

workers' ACTION

No.115

Sep.2-Sep.9, 1978

10p

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

TRADES UNION CONGRESS MEETING

6.30pm, Tuesday 5th September, at the King William IV Room, Brighton Pavilion.

Speakers: ERNIE ROBERTS [Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Hackney North & Stoke Newington, retired assistant general secretary of the AUEW], JONATHAN HAMMOND [NUJ Executive, in personal capacity], and other prominent labour movement figures.

Where Heath failed, AUEW leaders try again

Duffy's anti-strike law

32 TOOLMAKERS at SU Carburettors, a British Leyland subsidiary in Birmingham, are threatened with expulsion by their union, the AUEW.

Why? Because they are on strike. Striking not for any anti-union or reactionary cause, but to get an agreement implemented which was negotiated for them by the AUEW in 1976!

The SU Carbs. toolmakers were promised that their pay would be brought up to the level of toolmakers at Rover Solihull. That is what they are demanding now.

The union district committee and national executive have opposed them, said the strikers will be expelled by Sunday (3rd) if they do not return to work, and now have offered to help SUs recruit scabs to take the strikers' jobs.

The union leaders are doing this in face of angry opposition within the AUEW. Roy Fraser's unofficial BL Toolroom Committee says it will call the BL toolrooms out on strike if the SU strikers are expelled from the AUEW. Derek Robinson, chairman of the British Leyland Joint Shop Stewards Committee, has condemned the proposed expulsions and threatened a day of action next Tuesday, 5th (although the 'Morning Star' — paper of his party, the CP — carried an article

on 28th August condemning the SU men). The toolroom at Jaguar Browns Lane has voted to strike if the expulsions go through.

Not only toolmakers, but other workers in Leyland and throughout engineering, are outraged by the scabbing, strikebreaking, dictatorial role of the union leadership.

The new right wing President-elect of the AUEW, Terry Duffy, has taken this as a test case. He wants to show the BL bosses that he can control the workers. He is taking the toolmakers as an example because they have been particularly troublesome, especially during their strike in spring 1977 against Phase 2.

The excuse is that the SU toolmakers are messing up negotiations which should bring pay parity for all Leyland workers from November 1979. In other words, the union leaders are saying: because we are making a deal which we think is the best you can get (bearing in mind the bosses' need for fat profits and big salaries — after all, we are responsible...), you can't fight for anything better!

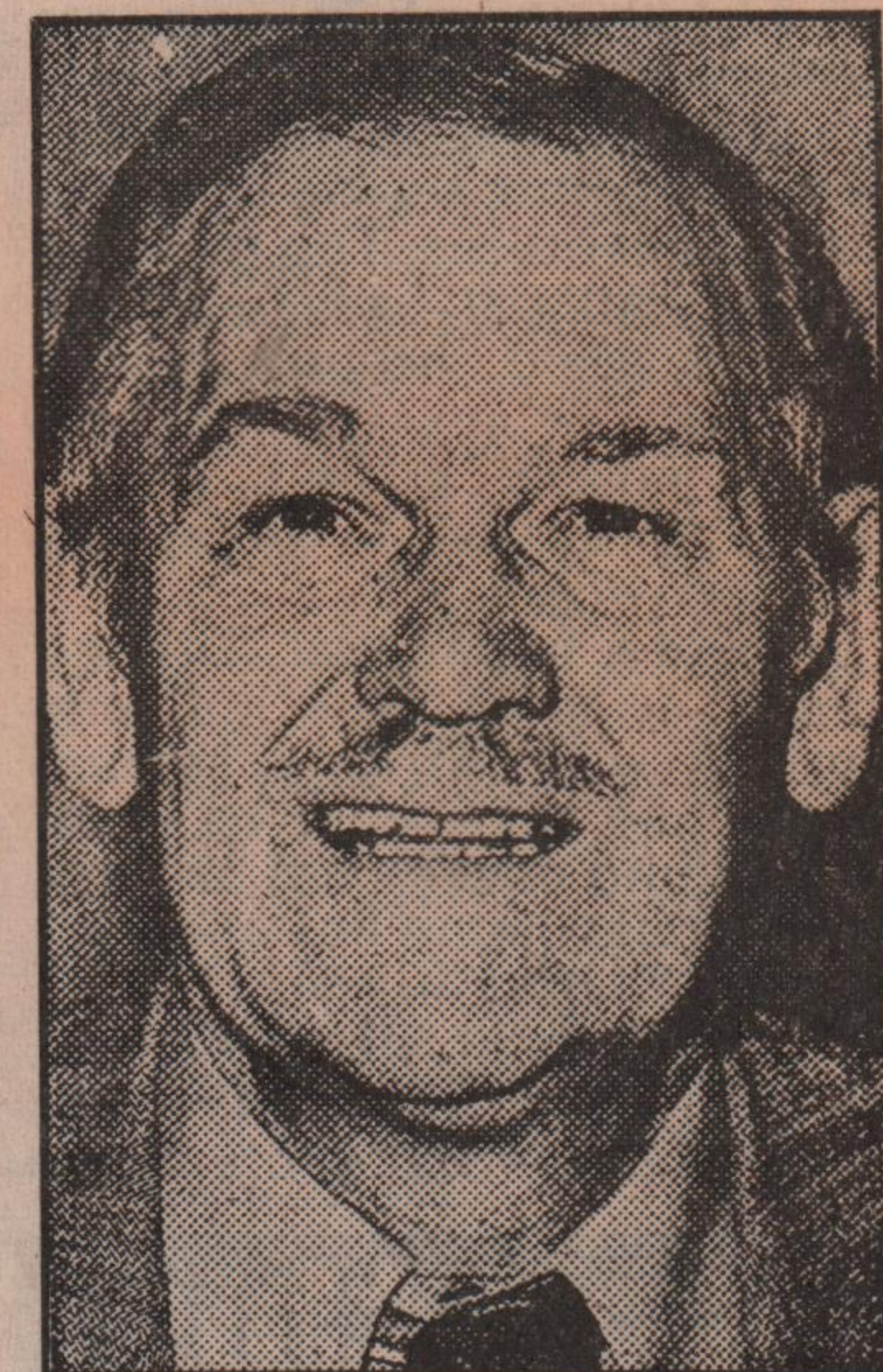
Duffy and all his accomplices are making themselves lackeys of the bosses, pure and simple, in this case. Any strike action against the expulsion threats should be fully supported.

The background to the strike was explained by Albert Benbow, one of the strikers, in an interview with Workers' Action reporter Angus MacDougall.

“In 1975-6 our wage claim went through procedure. There was a meeting with the AUEW Executive. We went on strike for a month in 1976, until Bob Wright, the EC member responsible, got an agreement for parity with the highest-paid Leyland toolroom workers.

Management put off implementing this because of the Government's pay policy.

continued back page



Terry Duffy

THE NAZIS' SPLIT GETS WIDER

“ANOTHER member of the [National Front] Directorate said that assaults on immigrants were a natural by-product of the change in the social climate that the party had been seeking to promote and as such should be welcomed rather than deplored

“Another member said he knew of several high-ranking [NF] officials who not only sanctioned acts of brutality but actually took a leading part in them...”

“Several members voiced their concern at the increasing amount of anti-semitism in Spearhead [the NF magazine]. They said there was barely any attempt to disguise these sentiments any longer”

These are members of the National Front speaking in a new document leaked from inside the fascist group. The document confirms what the Left has been saying about the thuggish, Nazi, anti-semitic nature of the NF. And it shows that the energetic resistance of

socialists and the black communities is making many of the fascists think a more cautious tactic would be better for them.

It is the second document to be leaked from the 'Action Committee of London Branch Organisers', an opposition faction (now extending outside London) inside the NF. The first document, a memo to NF Führer John Tyndall, confirmed that the sometimes murderous racist assaults and rampages recently in East London were the work of NF members, and threatened to tell the police unless the NF leaders acted to stop it. We published the document in WA 110.

The new document contains minutes of a meeting of the Action Committee. The message of the first memo is repeated, together with its complaints about financial malpractice in the NF.

The 'Action Committee' faction draw parallels between their activities and the split which formed the

ill-fated National Party in 1975. Clearly they aim to build a radically revamped fascist party. In the process they are bound to meet the most violent opposition from the present NF leaders, Tyndall and Webster.

WA takes no 'sides' in this quarrel among the Nazis. The 'action Committee' people have no objection in principle to anti-semitism or racist violence. For them the issue is simply one of electoral and political expediency.

The leaking of this document should increase the disarray in the NF, and thus help weaken them.

But the morale of the NF will still depend, fundamentally, on whether they can find victims on the streets for their racist brutality. It's our job to make sure they can't, by organising to deny the fascists any platform and to maintain regular defence groups.

Extracts from the document: page 7

Remember the last time:

ANTI-UNION LAWS
PICKETS JAILED
COUNCIL RENTS UP
THREE DAY WEEK

Keep
the
Tories
out

Vote
Labour

Boot
out
Callaghan's
Tory
policies

The SOCIALIST
CAMPAIGN for a
LABOUR
VICTORY
Fights for:

NO WAGE CURBS
CUT THE HOURS,
NOT THE JOBS
TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND
SCRAP ALL
IMMIGRATION ACTS

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory poster: out now in three colours. Order from SCLV, Box 127, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1. 5 for 20p, 30 for £1; add 20% for postage and packing.

HOW DID we come to be where we are? How did it come about that 75% of those that produce food and wealth were poor and that a small group — part of the non-producing part of the population — were wealthy?

For asking these questions about Kenya, the writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o was arrested at the end of last year and is now 'detained' in the Kamiti maximum security prison in Nairobi — without trial and without rights of appeal.

Summing up the state led by Jomo Kenyatta, who died last week, Ngugi wrote: "This was the society they had been building since Independence, a society in which a black few, allied to other interests from Europe, would continue the colonial game of robbing others of their sweat, denying them the right to grow to full flowers in air and sunlight".

British colonisation of the country began in 1895. Within a short time the Masai were driven off their highland grazing grounds, and settlers seized huge tracts of the most fertile lands. The European settlers reduced the tribes of Kenya to poverty, restricted them to the poorest land, outlawed many of their customs, barred them from many areas, taxed them and imposed a system of semi-slavery over labour levied from the different clans.

TRIBAL

Government measures forbade political organisations that linked up different tribes. In spite of this, numerous tribal associations demanding land or opposing various government measures sprang up in the '20s and '30s.

Kenyan nationalism also took less obvious routes: independent African church movements splitting away from their European equivalents, social organisations, and tribe-wide cooperative-type ventures. The growing African national consciousness was expressed through names and dress. 'Kenyatta', for example, means a belt decorated with beads — an article of African dress.

In 1943 a nationalist, Oginga Odinga, tried to have his sons baptised with African names. "I was told that could be done but I should choose not an ordinary African name but one connected with the Church..."

"On the day of the baptism... he preat, Rev. Simon Nyende, asked what my first son's name

Kenyatta's Kenya — from white colonialism to black capitalism

was to be. Ng'ong'a Mola, I said. Rev. Nyende advised I should have taken a name... associated with Christians.

"No, I said, Ng'ong'a was a great chief in the country, loved by his people, and I have not heard of anything he did which was objectionable to Christians. Rev. Nyende refused to baptise the children..."

In the towns, the Government outlawed all trade unions that sponsored strikes, and strikes themselves were crushed with great ferocity: tanks, planes, machine guns... this was the arsenal of industrial relations on the side of the white settlers.

The only trade union that was legal was one led by Tom Mboya — a darling of British Fabians and liberals. It did not sponsor strikes, and had been set up in opposition to a militant union federation (including both Africans and Asians) which had organised the successful Mombasa dock strike in 1947.

Under the colonial regime, the only bodies within which Africans were 'represented' were local councils, which had only advisory powers. The purpose of the councils was to give legitimacy to the Government's attacks on Africans by presenting them as decisions taken with African consent.

Oginga Odinga recounts that at his first meeting he dared to disagree with the white Commissioner. The Commissioner interrupted him, telling him

he had better sit down.

"I'm not going to sit down", I said. "You must sit down", he shouted. Then: "If you don't sit down, get out of the room", and "If you don't leave this room I'll get you out of it".

