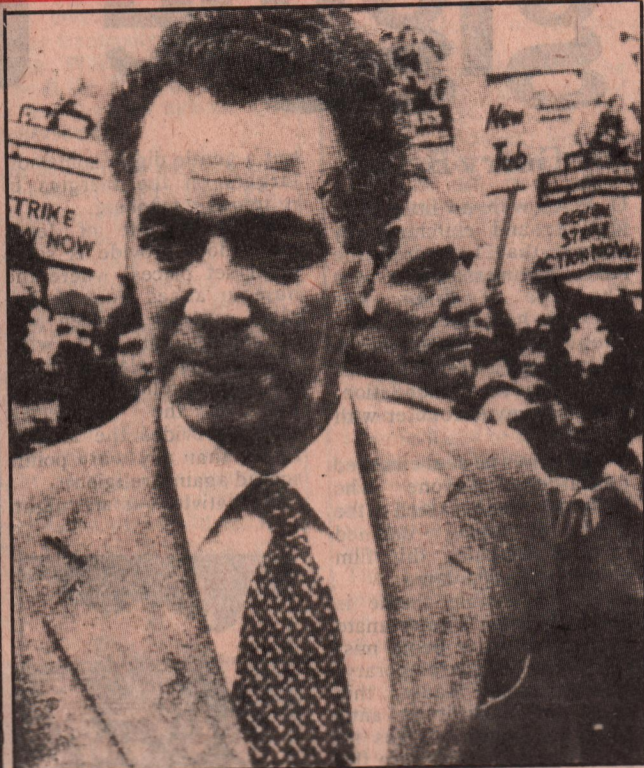


WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages
15p

No. 167
Feb. 16, 1980

Tories get egg on their faces



**Feb. 18th:
S. Yorks
general
strike
against
the cuts**

AT EVERY step of his tour of South Wales, Industry Secretary Keith Joseph was jeered, jostled and pelted with eggs and tomatoes.

Placards said: 'Pay the steelworkers. Stop the closures. General Strike. Action now'.

A morning visit to a Swansea Industrial estate had to be abandoned after a hail of tomatoes, placards and abuse from hundreds of steelworker pickets forced the official party to beat a retreat.

Later in the day, another visit, to the Alfred Teves brake factory, also had to be abandoned after angry crowds threw eggs and tomatoes at the minister.

Everywhere he went, Joseph was jostled and jeered.

And the Tories have more to face than the fury of South Wales steelworkers and their supporters. They face a rising tide of working class revolt, a collapse — even in their own terms — of their economic policy, and a serious split in their ranks.

The only bright spot for them in this picture is that the Labour Party leadership refuses to campaign to drive the Tories from office, refusing even to come out clearly on the side of the steelworkers. Callaghan can only lamely suggest that the two sides in the steel dispute go to arbitration. It is this spinelessness more than anything else that is saving the Tories from a massive defeat.

When the negotiators for the steel industry craft

by ANDREW HORNUNG

unions and general unions accepted the British Steel Corporation's offer last weekend, the Tories thought that the strike was as good as over — so presumably did the craft and general union leaders who share with the Labour leaders the ignominy of keeping the hated Thatcher government in office. But the first set of rank and file delegates to be asked about the deal, those of the TGWU, rejected it. Now it looks as if other rank-and-file delegations might reject the miserable job-cutting offer.

The GMWU water and sewage workers did the same. Again the negotiators accepted a deal — this time said to be nearly 20% while the steel offer is claimed to be about 14% — and again the rank and file delegates refused it.

The government has contingency plans to use up to 15,000 troops to distribute drinking water by tanker in the events of a strike. But they couldn't stop a water and sewage workers' strike having an

continued on pp. 6-7

Backbench calls mount for action in steel dispute
Cabinet heads for collision on strike law
National water strike on again

Prices explosion on way
Sales slump puts state car firm deeper in trouble

Leyland to lay off 50,000 workers



Sir Keith pelted by Welsh steelmen

"You're mad. We hate you". A South Wales county councillor, chasing after Keith Joseph at one visit, expressed workers' frustration and fury at the Tories' reckless destruction of livelihoods



INSIDE

Steel pickets out to win pp. 6-7

BL: bosses' deal rejected, anger grows p. 5

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The Cold War: Hell no, we won't go p. 3

Communism vs. Stalinism in E. Europe p. 9-11

**All out March 9!
Stop the Employment Bill!
Stop the Cuts!**

Official TUC demonstration, 11am from Hyde Park.

Putting a spoke in the spooks' TU work

A CHALLENGE to the subservience of the TUC's International work to the Foreign Office was launched on Sunday 10th at Conway Hall.

Over 50 trade unionists and activists discussed how the TUC backs stooge unions set up by right wing regimes in the Third World, to undermine rank and file attempts to build militant unions — in the Philippines, in Colombia, in South Africa and Malawi. The TUC International Department gives financial support via the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, contributing on average £300,000 to the ICFTU each year.

TUC International Department staff have been recruited from the Foreign Office or seconded to the FO, and the government gives £180,000 to the TUC to help towards the training in Britain of overseas trade union officials nominated by their governments.

Trade unionists felt that the campaign must beware of the danger of a smear campaign by the TUC bureaucrats against any attempt to make the International Department accountable.

All emphasised that they spoke in a personal capacity. Tony Ayland, a member of NALGO Executive Committee, described his attempts to get the issue raised after the publication of Don Thompson's book on the subject, 'Where were you, Brother?'. After a series of delays he received a letter from the General Council denouncing the book as being full of errors and contradictions: what errors, what contradictions, it did not say.

The meeting set up an ad hoc steering committee of 10 trade unionists and resolved to start a bulletin.

Contact: c/o Don Thompson 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

LAWRENCE WELCH

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

SATURDAY 8 MARCH. Day school on Ireland sponsored by Leicester South CLP. Includes sessions on historical background and the media and Ireland, and debates on Troops Out Now and the British Government and Northern Ireland. 10.30am to 5pm at Highfields Community Centre, Melbourne Rd. Creche Provided. Further details: 'Irish day-school', c/o 1 Florence St., Leicester LE2 8EN.

MONDAY 18 FEBRUARY. One-day general strike against the cuts in S. Yorkshire, called by S. Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils.

SATURDAY 22 MARCH. National anti-cuts conference, called by Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party. 11am, St George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials: 50p from T. Harrison/A. Dodswell, 70 Victoria St, L'pool 1.

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STOP THE N.F.!

The fascist National Front is planning a march for Sunday 24 February, starting at Camberwell Green (South London) at 10.30 and going to the Elephant and Castle. A counter-mobilisation is being organised. Look out for details.

THE LIFE OF LEFTY

Would God giggle too?

by Gerry Byrne

IT WAS with no little trepidation, and clutching my rosary, that I entered the ABC Hammersmith to see *The Life of Brian*. The Universe had, after all, been unequivocal: "Blasphemy is blasphemy". Lured by this sulphurous recommendation, I awaited my encounter with perdition.

