each Wednesday at 8 pm.

BIRMINGHAM RALLY—'Against the Common Market. For a United Socialist States of Europe!' Speakers include Ernest Mandel. Thursday 1 May at 7.30pm in Digbeth Civic Hall Assembly Halls. Organised by Birmingham IMG.

RALLY AGAINST THE EEC in Manchester, Friday 2 May at 7.30 pm in the Houldsworth Hall. Speakers: Ernest Mandel; Ernie Roberts (Asst. Gen. Sec., AUEW); Tribune MP, Chair; Bernard Panter (AUEW District Committee).

'NLF WILL WIN': Social in aid of Tolmers Village Action Group, fighting the eviction of squatters and against property speculation. Saturday 19 April, 8 pm in the Bank, corner of Tolmers Sq. and Hampstead Rd. (Warren St. tube). Films, live group, disco—all welcome.

FREE THE 14! Free the Press! A special meeting on the forthcoming conspiracy trial of 14 people for leafletting troops and the general question of press freedom, to coincide with the Cardiff ADM of the NUJ. Main speaker: Eamonn McCann. Also: John Hyatt (NUJ member and one of the 14), speakers from local groups of BWNIC 14 Defence Group and Troops Out Movement. Chair: Wynford Hicks ('Wildcat'). Thursday 24 April at the Marchioness of Bute (Upper Room), Frederick Street, Cardiff.

BIRMINGHAM Labour Movement Conference on Ireland: Saturday 3 May at Transport Hall, 211 Broad Street, Birmingham. 10.45 am to 5.15 pm. Delegates 50p, observers 30p.

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER Campaign—London Delegate Conference, 17/18 May at City University, St John's Street, EC1. Open to delegates and observers from all women's groups, trade union branches, Trades Councils, etc in GLC area actively campaigning for the demands of the Charter or interested in joining the Campaign. Closing date for credentials, 19 April. Further information and application forms for credentials from WWWC, 49 Louth Hill, SE23.

FOR CHEAP, reliable IBM Typesetting with fast turn around phone Carl or Martin on 01-837 9987.

IMG GAY GROUP: contact J. Mills, 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds.

DEFEND THE 14: Public meeting in defence of the 14 pacifists charged with conspiracy to contravene the Incitement to Disaffection Act. Speakers include: Joan Maynard MP, Maureen Colquhoun MP, Ernie Roberts (Asst. Gen. Sec. AUEW), Bill Hetherington (defendant). Saturday 3 May at 2 pm in NUFTO Hall, Jockey's Fields, Hobsbarn, WC1.

'COMMON MARKET—No, Socialist Europe—Yes': Preston IMG Red Circle, Thurs 17 April at Windsor Castle, 8 am.

PUBLIC MEETING: 'Fight Property Speculation' organised by Tolmers Village Action Group. Tuesday 22 April, 7.30 pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.

LON DOWN -

DOSSIER
ON INDOCHINA

THIEU TO GO!



Exit stage right—Lon and weeping wife



Ten years and \$144,000 million after the first open contingents of United States troops landed in Vietnam the American puppets are collapsing in Indochina. Lon Nol has gone on his 'extended rest-cure.' Thieu spends his time skulking between the front and his headquarters wondering whether it will be his own generals or the PRG who get him first.

It is indeed poetic justice that Cambodia should be the first country to fall to the Indochinese liberation forces. As long ago as the early 1950s the United States was trying to install a reliable pro-American government in Phnom Penh. As early as 1956 a Thai-South Vietnamese economic blockade was imposed on the country to try to force it into the Americans' South-East Asia Treaty Organisation. In 1959 the United States backed the Dap Choun coup to overthrow Sihanouk. The aim of this particular manoeuvre was to dismember Cambodia and create a new state in alliance with the southern part of Laos and its then puppet ruler Prince Buon Oum.

Following the failure of this plot, the Americans then attempted to subvert Cambodia through an 'aid' programme. When this was rejected in 1963 it created a crisis which led to the severing of diplomatic relations between Cambodia and the United States. Finally in 1966 the Americans thought they had got what they wanted. Pro-American elements engineered a majority in the National Assembly, while Sihanouk remained head of state, and the new government under Lon Nol set about suppressing the left. It appears likely that President Johnson contemplated invading Cambodia to support Lon Nol even then.

For a variety of reasons, notably fear of the spread of the armed resistance which had started in 1967 and the hope that Sihanouk could be persuaded to come out openly for the Americans, the US held back. Sihanouk, however, continued to vacillate and accused Lon Nol of planning an Indonesian-type massacre of Communists. Finally, therefore, the CIA organised the 1970 coup against Sihanouk and gave the signal for the US/South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

It was this coup which set off the train of events leading to the isolation and inevitable fall of Phnom Penh. The country which the Americans decided to dismember has instead become the weak link of the Indochinese revolution. The fall of Phnom Penh will resound through Saigon. Thieu's 'extended rest-cure' will not be long delayed.

CAMBODIA: FIRST LINK IN THE CHAIN!

IT WAS WHILE RETURNING from a visit to the USSR in March 1970 that Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia learned that he had been deposed in a coup d'etat led by Lon Nol and Sirik Matak, and engineered by the CIA.

The coup produced a wave of protest in Cambodia, which was only halted—temporarily—by a massive invasion by US and South Vietnamese troops in August 1970, ordered personally by Nixon. For the next few weeks, daily TV reports showed headless Cambodian and Vietnamese peasants floating down the Mekong river, and US tanks destroying Cambodian rubber plantations. Cambodia had taken its place in the Indochinese Revolution.

The coup marked the end of two conflicting processes. On the one hand, all Sihanouk's attempts to build a 'neutralist' state, somehow based on an independent economy and uniting the various classes in Cambodia, had failed.

His manoeuvres were doomed from the start. He never understood that in an imperialist epoch, the road of independent capitalist

development for a poor country is closed by the forces of the world market—not to mention the strategic designs of the major imperialists—and that there is no 'middle way' between an economy based on private property and one based on a dictatorship of the working class and poor peasants. Nor did he understand that the economic dependence of small countries on

the main imperialist powers ruled out completely any real political independence.

Thus the perspective of developing a progressive national bourgeoisie which could unite the contending classes as well as confronting the imperialists was a complete illusion, for which tens of thousands of Cambodians have paid with their lives.

WEAKEST LINK

On the other hand, the coup also signalled the failure of the US to knit Cambodia into its web of pro-imperialist puppets. This increasingly threatened the whole stability of the South East Asia bloc.

The coup succeeded where persuasion, economic blockades, CIA plots, Thai and South Vietnamese invasions, and daily bombing raids since 1966 had all failed. In the

final analysis, it was the importance to the USA of tying Cambodia to its coat-tails that necessitated Sihanouk's overthrow, and this had to be done by deposing him because his Bonapartist class-balancing act would not allow him to go voluntarily.

The polarisation between the classes that had been slowly developing in Cambodia since the early 1960s was given a new impetus by the coup. Within a week the National United Front of Cambodia (FUNK) had been formed and was fighting back. This organisation was based firmly on workers and intellectuals who had left Phnom Penh over the previous three years to prepare for the confrontation that they recognised would inevitably come.

Lon down...



Cambodia's late entry into the war; its previous relative tranquillity (due partly to Sihanouk's nonpartisan policies and partly to its history as a buffer state); the low level of imperialist distortion of the economy, and then the relative unimportance of the agrarian question; and the rapid development of the resistance: these were the factors that made up the specific dynamics of the Cambodia revolution within the framework of Indochina.

They were also the factors that prevented the USA from erecting a semi-autonomous regime in Phnom Penh (unlike in Vietnam), which meant that the puppet regime was heavily dependent right from the start on external aid and intervention. This is what made Cambodia the weakest link in the

PUPPETS FAIL

A number of different strategies were tried, however, to consolidate the puppet regime. But the first failure was the coup itself, which failed as soon as the peasants began to rally to Sihanouk's banner.

An attempt was then made to prop up the regime by direct US and South Vietnamese intervention, a strategy which was smashed at the battle of Krek in January 1972. Similarly, the policy of 'Khmerisation' was shown to be a failure in December 1971. The operation of Chenla II was to be the last large-scale offensive that Lon Nol could mount. After that his army became bogged down in scattered enclaves, denied any initiative in action and forced to move from one position to the next as the FUNK opened a new front in one province, then switched to another somewhere else.

were only made up by drafting in women, children and invalids—who were in turn sent to pathetic slaughter.

The only units that remained completely loyal were the Khmer Krom—bandits recruited by the CIA for guerrilla activity against Sihanouk in the mid-1960s, and well-known for their love of opium, rape and decapitation. They remained loyal to the regime for one reason only—they knew full well that the Red Khmer would show them no mercy at all.