"The Commissioner scolded the chief of my area, telling him he was a fool to have an elected member who could not behave properly. The Commissioner reported me to the Provincial Commissioner, who called me to his office. If I continued to be rude to the District Commissioner, I would be removed from the council, I was told".

Jomo Kenyatta had become the general secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association in 1926. From 1929 to 1946 he was in Europe. He returned in 1946 and received a jubilant welcome from the African masses. Over the next six years he was the leading figure of the Kenya African Union, a nationalist organisation striving to unite all the Kenyan tribes against the European settlers and combining from time to time with the more militant elements within the 25,000 strong Asian community.

In 1952 the white settler government launched its "Mau Mau" emergency, to suppress the outbreak of anti-settler guerilla warfare by the nationalist "Land and Freedom Army".

The emergency, which lasted eight years, was 'sold' to the British public by means of a

massive campaign of lies, distortions and racist propaganda. Yet the real perpetrators of the 'terror' can be seen from the general agreed figures of those who died: 32 white settlers are said to have been killed by the "Mau Mau" along with 1700 Africans. The 'security forces' killed over 10,000 Africans and detained 90,000 in concentration camps, while further thousands were behind the barbed wire fences that ringed the protected villages.



Ngugi wa Thiong'o, also known as James Ngugi.

The campaign against "Mau Mau" — the word itself was concocted by the settler press — was mainly directed against the Kikuyu tribes. The Kikuyu were the central force behind the revolt, but the settlers also hoped that by 'going easy' on non-Kikuyus they could split the nationalist movement on tribal lines. Thus militants to the left of Kenyatta, like Oginga Odinga, were spared, like the more conservative but very prominent Mboya, because they were Luo.

The 'security forces' and British Army had broken the back of the guerilla movement by about 1956, but the emergency was not terminated until 1960. Kenyatta, who had been jailed along with 98 other KAU

leaders in 1952, was released in 1961. After long negotiations, the British government conceded independence in 1963.

Gradually the regime asserted a right-wing line. In 1966 a large group of MPs led by Oginga Odinga split from the ruling party, KANU, to form the Kenya People's Union. After an election, however, this party's base was more or less confined to the Luo tribes, while KANU was more and more based on the Kikuyus.

The nascent African bourgeoisie used the state to appropriate former European settlers' lands. They also used legislative means, first to restrict and then to expropriate large parts of the commercial sector held by Asians.

The strengthening of African capitalism was further aided by government agencies which gave preferential treatment to Africans in the distribution of loans, licences and goods.

Stability was achieved partly by 'buying off' the petty bourgeoisie through the provision of means to purchase the assets of Asian enterprises. This did not only apply to so-called non-citizen Asians: in early 1975 the government cancelled the trade licences of 69 large wholesale/retail stores in Nairobi owned by Asian citizens on the grounds that they were importing goods illegally. This was a cover for the takeover of the largest of these shops by the black African capitalists.

Some measures were taken against foreign — mainly British and US — companies. But for the most part they were allowed to stay — 'for a consideration'. Kenyatta's son-in-law is the chairman of Lonrho's Kenya branch, while his nephew is the chairman of Mackenzie Daigety, the biggest US firm in Kenya.

REVOLT

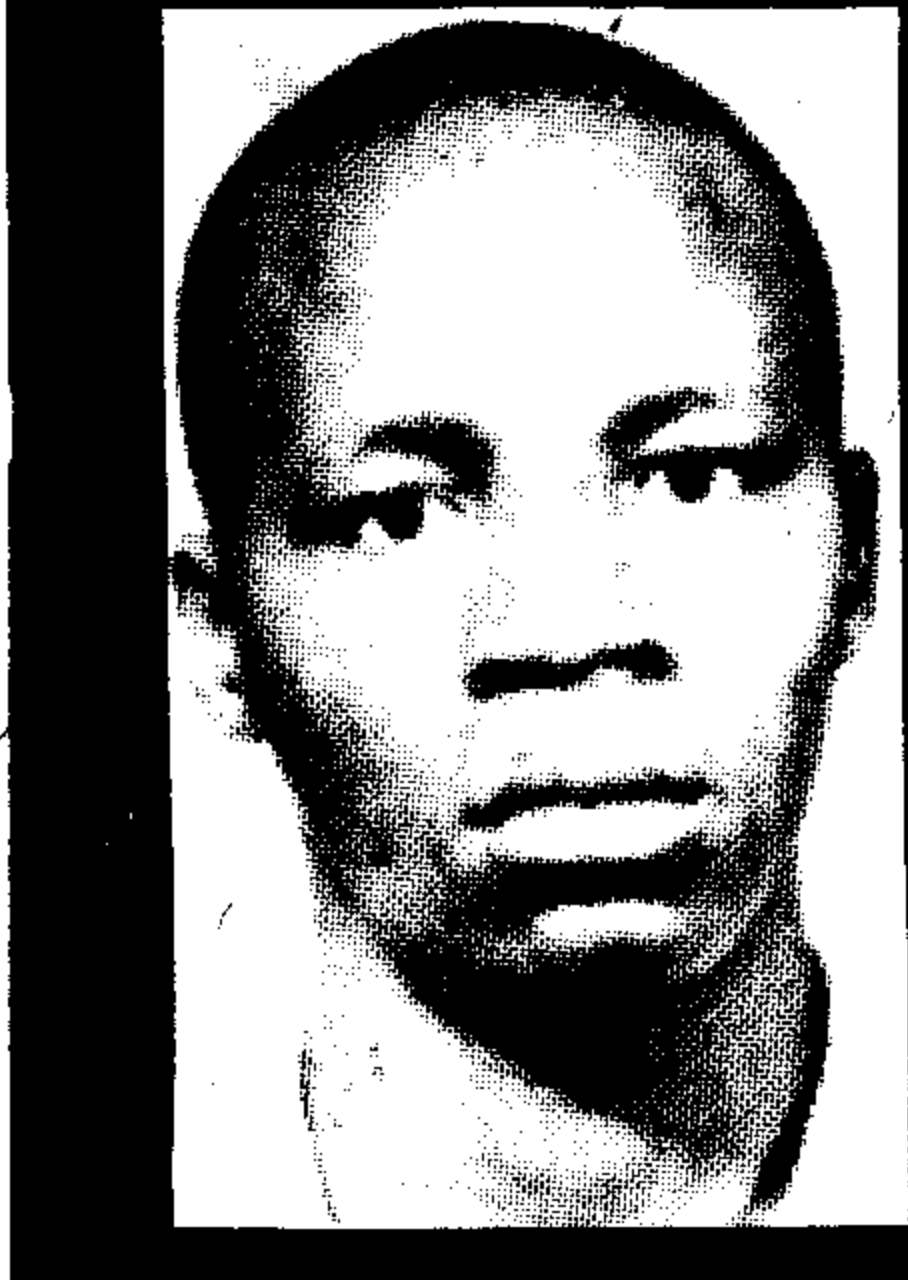
Under the role of these conservative capitalists, repression has increased. Not long before Ngugi's arrest, Oginga Odinga and seventeen others were briefly detained for criticising the government. Several MPs already languish in jail for criticising Kenyatta's regime.

This is not a story of a revolution "running out of steam" of young revolutionaries getting tired, cynical or moderate. It is the story of a national revolt which did not aspire to transforming the social relations of the country, to putting the working class in power.

Jomo Kenyatta did not betray a once-revolutionary past. He was never a socialist, though he liked to use the term, when he wanted to fake a little radicalism. He even denounced the guerilla fighters. He was a narrow nationalist — once the champion of Uhuru, of the nation's freedom, finally the gaoler of those who fight for freedom for the working masses of Kenya.

JAMES DAVIES

Stop this execution!



SOLOMON Mahlangu could be hanged by the South African apartheid regime any day now.

He was convicted in March of the murder of two white men in Johannesburg, although the judge conceded that Mahlangu had not fired the fatal bullets. Mahlangu and two other young nationalist guerilla fighters had been trapped by the police, and the whites were killed in the subsequent shoot-out.

One of Mahlangu's companions, Mondy Motloung, was so savagely beaten after being captured that he was officially found insane as a result of brain damage. Mahlangu has been refused permission to appeal.

For details of demonstrations against the execution of Solomon Mahlangu, contact Anti-Apartheid Movement, 01-580 5311.

The Shah and Hua best of friends

IN HIS LATEST move to defuse the explosive situation in Iran, the Shah has appointed a new Prime Minister, Sharif-Emami. The new Prime Minister, who is said to come from a strongly traditionalist family, said in a press conference that the Shah had instructed him to "base his government on the principles of Islam".

Clearly this is an attempt to split the religious movement of opposition to the Shah from other opposition currents like the National Front and the Tudeh (Communist) Party.

Sharif-Emami immediately reversed an earlier imperial edict: Iran will now drop the Pahlavi calendar, and return to the old Islamic calendar.

But the massive movement of opposition that has been taking to the streets regularly since the massacres in Qom in January of this year is not going to be bought off quite so cheaply.

Over 1,000 people have been killed by Iran's police and army this year, and some 10,000 jailed. Demonstrations have rocked 26 towns, and the recent horror in which nearly 400 people died in a blaze at a cinema in Abadan has been blamed on the Government.

Trying to restore some quiet,

troops have been taken off the streets in Teheran, though the city of Isfahan is still under martial law. The official commission of enquiry into the cinema blaze criticised the authorities in its report, allowing the Shah to scapegoat local administrators and military officials.

The Shah has even promised fair elections — though there are no signs of him doing anything about it. The promise, however, is being used by the regime to try to buy off the more conservative Muslim leaders.

Shah Reza Pahlavi has rarely been more isolated. Within Iran his regime rests on a very narrow base and a huge system of terror. Abroad those regimes that support him are under pressure to suggest that he modify his despotism.

But the Shah does seem to have one uncritical supporter: the Chinese leader Hua Kuo-feng. Hua is on a visit to Iran and has announced that he will stay on a further two days as a sign of support for the regime.

China's support for the Shah is not new. Mao Tse-tung declared that the Shah was "a great anti-imperialist fighter" because of the anti-Russian attitude of the Iranian regime!

'UMTALI MASSACRE WAS SMITH'S WORK'

A RHODESIAN government inquest on August 22nd declared that the massacre of a dozen people, including children, at the isolated Elim Pentecostal Mission school near Umtali was the work of black freedom fighters. The inquest tried to pin the blame on the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army headed by Robert Mugabe of the Patriotic Front.

The same day, however, a group of four western lawyers produced a very different report of the events.

The lawyers, from the USA, Belgium, and Britain, had interviewed an ex-member of the Rhodesian army who claimed to have taken part in the massacre. The man, calling himself Flint, gave a detailed account of the events, and named Rhodesian and South African army off-

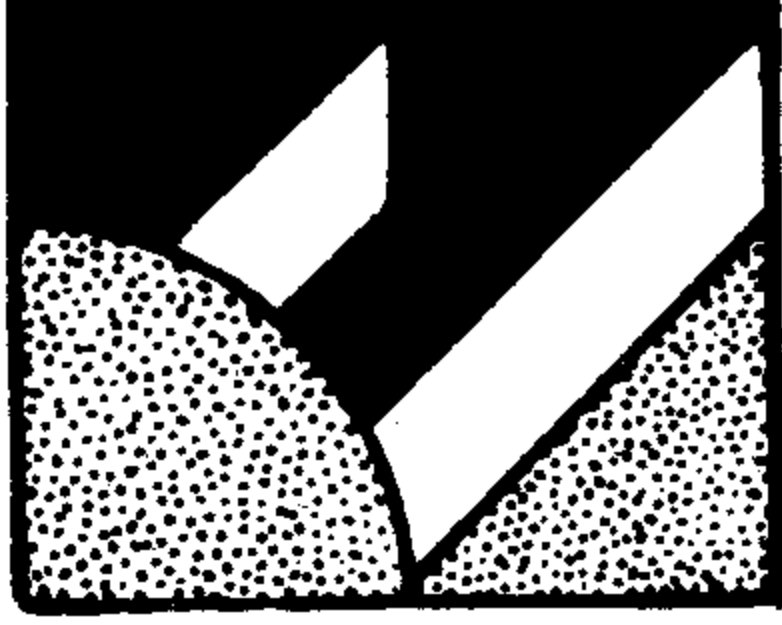
icers who had led the killings — a Rhodesian detective security officer named Gunston and a South African special branch sergeant named Qhole.