My immortal soul emerged unscathed. Anyone who seriously entertained the hope of being damned through watching this film would be disappointed.

The ostensible theme is our hero Brian's unfortunate susceptibility for being mistaken for his contemporary, The messiah. Sadly, this does not make it an anti-religious satire. It gives no penetrating insights into the role of Christianity or its psychological mechanisms. Only the most feeble-minded would have their religious convictions shaken by watching this film.

NERVOUS

The great outcry against the film in some circles is more testimony to the nervousness of religious bigots and the frailty of their grasp on reality than to any critique of religion it contains.

One gets the feeling that if there was a God, he'd be laughing too. The film is not a biting attack on the pillars of present day society,

but a gentle dig at some soft targets on the margins of religious symbolism.

What the life of Jesus motif does provide is some good set pieces, where the humour arises from an implicit contrast between how it should run and what actually takes place. It's the familiarity followed by the jolt of the unexpected which provides the laughs, rather than any witty points scored against religion:

The Nativity — starry night,



celestial choirs, exotic sand-draped backdrop, lowly cowshed, the works! Delicious bathos with Mrs Cohen, mother of the infant Brian, greeting her nocturnal star-following visitors with "What do you want? Are you drunk?"

Or the barely audible Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the cheese-makers?", "That shouldn't be taken over-literally; he's referring to all manufacturers of dairy products."

The real underlying thread, however, is how laughable small subversive groups are, passing endless resolutions and never actually managing to realise their grandiose plans in action. Every trendy jibe at revolutionaries is represented:

Small groups: "Where's the Judean Popular Front?" "There he is, over there".

Infighting: Our hero attempting to intervene to stop a punch-up between the Popular Front of Judea and the Free Galilee Army over who got in first to kidnap Pilate's wife, cries "Let's stop all this fighting among ourselves and unite against the common enemy". "Yes! (with real feeling) The Judean Popular Front!" "No, I meant the Romans!"

Male arrogance: Judith, Brian's girlfriend, trying to rouse the rest of the PFJ from their torpor to go and rescue Brian from crucifixion, and understandably somewhat emotional, is contemptuously silenced and leader Cleese sneers "So much for our feminist friends".

All in all, the picture presented is a kind of *Beyond the Fragments* through the looking glass. The revolutionaries are laughable, incompetent, male-dominated, leader-worshipping, phrasemongering windbags who can not even get it together to save one of their members from



crucifixion.

Mostly this is mildly funny (if one-sided). But what to make of a scene like this: PFJ leader Cleese is gearing up his members to drive the Romans out and ends his anti-imperialist speech with the rhetorical "What have the Romans ever given us?"

"Irrigation", pipes up one bright spark.

"What apart from irrigation have the Romans ever given us?"

"Sanitation"

"What apart from irrigation and sanitation?" And so it goes on until the list includes, as well as sanitation and irrigation, education, viniculture, law and order, roads, transportation, etc.

That strikes me as just reactionary: we come over and civilise these wogs; what are they moaning about?

SMUT

Of course, there are some nice knocks at Authority: John Cleese as an officious Roman centurion who makes Brian write out 'Romans go home' a hundred times because he's got the Latin

wrong in the first version.

But mainly these rely on speech impediments, funny voices and low-level smut (a lot of mileage is made out of Pilate's friend "Biggus Dickus"). This reveals the Python's stance generally — lefties are laughable in themselves, whereas the ruling classes need subsidiary handicaps in order to be funny.

Their general political stance can perhaps be best gauged from Brian's sermon in praise of liberal individualism, received with uncomprehending adulation by his followers: "Don't follow leaders. It's up to you to work out what you think for yourselves."

All that said, most people will not go to see *The Life of Brian* in order to orientate themselves politically in the confusions of the modern world, but just for a good laugh. And there are plenty of them — even if they do confirm a few commonly-held prejudices.

The Nativity and the stoning are good fun; the finale is greatly uplifting (you walk out of the cinema singing); and Eric Idle's chirpy about-to-be-crucified spiv not to be missed. Nice jokes, shame about the politics.

THE OUTSIDER

Sympathetic but empty-hearted

THE OUTSIDER is an interesting, even good, film, with a hole in the middle and a silly ending.

The outsider of the title is Michael, an idealistic, naive American who goes to Ireland in 1973 to join the IRA. By the end of the film his dreams are shattered and he feels let down and betrayed.

However, the reason for his disillusionment lies not in any of the basic political issues of the Irish struggle but in one of its tiny subplots which is central to him: he finds out that he was to be killed by his comrades, using a captured British gun, as a propaganda exercise to help step up the flow of Irish-American money to the Republicans.

The fall-guy set-up serves to hollow out the film's generally intelligent and sympathetic treatment of

the nationalist struggle. If it's on any side in the war, the film is clearly against the British and for the IRA.

The British high-ups are just as cynical — they decide to try to smear Michael as an informer so he'll be killed by the IRA, thus helping Britain's propaganda war. The N.Ireland police, the RUC, are shown as racists and torturers, used to do the British army's dirty work. The IRA's execution of a captured magistrate (so brilliantly played, you can sense his fear just from his walk) is summed up: 'that's the only bit of justice that bastard ever saw'.

In Belfast, we see the hatred of the British stoked up by patrols sent in as deliberate harassment, and by incidents like the careless shooting of a kid messing about with molotov cocktails

for a bit of adventure on a waste plot. And when we see members of the Short Strand brigade emerging to deal with the murderous British patrol, it is a good sight: the community (whose solidarity we have already powerfully sensed) is fighting back, and some justice will be done.

The local brigade commander himself is a brave and decent man who dislikes the order from the South to kill Michael, and who tells us 'if we had more guns and less gelly we'd take on more military targets'. Even the decision of the Southern command to 'use up' the young American is taken reluctantly, the decisive argument being that 'plenty of Irish lads have died and the press doesn't care'.

Apart from the film's central plot (revealed to the audience in the first minutes) the

only character who conforms to the media's slanderous view of the IRA is the trigger happy Tony, who is disliked and distrusted by his commander as a pathological case — 'all the killing has gone to his head'. In the one reference to a real incident, the film puts the blame on Tony (i.e. on undisciplined, out-of-control 'bad apples') for the Donegal Street bombing, one of Belfast's worst bloodbaths: actions like that, it seems to be saying, have been the work of deranged individuals, not of the IRA command.

Then why, if the film is on the IRA's side in the war, does it concentrate so much attention on a possible but untypical scenario, that of the plot to kill Michael?

The answer might be that it is not a propaganda film. But it does have a message.

The implication of it all is that however good the cause, war must destroy those who engage in it. The film is prepared to concede that the IRA has a good cause and to take its side — but only so far. Its real hero is the blind, gentle, peaceable Finbar who takes no part in the war at all.