The Government itself, based on bureaucrats and petty capitalists who had grown fat by diverting aid into their own pockets, was rotten to the core. It slipped from crisis to crisis, losing even the support of the bourgeoisie. In 1971, Lon Nol declared that he was going to destroy the resistance. Last year he appealed for negotiations. Then a fortnight ago he slipped out of the country on a 'state visit' to Indonesia, and is now hiding in Hawaii.

OPEN PROTEST

The crisis in the cities early on transformed the initial support for the regime from students and intellectuals into open protest, despite massive repression. Periodically the students have launched vigorous attempts to change the regime. The most recent, in the middle of 1974, led to several days of pitched battles with the police, the occupation of high schools, and the death of the Education Minister. The radicalisation is such that the regime dare not even try to conscript them, and this mood has been transmitted to the working class, who have recently begun to stage small-scale strikes and protests.

such slow progress. For this, the Chinese and Russian bureaucrats must take heavy responsibility. They are the only people who could have materially aided the insurgents, and this they have refused to do. The Chinese only gave some arms last year—and as yet it is unknown what the Red Khmers had to concede to get them.

The Russians still give nothing at all, and certainly not the few SAM-7s with which the airift could be halted and the misery brought to a speedy conclusion (of course the bourgeois regimes of Pakistan, Egypt and Syria do not go short of such aid). In fact, the puppet regime uses more Soviet armaments than do the guerrillas.

NEEDS OF DETENTE

This betrayal does not just cover military hardware. For both the Kremlin and Peking, the interests of 'peaceful co-existence'—the detente—come before those of the Indochinese revolution. It is true that China has given refuge to the FUNK leaders, but at no time have they seriously tried to prevent US interference.

As for Russia, the Kremlin has only just evicted Lon Nol's envoy from Moscow. It was only after the GRUNK (Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia) had won a victory at the Algerian Conference of 'non-aligned' nations and confronted the Lon Nol regime at the United Nations that the USSR grudgingly did an about-face and recognised the GRUNK as the rightful Government of Cambodia.

Within the FUNK itself there have been serious tensions between the 'Sihanoukists' and the Communists of the Red Khmers, mainly over the question of the social depth of the revolution. These were eased a little when the GRUNK was returned to Cambodia from Peking, and have now finally been resolved in favour of the Red Khmers, who have won their leadership in struggle. Sihanouk now openly admits that he is simply a figurehead, and grudgingly acknowledges the correctness of the line followed by the Red Khmers.

NO CONCESSIONS

Despite various political weaknesses, the Red Khmers at least understand that there is no independent social force existing between the revolutionaries and the puppets, and this has led to their firm commitment to total victory without any concessions to imperialism.

Originally they stated that they would not negotiate with the Lon Nol clique. When it became obvious that the US regarded this formula as opening the way to face-saving negotiations, the FUNK issued a statement through Sihanouk that made it quite clear that they were not simply opposed to *individually* but to the whole puppet *administration*.

The puppet regime is now at its last gasp—indeed, by the time this appears, it may have collapsed entirely. At the same time, this victory in Cambodia coincides with the tremendous victories of the resistance fighters in Vietnam. A new period is dawning in Indochina—a further step towards the victorious world proletarian revolution.

Material on these pages compiled by DAVID JOHNSON



Cambodian puppet troops — on the verge of collapse

In 1973 the USA, having been forced to pull out of Vietnam, launched a final bid to redress the balance of forces in Indochina by smashing the FUNK. The whole of the US airforce in South Asia was thrown against Cambodia. Several months of saturation bombing (during which more explosive landed on Cambodian soil than was expended in the whole of World War Two) inflicted huge casualties on the insurgents. But eventually in August 1973 the USA was forced to call a halt by the weight of international solidarity—still without breaking the hold of the guerrillas.

During the dry season of 1973/74, the FUNK consolidated its grip, wearing down the regime's army, tightening its stranglehold on Phnom Penh and even moving its Government back into Cambodia. The capital and its airport at Pochentong were subjected to artillery barrages and sabotage, but no real attempt was made either to block the Mekong river or assault the city—largely because of their fear that the US might intervene again.

GREAT UNREST

Not surprisingly there was at the same time great unrest within the puppet enclaves. Food prices rose 20-fold, most families could not afford enough rice to eat, and so there was mass starvation. Now there is about 90% unemployment, and the riel (Cambodian currency) is virtually worthless. There is a shortage of medicines, and diseases which had not been seen since the beginning of the century are now epidemic.

Conditions were no better in the army. Indeed, a recent report that an army unit had killed and eaten their warrant officer came as no surprise to anyone in Cambodia. The army has been gradually decaying over the past five years. Whole battalions went over to the Red Khmers when they could; and when they couldn't, they preferred to fight. Massive losses in action

At the beginning of this year, the FUNK launched their present offensive with the start of the dry season. Phnom Penh was soon completely isolated. All roads into the capital were cut, with the Mekong river being controlled by the insurgents. The capture of Neak Luong a fortnight ago meant that there was also no prospect of re-opening it. The only remaining supply route into Phnom Penh—Pochentong airport—was heavily shelled over the last few weeks and seemed on the point of being closed down altogether as we went to press.

Even if enough ammunition could have been shipped into Phnom Penh, there was no longer the manpower to use it. The regime became so short of troops that it had to withdraw them from other towns it held, allowing them to fall to the insurgents. Recently the town of Kompong Seila (which had been under siege since May 1974) fell in this way. Nearer to Phnom Penh, Tannac Totung and Ang Snom were liberated last week, while the village of Tuol Leap, which overlooks the capital's northern defence perimeter, was captured the week before. The whole defence line of the capital shrunk back to only a few miles from the centre of the city.

LACK OF RESOURCES

The FUNK have faced serious problems which are still not overcome. Their late entry into the struggle brought with it great courage, but also great inexperience which has led to several tactical mistakes and losses. Their greatest problem, however, has been that of resources. In the face of the massive aid given to the puppets by the US, the FUNK has received next to nothing. Almost all their weapons and ammunition, including the howitzers presently bombarding Phnom Penh, are American made.

These are the factors which have necessitated



'Refugees make citizens'

One of the most effective ways of tracing the different periods of the Vietnamese revolution is to look at the movements of the refugees.

After the Geneva Accords of 1954, about 800,000 refugees left the North to go South. Almost all were Catholics, many of whom were dragged away from their land by threats of excommunication. Dire threats were made that the Communists would ban the Virgin Mary, and they were bribed by offers of free land, jobs and money in the South.

Other methods were also used. T.D. Allman recounted in the *Guardian* on 8 April how the evacuation operation was run by the CIA in Hanoi: 'Unwary children were hustled into aeroplanes as they took off, to ensure their relatives followed on the next one'. Then as now, a 'humanitarian' operation was used as a cover for ferrying in military supplies: 'Before evacuating refugees stamped into Haiphong by US rumour campaigns, ships of the American "mercy flotilla" cached arms in the Tonkin Delta.'

The refugees were heartily welcomed when they arrived, and a big propaganda campaign was launched praising these miserable peasants who had 'voted with their feet'. All of them were comfortably installed in Saigon—many found jobs in the bureaucracy. Not surprisingly they constituted the social base, first of President Ngo Diem (assassinated in 1963), and later of his successor Nguyen Van Thieu.

NOT FORTUNATE

In the 1960s millions of refugees were created who were not so fortunate. This was the period of the 'strategic hamlet', when villages were emptied and the people herded into fortified hamlets little different from concentration camps.

As one USAID manifesto explained, 'Refugees Make Solid Citizens'. The aim was to 'empty the sea', i.e. to depopulate the areas in which the NLF was active and thereby deny them any base. US Ambassador Robert Komer, then responsible for the Phoenix Programme of counter-terror, perhaps defined its purpose best: 'If we can attrite the population base of the VC, it'll accelerate the process of degrading the VC.' The casualties were eight million South Vietnamese made homeless.

Their number was then further added to by the hundreds of thousands of peasants driven off their land by defoliation, napalming and saturation bombing by the US. These people too, were often driven into the concentration camps.

The present wave of refugees arises from

WHAT LIFE'S LIKE IN THE LIBERATED ZONES



The National Liberation Front has won mass support in the countryside by taking up the fight against the rural capitalists.

The root cause of the peasants' poverty and oppression has been the system of land-ownership. Absent landlords own vast areas of land, for which they charge huge rents and impose crippling interest rates on their tenants. Furthermore, the forced acquisition of land into the hands of a small group of capitalists, which was begun by the French, has been tremendously accelerated by the so-called 'Green Revolution'. This has driven thousands of peasants off their land and pauperised thousands more.