Flint stated that after the troops had beaten and clubbed the missionaries for over two hours, he had taken part in a firing squad that had executed seven of them. After that, the soldiers had written up slogans saying 'down with Smith, forward with ZANU', to try to put the blame on the guerillas.

He also told the lawyers that the African soldiers taking part had been paid a bonus of 100 Rhodesian dollars (double their weekly pay) for it. The transitional government is obviously prepared to spend a lot of time and money on its gory 'public relations' exercises.

TUC - softly, softly catchee voter

Editorial



IF THE TRADE Union Congress starting in Brighton on September 4th reflects the feelings of rank and file trade unionists it will roundly condemn the Government.

Scarcely a single voice within the unions supports Phase 4, and a series of Congress resolutions condemn pay curbs. Just at the time when the Government is trying to suppress the Post Office engineers' demand for a cut in working hours to 35, several Congress resolutions call for the 35 hour week as top priority in order to fight unemployment.

But the tone of the resolutions generally is muted. And the tone of the Congress will be more muted. The trade union leaders will be going all out to give a display of support for the Labour Government, in preparation for the General Election probably coming up this autumn.

Their argument is that we need to keep out the Tories. TUC President David Basnett declared: "A vote for the Tories is a vote for inequality, for elitism, for private affluence and public squalor".

True enough. But that is no excuse for forgetting the present Labour Government's role in propping up inequality, elitism, and squalor!

A working class vote for Labour on the basis of approving wage curbs, strikebreaking, rising unemployment, immigration controls, and continued British Army repression in Ireland — or on the basis of accepting these things as unfortunate but unavoidable parts of a 'lesser evil' — would hardly be a smaller defeat than a Tory victory.

A Labour victory at the election can only be a step forward if behind it there is a vigilant, critical, militant working class prepared to fight for socialist demands, when necessary against the Labour Government.

That sort of victory would only be a stage towards a big shake-up in the leadership of the working class movement, replacing the sell-out champions by militants. That's why the TUC leaders don't want it. Instead they want a campaign which says everything's fine with Jim and if there are a few problems it really isn't worth mentioning because the demon Tories will be so much worse.

They will get their line accepted at Brighton. But that doesn't mean at all that they'll get it accepted in the factories and offices! One of the duties of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is to see that they don't.

Finally: outside the main debates, there are one or two resolutions on the Brighton agenda worth looking out for.

NATSOPA is calling for support for the Anti Nazi League. The NUJ wants the TUC to call for the dropping of the prosecution against Crispin Aubrey, John Berry, and Duncan Campbell under the Official Secrets Act, and the Tobacco Workers' Union wants a condemnation of the activities of the Special Branch and the Special Patrol Group. ASTMS [MPU] calls on the TUC to organise demonstrations against any future legislation restricting abortion rights.

Bust the sanctions busters!

THE LARGELY state-owned oil company BP, together with Shell, has been supplying Rhodesia with oil for the last twelve years, flouting the British Government blockade on the Smith regime. And top Government officials knew all about it.

The details were revealed in a report produced by BP for the Foreign Office and leaked by the 'Sunday Times' on August 27. Shell and BP knew as early as 1968 that a jointly-owned subsidiary, Shell Mozambique, was supplying more than half Rhodesia's oil.

To step round the law, they arranged a 'swap' with the French-owned oil firm Total. Total supplied Shell/BP's outlets in Rhodesia while Shell Mozambique supplied Total outlets in South Africa. The Government was told and, according to BP, "accepted that the effect of the change would be a purely cosmetic one".

After Shell and BP split their joint marketing operation in Southern Africa in 1971, direct supplying of Rhodesia started again, and they began to compete for the Rhodesian market. BP were determined to keep their operation quiet, in their words, "to ensure that the value was not diminished by allowing the source of the oil to be identified".

BP is 51% state-owned, and its Government-appointed directors must have known all the details of these deals. The former head of the Foreign Office from 1969 to 1973, Lord Greenhill, who knew of the 1968 deal with Total, is now one of the Government-appointed directors of BP.

The directors, ministers and senior Government officials who organised and covered up these deals should be prosecuted — they knew they were out to bust the sanctions against Rhodesia's racist regime.

Their excuse will be a simple one — and this Government's record shows it is likely to agree with it. "We were trying to keep our business profitable and to do that you must maintain business secrecy". The top men may try to find some fall-guy in the lower ranks of BP management.

The answer to them should be a simple one, too. Business and government secrecy should be abolished; their accounts and records should be open to the inspection of the working class movement.

Gallagher calls off hunger strike

WILLIE GALLAGHER was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment by a no-jury 'Diplock Court' in 1976, on the evidence of an unsigned 'confession' produced by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He has just called off a hunger strike after seven weeks which brought him close to death.

Gallagher, who denies any connection with the IRA, is demanding to be retried on charges of bombing the Strabane British Legion Hall in 1976. He is also protesting at the beatings he has suffered at the hands of the warders in Long Kesh.

His father, Brendan Gallagher, visited him in Long Kesh on Sunday 27th August and said: "There is a marked deterioration in his condition in the three days since our last visit. He is now like a skeleton with the skin over it... The hunger strike can only last a few more days. We were in fact surprised to find he was alive today".

Facing death, Gallagher was forced to give up his hunger strike without winning his demands, even after his case had been publicised in a recent 'Play for Today' on BBC, "Willie: the Legion Hall Bombing". The play, despite protests from its writer and its director, had been censored by the BBC.

Sound-track pointing out the way the Diplock courts can, and do, use unsubstantiated police evidence and confession obtained by the use of violence, was cut.

Gallagher is a victim of those courts, and the warders' brutality. The suffering he has gone through lies at the door of the force that established, uses, and pays to prop up the Northern Ireland state: British imperialism.

NIK BARSTOW

Toryism - an everyday story of millionaire folk

MARGARET THATCHER: wife of a company director. William Whitelaw: big landowner. Keith Joseph: director of an investment trust, former director of Bovis builders, his family firm.

Geoffrey Howe: director of seven companies including EMI. Michael Heseltine: chairman of a publishing firm. Sally [housewives' friend]

Oppenheim: former company director, wife of a millionaire.

These are the Tory leaders who will be trying to make the voters believe they are the best friends of ordinary people...

The new Labour Research Department pamphlet, "Tories - new turn to the right", gives these facts, and a list of big business donations to the Tory party. It also gives a useful rundown of some of the Tories' politics.

It outlines the Tories' threats to social services and particularly to housing, through increasing rents and selling off council houses. "Once a council house has been sold, it gets into the second hand housing market from which only estate agents and property speculators gain".

Bigots

It describes the Tories' proposals for stricter entry restrictions plus internal control of immigration [pass laws]. The Tories promise to "restrict the entry of parents, grandparents and children over 18 to those who can prove urgent compassionate grounds". "Non-patrial" husbands and fiancés will have no right of entry, neither will wives and dependants of people who entered Britain after 1 January 1973.

The 'internal control of immigration' could mean pass laws like in South Africa.

LRD also documents the Tories' promise of increased arms spending, their plans for higher indirect taxes [VAT to be raised to 10 or 16%], and their pledge of tough measures against picket lines.

Completely missing, however, is any mention of some of the Tories' most alarming promises: about restoring power in Northern Ireland to the Orange bigots.

That omission is a reflection of the politics of the LRD, which is close to the Communist Party. Another reflection is the alternative they pose to Toryism:

Failure

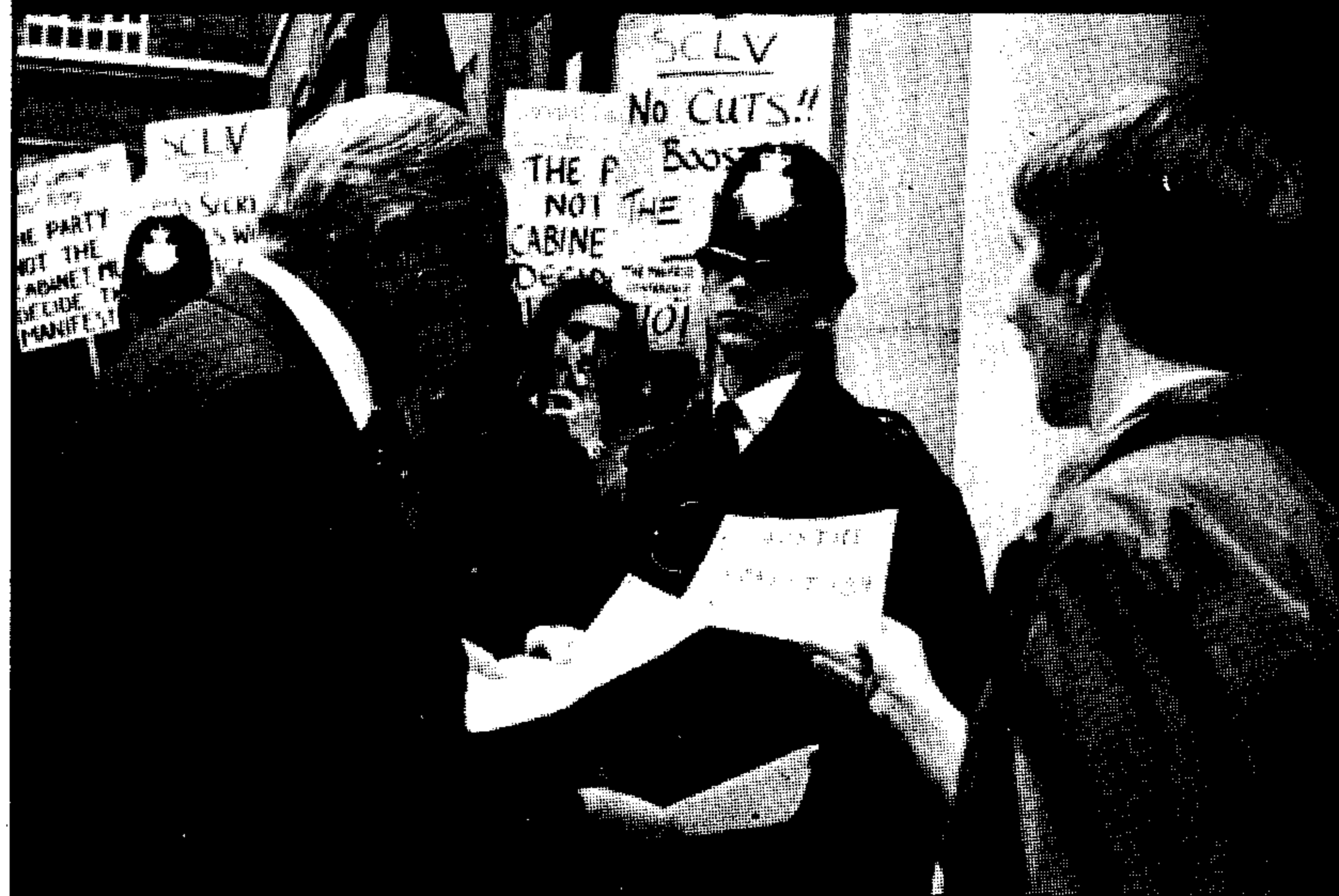
"Any attempt to restore some kind of pure capitalism... is doomed to failure. The only way forward is to have more conscious planning, more public ownership, and, above all, more popular participation..." Not pure capitalism, but 'impure', statified capitalism, seems to be the LRD's slogan! When the LRD takes up the Tories' economic arguments, it does not challenge the Tories' concern with higher profits head-on, but merely comments that higher profits do not necessarily mean more investment.

There is not a word of fighting working-class policies as the answer to the Tories.

There is also a fine example of the CP's obsession with reducing every conflict to a struggle between a tiny handful of reactionaries and a 'broad democratic alliance' of all other classes and parties. The LRD has discovered that Edward Heath — the man behind Selsdon and the Industrial Relations Act — is a definite 'lesser evil' than Thatcher! Statements from Heath about 'moderation' and 'uniting the nation' are quoted as good coin, with the comment, "Margaret Thatcher has changed all that".