Whatever your cause, whatever your oppression, don't pick up a gun and fight; it'll only turn you into a cheat, a liar or a nutcase. That is the message in the empty middle of *The Outsider*. See it for its fine acting, its doom-laden, poetic evocation of Belfast at war, its rare and welcome condemnation of Britain and its realistic presentation of the conflict. But be prepared for a let-down in its banal pacifist ideas.

SOPHIA CAPLAN



"HELL NO, we won't go", is the slogan of protests taking place in the USA against President Carter's moves to bring back conscription. And in Britain, too, no-one should be willing to line up as cannon-fodder for our ruling class, either in a hot war or in a cold war.

Under cover of phony moral outrage and a fuss about the Olympics, the rulers of the USA and the big capitalist powers are organising a new military build-up. Carter's big effort is to make sure that the US has enough military striking power to quickly crush any threat to "US interests" in the Persian Gulf.

That is what it is all about — not the defence of anybody's freedom, but "US interests", or, rather, the interests of US and West European big business. US protestors have said what they think of it with the slogan "Exxon, Mobil, what do you say; we won't fight your war today".

It is not because of Russian army brutality that the ruling classes of the west are stepping up the cold war. It is not because Russian troops entered Afghanistan against the wishes of the country's people. It is because of their mortal hostility to anything that seems to knock a hole in their worldwide drive to despoil, plunder and profiteer.

The whole economic system of the capitalist world is centred round the profit-making of the giant capitalist concerns of the rich countries. Every area serves them, as a market, as a source of raw materials, or as a site for production. Not the people of Afghanistan, but oil profits and oil prices, are Carter's concern.

The Shah and his army were installed and built up by the US to police the oil-rich Gulf and Middle East area. Together with British forces, the Shah's army helped put down revolutionaries challenging the corrupt dictatorship of the Sultan of Oman. Carter's campaign is aimed at restoring the ability of imperialism to police the area.

The Cold War: Hell no, we won't go

He talks about bringing back the draft. New US bases will be built in Kenya, Somalia and/or Oman. More US forces will be moved into the Gulf area. US arms spending is being sharply increased. The cold-war fever will be used to clear the way for the NATO medium-range Cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles being introduced in Europe, including in Britain.

This build-up is not just aimed at the USSR, but also against any rebel movement threatening US imperialist interests. The Russian army wasn't in Vietnam. Nor was it in Chile when the CIA helped 'destabilise' the Allende regime.

Recently France sent naval units to help crush a rebel movement against the right wing dictatorship in Tunisia, and the US also showed willing by giving \$18 million in military aid.

No Russian army there, either.

Although the US ruling class resents the fact that the USSR has remained outside the ambit of capitalism since the revolution of 1917, it does not seriously foresee reconquering the USSR for capitalism. But for three decades it has mounted such a military build-up against rebel movements (Russian-backed or otherwise) or against attempts by the Russian bureaucracy to steal a march on imperialism, as could easily tip humanity into World War Three. It is escalating that build-up now.

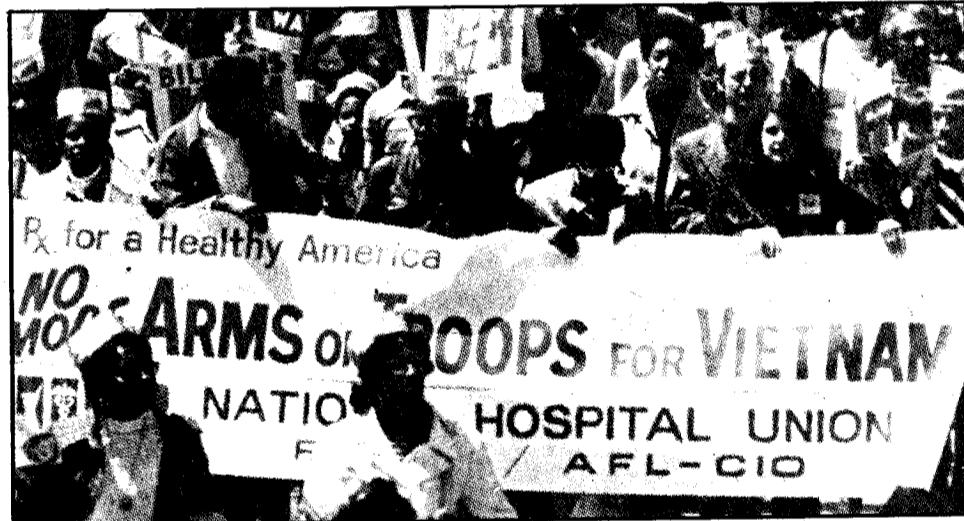
The threat of World War Three faces us, as long as the working class does not overthrow these masters of war.

Radical movements inside the rich capitalist countries are also threatened. Britain's war in Ireland has led to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, under which over 4,500 people have been detained on vague suspicions of perhaps having something

to do with 'terrorism'. In the US in the early 1950s thousands were 'railroaded out of their jobs on suspicion of having something to do with 'communism', as the bosses frantically lashed out, crying 'Who lost us China?' — as if the Chinese revolution was a crime against US property rights!

In Britain, we recently got a smell of what cold war means when Tory minister Norman St. John Stevas adds his voice to the witch hunt against Labour left-wingers with the helpful suggestion that Trotskyists were not only a threat to the Labour Party as we know it, but also to national security.

For the sake of people everywhere in the world who fight back against imperialism, for the sake of halting the deadly arms build-up, for the sake of defending our own rights to organise — no, we won't go along with the cold war.



Protests against bringing back the draft have force the US to get out of Vietnam is still shown that the anti-war feeling which helped alive. But cold warriors are trying to kill it.

IRAN'S DUEL FOR PRIME TIME

"Mr Bani Sadr, you are afraid!" announced a recent editorial in the Muslim daily *Azadeghan*, attacking Iran's newly elected president.

"You are afraid of the revolutionary activities of the students (holding the Embassy hostages) who are supported by Imam Khomeini and by the nation. The nation will continue to support the students and demand that they carry on unmasking the lackeys of imperialism."

Azadeghan's fury had been roused by the president-elect's three pronged attack on the students. It is the response of the Islamic Right to Bani Sadr's campaign to isolate the students holding the Embassy hostages and then come to some agreement with the US on their release. This will be no simple matter, but things have started well for the new head of state.

A week ago, a spokesman for the students announced on television that the ex-minister of information, Mr Minachi had collaborated with US Embassy staff. Within hours, Revolutionary Guards had arrested Minachi on no more evidence than the students' say-so. Bani Sadr's personal intervention led to the ex-minister's freeing, and provided the president-elect with an opportunity to attack both the students and the television authorities.