Because the rural capitalists are completely tied to the Government and the native urban capitalists—often they are one and the same—the class struggle in the countryside is directly intertwined with that in the cities. The NLF, by raising to the fore the class struggle in the countryside and showing that it is a key element in the national struggle, have built a massive base amongst the peasantry and won the leadership of the struggle.

In the liberated areas the clan of rural capitalists have been overthrown, their power smashed, and the exploitation of the peasants ended for ever. The social transformation of the countryside therefore provides the material and political basis for all the other gains of the liberated areas—and these are considerable.

All observers, even the most reactionary ones, agree on the high quality of life in the liberated

areas. The capitalist press has been seized on by the capitalist press to cover up the powerlessness of imperialism in the face of the insurgents' audacious victories, and also to cover up the enormous influx of arms and ammunition—not food or medicine, of course—from the US into Saigon.

But the consequences of imperialism go far deeper than the uprooting of millions of people. The economy of South Vietnam is grossly distorted, being completely geared to the needs and enrichment of a few petty capitalists. It is wracked by inflation with no stable base or infrastructure.

US Senator J. Walter Fulbright was not far wrong when he called South Vietnam 'a society of prostitutes and mercenaries'. Aid magically transforms itself into arms and graft. Last week a US newspaper revealed that some 200 million dollars in American equipment—including no less than 46 ships—had gone astray. Most, it was indicated, had been stolen by officials in Saigon and sold to the North Vietnamese and NLF!

In Saigon the cultural distortions have reached their worst extremes. Thousands of drug-peddlers, black-marketeers and prostitutes live piratically off the USA's handouts. Conscience has destroyed whatever social cohesion remained.

Added to this is the misery of starvation, unemployment and hard repression arising out of the rot caused by imperialism. No wonder the liberated PRG areas are such a magnet of attraction for the poor in the South.



Liberation forces enter Hue

areas. Every peasant family has their own piece of land. In addition every village has communal land. This is shared out, the labour and the produce being pooled.

As yet there is no generalised collectivisation of agriculture, but it is being slowly built up through the development of 'mutual aid' teams, the emulation of exemplary collectives and the collective clearing of land and building of dykes etc.

The immediate results of even this minimal reform can be seen in some figures published in the PRG's paper *South Vietnam in Struggle*. In almost all the liberated areas there are now two or three crops a year sown instead of one. In Vinh Thuan an extra 5000 acres are now under cultivation. In Binh Dinh Province, agricultural produce is up 20 per cent. In Kontum the acreage cultivated has increased by 30 per cent. The rice and maize yield is up 40 per cent and domestic animals have increased by 20 per cent. The PRG were able to claim an approximate production increase of 64 per cent in the last year.

PHYSICAL RISK

This has been achieved on land previously thick with mines, barbed wire and bombs that needed 10 working days per acre to clear, excluding the terrible physical risk involved.

In all the PRG areas there is no shortage of food. Many poor peasants get a subsidy and any surplus is pooled to offset ussaiers in other areas.

There are two markets in existence. There is the 'free' market and the state market. The state market has a monopoly of all goods in short supply and rations them out accordingly. Goods on the state market are sold at three-quarters or half the price of those on the 'free' market.

Nearly every PRG village has a school, and education is given great emphasis. In the Mekong Delta 300 such schools were opened last year. In Con Man province every village has three or four schools with attendances in the region of 80 to 90 per cent. In Quang Tri province everyone can now read and write, whereas previously 88 per cent of the people were illiterate.

Special emphasis is given to the education of women, and creches are universal. A deliberate effort is made to organise women into women's organisations to break the stifling patriarchal hold.

Special help is also given to the ethnic minorities such as the Khmers in the Mekong and the Montagnards in the Central Highlands, who are encouraged to develop regional autonomy.

HEALTH CENTRES

In health there has been an extensive coming together of traditional and modern medicine. Extensive medical facilities exist throughout the liberated areas, with medical posts in every village and major hospitals and maternity homes at district level.

Seventy-five per cent of the treatment is free. Mobile medical teams regularly tour the villages, and there are frequent immunisation and health drives. Most of the endemic diseases like TB and malaria are on the way to being eradicated.

Regular area conferences are held on all aspects of life in the liberated zone. For example mass meetings were held after the Paris Peace Accords were signed so that the people could debate their significance.

Finally, an integrated system of self-defence exists throughout the liberated zones, with everyone permanently armed. All the

population take their turn in the people's militia and the self-defence groups.

Of course there is still a shortage of full information about the organisation of the liberated zones. The structure is certainly hierarchical, and heavily dominated by the PRG—although organised through village councils.

HARSH LIFE

Life in the liberated zones is still harsh. However there is no longer any hunger. Most of the population can not only read and write, but they are now planning and building roads and bridges as well as playing their role in developing even more complicated technological devices. They have adequate health care. Most important they are rapidly developing political consciousness.

The liberated zones are at the same time the result and the extension of the class struggle in Vietnam. They are the revolutionary bases from which that class struggle is now being extended into the puppet-controlled areas. This is the base of the PRG, and the basis of its success.



Education is given great emphasis in PRG zones

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er different causes. Many are the families of soldiers (who traditionally accompany them). Most, however, are forced evacuees driven along by the panic-stricken troops for protection. Now they are being stuck in concentration camps outside Saigon as a human barrier to the liberation forces.

Many are also genuinely afraid of the PRG. The areas still controlled by Thieu anti-communist propaganda is constantly pumped.

A favourite theme is the myth of the mass executions supposedly carried out by the NLF in their occupied Hue in 1968.



At that time the highest figure of executions reported was 300. Now the figure has grown to an alleged 5000. Correspondents who were usually in Hue never found the mass graves it were supposed to house the victims. The 100 who were killed by US bombs at the same time are never mentioned.

Even *Time* magazine admits that the vast majority of the refugees are just fleeing to escape the fighting. This is hardly surprising, the liberated areas were immediately declared 'free fire zones'—subject to intense bombardment—by the military commanders in the South.

As a result of all these factors, there is an atmosphere of sheer panic cynically encouraged by the Saigon regime. Many refugees do not even know why they are fleeing or what from. The *International Herald Tribune* reported on 27 March, the most common reply to the question 'why are you fleeing' was 'because everyone else is'.

There is a clear division amongst the refugees. The first to go are the local bureaucrats, the officials and the ruling class—usually on the air-flights. Thieu's family, for instance, have already left Saigon. In Tay Ninh the rich fled to Saigon, the poor to the PRG.

The 'baby lift' and the evacuations were



HOLDING THE REVOLUTION BACK

1945 - 75

THE INDOCHINESE REVOLUTION has not only had to fight titanic struggles against the military might of the great imperialist powers. It has also had to counter the back-stabbing and double-dealing of the bureaucrats in Moscow and Peking.

As the 1939-45 war drew to its close, the Allies began to wrangle over regaining or acquiring new spheres of interest. At the Yalta Conference, US President Roosevelt set his sights on establishing an American influence in South East Asia, and suggested that Indochina 'be set up under a trusteeship'.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., in his book *The Bitter Heritage: Vietnam and American Democracy* reports how: 'Stalin liked the idea.' In order to preserve his alliance with the US, Stalin was quite prepared to ditch the nationalist forces, then known as the Vietminh.

Not Enthusiastic

But the British were not enthusiastic about the idea. They were worried about the effect on their own colonial possessions if France lost Vietnam. So British pressure was applied to the Americans to restore Vietnam to France instead.

At the Potsdam conference the US reluctantly accepted the 'military arguments' of the British. The new US President, Truman, approved the projected division of Vietnam and agreed to allow the British troops of the South East Asia Command to go into Saigon to prepare the way for the return of the French. Stalin did not dissent. The need to preserve the alliance with the imperialists was more important than the brutal division of Vietnam.

The French Communist Party took up this line with fervent enthusiasm. Without hesitation it gave unstinting support to the French war of reconquest in Indochina. Marcel Thorez, the leader of the French CP and in the post-war years a Vice-President of France, was one of the counter-signatories authorising the bombardment of Haiphong in November 1946. Over 6,000 people were killed in this attack.

Congratulations

On 20 December 1946 all 182 CP deputies in the French National Assembly joined in the sending of congratulations to Leclerc and his army for their bloody suppression of the people of Haiphong. After all, *L'Humanite*, the daily paper of the French CP, had set the tone of servility to Moscow's line when it wrote on 24 July 1946: 'Are we, after having lost Syria and Lebanon yesterday, to lose Indochina tomorrow...?'



By JEFF KING

The French CP did everything in its power to make sure France did not lose Indochina, voting unanimously for the Government's military credits budgets in 1945 and 1946. On 26 July 1946 the French CP deputies voted to endorse the constitutional terms of the 'French Union', which legally upheld the right of the French Government to treat all colonial territories as part of metropolitan France. Even in March 1947 the CP Ministers in the French Government were still voting solidly for the military budget, most of which was going to the Indochinese war.