* "Tories: new turn to the right". 25p plus 7p post from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Rd, SE1.

FOREST FOUR FIGHT FOR NEC SUPPORT



Gill Ireland, one of the 'Forest Four', hands Jim Callaghan a leaflet at a lobby of the NEC.

Four Labour party members from the Forest of Dean (West Gloucestershire) have been suspended from their local party. Labour's National Executive is inquiring into charges that they "persistently criticised party officials and councillors".

On 20 August the suspended members brought home a lesson in Labour Party democracy to Prime Minister James Callaghan. Together with supporters, the 'Forest Four' leafleted Callaghan's constituents in Cardiff, demanding to know why he had not backed their demands for reinstatement.

The 'Four' don't deny they made criticisms of Labour councillors in the Forest of Dean who had refused to be answerable to the local party. They attacked councillors who had dominated the council's housing com-

mittee and kept direct personal control over housing allocations.

Reactions in Cardiff were mixed. Callaghan's constituents were keen to help and interested in the case. Callaghan himself, however, was reported in the local press to be 'hopping mad'.

The idea that leading figures in the Labour Party should be free of criticism or control may appeal to Callaghan — but Labour Party members and supporters aren't going to stand for it.

The Forest Four's next plans are to leaflet Ebbw Vale, in order to put pressure on another NEC member whose attitude to 'criticism' has become very suspect: Michael Foot.

They are also going to be outlining their case on Westward TV's edition of 'This Week'.

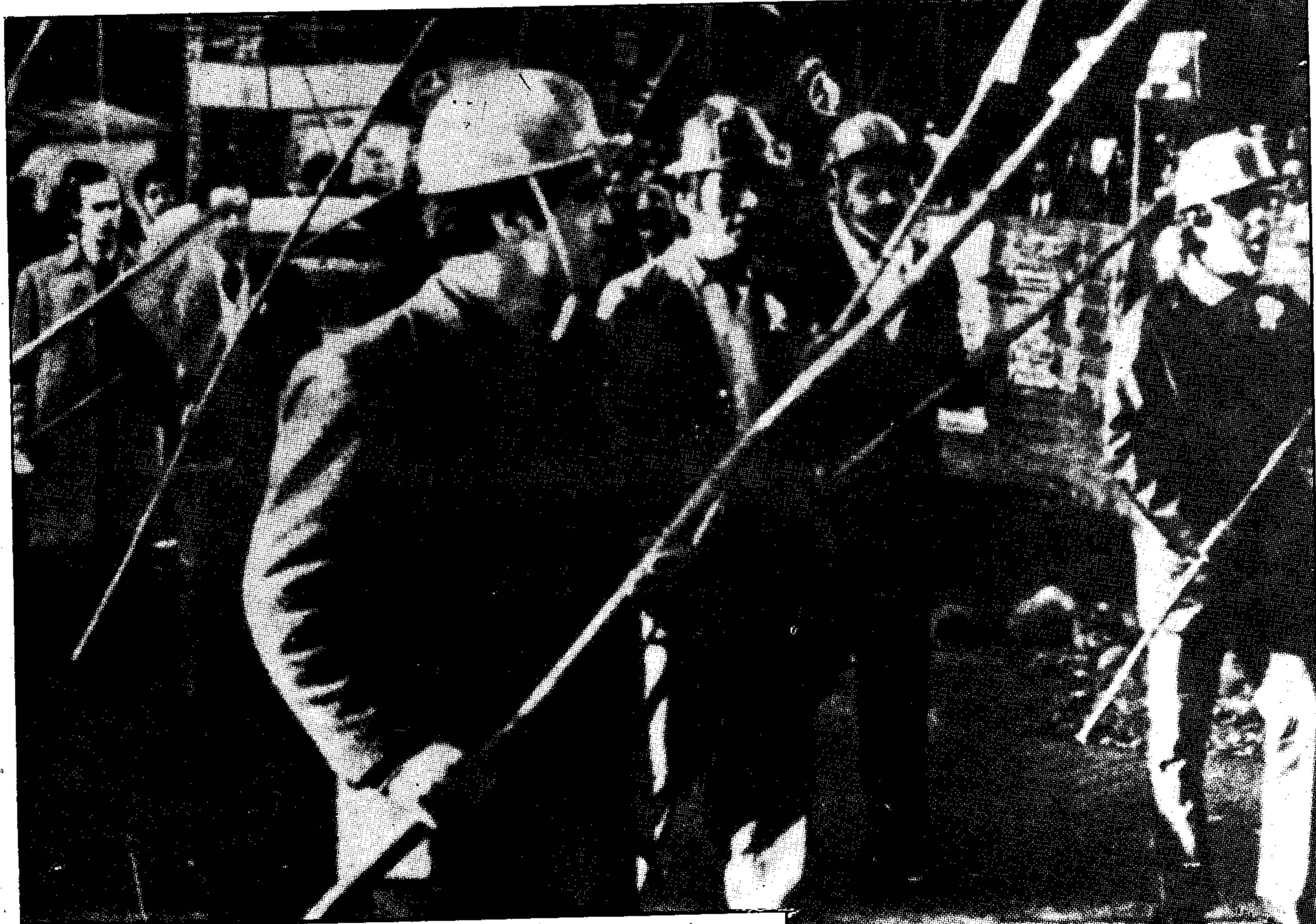
In recent years, the 'Eurocommunists' have set their minds to constructing a new, third, road to socialism: more radical than the traditional parliamentary strategy so discredited by the Chilean tragedy, yet more 'democratic' than the revolutionary strategy deriving from Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Their ideas have been taken up by some faded ex-leftists in the Labour Party, like Ken Coates, who writes in the most recent *Tribune* that the 'Eurocommunists' represent "hope for democratic socialism".

An article in the latest *New Left Review* (no. 109) by the Greek theorist NICOS POULANTZAS — "Towards a Democratic Socialism" — tries to explain the 'Eurocommunist' strategy theoretically. RHODRI EVANS argues that Poulantzas' article in fact shows that the Eurocommunists' perspective is one of 'socialism' introduced under the benevolent supervision of the capitalist class.



Nicos Poulantzas



Chile 1973: Hundreds of thousands of workers march through Santiago: but spears were not enough to defeat an army which the Government and the Communist Party had already placed confidence in.

According to Poulantzas, the seeds of Stalinist despotism were in Lenin's programme of "All power to the Soviets". This was shown in the "correct and fundamental critique of Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution" made by Rosa Luxemburg: "Luxemburg reproaches Lenin not with neglect or contempt of direct, rank-and-file democracy, but rather with the exact opposite — that is to say, exclusive reliance on council democracy and complete elimination of representative democracy [through, among other things, dissolution of the Constituent Assembly — which had been elected under the Bolshevik government — in favour of the soviets alone]."

He quotes from her "The Russian Revolution": "In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only

true representation of the labouring masses. But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element."

Social democracy, however, is equally statist and distrustful of the masses. Thus: "The basic dilemma from which we must extricate ourselves is the following: either maintain the existing State and stick exclusively to a modified form of representative democracy — a road that ends up in social-democratic statism and so-called liberal parliamentarism; or base everything on direct, rank-and-file democracy or the

movement for self-management — a path which, sooner or later, inevitably leads to statist despotism or the dictatorship of experts. The essential problem of the democratic road to socialism, of democratic socialism, must be posed in a different way: how is it possible radically to transform the State in such a manner that the extension and deepening of political freedoms and the institutions of representative democracy [which were also a conquest of the popular masses] are combined with the unfurling of forms of direct democracy and the mushrooming of self-management bodies?"

The answer is to combine two forms of struggle in a "democratic road to socialism": "A long stage during which the masses will act to conquer power and transform the State apparatuses". "It is not simply a matter of entering state institutions [parliament, econom-

ic and social councils, 'planning' bodies, etc] in order to use their characteristic levers for a good purpose. In addition, struggle must always express itself in the development of popular movements, the mushrooming of democratic organs at the base, and the rise of centres of self-management...."

"As we see then, the task is really not to 'synthesise' or stick together the statist and self-management traditions of the popular movement, but rather to open up a global perspective of the withering away of the State. This comprises two articulated processes: transformation of the State and unfurling of direct, rank-and-file democracy."

To the problem of counter-revolutionary violence, Poulantzas responds: "A broad popular movement constitutes a guarantee against the reaction of the enemy, even though it is not

NO REVOLUTIONS! That is the essence of Poulantzas' argument.

Since 1945 the West European Communist Parties have generally followed a "parliamentary road to socialism". For their militant rank and file they kept open the possibility of a final revolutionary push at the end of that road — but in the form of a military coup organised 'from above' by the "leading party", something like the 1948 "Prague Coup".

Since 1968 new arguments have been necessary. No longer can revolution be dismissed as something for far-off lands or the distant future.

With Poulantzas, it is no longer the old argument that revolution is out-dated, unworkable or impossibly far in the future. He tries to show that revolution is undesirable (because he says it leads to Stalinism) and to outline a non-revolutionary strategy which is (or at least appears) better than a purely parliamentary policy.

Bolshevik-type revolution, says Poulantzas, leads to Stalinism. A "role... was played by the conception of the Party contained in *What is to be Done?*" — but the evil was more fundamental. The revolution led to tyranny because it began by substituting "rank and file democracy for representative democracy".

For Marxists, Stalinism did not arise from Bolshevism but from the defeat of Bolshevism: first, the defeat of Bolshevism in Western Europe, during the revolutionary uprisings there, which left the Russian workers' state isolated; then the suppression in all but name of Russian Bolshevism — the soviets (workers' councils) and the Bolshevik Party — by the bureaucracy which arose on the basis of Russian isolation and backwardness.

How does Poulantzas justify his strange conclusion that direct

working class democratic rule can only lead to tyranny?

He does it just like any Tory: by identifying general democratic rights — free speech, free assembly and so on — with the particular forms of bourgeois, Parliamentary democracy. Because the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly (in January 1918) therefore they abolished democratic rights... and therefore the Soviet state became a despotism.

Poulantzas calls Rosa Luxemburg to support this theory. But he distorts Luxemburg's ideas.

When she wrote her book on the Russian Revolution (in prison in 1918), Luxemburg did not understand the significance of the soviets, the fact that they provided a means of rule as closely adapted to the needs of working class democracy as Parliament has been to the needs of the bourgeoisie. Thus she did not understand the superiority of the soviets to the Constituent Assembly, and saw the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly as merely a restriction of democracy.

Without denying that democracy might need to be restricted in the struggle against counter-revolution, Rosa Luxemburg was worried that the Bolsheviks seemed to be making a virtue of necessity.

After leaving prison, and entering the revolutionary struggle in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg soon changed her views. "The workers' and soldiers' councils" she declared "must learn how to become the sole public authorities throughout the realm". "The National Assembly is a counter-revolutionary fortress erected against the revolutionary proletariat. Our task is thus to take this fortress by storm and raze it to the ground".

So Poulantzas' theory will have to limp without Rosa Luxemburg's authority to help it along.

It amounts to nothing less than saying that the workers can only be trusted to achieve socialism gradually and under the tutelage of the bourgeoisie. And that what went wrong in Russia was not that the Bolsheviks were isolated and eventually suppressed by the bureaucracy, but that the Bolsheviks suppressed the pro-bourgeois Constituent Assembly!

And we need not go back to

THE DEMOCRATIC ROAD INTO BLIND ALLEY

Russia in 1917.

Every group of workers electing their shop steward, discussing with him (or her), instructing him at shop meetings, and replacing him when they feel the need, is exercising direct, democratic workers' control in a way they could never do by electing an MP who, once safe in Westminster for five years, will forget all the promises he has made and will vote the way he is told. That is true despite all the bosses' attempts to co-opt and corrupt the shop steward system.

The rule of workers' councils is in essence nothing but workers' control over society as a whole through a transformed and all-embracing system of shop steward-type committees. That is what the French upheaval of May 1968, the Portuguese revolution of 1975, and the Hungarian uprising of 1956 were all groping towards.