The television authorities had, already come under attack for their failure properly to broadcast the investiture of Bani Sadr. Their support for the students was well known. As if to emphasise that the

broadcasting services would not be allowed to operate as a "parallel power centre", Bani Sadr got them to give ex-Prime Minister Bazargan an hour on the air — something he has not managed for a long time.

It is clear that Bani Sadr's campaign against what he calls the "parallel centres of power" will be his main drive between now and the March elections. After Minachi's arrest, for instance, Bani Sadr condemned "this tyrannical action" by "these kids", adding "How can a country be governed while a group who call themselves 'Islamic students loyal to the line of Imam' claim to operate a state within a state?"

While Bani Sadr denounced the students as "plotters", Bazargan went further and accused them of being "traitors".

What will soon occur is a clash between that section of the clergy which is bitterly hostile to the US and the conservative pro-imperialist bourgeoisie. Bani Sadr, for all his anti-imperialist demagoguery, will side with the latter against the theocratic clergy. At present his speeches — particularly on the Afghanistan question, which he has easily been able to exploit — are carefully directed only against the students, but this is clearly a prelude to a more generalised attack on Muslim fanatics.

The Iranian working class cannot place its faith in the Islamic reactionaries whatever their anti-imperialist declarations, nor can they expect anything from Bani Sadr's populist promises of better housing and more political liberty.

FRANCE'S PASS LAWS: LIKE NOTHING ELSE SINCE 1940

THE NEW Tory curbs on immigration could become law any day now. The measures making it even more difficult for husbands, fiancés, or relatives to join people here need only be laid before Parliament with a week's notice.

If they do go through, it is only a matter of time before harsher curbs are proposed. In a social crisis, racism feeds on racism.

The Select Committee on Immigration set up under the Labour government recommended not only measures similar to the Tories' but also identity control for immigrants. Could that be the next step?

In France a system of identity cards has long existed. Anyone can be challenged by the police to produce his or her card at any time; this is constantly used by police to harass immigrant workers, especially North Africans, and immigrants whose papers are out of order live in fear of being picked up on the spot by police.

Now the details of "residents' cards" of immigrants are to be filed in a computer system containing 40 items of information — name, job, criminal record if any, etc. — about each person.

It is a further stage in a long anti-immigrant drive by

the French ruling class. In July 1974 a ban was put on further immigration (except if there was a special request by a prospective employer). A series of measures since then have made it easier to expel immigrants.

Two laws introduced last year — the "Bonnet law" and the "Stoleru law" — were especially sweeping. The Bonne law, for example, allows for immigrants to be expelled simply on the decision of the police if they are reckoned to be "a threat to public order".

The French government says plainly that it wants to reduce the number of immigrant workers by 200,000 a year. At present almost 5,000 a year are thrown out of France.

Nothing like the new system of computerised identity control has been seen in France since... the surveillance of Jews during the Nazi occupation.

That's the way the Tories are going too. Having pulled in masses of immigrant workers as cheap labour during boom years, the British capitalist class, like the French, now faced with a slump, wants to get rid of excess labour and to find scapegoats for its crisis. It's time we stopped them.

Smash H-blocks, free the Armagh POWs

"We're on our way to our trial today, But the British Army stood in our way, What will Basil MacIvire [the magistrate] say When the Women's Army is late!"

With this song, the Armagh 11 defendants and their women supporters jeered the British troops who were searching them, while on their way to trial.

The Armagh 11 defendants are women from the 'Women against Imperialism' group who were arrested last International Women's Day (March 8th) whilst picketing Armagh Gaol in the North of Ireland. The picket was an attempt to highlight the plight of the Republican women prisoners in Armagh who are subject to 23-hour lockup and have lost all their "privileges" as

punishment for the solidarity with the struggle for political status. They are only allowed half hour visits every month, and only three visitors at a time.

The trial of the Armagh 11 for assaulting the police and for obstruction was first postponed from October 25th to January 2nd. On January 2nd, 50 women supporters from Ireland and Britain were in the courtroom. The prosecution moved for yet another adjournment, pleading "sickness" of their chief lawyer! Magistrate MacIvire duly granted the request, and the

trial was rescheduled for April 9th.

Then, however, it will be a trial in an empty courtroom as all the women have refused to reappear and have dismissed their lawyers. On their way out, the women held a fifteen minute demonstration in the courtyard opposite the gaol.

"Women inside came to the windows — the response was magic. They yelled H-Block slogans, and "Shoot, shoot, shoot the bastards!" for the benefit of the RUC surrounding us".

Protesters will return to Armagh on the next Women's Day. Send all messages of support to: Women against Imperialism, Anne-Marie Loughran, 7 Riverdale Park Drive, Andersonstown, Belfast



SATURDAY 23rd FEBRUARY

MASS PICKET

1pm to 2pm of the Foreign Office Downing Street

RALLY

6.45pm - 8.30pm at the National Liberal Club 1 Whitehall Place SW1

BENEFIT & DANCE

9.00pm - 12.30am at the National Liberal Club 1 Whitehall Place SW1 Bands from Southern Africa IABULA IMMIGRANT [a special reunion benefit performance] £2.50 Rally and Benefit £2.25

Too little oil - or too much capitalism?

by
ARTHUR BOUGH

THE LAST decade has seen growing concern over the shortage of natural resources. Computer models have been created showing that when various schemas for the variables of food production, population, resources, and pollution were considered, there would inevitably be a global crisis before the end of the century.

Many criticisms have been made about the statistical methodology of this work, but more importantly the conclusions arrived at depend on a number of assumptions about the future of society which need not hold.

Fear of a shortage of resources is not new. In 1798 Thomas Malthus published his *Essay on Population*. He argued that while food production increases arithmetically, population increases geometrically, thus population growth will always outrun the growth of the food supply and permanent improvement in the standard of living of the masses above subsistence level is impossible.

Malthus was soon proved wrong by the massive amounts of food from the American prairies and the potential of using capital and scientific methods to increase output. That increase has continued, and over recent decades productivity has actually grown more in capitalist agriculture than in industry.

Periodically, however, the development of productive capacity under capitalism has created a relative shortage of specific resources. In the textile industry, after the Industrial Revolution, new techniques and sources of supply had to be found in order to maintain an adequate supply of wool and cotton. For capitalism, shortage of resources is not an absolute shortage, but a shortage of resources at a low enough price to enable them to make a profit.

In order to ensure sufficient supply of cheap resources, Britain and other capitalist countries colonised vast areas of the world, enslaving their populations and often forcing them to produce just one resource.

When capitalism is in crisis and needs to find new markets and boost its profits by gaining cheaper supplies of raw materials, com-

petition between the various capitalist countries increases to gain control over these potential markets and sources of supply. This leads to imperialist wars — like World War 1 and World War 2, which were basically about the re-division of the world between the great powers: Britain, Germany, the USA.

The present resources crisis has occurred as the post-war boom has come to an end. Bourgeois economists have argued that this shortage of resources and the consequent higher prices particularly of oil have created the unemployment and inflation from which the West has been suffering for more than a decade.