The French ruling class was duly grateful to the Communist Party for its unwavering allegiance. In the Appropriations Debate in the National Assembly from 14-18 March 1947, the French Premier Ramadier acknowledged the treachery of the USSR when he said: 'In the Indochina question, we have always noted to this day the correct attitude of the Soviet Government.'

The USSR and its servile allies in the French CP only dropped their all-out support for the French imperialists after the French CP had been unceremoniously dumped from the cabinet. They had rendered their service to French capitalism. The time had come to make way for an open pro-capitalist, pro-US government.

French Smashed

By 1954 the French were smashed in Vietnam. Their armies had been routed at Dien Bien Phu. Over two-thirds of the country was in the hands of the Vietminh, and total victory was in sight. But imperialism still had some tricks up its sleeve - two of these being the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies.

At the Geneva Peace Conference in 1954, the Russians and the Chinese applied enormous pressure on the Vietminh representatives to accept the division of their country. Spurious promises were made by the imperialists that 'free' elections would be held within two years. The USSR and the Chinese urged the Vietminh to accept this offer.

The *Times* on 25 July 1954 reported how the Vietminh delegates at Geneva complained that it was only the pressure of the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai and the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, 'which forced them to accept less than they could have gained'.

The promised elections never took place. As the American President Dwight Eisenhower explained in his autobiography, *Mandate for Change*: 'I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held at the time of the fighting in 1954, possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for Ho Chi Minh.'

The election promises had only one objective - to give the imperialists time to re-stabilise the South Vietnamese regime. The French puppet Emperor Bao Dai was replaced by the pliant American puppet Diem. The stage was being set for another bloody confrontation. Appeals by the Vietminh to the USSR and the People's Republic of China for arms were rejected by both countries.

Formal Recognition

In January 1957, turning its back on the legitimate demands of the Vietminh for a unified Vietnam, the USSR proposed the simultaneous admission of both North and South Vietnam into the United Nations. This move by the Soviet Union was designed to assure the imperialists that it was in favour of peaceful co-existence with the imperialist powers. At the same time it gave formal recognition to the dismemberment of Vietnam by recognising the existence of two separate states.

As the US began to step up its intervention in Vietnam, aid from the USSR and China became even more crucial. From 1965 to 1971 the US exploded 26 billion pounds of munitions in Indochina. By 1972, during the period of Nixon's visit to Moscow, the giant B-52 bombers were raining down the equivalent in explosives of two and a half Hiroshima bombs a day on Vietnam. The US Seventh Fleet had also enforced a blockade on the North Vietnamese ports, cutting off vital supplies of materials to the liberation forces.

In Vietnam the US was using its best plane, the F-4E. But the Mig-23 Soviet combat plane which could have swept the Americans out of the



Stalin agreed at Potsdam that the French could go back into Vietnam.

sky was never delivered to the liberation forces. The STYX missiles supplied to the Egyptians by the USSR - which could have broken the US blockade of the North Vietnamese ports - were also denied to Hanoi.

The SAM 11 was the best missile sent by the Russians to Vietnam. Designed in 1951, it could not be used above 1,000 metres and was totally inadequate against the B-52s. The much more modern SAM 11Is and the SA 4 and 5 - supplied by the Russians to Egypt - were denied to the Vietnamese liberation forces.

Detente

The Americans know full well what the USSR was up to: The *Pentagon Papers* reveal how the US military and political strategists always assessed the likely response of Moscow and Peking before any American escalation in Vietnam, fearing that a firm response from them would cost the US more than the war was worth. But to the bureaucracies (the war in Vietnam was nothing more than a bargaining counter in their attempts to secure *detente* with imperialism).

Their responses were coldly calculated. They deliberately kept their supplies of arms at a level just sufficient to keep the war going, but not enough to enable the Vietnamese to secure a downright victory.

Indeed, so concerned were the Russians that the Vietnamese offensive in 1972 might disrupt Soviet plans for *detente* that Victor Louis, the Soviet journalist, wrote on 16 June 1972 that the North Vietnamese had tried to 'undermine' the Moscow-Washington summit with their South Vietnam offensive.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that during Nixon's Moscow visit Russian propagandists 'privately berated Hanoi for trying to sabotage co-operation between the superpowers'.

'National Interests'

No wonder the North Vietnamese 'accused the Soviet Union of putting its own "national interests" over those of the world revolution' (quoted in despatch to *New York Post*, 14 June 1972).



Mao and Kissinger have 'friendly' chats whilst US bombs rain down on Vietnam.

As the Russians were laying out the red carpet for Nixon, the 21 May edition of the North Vietnamese Army newspaper *Nhan Dan* warned: 'Communists ... never place private national interests above the common interests of the world revolution, much less serve their own national selfishness.' But the call went unheeded. The USSR and Peking were more concerned with *detente* than the victory of the NLF.

But the NLF are not the only ones in Indochina to have suffered from a lack of Soviet and Chinese support. Prince Sihanouk was in Moscow when the CIA inspired coup put Lon Nol into power in Cambodia in March 1970. In his book: *My War with the CIA*, Sihanouk reveals how the Soviet leaders sold him down the river.

The Soviet Premier Kosygin had told him: 'You can have absolute confidence in the Soviet Union's backing of your struggle... we will always support you - to the end.' But when Sihanouk arrived in Peking the Russian *charge d'affaires* refused to give him a message of support. As Sihanouk recounts, his Government was 'recognised by over 20 states, but not by the Soviet Union...'

Embassy

The USSR kept an embassy in Phnom Penh and as Sihanouk says, 'maintained diplomatic relations with the traitor regime'. He also adds the bitter note, that the USSR sent 'moral and surgical equipment to patch up the troops of Lon Nol whom we have put out of action, so they can attack us again.'

The real kick in the guts came in October 1971 when the USSR renewed a financial agreement with the Lon Nol regime. Just to make sure that the liberation forces did not upset the apple cart the USSR advised Sihanouk to return to the path of 'peace and neutrality' and warned him against turning the country into 'a base for war against neighbouring peoples.'

It was only when the Red Khmer liberation forces in Cambodia had driven the puppet regime into a state of complete disarray that the USSR gave recognition to the FUNK (National United Front of Cambodia). Until then Moscow Radio had described Sihanouk as 'the former head of state of Cambodia', thus conferring formal recognition on Lon Nol as the present head of state.

For 30 years Moscow has used the people of Indochina as pawns in a dirty game of chess. The heroic struggle of these people has been nothing more to them than a means of putting diplomatic pressure on the imperialists.

The theories of peaceful co-existence have been demonstrated in practice as bankrupt and counter-revolutionary. They have aided no-one but the imperialists. In Indochina they have resulted in the unnecessary loss of countless lives.

Victory in Indochina could have been won many years ago. But international stalinism has delayed that victory, in the interests of a privileged bureaucratic caste who prefer to deal with the capitalist class rather than rely on the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed masses.

End slanders: debate your politics!

In recent weeks the leadership of the Workers' Revolutionary Party has unleashed a stream of slanders against the IMG which has had few equals. The WRP has declared that the IMG is harbouring 'police agents' and 'agents provocateurs' in its ranks (*Workers Press*, 12 March 1975), and accuses it of 'collusion with Scarman (Tribunal) and the police' (*Workers' Press*, 15 March 1975).

These accusations are just a small part of the steady stream of filth, directed against other organisations of the revolutionary left, which has poured out of the WRP recently. It also stands in a long tradition of WRP slander campaigns, which have been regularly and systematically used to divert attention away from the political bankruptcy of the WRP and its so-called 'International Committee'.

In Bolivia the WRP launched a slanderous string of accusations against Hugo Moscoso, leader of the Bolivian section of the Fourth International, accusing him of being a Government agent. This was designed to hide their own bloc with the opportunist Lora—a bloc which bore its fruits when Lora supported the illusion that the military regime of Torres would arm the workers against a rightist coup.

In Ceylon they charged Fourth International militant Bala Tampoe with being an agent of imperialism (accusing him of going on trips to the USA to hold private discussions with American Secretary of Defence, McNamara!), to hide the fact that their own group in that country had totally failed to solidarise with the revolutionaries of the JVP when they fell

victim to a vicious wave of Government repression.

Last year in Britain they invented the 'Lawless affair' to cover over their own capitulation to British imperialism on the question of Ireland. Now they are trying to conceal their abysmal failure to deal with the threat from the far-right and take any part in the growing anti-fascist movement by launching an hysterical witch-hunt against IMG militants.

PRECAUTION

An outstanding feature of all these slander campaigns has been that the WRP chooses to make them at precisely the moment that the recipients are coming under attack from the capitalist state machine.