Far from suppressing freedom of speech and assembly, they opened the way for millions of ordinary working people, who had never had a political voice before, to speak and assemble and take part in political decisions.

And the leading Portuguese politicians in France and Portugal did all they could to suppress that! Anyone who said, in France in 1968 or in Portugal in 1975, "wait for a socialist parliamentary majority" would be defending not democracy but simply the capitalists.

But, warns Poulantzas, once formal liberties are swept aside in favour of direct rank and file democracy, then the road is open to tyranny.

"The fact remains, however, that the term smashing [the state], which Marx too used for indicative purposes, came in the

sufficient and must always be linked to sweeping transformations of the State. That is the dual lesson we can draw from Chile: the ending of the Allende experience was due not only to the lack of such changes, but also to the fact that the intervention of the bourgeoisie [itself expressed in that lack] was made possible by the breakdown of alliances among the popular classes, particularly between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie.

Even before the coup took place, this had broken the momentum of support for the Popular Unity government. In order to arouse the broad movement, the Left must equip itself with the necessary means, taking up especially new popular demands on fronts that used to be wrongly called 'secondary' [women's struggles, the ecological movement, and so on]."

INC DA EY

end to designate a very precise historical phenomenon: namely, the eradication of any kind of representative democracy or 'formal' liberties in favour purely of direct, rank-and-file democracy and so-called real liberties. It is necessary to take sides. If we understand the democratic road to socialism and democratic socialism itself to involve, among other things, political (party) and ideological pluralism, recognition of the role of universal suffrage, and extension and deepening of all political freedoms including for opponents, then talk of smashing or destroying the state apparatus can be no more than a mere verbal trick."

It is true that revolutions are rough affairs. As Engels put it: "A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon — all of which are highly authoritarian means. And the victorious party must sustain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries."

That holds for the great bourgeois revolutions which brought democracy into existence in the first place — Cromwell's in England, Robespierre's in France, the American War of Independence — and for workers' revolutions. But if the bourgeoisie, once established, managed to construct constitutional guarantees for their (bourgeois) liberties, who can doubt that the working class will also be able to regulate and insure its liberties?

Poulantzas does doubt it. He wants a 'constitutional' road to socialism. That is, he takes for good coin the claims of militant Stalinism to embody socialist revolution; he ignores the workers' uprisings against Stalinism; he concludes that the workers are not to be trusted, and that only the tutelage of the bourgeoisie can safeguard

democratic rights. Poulantzas talks a great deal about mass struggle and popular involvement. He also speaks of an eventual "climax" when "the relationship of the forces on the strategic terrain of the State swings over to the side of the popular masses". But until that hypothetical moment everything must proceed under the regulation of bourgeois constitutionalism. Any attempt to speed the pace will lead to tyranny.

It is the bourgeois content, indeed, which he clings to, more than the constitutional form: for the government the Bolsheviks (unwisely?) overthrew in Russia was neither constitutional, nor elected — and the same goes for the Fourth and Fifth Provisional Governments in Portugal in 1975, whose possible overthrow by workers' councils he likewise deplores.

Bourgeois democracy has to be maintained while "the popular masses" permeate it, construct flanking "self-management" bodies, and gradually push things towards ... the withering-away of the State, no less.

This scenario depends not only on keeping the working class under bourgeois guardianship, not only, therefore, on helping to put down movements for direct workers' power, and not only on assuming benevolence or even cooperation on the part of the bourgeoisie, but also on a mystified theory of the State.

This last point is Poulantzas' speciality; he has written several books on it.

He blurs over all distinctions between the state and society. So education, the church, even the family, become 'ideological state apparatuses'. Almost any struggle can be called a struggle "in the sphere of the State", contributing to the strategic aim of "a shift in the relationship of forces within the State".

The result is twofold. First, in Poulantzas' "democratic socialism", socialism almost disappears. There is not a word in his article about the expropriation of the capitalists, the shortening of the working week, the ending of unemployment, economic equality, or the abolition of poverty. His vision is little more than a stepping-up of "democracy" — that is, of existing Parliamentary rule, with its structure that was designed for the rule of the wealthy.

Secondly, the Eurocommunists are able to give themselves a radical gloss by taking up some social struggles — women's, community, environmental — as "struggles to transform the State", on condition that they have a 'broad', cross-class, and not working class character.

Poulantzas presents his "strategy of effecting changes on the terrain of the State" as an alternative to the Bolshevik strategy which aims, in a revolutionary situation, to build up workers' councils and workers' militias in opposition to the tottering bourgeois state (creating "dual power") and then to lead the seizure of full power by those workers' councils. In fact only that Bolshevik strategy has ever seriously dealt with the problems of subverting the armed forces of the bourgeois state.

He refers to the radicalisation in the army in Portugal. But that was fuelled by the bold action of the workers — who set their sights on socialist revolution, not on gradually modifying the State — and the revolutionary wars of the workers and peasants in Portugal's African colonies.

If Poulantzas is talking about the problem of winning over rank and file soldiers (or civil servants) to socialism, then he is telling 'Bolshevik' Marxists nothing new: the carrying out of systematic propaganda in the ranks of the armed forces was one of the duties laid down for the early Communist Parties in the '21 Conditions'.

Likewise there is nothing new if he is talking about using Parliament and other forums.

What is new? Beneath all the vagueness, he is talking about gradually converting the capitalist state institutions to social-

ism: converting the army, the police, the various planning committees and bureaucracies.

It is a foolish hope. In normal times, the functioning of capitalist society builds up and structures the State as a weapon of the ruling class. Solid reactionaries man its command posts. A thousand threads link them personally to the big capitalists. The army, the police, and the civil service have a strictly controlled hierarchy. They are trained in imposing bourgeois laws and bourgeois policies.

In times of revolutionary upheaval, the state can become unstable. Soldiers and even policemen become unsure that the state they serve is defensible or worth defending. But only in Poulantzas' fools' paradise — not in the actual experience of any country! — will the bourgeois chiefs watch this process gradually advancing until the state peacefully 'swings over to the side of the popular masses'.

The bourgeois chiefs will fight ruthlessly to reassert their authority, as they did in Portugal on 25th November 1975 and as they did more bloodily in Chile. And

not organise themselves for power, did not arm themselves for struggle, and did not act to subvert the army.

For Chile, the sort of ideas preached by Poulantzas were suicidal. For Portugal in 1975 or France in 1968 they meant trying to stop the revolution. For Western Europe in 1978, the perspective of gradually converting the state means being the accomplice of that state.

Thus, in the name of safeguarding democracy and increasing popular influence on the State, the Italian Communist Party has backed the Christian Democratic government, its wage freezes, and its measures to strengthen the police. The Spanish CP has backed not only the police and wage curbs, but also the monarchy! Not only are the Eurocommunists not communists — they are not even good democrats.

What is happening is not a gradual conversion of the State,

representative democracy and direct democracy.

Aside from the fact that the Provisional Government did not rest on representative democracy (it was not elected), this leads Poulantzas to the conclusion that revolution (victory of the workers' committees) and counter-revolution (suppression of the workers' committees) are ... equally undesirable disturbances of the democratic balance. Here Poulantzas' idea of reconciling representative and 'direct' democracy translates into an idea of reconciling the workers and the bourgeoisie.

Poulantzas' message to the working class is a message of despair and defeatism: don't take power, or you'll just end with despotism. To the revolutionary Marxists who say that workers can organise society democratically through their own committees and councils, with more real individual liberty than bourgeois society has ever known, he would reply: you are utopians.

Yet it is Poulantzas' democratic socialism which is utopian (unless it is just revamped democratic capitalism, which he denies)



November 1975: Portuguese MPs sleep in the besieged Constituent Assembly.

they will succeed unless the workers have known how to take their chance and impose their own power.

Poulantzas' scheme is made even more foolish by the fact that he considers it must apply to every country, "not only the so-called developed countries". Yet outside Western Europe and North America the parliamentary democratic forms he values so much have only a rare and feeble existence.

How does his strategy of gradually, democratically converting the state apply there? How does it apply even in certain quarters of Western Europe today, like Ireland? What does he have to say about socialist tactics in face of violent bourgeois reaction like the "colonels' coup" in his native Greece in 1967? Does he think such coups can't happen elsewhere?

When he deals with the experience of Chile, Poulantzas is even vaguer than usual. "A broad popular movement constitutes a guarantee against the reaction of the enemy" he says, and this is built by "taking up especially new popular demands on fronts that used to be wrongly called 'secondary' (women's struggles, the ecological movement, and so on)..."

As if rallies for Clean Air and Sisterhood (even if deserving of support) are an answer to Pinochet's machine guns and tanks! The "broad popular movement" was crushed in Chile in 1973, as in Argentina in 1976 or Bolivia in 1971, because the workers did

but a further stage in the gradual conversion of the Communist Parties into firm props of the existing State.

Poulantzas blurs it all over by never talking in class terms. In the entire article on democratic socialism workers and capitalists are hardly mentioned. He always uses the vaguest terms: democracy, the Left, the popular masses. With all his learned professor's style, he reduces the entire socialist programme to little more than the thought that more democracy would be a good idea and Parliament is eternal.

In a manner which is typical of his whole theoretical method, he substitutes word-play with formal structures for analysis of human and class forces in action.

For example, he declares that Portugal showed the dangers of dual power. Referring to the situation of summer 1975 when the Fourth and Fifth Provisional Governments were unstably presiding over a ferment of workers' commissions, neighbourhood commissions, and Popular Assemblies, he says it was "two powers of the Left — a left government and a second power composed of popular organs".

In Poulantzas' account the "dual power" arises not from class conflict (the Provisional Governments representing, albeit weakly, the bourgeoisie, as against the workers' committees) but a clash of political ideas: rep-

"History" he has to admit, "has not yet given us a successful experience of the democratic road to socialism: what it has provided ... is some negative examples to avoid and some mistakes upon which to reflect".

The Eurocommunists like Poulantzas do not seek to continue the long history of working class struggles for socialism and bring it to victory. They turn their back on that history; they regard it (and especially its most heroic, inspiring chapters) as a collection of mistakes to be avoided in the future.

They merely repeat the thinking of the social democrats of the late 19th century, described by Marx and Engels in these terms:

"They are the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie who are making their presence felt, full of fear that the proletariat, under the pressure of its revolutionary position, may 'go too far'. Instead of a determined political opposition — general mediation; instead of the struggle against government and bourgeoisie — the attempt to win them over and persuade them... All historically necessary conflicts are re-interpreted as misunderstandings..."

"These are the same people who, under the guise of unflagging activity (for petty-bourgeois patchwork reforms) not only do nothing but also try to prevent anything happening at all except — chatter... the same people who never see reaction and are then quite amazed to find themselves in a blind alley..."

IGNAZIO SILONE, who died at the age of 78 last week, was one of the greatest socialist novelists of our time. Until 1929 he was also one of the central personalities of the Communist Party of Italy and a key figure in its foreign underground work.

Silone — his real name was Secondo Tranquilli — was born on May Day 1900, the son of peasants in Pescina dei Marsi. He left this area at the age of fifteen after the great earthquake of Avezzano which had claimed the lives of his mother and two brothers. The impressions of this early part of his life are contained in a number of his stories and novels.

At 17 he joined the socialist youth and soon became the editor of its weekly paper *Avanguardia*. He became the leading figure in the anti-war youth movement. With the split in the Italian Socialist Party in 1921, Silone was one of those who left to found the Communist Party, whose Young Communist League he was to lead.

Silone was never a leading thinker in the party. Above all he was an organiser and journalist — from 1922 he was editor of the Party's paper *Il Lavoratore*, though that work was soon interrupted by Mussolini's rise to power in October of that year.

A critical moment in his political development came, in his own opinion, when in May 1927 he and Togliatti participated as representatives of the PCI in an extraordinary session of the Enlarged Executive of the Comintern. The incident is recorded in the collection 'Emergency Exit'.