Clique

In fact, primary producing countries, including members of OPEC, are still exploited by western multinationals. Price rises in raw materials reflect the increasing devaluation of the dollar (a process set off by the Vietnam war) and the higher prices of manufactures which primary producers have to buy from the West. A few ruling cliques in Arab countries have enriched themselves, but you only have to look at the four-fold increase in profits of BP to see who is really benefitting.

For the capitalists, the solution to the resources crisis has been a switch to nuclear power, a search for cheaper substitutes, and greater exploitation of primary producers through even greater unequal exchange and of their own working class. While Britain and France are massively increasing their investment in nuclear power, the *Economist* on 22nd December argues that the latest OPEC price rises should be dealt with by passing on the full cost to the consumer, and by political intervention in OPEC countries to prevent another Iran.

Other solutions which some on the left have associated with have also been put forward. There has been widespread opposition to nuclear power, and an emphasis on alternative sources of energy like wind and solar power. Some of these solutions have been basically reactionary, opposing economic growth altogether and harking back to a simpler supposedly golden age of lifestyle which never existed. Though some of the alter-

native ideas have been taken up and large investments made in research on them by the state, they are currently unlikely to be able to provide more than 10% or so of present requirements, let alone the amount that will be needed to provide a decent standard of living for the whole world. The most hopeful prospect is solar power.

It can be used to create heat in solar furnaces, solar panels to heat water, etc., and for direct conversion to electricity through solar cells.

At the moment, solar cells are prohibitively expensive, but new production techniques and mass production could greatly reduce the cost.

The problem with solar power is the need for a sufficient supply of sunshine. The US, who have the technology to harness solar power, are considering building a massive bank of solar cells in space and beaming the energy back to earth as micro-waves. To do this they would need to send up one spaceship every day for a year. Even with the use of the space shuttle this would be enormously expensive, and it has been shown that micro-waves are harmful.

Safer

Of course the cheaper, safer and rational alternative of constructing collectors in the world's deserts is out of the question for imperialism, as this would give increased economic power to those countries, mainly in the Third World, who possessed the collectors! Under socialism, this would be no problem, as it would just be part of the world division of labour organised under a rational planning of the world's requirements.

We should argue now for the construction of massive solar collectors, especially in Third World countries, built and operated under workers' control.

Existing resources are used extremely wastefully. While resources are wasted on imploring us to save energy, the energy-supplying companies try to get us to increase our consumption and their profits. Not only is much of present production wasteful and harmful, like arms production, but nearly all consumer durables have built-in obsolescence, creating a massive waste of resources and labour. For the capitalist, designing goods

so that they have to be regularly replaced is rational, as it guarantees him a certain demand for his products in the future. For the working class it is totally irrational. We are hit by continually having to replace these goods, and we have to work more than we need to produce them. Under socialism we would save resources and our own labour time by building goods to last.

Re-cycling scrap materials of various sorts generally does not pay for capitalism, since there is no social effort to collect the scrap and it would be costly for the individual capitalist to collect it. That is another big cause of waste of resources.

The irrationality of capitalism is not obvious to the individual consumer. Car-drivers look at the cost of running their cars, compare it to the declining level of service and increasing cost of public transport, and make what for them is often a rational choice that a private car is the best alternative.

Looked at from the perspective of the general development of society, the decision is far from rational. If you compare the cost in terms of labour and resources for production of cars, roads, etc; the cost of policing traffic; the hold-up in transporting goods due to traffic congestion; pollution; not to mention the human cost of more road accidents — the private car is much more loss-making than British Rail. If we transferred labour and resources to the production of buses and trains, and provided a massively improved public

When there is a transfer from car production, the saving in labour time is meaningful for the capitalists only if it is a cut in labour costs (more unemployment).

Logic

There is no reason why we should accept that upside down logic. We should demand a massive increase in the provision of public transport, and it should be made totally free. The saving in labour in the car industry should be matched by a shorter working week with no loss of pay, or retraining for other jobs with no loss of pay.

Perhaps the greatest waste of resources occurs in the area of man's most basic need, food. Every socialist is aware of the criminal practice of destroying food in order to maintain prices. Massive quantities of grain have been dumped in the sea by the USA rather than send them free to Third World countries, and farmers throughout Western Europe have ploughed under vegetables and left fruit to rot on the trees when there has been a glut.

The EEC's Common Agricultural Policy sets prices at a level such that the most inefficient peasant farmers can make a living (though in fact many have to take a second job to survive), and this ensures that the large efficient capitalist-run farms make large profits. It also means that they are free to expand their output to the maximum without the fear that the laws of supply

CAP is not withdrawal of help for peasant farmers, but the reduction of prices to consumers, the collectivisation and nationalisation of the big farms under workers' control, and a programme of investment to increase production. To pay for this the European Parliament should begin by levying taxes on the capitalists' profits. It is this that the British workers' representatives should be fighting for with their European comrades, not chauvinist ideas of the 'national interest'.

Similarly a programme of suitable investment in underdeveloped countries could massively increase their output of food.

A transfer of goods in their favour, to increase their standard of living, would not necessarily increase the population growth, as the merchants of doom with their computer models predict. It would probably reduce it. In Third World countries peasants have large families in order to increase the number of hands working their land. The less the land produces, and the lower the price they are paid for any surplus, the more hands they need to produce more. By increasing the standard of living and improving the output of the land through scientific methods, this pressure on population would be massively reduced.

Fetter

Capitalism in its imperialist phase is a fetter on the development of production and on human ingenuity. New inventions by individuals either cannot be produced because of the amount of capital required to compete with large companies, or are bought up by the large companies and put on the shelf.

Even so, the incessant drive to reduce costs has meant that technological change and scientific discovery have progressed faster in this phase than in any other period in humanity's history. Where resources have become expensive or when requirements have changed, new alternative resources have been discovered, or increasingly have been provided by synthetic processes.

Ideas

When the mystique of science has been removed for the working class, and its control wrested from the capitalists with a massive extension of education, the development of the greatest resource, human brain power, will ensure that vast new alternatives are opened up before us. Moreover, when workers can see that their ideas can be taken up to increase their standard of living rather than make them redundant, they will have an incentive to look for improvements.

The longer capitalism survives, the more resources will be wasted, the more capitalists will be prepared to risk human life through unsafe nuclear programmes or new imperialist wars in the search of resources... the more urgent the struggle for a socialist revolution becomes.

BRUCE ROBINSON



Not natural shortages, but capitalism, causes world poverty

transport system, there would be a massive saving in resources, and the saving in labour would enable us to produce a wider variety of goods and reduce the working week.

Of course this alternative is not one that capitalism can consider. On the contrary, public spending cuts are increasing the cost and reducing the service provided by public transport, pushing more people into buying their own cars and creating more profits for the motor companies, tyre companies, oil companies, etc.

and demand will reduce the price of their products. There is then a tendency for them to produce more than would be the case if prices were determined by the market. The surpluses are purchased by the agricultural authorities and stored.