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)



Red Lion Square - where was the WRP?

Ireland, Womens' Liberation - where was the WRP?

In relation to the WRP's latest stunt, the IMG has nothing to answer for. We repeat: the comrade who did not appear in person before the Scarman tribunal was a militant in the process of unionising his workplace, and the leadership of the IMG agreed in advance to his course of action.

We would have thought that every section of the revolutionary left would agree with the need to take every precaution possible to avoid the victimisation of revolutionary militants. But the WRP chooses to seize on this commonplace incident and transform it into a 'sinister plot', in order to launch its witch-hunting of IMG militants in harness with that of the ruling class.

WITCH-HUNT

The WRP then goes even further and seeks to cover up for Scarman's 'fingering' of the IMG by saying that we brought the witch-hunt on ourselves. This charge is not only slanderous, it is also absurd—unless, that is, the WRP actually believes that the course of ruling class justice is determined by the 'arguments' which revolutionaries bring to bear in their defence. Every single militant in this country—outside of the ranks of the WRP, at least—understood that the aim of the Scarman Tribunal was to whitewash the police action, pin the blame for the violence at Red Lion Square on the left, and thus lay the basis for moves to further restrict the democratic rights of the workers' movement.

The IMG aimed, by its intervention in the Tribunal, to expose the class character of the ruling class case and, more importantly, to link up the proceedings inside the Tribunal with the fight outside by growing sections of the workers' movement against the threat from the far right. The success of this—combined with the growing impact of the anti-fascist movement in the working class—made it impossible for the ruling class to carry through this scheme. *Not one single significant change in the law came about as a result of Scarman.* But to think that the IMG could prevent Scarman from making any political attack on us is to have a touchingly naive faith in capitalist justice.

As to the WRP's claim to have made 'a principled defence of the IMG from the legal attacks by the judiciary', this is just a sick joke. This 'defence' was carried out in accordance with a well-established methodology, that is also shown in the WRP's 'principled defence' of the Irish struggle: a few formally correct phrases are written in the paper, which are then followed with tens of thousands of words of sectarian diatribe, and a complete failure to undertake any practical measure of solidarity whatsoever.

COVER UP

There is a simple explanation as to why the WRP is engaging in such frenetic thrashing about at this time: it needs to throw up a smokescreen to conceal from its membership the patent bankruptcy of its own organisation, and of its pathetic substitute for a revolutionary international organisation, the 'International Committee'.

The WRP leadership now has to try and cover up a record which consists of years of wrong positions on virtually every major political and theoretical question which has confronted the British workers' movement. Self-proclaimed 'Trotskyist' sects like the WRP—which long ago abandoned the internationalism of the Trotskyist Fourth International for the most parochial of politics, based on a narrow national outlook on the world—could survive and even flourish in a period of relative calm in the class struggle, for as long as the reserves of British imperialism created the objective basis for the lack of internationalist consciousness in the British working class. But now the upsurge of the class struggle on the international plane and the chronic crisis of British imperialism is throwing such organisations into total political disarray.

BANKRUPTCY

The WRP is actually sinking even deeper into the mire of its own political bankruptcy, as is shown by its recent political record:

- its failure to make any sort of mobilisation on the question of British troops in Ireland;
- its failure to mobilise actions against

working class against black and immigrant workers

- its failure to take up the oppression of women in capitalist society, even when issues like opposition to abortion and 'erosion of the family' threaten to become important rallying cries for reactionary forces (its total failure to make any response to the reactionary anti-abortion Bill of Labour MP James White is just the latest example);
- its complete failure to deal in any way with the threat of far-right, racist and fascist groups, exemplified in its absence from the anti-fascist movement and its united actions—such as Red Lion Square, Hyde Park Corner and the recent demonstration at Islington Town Hall.

These political failings of the WRP are not accidental, but flow directly from its political outlook. Objectively they lead the WRP into a failure to really confront the backwardness of the working class, capitulation to the social democratic ideas which permeate the workers' movement, and a failure really to challenge the social democratic, bureaucratic leadership of the workers' movement on any level except that of abstract and barren rhetoric.

INTERNATIONAL

As far as the farce which goes under the name of the 'International Committee' is concerned, its record has been partly exposed by the leaders of the WRP themselves in their denunciations of the opportunism of their erstwhile colleagues of the French OCI and the Bolivian POR. More recently departed members of the International Committee, such as Alan Thorsett in Britain and Tim Wohlforth (former leader of the American group) in the United States, have painted an even more lurid picture. The International Committee now stands publicly exposed as a pathetic parody of an attempt to build an international revolutionary party.

Our final word is simple: over more than 12 years the Fourth International has repeatedly challenged the WRP to debate publicly the real questions of the world class struggle and the real record of our two international organisations. Repeatedly the WRP has run away from such a debate—only once agreeing to a discussion, and then only provided it was confined to members of our organisation alone.

We say to the WRP and its members: leave your sewer of slanders and distortions—come into the light of open political debate and let the workers' vanguard decide the merits of our positions. We challenge you to a public debate on 'The Politics of the United Secretariat and the Politics of the International Committee'.

If you have any confidence in your ideas you will seize such an opportunity to expound them and expose us. If you refuse the challenge then the whole left will understand that your current campaign of filthy slanders is nothing more than a cover-up for your political bank-



Gerry Healy, Secretary of the WRP

LETTERS

Provo campaign - need to break from elitism

The letter you carried last week on the Provisional IRA's bombing campaign was one of the most coherent defences of their position I have seen. But it also highlighted their crucial political weakness—their elitism.

Peter Arnlis's letter expounded the traditional Republican notion that it will be a small group of armed conspirators that will make the revolution on behalf of the masses. 'Implicit in the aims, methods and outcome of Provisionalism is the existence of a revolutionary nucleus. The leaders are the only people capable of creating a 32-county Socialist Republic' (my emphasis).

But the task of leadership is not to substitute one's own actions for those of the masses, who alone can make the revolution. It is to develop the self-activity of the masses, starting from their day to day

concerns, and lead this inexorably towards one conclusion: the seizure of power and socialism. This the Provisionals cannot do—which explains why the Catholic masses still look towards the reformist SDLP for political solutions despite the Provisionals' many successes against the British Army in defence of the ghettos.

In the defence of the ghettos, both before and after the ceasefire, the Provisionals failed to develop mass self-defence of the population. Favourable opportunities to develop mass self-defence—opened up by the Provisionals' bombing campaign which tied down the armed forces in the city centres, and allowed the emergence of the no-go areas—were lost.

In the end the bombing campaign became an end in itself—a blind alley. That's why the ceasefire was a step forward for the Provisionals—in the sense that it opened up for them an alternative to the

ist politics of the bombing campaign—while being a set-back for the struggle as a whole.

Unfortunately, what has occurred since the ceasefire shows that the Provisionals have learned very little from the mistakes of the past period. The whole manoeuvre of Rees in agreeing to the ceasefire was to get the RUC back into the ghettos. The Provisionals have responded to this not by preparing the whole population for an onslaught through the formation of mass self-defence squads, but through the setting up of Provisional 'incident centres' through which they 'police' the ceasefire.

We criticised this because it led to the real danger of the Provisionals themselves demobilising the ghettos. No resumption of the bombing campaign would get the Provisionals and the Catholic population as a whole out of this trap.

Recently, Seamus Loughran, the leader of Provisional Sinn Féin in the North, has proposed community policing which would have a defence function. He has also hinted that such patrols would not be simply made up of Republicans. If adopted this, unlike a resumption of the bombing campaign, would point a way forward for the masses of the minority—but to be successful it would demand a break from the elitist political ideas underlying 'Provisionalism'.

W. G. CLANTON, London



LABOUR SLAMS LOW PAID

AMID ALL THE FUSS about Denis Healey's Budget, one thing is quite clear: the actions — or lack of them — of the Labour Government are viciously hitting low paid families in Britain.

The situation is so bad at present that the real increase in the cost of living of low paid families is systematically concealed by the Government's official figures. The tax and social security situation is so bad that when low paid workers win an increase in money wages it may actually lead to a fall in their real income.

'COST OF LIVING' FIDDLE

Even the official cost of living figures, which the Labour Government has never challenged, show the present rate of inflation running at 20%. This hits particularly hard at the 3 million men and 4 million women who, according to the latest earnings survey, earn below the £30 a week supplementary benefits level for a two child family. What is not so generally realised, however, is that the official figures on inflation greatly underestimate the effect of inflation on working class living standards. Above all, they underestimate the effect on the low paid.

showed rises in food prices of 61 per cent, in fuel and light of over 30 per cent, and in housing of 50 per cent on average. By contrast the price of durable household goods like washing machines and cookers rose by only 29 per cent.