At the first meeting we attended we had the impression that we had come too late. It was held in a small office of the Comintern, and the German Ernst Thälmann was presiding. He immediately began reading a draft resolution against Trotsky to be presented in plenary session. The resolution violently condemned a certain document sent by Trotsky by the political office of the Russian Communist Party. At that meeting of the senior convent the Russian delegation consisted of Stalin, Rykov, Bukharin and Manuilsky, which was extremely unusual. At the end of the reading Thälmann asked us if we agreed with the draft resolution. The Finn Ottomar Kuusinen, the future Quilang of 1941, did not find it strong enough.

Since no-one else asked for the floor, after consulting with

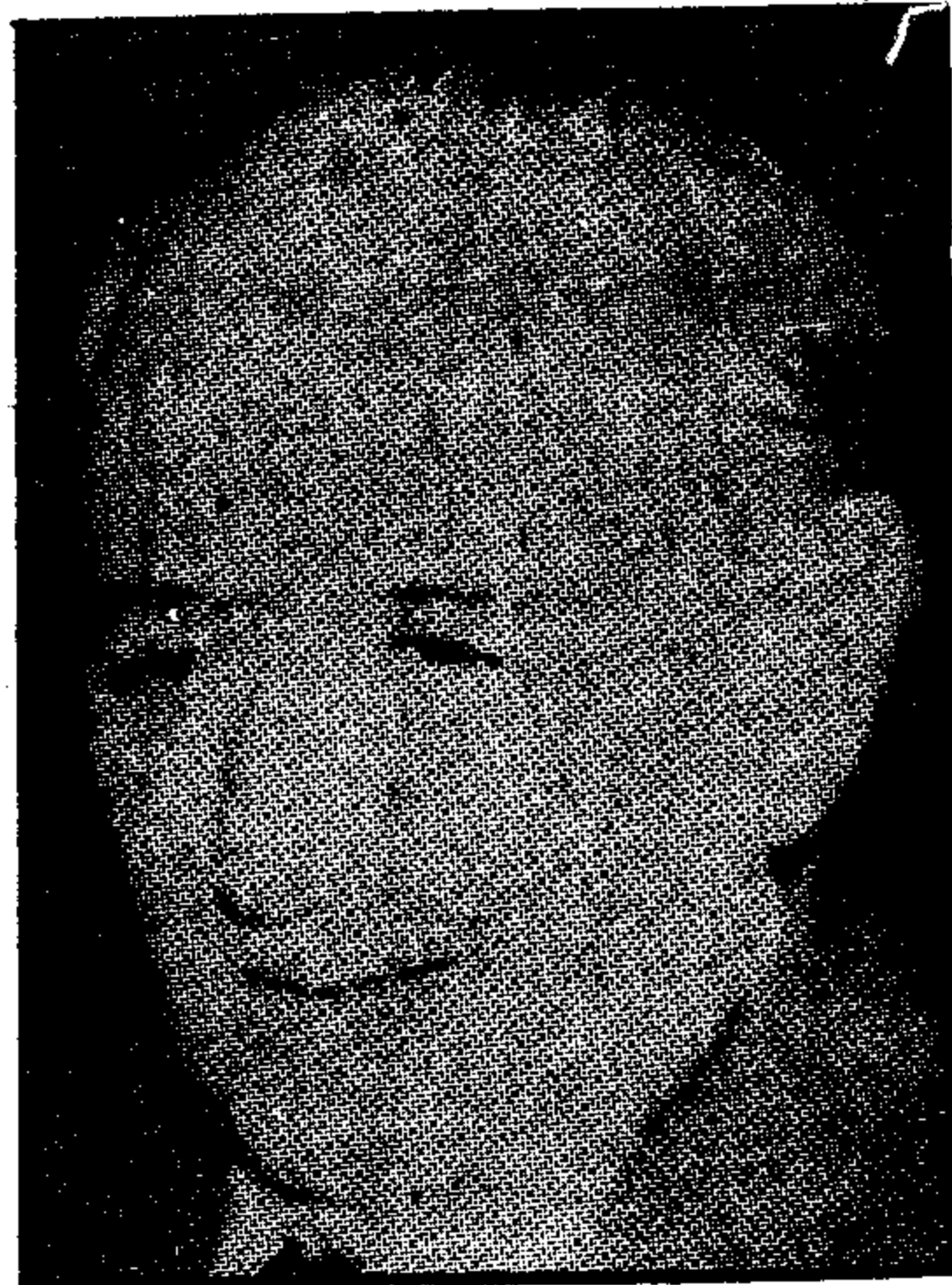
IGNAZIO SILONE: from Comintern to Christianity

Togliatti, I apologised to those present for having come late and for not having had a chance to read the document in question.

"Actually" Thälmann candidly remarked, "we haven't seen it either".

Confronted with this all-too-frank reply, I preferred to doubt my ears and repeated my objection in other terms.

"It may well be" I said, "that the Trotsky document should be condemned, but



Ignazio Silone

obviously we can't condemn it until we read it."

"But we haven't read it either" replied Thälmann. "And neither have most of the delegates here, except for the Russians."

Thälmann was speaking German, and his words were being translated into Russian for Stalin and into French for two or three of us. The answer translated to me seemed so incredible that I had words with the translator.

"It's impossible that Thälmann should have said that," I said. "Please give me his answer again, word for word!"

At this point, Stalin intervened. He was standing at one side of the room and seemed to be the only calm and unruffled person in the group.

"The political office of the party has thought it best not to translate Trotsky's document and distribute it to the delegates of the International Executive" Stalin said, "because there are various allusions in it to the policy of the Soviet Government in China."

(Stalin was lying. The mysterious document was published abroad later by Trotsky himself in a pamphlet entitled *Problems of*

the Chinese Revolution and, as everyone can now see, it contains no state secrets, but is a violent attack on the China policy of Stalin and the Communist International.

In a speech on April 5, 1927, before the Moscow Soviet, Stalin had exalted Chiang Kai-shek and confirmed his faith in the Kuomintang, and that was barely a week before the famous anti-Communist about-face of the Chinese Nationalist head and his party. ...the Communists had been suddenly expelled from the Kuomintang, and some tens of thousands of their followers were killed in Shanghai and Wuhan. It is therefore understandable that Stalin did not want a debate about his mistake and tried to protect himself behind "state secrets".

Ernst Thälmann asked me if Stalin's explanation satisfied me.

"I don't dispute the right of the political office to keep any document secret" I said. "But I don't understand how others can be required to condemn an unknown document."

"This is unheard of" Kuusinen was shouting, red in the face, "that in the citadel of the world revolution we still have such petty bourgeois!"

...The only person who remained calm and imperturbable was Stalin. He said, "If even one delegate is against the draft resolution, it must not be presented." Then he added, "Perhaps the Italian comrades are not well informed about our internal situation. I suggest we postpone the meeting till tomorrow and that someone here spend the evening with our Italian comrades and explain the situation to them."

The Bulgarian Kolarov was given this unpleasant task.

POWER

"Let's be frank" he said with a smile. "Maybe you think I've read the document. No, I haven't read the document. Shall I tell you the whole truth? The document doesn't even interest me. Shall I tell you more? Even if Trotsky were to send me a copy in secret, I would refuse to read it. My dear Italian friends, this is not a question of documents. I know that Italy is a country of academies, but this is no academy. Here we are, in the thick of

a struggle for power between two rival groups in the Russian central directorate. Which of these groups do we want to line up with? That's the question. Documents have nothing to do with it. It's not a question of finding the historical truth about the failure of the revolution in China. It's a power struggle between two opposed and irreconcilable groups. We have to choose. And I've already made up my mind. I'm for the majority group. Whatever the minority does or says, I repeat that I'm for the majority. Documents don't interest me. We're not in an academy here."

He refilled our glasses with tea and looked at us like a school-teacher at two obstreperous boys.

"Have I made myself clear?" he asked, looking straight at me.

"Yes", I answered, "very clear".

"Have I persuaded you?" he asked me.

"No," I answered.

"Why not?" he wanted to know.

"I'd have to explain why I'm against Fascism" I said.

BROKE

Kolarov pretended to get indignant, while Togliatti expressed his opinion in more moderate but no less decisive terms.

"You can't come out for the majority or the minority per se" he said. "You can't ignore the background of the political question."

Kolarov listened to him with a benevolent smile of compassion.

"You're still too young" he told us as he accompanied us to the door. "You don't understand yet what politics is all about."

The following day Silone and Togliatti repeated their position and it was now supported by the Frenchman Albert Treint and the Swiss Jules Humbert-Droz. Again Stalin intervenes: "The draft resolution is withdrawn" he declared.

At first Silone believed that Stalin had been generous in withdrawing the resolution because it failed to be agreed unanimously. But he soon learned better. On his return journey he passed through Berlin:

(There) I read in the papers that the Comintern Executive had censured Trotsky severely for

his report on the events in China. I went to the headquarters of the German Communist Party and asked Thälmann for an explanation. "This is untrue" I said bitterly. "You know they didn't vote the censure." But he explained that in critical cases the statutes of the International authorised the President to adopt any measure in the name of the Executive. They had waited for us to leave Moscow to vote in our name on a text we had not approved. This also explained Stalin's impassivity before the senior convent.

During my few days of enforced idleness in Berlin, while I was waiting for my false documents to be put in order so that I might return to Italy, I read in the papers that the American, Hungarian and Czech Communist Parties had vigorously blasted Trotsky's letter.

I asked Thälmann, "So the mysterious document has finally been made public?"

"No" he answered. "But you should learn what Communist discipline means from the American, Hungarian and Czech Communists."

In Spring 1929 Silone asked for an unlimited leave of absence from the PCI on medical grounds and moved to Davos on Doctor's orders. He did not resume political activity, and in 1931 he officially broke his links with the Party though he continued to give aid to the resistance.

For a period Silone retreated to a position which said the problem was the influence of the Russians; better concern oneself with problems of one's own 'national' class struggle. While a few of his collaborators in the underground, like Pietro Tresso, understood the real significance of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern and became Trotskyists, Silone was to draw closer to the Catholic Church.

CHRISTIAN

It was in Davos that he wrote his first book, the brilliant anti-Fascist novel (recently reprinted in English) *Fontamara*. It is the story of the development of an anti-Fascist and socialist consciousness among South Italian peasants.

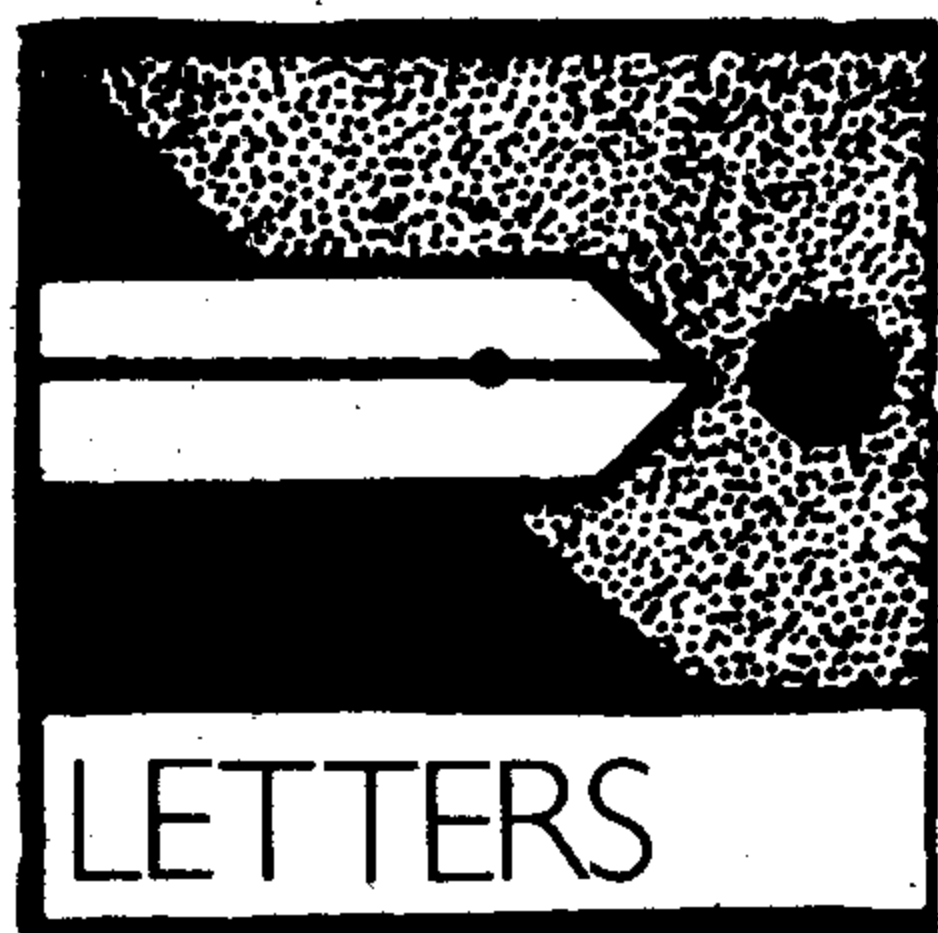
This book brought Silone world-wide fame.