The lunacy of the system is not that it subsidises inefficient peasants, but that it encourages production which is not consumed, but is destroyed or fed back to cattle. (Occasionally it finds a rational outlet by being sold to Eastern Europe).

A socialist solution to the

What about the Right?

"I'VE MORE than enough to do without starting investigations into the CIA", said Labour Party general secretary Ron Hayward after an unexpected turnabout in the witch hunt against Labour's left.

After what one member described as a "very nasty and very tense" meeting, the Labour Party's Organisation Sub-Committee has voted for an

inquiry to look at the left-wing Militant faction — and also at other groups with links with "industrialists, bankers, the CIA, and other enemies of the labour movement".

The decision still has to be approved by the National Executive as a whole, and may well be rejected. The amendment calling for the right wing to be investigated, too, could

torpedo the call for an inquiry into Militant. Labour's leaders to say they're too busy to look into CIA intrigue in the labour movement, but have plenty of time to do investigation on part of the left wing of the labour movement itself.

The Organisation Sub-Committee also rejected a proposal by Shirley Williams that

the Labour Party officially publish the documents on Militant collected by former Labour National Agent Reg Underhill. It passed, however, a motion from Tony Benn that Underhill be invited to publish them on his own account (which Underhill had already threatened to do).

Underhill has said that he will await the full NEC's deci-

sion before deciding what to do. But the witch hunt is far from over yet. The left still needs to organise to ensure the witch-hunters are driven back. It's only the machinations within the labour movement of the class enemy that call for an inquiry — not the organisation of factions within the movement.

BL: ALL OUT NOW

BL WORKERS have voted 59% to 41% to reject the bosses' "5% plus strings" offer. Now the next few weeks will decide:

- whether BL workers are forced into a pay deal that means about 15% cut in real wages.

- whether BL boss Michael Edwardes' plan to cripple shop-floor organisation in BL and enforce speed-up and job cuts goes through.

- whether BL unions admit defeat over the sacking of Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson — thus clearing the way for other union activists in BL to be purged.

Resolute action can win. Otherwise the outlook is grim. Edwardes is out to break down workers' resistance. BL management ran a big campaign to try to get a vote for their offer. Trying to face down the unions, Edwardes said he would not recognise any vote against the offer less than a crushing majority. (59%, he says, is not enough, because it was only 41,000 out of 90,000 who could have voted).

If there is a serious strike, says Edwardes, the BL board will scrap all its plans and the whole company will be for the axe.

The *Observer* reckoned, "The chances of BL surviving in its present form for the rest of 1980 look remote."

Despite the battering the Tories are getting from the steelworkers and now possibly from the waterworkers, Edwardes and the government are out to tame the BL workers — or bust. The AUEW angled for a compromise by which Derek Robinson would be reinstated but also banned from

union office but Edwardes would have nothing of it.

The BL workers' main hindrance is the weakness of their union leadership. Not only did the AUEW leaders offer a compromise on Robinson, not only did they sabotage the spontaneous strike last November and then spend 2½ months "inquiring", but they have stressed that no disciplinary action will be taken against any worker who fails to follow the AUEW's official but very half-hearted strike call.

The TGWU, the biggest union in BL, has promised support if AUEW workers strike over Robinson. But, faced with the bosses' determination, what BL workers need is concerted strike action for Robinson's reinstatement and for the full claim: £24 increase and cost-of-living protection.

On that, TGWU official Grenville Hawley has been saying that a vote to reject the offer does not mean a strike. The unions will go back for more talks. But before they went for the ballot the unions had been negotiating with BL for months without budging them an inch.

Now Hawley wants to tackle the brick wall of the bosses' class-war stance, not with the battering ram of industrial action, but with the feather-duster of more pleading and wheedling.

The Tories and Edwardes can be beaten: but only with a determined fight. BL workers must demand that the union side of the LCJNC or the Combine Committee calls immediate all-out action, joining BL's forces to those of the steelworkers.

'This time they've gone too far'

BL WORKERS at Longbridge and other plants were furious after BL bosses announced that they will not recognise the 59%-41% ballot majority against their "5% plus strings" offer, and that they are laying off 50,000 BL workers.

The company says the lay-offs are because sales are low and stocks are too high. Longbridge T&GWU shop steward Jim Denham told *Workers' Action*, "For years BL bosses have been telling us that we don't produce enough. Now they turn round and say we've produced too much. Their idea of running the company is heads they win, tails we lose."

A Cowley worker told the *Guardian*, "Contrary to public opinion, all too often we believe what the company says. They tell us to build more cars because they say they can sell them. We build more cars and what happens? We are still blamed for landing the company in the shit."

The 50,000 workers laid off — mostly at Cowley, Canley, and Solihull, plus 5,000 in the engine plant at

Longbridge — will get 80% lay-off pay for seven days, then nothing. There was no consultation or warning before the lay-offs were announced on Monday 11th. Longbridge workers are convinced the lay-offs are an attempt to intimidate and forestall strike action. At Cowley, one comment was:

"It stands to reason that they want to see lay-offs and redundancies. That way it's easier for the management to carve up the company and break the unions."

"Well, this time they've gone too far".

Many workers feel BL boss Michael Edwardes has gone too far with his refusal to accept the ballot result, too. Will Edwardes be consistent and demand the Tory government resigns because it didn't get a majority of those able to vote in the general election?

Jim Denham told WA: "There's a strong feeling for action now. With an all-out strike we can beat Edwardes, and together with the steelworkers and water workers we can beat the Tories".



ANGRY women protested inside and outside Parliament last Friday afternoon during the long debate in the House of Commons on John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill. Jo Richardson MP reported to a Women's Assembly in Central Hall that the Bill and the amendments to it are being discussed at great length, and that the debate looks likely to be extended over several more Fridays, and possibly into March.

The protest at Westminster ended with rough handling by the police, and a number of women were arrested. Later over 1,000 women joined a torchlight procession through the City to Fleet Street, to deliver a declaration of outright opposition to the Bill to those major newspapers which have consistently publicised scare stories about live aborted fetuses, but never the DHSS's denials of those stories, and have misrepresented opposition to the Bill as only a small lunatic-feminist fringe.

Many passers-by expressed sympathy and some joined in the march with the slogans, 'Every child a wanted child, every mother a willing one', and 'Not the Church, not the State, women must decide their fate'.

At present, Corrie and his supporters are still pushing the entire Bill, though at the weekend they are reported to have been considering (and they still may need to consider) a compromise which raises the upper time limit, retains the 'conscience clause' (enabling doctors to refuse to recommend abortion without giving a reason) but drops the highly restrictive criteria for legal abortion, and the charity-wrecking clause.

Such a Bill would be likely to receive the Government backing which the present form of the Corrie Bill does not have.