The real impact of inflation on the low paid is further underplayed by the exclusion of the richest and the poorest from the Family Expenditure Survey. But it is the poorest who suffer the highest rates of inflation — especially the old and disabled, and harassed mothers who have to use the corner shops rather than supermarkets and out-of-town hyper-markets, and thus miss out on the cost-saving of bulk buying.

Not only does the Retail Price Index contain fur coats and jewellery, but it also lumps together mince and oysters in the same category. Similarly public and private transport are not separated, and rents and mortgages are put together.

In Italy and France the fiddling of the price index is so blatant that even functionaries of the various institutes of statistics have denounced it themselves. In Belgium the trade unions have often campaigned against the 'top hat index', which included that item in an index on which increases to compensate for inflation were to be calculated.

The only way to stop such goings-on is for the establishment of a price index drawn up by the trade unions, which can monitor prices for the use of the workers movement in calculating the true rise in the workers' cost of living. Healey, precisely because he knows the effect of this, has no intention whatever of moving to any such index.

THE POVERTY TRAP

While the fiddled cost of living index conceals much of the real impact of inflation on low pay, a second hidden attack is the effects on the low paid of the tax and social security policies which Labour has maintained. These form the vicious circle of the



Low pay hits the aged and the children of the poor

'poverty trap'

The first part of the poverty trap is the way in which taxation works. As inflation soars money wages go up, but without real income rising at all. However taxation is carried out on money and not real income. The result is that, for example, money income may go up by £2 without real income going up at all, but taxation is carried out as though real income had increased by £2. The result is that the standard of living at which people begin to pay tax continually falls.

In fact the value of the tax 'threshold' has dropped consistently in real terms since the mid-1960s. When it was raised by the Labour Government in April 1974 it was still £1.69 lower in real terms for families with two, three and four children than in 1972. In this situation a low income family raising its money earnings to keep pace with inflation can easily find itself worse off after a pay increase

than before. *The Economist* of 12-18 April estimates that 50,000 poor families (probably nearly a quarter of a million people) now actually lose money with every £1 they earn, since they have to pay 33p in tax on it and lose more than 67p of means-tested benefits through it.

In August 1974 the Department of Health and Social Security estimated that 450,000 families would be subject to a 'potential marginal tax rate of more than 50p in the pound'. (*Hansard*, 10.6.74) Of these families 249,000 were receiving less than £30 a week in wages. The tax threshold is now below the level of income at which families become eligible for Family Income Supplement, producing the absurd situation where families officially defined as poor are paying high rates of tax.

THE MEAL SNATCHER

Finally in the poverty trap, just in case anyone escapes the taxation

teeth, there is yet one more attack. As money incomes rise in response to inflation, many families lose their eligibility to Family Income Supplement. In turn this means that they lose the right to free school meals, free prescriptions, free dental and eye treatment, and free welfare milk for young children and expectant mothers. Hit the sick, the children, and the pregnant — that is what the Social Con-trick tolerates.

The way to end this situation is very simple. All taxation on working class wages should be abolished, free school meals should be available to all, all health charges should be abolished, and a sliding scale of wages and benefits, calculated on a working class cost of living index, should be implemented. All this is easily possible through a planned socialist economy. Instead Healey will continue to sacrifice the low paid to the great god of the profit system.

by Mick Gosling

A recent investigation into *Poor Families and Inflation* by the Child Poverty Action Group worked out that low income families spent 44 per cent of their budget on food and 25 per cent on housing. But according to the official Family Expenditure Survey for 1973, average households spent 24.4 per cent on food and 13.5 per cent on housing.

Until very recently, it was in these areas that prices were rising fastest. Between January 1970 and January 1974 the official Retail Price Index

£1 A WEEK - THAT'S WHAT IT'S WORTH

One pound a week — that's what the social contract is worth! At least that's the size of the pay increase that Leslie Sillitoe, National Secretary of the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union, tried to sell under the guise of the con-trick to a mass meeting of thousands of pottery workers in Stoke-on-Trent on 7 April.

Not surprisingly the offer met with derision even from this traditionally non-militant group of workers. Pottery workers are one of the lowest paid groups of industrial workers, with a wage level some £20 below the national average.

The annual wage agreement between CATU and the British Ceramic Manufacturers Federation normally becomes operative on 25 March of each year. By tradition, the round of negotiations leading up to this agreement is opened six weeks before by the exchange of the 'March Notices' between CATU and the BCMF.

This year the Union's March Notice called for a substantial increase in basic and piecework rates, a new threshold agreement, three extra days paid holiday a year, improved overtime rates, and the payment of adult rates at 18 instead of 19. But the settlement, while conceding the last two points and giving an extra two days holiday as well as consolidating the existing threshold payment into the basic, gave no new threshold agreement and offered only £1 in 'new money' — with further small pay increases in three stages

spread over the coming year.

By rejecting the proposed settlement and refusing to be intimidated by Sillitoe's talk of the social contract, pottery workers have taken an important step forward in the fight against low pay. The Union executive must now go back and resume negotiations on the basis of the original 'March Notice' claim.

Unfortunately, while calling for a 'substantial' increase, this did not specify

a particular figure. The following clear demands should be put to the employers' federation:

— a £20 increase on basic rates to bring the pottery workers up to the national average wage;

— extension of the threshold agreement and its transformation into a sliding scale of wages which will give automatic protection of real wages against every increase in the cost of living.

The employers' federation will no doubt refuse to grant 'substantial' increases on the grounds that they would be outside the guidelines of the social contract. This is when the real fight will start. The only way forward for pottery workers against low pay is through the decisive smashing of the social contract.

Jason Hill
Geoff Lowless

LOW PAY HITS THE NURSES

The latest nurses' pay settlement does nothing to solve the problem of low pay in the National Health Service.

The award gives a student nurse a minimum wage of £30 — meaning an increase of around £8 a week. However this includes thresholds of £4.40 which are being absorbed into the new rates, and there is no new cost of living agreement. The real increase is therefore a miserly £3.60 a week.

It was months after the *Halsbury Report* was published before the nurses got their increase, and by that time inflation had eroded most of the new award. But *Halsbury* had also warned about the need to increase board and lodging charges, and even though the Government has been slow to implement its other promises about the

NHS it was quick to fulfil that one.

In 1972 boarding charges were £2.40 a month. In 1975 they are £10 a month — an increase of 316 per cent. Now they are to go up by another 17 per cent. Eating costs are also going up. The Ancillary Staffs side of the Whitley Council has negotiated a rise in canteen prices which will affect all NHS workers.

Not long ago Alan Fisher was describing the nurses as victims of a 'primitive

slave society'. Emotive words indeed. But NUPE, like all the other NHS unions, has done nothing to emancipate the slaves. All the union leaders have back-peddled on the demand for a cut in the working week and for major improvements in the special duty money they were so loudly demanding a

short time ago.

Last year the nurses were united and prepared to wage a struggle for an all-round better wage. The findings of the *Halsbury Report* were designed to split that unity. The nursing officers were given quite substantial increases and the student nurses left with a mere pittance. Now it is the really low-paid student nurses who will have to fight the battle alone.

This is the social contract in practice — hitting hardest at groups like the nurses who are expected to pay for the crisis of the capitalist system. The NHS is in a state of near collapse and once again the Labour Government is putting the burden of that crisis round the necks of the low paid.

JANET MAGUIRE



It's nice to know we're helping to hold it down a little!



Wages councils - Labour's criminal record

Labour Governments have always been keen to dress wage restraint in the clothing of 'egalitarianism' and 'help for the lower paid'. The social contract itself is based on the fraud that in return for wage restraint by the more powerful sections of the trade union movement, the living standards of the worst off will be defended and the social services improved. Labour's record on low pay, and especially its attitude towards industries covered by Wages Councils—which should have been abolished in any case, as they are a poverty trap for the low paid—points to a very different conclusion.

Wages Councils were established in 1909—supposedly to improve the wages of workers in the sweated trades.

Today there are 53 such Councils covering some 3½ million workers.

When Labour got the opportunity to do something for the low paid after the Second World War it soon made its attitude clear. Post-war austerity measures were continued with Labour's attempt to introduce an incomes policy in 1948 with the publication of the White Paper, *Personal Incomes, Costs and Prices*. This was followed by a letter from the Minister of Labour to Wages Councils suggesting that any proposals conflicting with Government policy would be referred back. Trade union pressure forced the Government to withdraw the letter.

INCOMES POLICY

The 1964-70 Labour Government further developed the tactic of referring back and delaying the signing of Wages Council recommendations on pay, inadequate as they were. As Frank Field and Steve Winyard have pointed out in a recent report*: 'On a number of occasions orders were held up for signing on the grounds that, if implemented, they would be outside the guidelines of the Government's incomes policy. In this way the Government postponed wage increases for the low paid.'