He remained in Switzerland throughout the rest of the period of fascism in Italy, not returning until 1944. In this period he wrote a number of novels and short stories: *Seed Beneath the Snow*, *School for Dictators*, *A Handful of Blackberries*, and *Bread and Wine*.

This last book which became almost as popular as *Fontamara* expressed in novel form Silone's growing acceptance of Christian values. The hero, an underground organiser disguised as a priest and forced therefore to carry out some priestly duties, embodies the two 'currents' — Communism and Christianity — that Silone saw as expressions of humanity. Significantly the peasants in the novel warm more to the Christian than the Communist side.

Silone's political development continued rightwards. He joined the Democratic Socialists after the war; then when the party split into the Nenni (left) and Saragat (right) factions under the pressure of the Cold War, Silone left the party. But his sympathies seem to have been more with the right. In his later years he lent himself to a number of crudely Cold War anti-Communist projects.

Ireland: the duties of British socialists



Dear comrades,

While I agreed with the general sentiments of your editorial in no. 113 (entitled "Yes! Troops out of Ireland now!"), it seemed to me that there was an unhealthy strand in it, foreign to *Workers Action's* previous position on Ireland.

This came out in the last paragraph. You call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland: "But also organise solidarity with the Republicans who are fighting for a democratic unification in Ireland and more especially with the socialists fighting for an Irish Workers' Republic".

It is not the task of socialists working among the British working class

to organise solidarity with one or another tendency in the Irish revolutionary movement "more than" others.

The tasks of socialists fighting on the Irish question in Britain are different from the tasks of socialists fighting in Ireland. In Britain, it is our responsibility to build as large a movement as we can to get British imperialism out of Ireland, and to take up solidarity with all those forces in Ireland fighting to get the British out.

Solidarity is not an abstract question. It means that we defend the right of Republican forces to attack British military bases and personnel, and it means that we do not recognise the right of the British Army or judiciary to impose its punitive measures on the Irish people in retaliation.

Even when we consider that Irish liberation fighters have made grave errors — like the Birmingham bombings — if indeed Republicans were responsible for them — it is still the duty of socialists to refuse to recognise the right of the British occupiers of Ireland to condemn those responsible, and to assert that the ultimate responsibility for the tragedies lies with the British Government itself.

When we look at what solidarity means as a position which socialists

argue in the British labour movement concretely, we can see how absurd it is to talk of degrees of solidarity. You cannot solidarise with the Republicans a little bit or a lot, you either do or you don't.

Of course it is different when we look at the task of revolutionaries in Ireland, or of an internationalist organisation in Britain seeking to intervene in the Irish revolution. Then it is a question of fighting for a correct political line to carry the Irish revolution forward to the creation of an Irish Workers' Republic. And in doing that, to propagandise against the nationalist illusions and state capitalist programme of the Provisional Republican movement.

But the editorial was not addressed to that task. It was addressed to activists in the British Labour Party and trade union movement. As such it was, I think, at best ambiguous, at worst a tentative step down the road at whose foot lies the position of the *Militant* tendency on the Irish question.

PAUL GORDON

REPLY

YES, our solidarity with Irish Republican militants against British domina-

tion of their country must be unambiguous and unconditional. But that does not mean that we are neutral or indifferent as between revolutionary socialists and nationalists in Ireland.

British workers do have a special duty to give aid to proletarian revolutionaries in Ireland — including, if necessary, aid against the Irish nationalists. That does not mean our solidarity with the nationalists against British imperialism and Orange reaction is half-hearted.

We have never found Militant at fault for calling on British socialists to help in the building of a Marxist tendency in Ireland. Our complaint is that the tendency they call 'Marxist' is not Marxist, and that they evade the defence of the nationalist fighters against imperialism by talking about the need for socialism instead.

Our editorial was a response to the Daily Mirror's proposed solution for Ireland, not a response to a *Press or Army* attack on the Republicans. As such, it was bound to state our views on Ireland in a rounded way: both our solidarity with the Republicans and the special solidarity with the fight for an Irish Workers' Republic which is an equally long-standing principle of our politics.

NF SECRET MEMO

SCLV MEETINGS

THE NEW SECRET MEMO FROM THE NATIONAL FRONT

"Action Committee of London Branch Organisers: Minutes of meeting held at the Royal Bayswater Hotel, London W2. July 22"

... Investigation into leaking of Memorandum

Members present recorded their unanimous concern at the recent leaking of the Action Committee's recent memorandum to the Chairman of the National Directorate and decided to instigate an investigation to identify the person or persons responsible.

It was generally agreed that the motive behind the leak must have been a desire to discredit the Action Committee at its inception by someone ill-disposed to debate within the party. The meeting was invited to draw its own conclusions from this.

However one of the Sheffield delegates did point out that the publicity in the Left-Wing Press had at least shown provincial members that such an organisation existed and had therefore provided a rallying point for like-minded individuals. Nevertheless, the chairman of the meeting reminded members, the advantages of this had been outweighed by the negative and counter-productive impact that such premature publicity had had on the Directorate.

Already the Action Committee was being talked of as a 'splinter group' when, of course, this was not its aim.

National Directorate Response to Memorandum

The response of Directorate members to the memorandum was mixed, according to the Committee



Tyndall: the voice behind the Nazi thuggery

Chairman. He reported that the National Activities Organiser was completely hostile to the existence of the Action Committee and, at first, had advocated the wholesale expulsion of all those connected with it. However he had not supported from his Directorate colleagues for this course of action although many of them felt he had been libelled in the document.

It was understood that the National Activities Organiser was refusing to work with what he understands to be the 'prime movers' in the Action Committee, when in fact the Committee represented the majority of London officials' thinking on the current state of the party organisation.

The meeting was also informed that the Chairman of the Directorate had refused to recognise the Action Committee as a body, seeing it as a challenge to his authority. He had regarded the demand for a special party conference to discuss the leadership question as an impertinence and had refused to brook any further dialogue on the matter...

Hooliganism

This matter was discussed at length with several members of the National Directorate and was felt to be so serious that it occupied a special debate at the meeting.

The Treasurer of the Action Committee said that attacks on immigrants, especially Asians, were on the increase in his area of London and that for the sake of the party's image it had to be curbed. Other members agreed but confessed that the problem had long since passed beyond their control.

He said he had been disgusted with the nonchalant reaction of the Chairman of the National Directorate who had taken the view that it was nobody's business what ordinary party members did in their 'spare time'. Since, for most members, all party work was 'spare time' work, this statement seemed meaningless.

Assault

Another member of the Directorate said that assaults on immigrants were a natural by-product of the change in the social climate that the party had been seeking to promote and as such should be welcomed rather than deplored.

But the meeting took a different view. One member said he had sustained a beating when trying to restrain two of his branch members from hitting two Asian girls. Other members pointed out that street brawls with "Red agitators" were one thing but wholly unprovoked assaults on peaceful citizens were intolerable. Another member said he knew of several high-ranking officials who not only sanctioned acts of brutality but actually took a leading part in them, often travelling many miles across London for what were known as "raiding parties".

It was finally agreed by a majority of those present that sympathetic branch officials should compile a dossier of incidents and their perpetrators and bring them to the attention of the entire Directorate. Falling swift action on the part of the Directorate, the police should be notified...

Spearhead

Several members voiced their concern at the increasing amount of anti-semitism in Spearhead. They said there was barely any attempt to disguise these sentiments any longer. The June edition of the magazine had provided a field day for the party's opponents and would be responsible for thousands of lost votes at the next election.

One member said the final straw had been the quotation from the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" as if it had been an authentic document. The Secretary of the Action Committee said that the Editor must have been out of his mind to



Webster: comforted by his cronies.

permit this but the final blame rested with the Chairman of the National Directorate who owned the

publication and presumably had overall control of its contents.

Members of the Action Committee were encouraged to hear that two Directorate members had plans for an alternative magazine with a brighter format but without descending to the level of the present party broadsheet which was little better than a comic. The Chairman of the Action Committee felt certain that he summed up the meeting's feelings by saying that anything which lessened the party's reliance on Spearhead was a good thing and should be supported, if necessary, with generous financial donations.

Cash

The Treasurer said that a condition of this cash support would have to be some say in the new magazine's contents. He did not want a situation to develop, as had happened with Spearhead, whereby members' donations kept alive a publication that merely existed for the greater glorification of one or two individuals and their acolytes...

CARNIVAL TRIUMPH

250,000 people attended and enjoyed last weekend's carnival at Notting Hill, West London. Considering the attempts from many quarters to smother, divert, divide, and bludgeon the life out of the annual West Indian carnival, this was a triumph.

The conflict reported in the press was inevitable — and planned, as it has been in previous years. The same techniques — helicopters, surveillance posts, clubs and not shields — were used, and on top of that the police 'profile' was higher than last year. Roads were blocked off to prevent crowd movement, more police were on foot patrol (about one every ten yards in the area round Portobello Road), and more vans cruised the streets.

Despite all this, the atmosphere was generally less tense than last year. Sunday and early Monday attracted smaller crowds than previously, but later the streets were as packed as usual.

One person unlikely to be

pleased about it all is Pastor Rupert Morris, who had tried, with official backing, to split the carnival by organising his own event in Finsbury Park.

"This public event must be put on a properly organised and managerial footing", said the Pastor.

"Our massive West Indian cultural and artistic activity must not be allowed any longer to be used as a platform by political extremists and activists. Well-thinking and dignified West Indians have an obligation and responsibility to set an example and give a lead to their children in this country..."

Local black youth called for a boycott of the Finsbury Park event — an unnecessary move as it turned out, since this was a dismal affair with few attenders, shuffling about the park self-consciously, no doubt wondering whether dancing to steel bands was compatible with the 'dignity and respectability' the Pastor sought. *James Ryan*

from workers ACTION bulletins

From the WORKERS' ACTION bulletin at Ford Dagenham.

This year's pay claim was presented to management last Thursday.

Ron Todd, T&GWU national organiser, said after the meeting: "In the light of Ford's latest profit results, we believe that the time has come to receive some restoration of lost earnings during the past years of income restraint".

So the full claim would only go some way to making up the lost ground we've suffered since 1974. Despite what the bosses and their supporters have said about it, that's how moderate and reasonable it is.

Management are due to reply to the claim in a month's time (September 21st). It's rumoured that they want to force us to accept around 10% — about £7 before tax for most of us.

FORD PAY CLAIM

While outlining how necessary the full claim is, the union leaders have already talked about accepting less. Ron Todd said that "the actual amount would be determined by negotiations", but he wouldn't accept 15% if it was offered.

But the claim is for 30%. If it's good enough for the claim, it's good enough to fight for, and Ron Todd should be saying that. It will

THIS YEAR'S CLAIM

- Minimum pay rise of £20
- 5 hours off the working week
- Full pay for all lay-offs
- Extra pay for lineworkers, and improved shift premiums.
- Improved holidays, pensions, and sickness payments.

be up to us to make sure that that happens.

Another thing that Ron Todd said on Thursday was that the demand for five hours off the working week was serious this year, and 'not simply for the historic record'.

The only previous moves on getting a shorter working week have been when the union changed the

demand from 35 hours in 1976 to 37½ last year. It's back to 35 now! Todd has now admitted that the demand wasn't taken seriously by the union negotiators before.

Ford, of course, have been laughing. We've been stuck with 40 hours while they've managed to screw twice as much work out of us since 1961. It's about time we started improving our situation.