In order to get extra time for the Bill, anti-abortionists are delaying the Seat Belt Bill in its Committee stage, thus freeing the Fridays scheduled for its debate for the Corrie Bill. In addition, a Tory MP due to introduce his Private Member's Bill on March 7th may turn over his time to Corrie, and Bernard Braine MP has announced himself willing to sit through the night and weekend to reach a vote.

However, Jo Richardson has assured women that she and her colleagues are equally willing to stay up to fight it. Opposition to the Bill is extremely strong, inside and outside Parliament.

MIANDY WILLIAMS

April 27 demo will demand: Free Southall prisoners

CAMPAIGNERS in Southall are organising a demonstration for 27th April — a year after the SPG rampaged through Southall on the night of a National Front election meeting, and the day before the inquest reopens on Blair Peach, killed in that SPG rampage.

The demonstration's slogans are 'Disband the SPG', 'No to Tory Immigration Controls', 'Remember Blair Peach', and 'Amnesty for the Southall prisoners'.

16 out of the 342 people arrested during the police rampage have been jailed, and four of them are still inside. The trials of the 342 have been described by the Legal Action Group as "the judicial scandal of the century".

Most of the magistrates at Barnet court have been convicted at a very high rate — one of them, Brian Canham, at a rate of 95%. The police were so confident that they didn't even bother in many cases to check their stories with each

other, and people were convicted on the most spurious of evidence.

Only in the most obvious and publicised cases (like Clarence Baker's) were the police disbelieved.

16 cases have still to be heard, but not in Barnet. They will be heard before a Crown Court jury in June, well over a year after the Southall events. It is expected in Southall that the police will prepare more thoroughly for these trials than they have done for previous ones; the Crown Court can impose longer sentences than the six month legal maximum for a magistrate's court.

Over 30 of the defence lawyers from the Barnet trials have made complaints against the magistrates, but the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, has refused to take them up — just as the Director of Public Prosecutions refused to take action against any SPG officer over the murder of Blair Peach.

JO THWAITES

'Behind the Kabul coup'

OVER THE last few weeks we have given a lot of space to the events in Afghanistan, which pose a number of important questions for socialists who are anti-Stalinist and at the same time defend the fundamental bases of the Soviet Union against imperialism.

The first two long articles, 'Behind the Kabul Coup', analysed in detail the events leading up to the Russian invasion. Overall, our coverage concentrated on rejecting the imperialist outcry while at the same time attempting to make a Marxist analysis on the basis of a clear reading of the facts as they are available to us.

But the astonishing unqualified support for the Russian invasion by the American Socialist Workers Party — one of the most important organisations

calling themselves Trotskyist in the world, and one whose political lead is followed by many revolutionary socialists throughout the world — compelled us to give space to a response and comment on that issue. We did that in nos. 165 and 166.

The statement published in our last issue (no. 166) essentially covered much of the material originally scheduled for the rest of the article 'Behind the Kabul Coup'. We have decided therefore that the rest of the background coverage on Afghanistan, including especially a discussion of the views and reactions to the invasion of the other tendencies calling themselves Trotskyist, is best done in separate articles, which will appear in the forthcoming issues.

TIBET: A CORRECTION

In the editorial statement on Afghanistan published last week, one sentence was mistakenly placed in the wrong paragraph. The statement read:

"In Afghanistan, to have any hope of creating a friendly regime, the Russians would have to carry through the land reform and other reforms. They have the strength, including the military resources and the physical power that the PDP-Army regime did not have, and therefore could carry through these changes."

If they do, it will be on the basis of subjugation and conquest, with a greater or

lesser degree of violence, of the vast majority of the people of Afghanistan. The most relevant experience here is Tibet/China."

The sentence, "The most relevant experience here is Tibet/China," should have appeared at the end of the paragraph, "... carry through these changes", not where it did. As it stood, it implied a view of the events in Tibet in 1959 which we do not hold. The Trotskyist movement saw those events not as comparable to the invasion of Afghanistan, but rather primarily as a part of the development of the Chinese Revolution.

Picket 'kicked half to death' by cops

A STEEL picket from Rotherham was nearly killed by police outside the Castle Bromwich BL plant last Wednesday, 6th.

About 80 ISTC flying pickets arrived at the plant. BL stewards told them they would accept steel coming into the plant, but the pickets blocked the gates and nothing crossed. Several lorries were turned away.

The police presence increased to 300 in the course of the morning. As one picket described it, "They ringed us and shoved us out of the way, and there were boots going in from the police". He also noticed a core of about 30 hard men who he suspected were SPG drafted in from London.

Then a lorry tried to get through, and the police charged the pickets.

"One of our blokes went down and was kicked by police when he was on the ground. But while he was down, he managed to get a sergeant in the crutch.

"I then heard an Inspector shout 'Get him', and the police grabbed him and took him into the security cabin on the gate.

"What they did to him in there was nobody's business. They kicked him half to death".

He was taken to hospital and no-one was allowed to go near him for a couple of days. He was so badly beaten there were fears for his life. He is now back in Roth-

erham — suffering from severe external and internal injuries.

At least one T&GWU steward and several T&G lorry drivers saw the incident, and not one of them has been willing to come forward as a witness.

At a meeting on the steel strike organised by Selly Oak Constituency Labour Party in Birmingham, an ISTC branch official from Sheffield broke down when telling this story and had to be helped by the chairman to finish it.

Earlier he had told the meeting, "Before I came to Birmingham, my impression was that Birmingham was solid trade unionist. I haven't met one since I got here".

He told the meeting that the pickets had got a bad reception from lorry drivers and factory workers in the area, and are bitterly disillusioned with the parochialism of workers in the West Midlands.

Strike

He stressed that the strike is "a matter for all trade unionists and all good socialists. It's about de-industrialisation and the Tories' and capitalists' dream of three or four million workers unemployed and the situation where the trade unions are so weakened that if we try to fight the boss can turn round and say, 'There's another'll do your job for £10 less than you'".

Harold Poulford, speaking for the West Midland Brigade Committee of the Fire Brigades Union, argued that the main issue facing all workers is jobs. The ISTC's battle is "not just for money, but for their very existence".

The third speaker was Jim Denham, a Longbridge T&GWU steward and *Workers' Action* supporter. He argued that the issues facing workers in steel and in BL are virtually identical. Both have been given insulting pay offers coupled with incentive schemes that might well never pay out, and both are faced with massive job losses.

The Tories thought both groups were soft touches that they could attack with impunity. They have been surprised by the steelworkers, and the best chance for the BL workers is to come out now while the steel workers are still fighting.

The steel strike is a pointer for the struggle against the Tories — and the logic of the situation is a General Strike to stop them in their tracks.

The 40 people at the meeting raised £26 for the strike fund, and an appeal was made for help in picketing. Pickets assemble at 6.30am and 9pm daily at the Labour Club, 14-16 Bristol St, Birmingham, to be transported to the various works and stockholders to be picketed that day.