The Prices and Incomes Board played a leading role in this policy. When the Retail Drapery Wages Council proposed in 1967 to increase the minimum wage paid to male counter assistants in drapers' shops from £11.15 to £11.90 a week, the PIB decided £11.75 was enough. And when agricultural workers decided to better their 1967 wage of £10.50 for a 44-hour week, the PIB granted precisely 30p extra a week!

Not surprisingly many of these wage settlements were not even keeping pace with inflation. In their

September 1970 report, Incomes Data Services Ltd. looked at the increase in minimum rates for male workers in the 53 Wages Council industries, and compared these increases with the rise in prices in the previous five years. IDS reported: 'In the last five years retail prices have risen by 24.7 per cent. During this period in 25 out of 53 Wages Councils the lowest minimum rates for men have risen less than 24.7 per cent.'

The comparison was even worse for the 1968-70 period, when prices had risen 12.1 per cent. Even these figures underestimate the true drop in real living standards by not taking into account increased insurance, pension and tax contributions, and the fact that most wage increases followed after the effect of price rises on incomes had already been felt.

THRESHOLDS

In its most recent period of office the Labour Government has succeeded in ending the one thing that gave the lower paid some protection, however inadequate, against inflation: threshold agreements. Instead of fighting to extend these by introducing automatic cost of living increases, giving automatic compensation against any increase in the cost of living, the Labour Government got rid of them as soon as they could.

Michael Foot, the Secretary of State for Employment, laid the blame (!) for the relatively high level of wage settlements last year on the Tory Government. *Labour Weekly* reported him as saying: 'The present rate (of wage settlements) can be attributed in large part . . . to the ill-conceived threshold agreements that Mr. Heath started in his Stage III package.' So much for the social contrick!

James Drake

*Frank Field and Steve Winyard: *Wages Councils*—Spokesman Pamphlet No. 49



One group of workers who are usually even worse off than the low paid, and ignored just as much by the unions and the Labour Government alike, are those dependent on supplementary benefits.

On 7 April Family Allowances went up, but as the regulations stand the increase will automatically be deducted from supplementary benefit payments. To draw attention to this, the National Claimants Union picketed social security offices throughout Britain on Tuesday 8 April. They are also demanding that

supplementary benefits should be related to the cost of living.

The sliding scale of wages and benefits, with automatic compensation for every one per cent rise in the cost of living, is of particular importance to those in weakly organised sectors: usually the low paid, and those dependent on state or Old Age Pensions. The fight for automatic compensation against inflation would not only defend workers living standards, but help win over these other groups solidly to the side of the workers in the class struggle.

CAR STEWARDS MUST CALL FOR WORKSHARING

LEADING STEWARDS AND CONVENORS from the entire motor industry will meet in Birmingham on 23 April to discuss the problems facing carworkers as the industry slips deeper into the capitalist crisis. This move, initiated by the British Leyland Combine Shop Stewards Committee, is an important step forward, but comes none too soon as a second wave of short-time working, voluntary redundancies and a new productivity offensive hits the motor industry.

British Leyland itself is on the point of collapse. Only the massive injection of state funds as a result of the Ryder inquiry will keep it alive. In its Midland factories alone, 25,000 workers are on short-time. At the Longbridge plant the management are now demanding more than 3,000 redundancies against an earlier figure of 1,200.

Fords have thrown 14,000 of their 52,000 manual workers on short-time. They are now threatening redundancies by claiming that the lay-off pay fund is running out of money. Vauxhall are putting 2,000 back on short-time next week in spite of earlier promises that they

ment . . . We do not envisage the destruction of effective management and control of such an enterprise, but those responsibilities must have and retain the confidence of the whole labour force . . .'

It is this sort of drivel about 'workers' participation' which will be served up at the Birmingham Conference. But to smash short-time and voluntary redundancies, which are part of the softening up process for mass sackings and speed-up later on, real measures of workers' control are necessary.

WORK-SHARING

When the car-giants threaten short-time, the reply should be the demand

basis of 'last in, first out' against short-time and voluntary redundancies.

Not only does this open the way for mass sackings later, but it splits the workforce now. The failure of the existing plant leaderships to provide an adequate response to short-time and 'voluntary' sackings has led to 700 workers at Wilmot Breeden, Birmingham 'applying' for 500 voluntary redundancies. A further 1,500 have volunteered for 3,500 redundancies at the Austin plant in Birmingham.

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

This response is also a result of the failure of the plant leaderships to involve the mass of workers in the decisions affecting their future. Very few mass meetings have taken place, and even where they have their function has been to rubber-stamp the shop stewards' proposals.

But workers' democracy is not just a nice idea—it is the only way that a central united response can be worked out to fight the bosses' offensive and lay the foundations for a workers' plan to solve the crisis in the car industry in the interests of the whole working class.

This is all the more necessary since the companies are being helped all down the line in their plans by the Labour Government. The Ryder Report on BLMC is now sitting on Tony Benn's desk—but only an 'edited' version will be published for the workers to see. The fact that the Labour Government is paying more attention to guarding the business secrets of the employers than it is to defending workers against redundancy is a sure sign of what Ryder will contain.

PROGRAMME

Leaks and rumours already abound. What is certain is that Ryder will call for at least 15 per cent redundancies out of BLMC's 160,000 strong labour force and an injection of £1 billion of money from state coffers over the next seven years to carry through a modernisation and development programme.

The need for workers in the industry to produce their own programme for the industry independently of the employers has never been greater. Below we print the sort of programme that the International Marxist Group thinks should be discussed at Birmingham. A central task must be the extension of the recent initiative of the Vauxhall stewards by raising the demand of worksharing without loss of pay and under the control of the workers throughout the motor industry as the only way to throw back the bosses' offensive on short-time and redundancies.

Sam Boyd



would only be laid off for a brief period.

Short-time working has been accompanied by a new productivity offensive. At Ford's Dagenham, management are aiming to introduce a surplus labour-pool in three to four weeks when the lay-off agreement—which gives 80 per cent pay for the first 15 days laid off—runs out. A 12½ per cent increase in the track speed is also planned, including rationalisation involving 20 to 40 per cent cuts in the size of various labour squads. In one department the labour-pool is going to be 137 out of a total of 500 workers.

Meanwhile the crisis facing the industry is intensifying. British Leyland's share of the UK market dropped catastrophically from nearly 45 per cent in February to 25.8 per cent in March. Total registrations last month were 111,450, the lowest March figure for four years.

CONFERENCE

The Birmingham Conference next Wednesday poses the possibility of a united fight around a common programme of action for workers throughout the car industry. This requires the rejection of any idea that jobs can be defended by going along with company plans to make their concerns more viable on the capitalist market.

But the trade union leaders who participated in the Ryder investigation have fought shy of this position. In a draft document submitted to Ryder by the unions attached to the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, they wrote: 'A public enterprise, whilst being free to challenge competition both at home and abroad, must be fully accountable to those employed in the industry and ultimately the Govern-

ment should be assessed at face value by the opening of all the company's books on investment and sales to workers' inspection. Shop meetings should then work out line speeds and shift schedules, and an average working week with no loss of pay should be calculated for the whole workforce to coincide with the cuts in production levels.

Such a plan should be presented to management and failure to comply met with occupation. The recent action of stewards at Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant in occupying part of the factory against the re-introduction of lay-offs, coupled with the demand that the workers should get a full week's pay regardless of the hours worked, was an important step in this direction.

By contrast the stewards at Pressed Steel Fisher in Oxford (part of BLMC's Cowley complex) have demonstrated the utmost confusion on this issue. There the stewards are demanding compulsory redundancies on the

The IMG puts forward the following proposals as among those which should be adopted at the 23 April conference:

- Set up a National Motor Action Committee.
- Each factory to hold mass meetings to elect delegates and decide policies.
- All decisions to be reported back to mass meetings.
- A one-day national strike on the day of the proposed lobby of Parliament. This to be the first step towards mobilising the shop floor against redundancies.
- The Conference to pledge full support including solidarity strike action for any factory fighting redundancies.
- Occupations of all factories threatened with redundancies.
- Against all sackings. For work sharing with no loss of pay.
- No increase in track speeds. No reduction in manning levels.
- No short-time working. Work or full pay.
- Right of the workers to veto management plans on just-in-time manning levels.
- Open the books of the industry to workers' inspection.
- For the nationalisation of the entire motor industry—including all the accessory firms—without compensation.

'Still waters run deep' was an apt description of the National Union of Students' conference at Llandudno last week, which faced the important task of electing a new national leadership.

On the surface things do not appear to have changed. The Broad Left, a mixture of Communist Party and 'Class 4' Labour Party members, still retains the leadership of the Union. The revolutionary left still has its three members, and the Liberals have sneaked in on the right with the election of Francis Hayden.