Five hours less here a week would be a great improvement, and one that inflation couldn't take away. It would also create over 3,000 jobs.

From our point of view, there's no argument against it. It must be taken seriously this year. It must be won.

The claim will need a fight, and the fight will need preparation and organisation. We don't have to hang around until the end of the month before anything is done.

Regular section meetings should be held.

A recall national shop stewards' conference needs to be organised to plan and coordinate the campaign in all the different plants.

— LONDON —

PUBLIC MEETINGS

HARINGEY. Thursday 14th September. "Fighting Racism" 7.30pm Tottenham Community Project.

SOUTH LONDON. Thursday 14th September. "The Need for a Socialist Campaign". Speakers Ted Knight (leader, Lambeth Council), and Patrick Kodikara (Hackney & Tower Hamlets Defence Committee). 7.45pm Lambeth Town Hall.

ALL-LONDON SCLV RALLY. 7.30pm, Friday 22nd September. Friends Meeting House Euston Road.

SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOUR VICTORY SOCIAL. Friday 1st September. From 8pm at Caxton House, St Johns Way, N19. Live bands.

ISLINGTON. Wednesday 27th September. "Defend Direct Labour". Speakers: Paul Lowenburg (an author of the pamphlet 'Building with Direct Labour'), Cllr Jenny Morris, and a UC-ATT member. 7.30pm Caxton House, St Johns Way, N19.

SCLV WOMEN SUPPORTERS' MEETING. Saturday 9th September, 11am, at Caxton House, St Johns Way, N19.

— OUT OF LONDON —

TRADES UNION CONGRESS MEETING: Tuesday 5th September. 7pm, King William IV Room, Royal Pavillion, Brighton

BASINGSTOKE. Tuesday 5th September. "The Government's record and Racism". Speakers include Patrick Kodikara (Hackney & Tower Hamlets Defence Committee). 7.30pm Chute House, Church Street.

CARDIFF. Friday 15th September. "The Government's Record and the TUC". 7.30pm, Four Elms pub, Elm St, off Newport Road.

COVENTRY. Monday 4th September. "No Phase Four". Speaker: Dave Green, Northampton District Committee AUEW, in personal capacity. 7.30pm, Swanswell pub.

■ Monday 18th September. "W(h)ither the car industry?". Speaker: Jim Denham (TGWU, Longbridge). 7.30pm Swanswell pub.

■ Monday 2nd October. "Ireland: Brits out!". Speaker: Richard Chessum. 7.30pm, Swanswell pub.

LEICESTER. Monday 11th September. "The Labour Government's record and the TUC". Speaker: Jim Denham (TGWU, Longbridge). 7.30pm, Secular Hall, Humberstone St.

NOTTINGHAM: Carlton East Branch Labour Party meeting with SCLV speaker. Friday 29th September, Burton Rd Community Centre, Burton Rd, Carlton. All Labour Party members & trade unionists welcome.

STOKE ON TRENT. Wednesday 13th September. "The Labour Government's Record". 7.30pm Cartwright House, Hanley.

- Advertisement -

"INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST" no. 9 now out ●● Socialist Campaign for the general election ●● May 1968 in review ●● Debates ● The I-CL and the Spartacist League ● Socialist Charter ●● French Trotskyism 1923-33 ●● Clara Zetkin on the First International and Women's Liberation ●● 35p. Order from ICL, 98 Gifford St, London N1: add 10p for p & p.

PUBLISHED by Workers' Action, Box 1960, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1, and printed by ANVIL PRESS (T.U.)

WORKERS IN ACTION

DOLE OFFICE WORKERS COULD CUT THEIR OWN HOURS

FROM 10 to 15 July, over 90% of the members of the civil service union CPSA in five Department of Employment (DE) Unemployment Benefit Offices and the linked Social Security offices struck against the job loss which could result when fortnightly signing is introduced for claimants.

The action had been organised against a background of virtual sabotage by leading right wing officials and by some NEC members who want to avoid embarrassment for the Labour Government.

This week the CPSA National Executive will debate the next steps. There is enormous enthusiasm among DE CPSA members to continue the fight. On top of the 1500 jobs threatened by the proposed fortnightly signing, there are big threats to jobs from computerisation.

The DE fightback must be turned into new channels if it is to win wider support. Many trade unionists and militants think that the DE CPSA members are wrong in trying to force unemployed workers to sign weekly.

The DE CPSA membership do not in fact demand that the unemployed sign weekly, only that there should be no jobs lost through any change. However, it is true that the CPSA bureaucrats and some leading activists do emphasise the 'virtues' of signing weekly, since this continues to limit the industrial action to the safe but defensive channels of trade union bargaining.

For CPSA activists, in particular militant socialists, the DE fight must be taken onto the offensive against job loss, and that can only be done by focusing on the need to cut working hours. Such a campaign — centred around the slogan 'one hour off the working day' — will be effective in winning the rank and file in DE to further and more intensive action.

It will also give a cutting edge to the campaign, to widen it out beyond the confines of DE,

into other areas of CPSA membership badly hit by job loss, and to gain broader support.

Many more unemployed workers can be won to giving direct support to the DE CPSA members than have been won to the uneven campaign of information meetings with bodies only partially representing unemployed workers, like Claimants' Unions.

Through fighting for a cut in hours, the CPSA could give a lead to many other workers facing the job loss and the dole queue. The Post Office engineers' action is only a start. It must be continued by the CPSA members.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

LAST WEEK bakery workers in Kent struck to get agreed manning levels on their production lines. The strike ended after a deal between the Bakers' Union leadership and the bakery owners — ABF, one of the two big bread monopolies.

But manning levels are still a major issue in the bakeries. In other parts of the country — Cardiff, Wigan, Manchester — bakery workers have banned overtime, refused to work on demanned lines, and even struck for manning levels.

The bread monopolies look at the issue this way. If they give agreed manning levels they will have to employ more people. But the demand for bread will drop after the holiday period — and then they will have to cut the labour force, or concede a shorter working week.

Two weeks ago the bakeries moved to a three-shift system, which — for the most part — ended the situation of workers having to do five 12-hour shifts a week. But the standard working week is still 48 hours: five eight-hour shifts plus a compulsory 8-hour overtime shift. [And, of course, the cut in hours meant a big cut in overtime pay for bakery workers].

During the summer students and other temporary workers have been taken on to keep

BAKERS DEMAND FULL MANNING ON THE LINES

production going. As far as the bosses are concerned, during the short period between those temporary workers leaving and orders dropping off, it will be all right if the lines run undermanned.

For bakery workers it is a question of going along with this swindle or demanding that there are fixed manning levels, with 'floaters' [reliefs] to cover for absenteeism and sickness. Fixed manning levels would keep the workload down, and also draw in at least some of our unemployed brothers and sisters who were thrown out on the dole by the Spillers closures.

It is important now that the fight over manning levels is coordinated and generalised nationally. The Bakers' Union

executive has no policy and is doing nothing on manning levels. But the regional shop stewards committees could link up to organise action which would soon bring ABF and RHM to reason.

Already local industrial action at RHM in Cardiff has won fixed manning levels and regulation of casual labour there. At Merretts, Cardiff [part of ABF], shop stewards have fixed the manning levels they consider reasonable and are refusing to start work on any undermanned line.

This action must be extended nationally in the coming weeks, as the casual workers leave and the bakery bosses try to keep up production on the basis of reduced manning.

GEOFF WILLIAMS

POST ENGINEERS ORGANISE AGAINST UNION LEADERS

"AN INSULTING offer... we feel totally betrayed". That is how North London Internal Branch described the Post Office Engineering Union leadership's attempts to sell out the union's demand for a 35 hour week in return for a deal reducing the working week to 37½ hours in two stages, with productivity strings.

Many other branches are determined to get the sell-out rejected at the union special conference on September 16th, in Birmingham. Liverpool Internal Branch has called on the union leaders to resign. Several branches continued working to rule or banning overtime after the union executive called off the action, and despite

tremendous pressure from the executive some — London City, for one — are still imposing sanctions.

POEU members are especially angry that the 'strings' the union executive wants to accept include measures often rejected by union conferences.

Left-wingers in the union are trying to arrange a meeting to organise the left for the special conference. At present the meeting is scheduled for September 2nd, in London, but it may be postponed. (For up-to-date information, contact London City Branch, Moorgate Automatic Telephone Exchange, 72 Fore St, London EC2: 01-236 5159).

The union leadership is equally determined to get their sell-out through: they say continued action would pose a threat to Labour in the coming General Election.

In a circular the executive has hotly denounced the militant lobby of POEU headquarters on 22nd August. It accuses "a group of people claiming to present certain branches of the POEU" of assaulting headquarters staff and smashing up the premises!

Around the country, in the weeks before the special conference, union leaders will be addressing area and regional meetings. The conference itself is also carefully arranged: no resolutions or amendments will be permitted from branches, and the Agenda is not out yet. Under the union rule book, delegates will not be newly elected, but will be the same delegates as attended the last annual conference.

Although feeling is still running strongly against the sell-out, the executive is banking on the loss of impetus, trying to breed the feeling that the initiative has been lost and the union just has to make the best of it. And they'll succeed, unless the left manages to organise itself. That is why the pre-conference meeting of the left is so important.

B'HAM TOOL STRIKE

continued from page 1

but said they would implement it as soon as they could. A month before we went on strike this time, we told the SU management to implement the agreement by August 1st this year.

This was ratified by the Birmingham East District Committee [of the AUEW] and a motion was passed to recall the National Executive. The EC referred this back, saying they were embarrassed and that the toolmakers had been overtaken by events and would get parity through the British Leyland scheme, to reach full parity in November 1979.

We got no further offer from the union or management, so we went on strike for parity by November 1st this year. We are demanding a rate of £83 to reach parity, plus a 5% rise.??

The toolmakers have been withholding union dues. Do you think this was a good idea?

A lot didn't like it, but the majority voted in favour.

ANOTHER BETRAYAL AT BATHGATE

AT BATHGATE, near Edinburgh, as at SU Carburetors, British Leyland and the AUEW leaders are working hand in hand to try to crush a strike.

1500 machine operators have been out for three weeks, and last weekend they voted two-to-one to stay out despite instructions by their union executive to return and threats from British Leyland that the plant would be closed.

The strikers are demanding increased pay for operating new machines in the truck and tractor plant. The claim dates back 18 months, but they have got no satisfaction and now BL is refusing to negotiate until the strike ends.

We took this decision because the EC refused to meet or hear the toolmakers' views.

Your demand for parity plus 5%: does this mean you accept the 5% limit?

We put that forward as a way of getting a return to work, that's all.

Have you got support from other SU workers?

The skilled men have decided not to do our work. The toolsetters voted 44 to 20 not to do toolroom work.

Ken Davies [AUEW convenor at SUs], ARTHUR HARPER [president of Birmingham East District Committee, and a delegate to the 27-man negotiating committee for BL Cars, representing both SUs and Tractors], and Ken Cure [Birmingham East District Secretary] have done all they can to get other SU workers to scab on our strike, and have encouraged SU management to employ contract labour.

Why did the toolmakers not attend the meetings [with the District Committee] which the District Committee instructed them to attend?

We made it clear that we would not attend any meetings unless there was something on the table. On Friday last we phoned the AUEW office and spoke to Ken Davies, the convenor, to arrange a meeting. Davies said OK, but later he said that there would be no meeting unless we went back to work.

There have been some rumours that what the toolmakers are angry about is the fact that unskilled workers are getting bigger wage increases than them.

That may be the case with one or two toolmakers, but it is not an issue as far as I am concerned. The women [on the shop floor at SUs] were very low paid before.

WORKERS' ACTION

supporters' groups

exist in most major towns. For more information, or to subscribe to Workers' Action, complete this form and send to the address below:

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

.....

I want more information

I want to subscribe for 25 issues/50 issues.

Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland, 25 issues £4, 50 issues £7.50. Rest of the world: Surface mail, 25 issues £4.50, 50 issues £8.50; Air mail, 25 issues £6, 50 issues £11. Cheques etc payable to 'Workers Action'.

SEND TO WA, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.