Despite poor election figures the International Socialists, who last year had three members on the national executive, now have only one. One of these places has been taken by Valerie Coultas, a member of the International Marxist Group.

However the conference also saw for the first time the right beginning to rear its ugly head in the shape of the Liberals and the Radical Action Group, a motley ragbag of Tories and Liberals.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Val Coultas of IMG, elected to Executive

CAMPAIGNS

In the present crisis, which fosters the right wing, students have to take up the campaigns on grants, educational cut-backs and housing but in a context of winning practical support from the working class. Students have to be in the forefront of all struggles against the presence of British troops in Ireland; the growth of Powellism and the National Front; and for withdrawal from the Common Market.

The most pressing problem facing students is their declining living standards. Allied to the ever worsening rate of inflation, students face an uphill battle to keep their heads above the rising tide of rents and prices. The Broad Left motion carried by the conference holds out no hope of defending the grant.

The motion carried claims that sliding scales or thresholds tie the grant to 'a declining standard of living'. Nothing could be further from the truth. A sliding scale would give immediate compensation for the effects of inflation. By rejecting it the Communist Party and the IS doom students to a desperate chase after inflation—a race they cannot win.

VIETNAM

Amongst all the rather predictable and at times mundane debates there were some brighter moments. The guest speech from the North Vietnamese *charge d'affaires* helped to raise over £500 for the PRG, after which an IMG militant successfully proposed that a telegram be

immediately sent to Harold Wilson demanding the recognition of the PRG by the Labour Government.

The best debate of the conference and the biggest blow dealt to the Broad Left came during the discussion over the Common Market.

Having just defeated the call for a United Socialist States of Europe and an anti-Market campaign on the slogan of 'No to the capitalist Common Market', the CP then tried to push through an amendment calling for a broad based campaign.

In line with NUS policy, they agreed that these broad-based committees should exclude racists and fascists. However, true to their 'anti-monopoly alliance' perspective, they were prepared to work with Tories, Liberals and the SNP.

The delegates did not quite agree. After a heated debate, a close vote kicked out the broad-based committees. The Executive have interpreted the rejection of the Broad Left amendment to mean—no participation in the GBGC; no national circulation of GBGC material; local campaigns with trade unions and trade councils.

This victory for the revolutionary left was a step forward for the NUS and its future campaigns. But this was a victory for the revolutionary left, not the IS or the IMG alone. It showed that with the present bankruptcy of the Broad Left leadership—the unity of independents and organisations of the revolutionary left in the NUS is at present more than ever called for.

Ric Sissons

200 WOMEN SAY 'BUILD ABORTION CAMPAIGN'

Two hundred women attended a one-day conference at the South London Polytechnic last Saturday, called by the National Abortion Campaign. The day combined workshops on the threat posed by the James White Bill together with discussions on how to organise, publicise and raise the money to defeat the Bill.

Madeleine Simms, from the National Secular Society, armed the audience with a barrage of statistics, tips and arguments for dealing with anti-abortionists like those from the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child.

Simms stressed the importance of turning the tables in these kinds of debates. When the anti-abortionists try to get the police and the priests to enforce their own beliefs, they deny the individual her freedom of choice.

James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill is being posed as an 'improvement' to the Abortion Act of 1967. But under the

guise of tightening up on corruption in the private sector it would actually make abortion illegal under most conditions.

Simms believed the way to deal with these types of arguments was to put the responsibility on the State: 'The way to kill corruption in the private sector is to make the public sector work better, with free abortions readily available on the National Health Service.'

As a result of these discussions, women students at the conference decided to translate into action the recent NUS decision to support the National Abortion Campaign by calling a meeting on 21 April to organise students and workers in Central London to take up the campaign. The meeting will start at 6.30 p.m. in the University of London Union (Room 2F) in Malet Street (for further information, phone 370 3645 during the day or 226 7512 in the evening).

Much of the National Abortion Campaign work over the next two months will be taken up with planning a national demonstration in London on 21 June. The Campaign is seeking help in its efforts to publicise and build this action, and volunteers will be welcomed at 80 Railton Road, London SE24. For more information, telephone 274 8498.

Linda Smith and Gwyn Davies

'Left' bureaucrats pave way for Glasgow defeat

The thirteen week long unofficial strike of Glasgow Corporation drivers is over—smashed by the combined onslaught of the corrupt Labour-controlled Corporation, the scabbing of the Labour Government in sending in the troops, and the capitulation of the 'left' bureaucracy. Under the influence of the Communist Party, the latter utterly failed to mobilise the West of Scotland labour movement against the use of troops, which was the only way to win the strike.

Glasgow electricians are still out after 11 weeks but their strike has also been undermined by the use of troops to service the incinerators.

CRACKS APPEAR

Cracks in the drivers' strike became evident on 5 April when Dan Duffy, one of the strike leaders, appealed to a meeting of strikers at the Polmadie incinerator 'not to go back in dribs and drabs.' Before the mass meeting of all drivers took place on Wednesday 9 April, a

spokesman for the Labour Corporation let it be known that 'either they give in completely or starve.'

Meanwhile Radio Clyde side used every news bulletin on the Wednesday to carry reports of drivers pawning furniture. Others had received eviction notices for rent arrears from the Labour Corporation. The extent of the personal crisis facing many drivers and their families was made clear by one steward who referred at the meeting to the number of homes which had broken up under the impact of the strike.

The Corporation mercilessly applied the screws. Returning strikers would only get the bonus if they worked flat out to clear the remaining rubbish. Despite this the drivers only returned on Monday 14 April—after they had insisted

that all the troops be pulled out first.

This is the most serious defeat that the West of Scotland working class has suffered for some time, and Communist Party elements in the local union bureaucracy can take much of the 'credit' for it. For three weeks they held back on all the strikers' attempts to organise support action through a West of Scotland stewards meeting.

This opened the way for the General Purposes Committee of the Transport & General Workers Union to reject out of hand a call after the dispute was already twelve weeks old to make the strike official.

The Labour Government has won its first significant victory for the social contract. Unless the workers' movement learns the lessons of the trade union bureaucracy's capitulation and the Communist Party's sabotage when the 'lefts' refuse to act, then the working class will face further defeats at the hands of the Labour Government.

Glasgow IMG



Some of the delegates to NAC one-day conference

WOMEN'S CHARTER-SPRINGBOARD FOR CAMPAIGNS

THE POTENTIAL of the Working Women's Charter campaign as a means of stimulating a whole range of activities against the oppression of women was clearly shown on Saturday at a Conference on the Charter called by Newcastle Trades Council and

attended by 100 trade unionists, women's liberation activists, and students. Among the campaigns launched was one against James White's amendment to the 1967 Abortion Act and for abortion on demand from the NHS in the North East.

There was also a lengthy discussion on the need for women to organise in separate caucuses to force the unions to take up the struggle against sexism at all levels, including in their own ranks. A motion encouraging the setting up of women's caucuses was overwhelmingly passed—projecting them clearly as instruments of rank and file action rather than the sops that trade union officials sometimes dish out to women in the form of firmly controlled women's sub-committees.

A public meeting to begin a campaign for nursery and after-school facilities was also initiated. This is becoming a particularly urgent problem because the Labour-controlled Council has already made it clear that grants to pre-school facilities will be the first to go if cut-backs are necessary.

Finally a decision was taken to set up an independent Charter group which would have the support of the Trades Council but would be open to representatives of all organisations willing to support the Charter actively. The importance of including women's groups and tenants' associations—thus involving women trapped in the private domestic work situation—was particularly stressed.

Hilary Wainwright

Immigrant workers to strike on Shrewsbury

The International Workers Branch of the Transport & General Workers Union is calling on catering workers in all London Eating Houses to join the May Day strike over the continued imprisonment of Des Warren and Eric Tomlinson.

This excellent initiative stands in stark contrast to the campaigns of lobbies and petitioning of MPs that have been organised by the trade union bureaucracy with the tacit support of the Communist Party.

The bankruptcy of the Communist Party's line of relying on the bureaucracy to mount a campaign to free the two has been demonstrated yet again by the cancellation of the Shrewsbury Two National Co-ordinating Committee conference due to take place on 19 April. This is the inevitable result of the demoralisation on

the issue in the building trade and the labour movement generally brought about by the bureaucracy's pointless protest actions.

Meanwhile the CP-controlled Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, which committed itself at its last conference on 22 March to fight for strike action on 1 May regardless of what the TUC decided, has been totally silent.

The action of the immigrant catering workers should be a lesson to the whole British labour movement. Not only have they shown international solidarity with the British working class, but they have demonstrated that, once they are able to organise, immigrant workers can actually lead the fight of the workers' movement on a decisive issue in the class struggle.

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