SCOTTISH WIVES ON REGULAR PICKET DUTY

THE CLYDEBRIDGE Strike Committee told *Workers' Action* that they are intensifying picket action to cover engineering works using unfinished steel. A spokesman said, "We're having a great deal of success, although we have problems with non-union drivers and shops. But retribution will be forthcoming at the end of the strike."

"At the start of the strike, certain dispensations were given to contractors, but the actual agreements were not obeyed by the lorry drivers. For example, Ravenscraig needs calor gas and certain people needed passes. These were given to lorry drivers who then used them to get steel in."

"In future pickets will ignore all pieces of paper, because that's all they are."



"GREAT support has come from the steel workers' wives", Pat Shevlin of the Scottish strike committee told *Workers' Action*. "Originally they turned up to do kitchen work, soup and tea, etc., but so many volunteered, that they are now turning up regularly for picket duty".



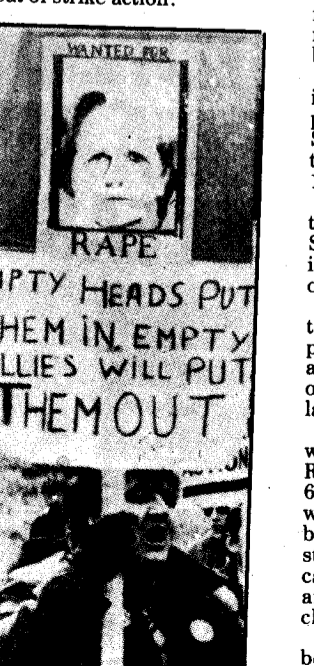
PAT SHEVLIN also told *Workers' Action* that supplies of pit props are running low. "As a token of support for us, the miners are refusing to use second hand pit props. We have been told by colliery workers in Fife that there are only two weeks' supply left, and then pits will have to close".



RUTHERGLEN Labour MP Gregor McKenzie has wished the steel strikers "all the best" but added, "as long as you don't break the law".



THE WALES TUC has called a recall conference for February 27 to discuss its call for a General Strike in Wales from March 10 against steel cutbacks. The British TUC is pressing the Wales TUC to drop any specific date from its threat of strike action.



Tories get on their feet

continued from p.1

immediate effect on industry — something that it is taking the steel strike a long time to do.

The Tories may well face a strike at Leyland too. Their handling of the victimisation of Derek Robinson — and no-one doubts that the government was behind it — looks like forcing the right-wing AUEW into supporting strike action. At Leyland too, the workforce has rejected the company's pay and conditions "offer" in a ballot that Michael Edwardes won't accept.

If Thatcher and her gang thought they would get an easy ride because of the nature of the leaders of the steel unions and of the AUEW and GMWU, they

reckoned without the rank and file.

Inside the Tory party there is revolt too. Last weekend, Chancellor Sir Geoffrey Howe publicly attacked Employment Secretary James Prior's "softly, softly" approach on anti-union laws. Howe wants much tougher measures. Obviously he thinks that the press support for Denning's recent union-bashing judgment means that there would be plenty of support from the public — from the riff-raff of Tory supporters, that is — if the forthcoming Employment Bill were speeded up and amended to make it more viciously anti-union.

Howe's hawks have lost the battle inside the Tory party for the moment. The fact that they haven't stopped fighting shows that

they think swinging their weight of the class state. According to *The Times* it was Howe's strategy; now under the hammer that defeat, limited to a narrow margin. That's not to mention the Tories' own admission that the hospital and teachers' strikes are making things worse! The Tories have been able to stop a national income tax cut, but the chances of the Chancellor that further cut to a deepening!

Labour's Left silent on steel strike

by JO THWAITES

WE KNOW WHAT the steel strikers have to say on the steel strike, we know what the TUC has to say, we know what the Tories and the CBI have to say. But what about the Labour Opposition?

James Callaghan has called for the government to intervene in the dispute, but he has carefully avoided saying the steelworkers should get their money and keep their jobs.

And what would a Tory intervention in the steel strike mean? Will the Tories help the strikers? If that's the best Callaghan can come out with, then the Tories have nothing to fear. The class interests represented by the Tories and the BSC bosses are one and the same.

Callaghan's latest effort is a call for a court of inquiry to settle the steel strike. Instead of calling in Tory ministers, his new form of "support" for the steelworkers is to call in some right-wing judge, a friend of Lord Denning's perhaps.

Ex-leftist Michael Foot made an appearance at the Cardiff rally on January 28th. He said it was a good demonstration. But he didn't say the steelworkers should get their money and keep their jobs. Not all that surprising, given his record on closures in South Wales under the last Labour government.

Wedgwood Benn is perhaps best placed of all to build a massive campaign to support the steel-

workers. If he is serious about building factory branches and developing a mass activist membership in the Labour Party, then what better way than a campaign to back the steelworkers. Benn has been making statements about the conservative influence of the civil service, about an eight-point programme for social reform, about the Daily Mirror — but not a word saying "the steelworkers are right".

The Labour Coordinating Committee, led by co-thinkers of Benn, has been



slamming the Labour leadership. Not a word from them either, on whether the steelworkers should win their demands.

If the Labour Party were to call a national demonstration in support of the steel workers and urge every local Labour Party to give assistance to the strike committees

(as a few have done), thousands of workers would be actively mobilised to support the strike and victory for the steel workers would not be far off.

The Tories are on pretty shaky ground already, yet the leaders of the Labour Party will not add a final push. Their ideas of fighting the Tories do not go much further than Parliamentary backchat.

But what can we expect of the members of the last Labour government? When did that government ever come out for the workers against the bosses? We need only ask the bakers, the Ford workers, the firemen, the lorry drivers of the public service workers.

In the outcry over 'secondary' picketing, and the Tories proposed Employment Bill the Labour leaders in Parliament have been hedging and hawing too, specifically refusing to commit themselves to repeal the Bill under the next Labour government. After the bold talk about fighting Tory cuts, Neil Kinnock (who used to be a left-winger — but has now got a job on the shadow front bench) has said Labour will give no promise to restore the Tory cuts if re-elected.

For the Labour leaders talking about socialism is about as far as any of them ever get. When real struggles come up, they are always looking in the other direction. Labour and Trade Union activists should demand: Stop collaborating with the Tories, start fighting them!



The picket line is still the front line

THE PICKET line is the front line — and it's getting bloodier as the police lay in more heavily. One picket was nearly killed last week by police at Castle Bromwich, and police brutality and violent arrests are becoming a daily feature of picket duty.

The bosses' press screams about violence on the picket line as an excuse for anti-union laws, but the pickets know where violence really comes from — police and scabs.

The lines are more solid than ever, as flying pickets travel to every part of the country to stop the movement of steel. But the picket lines need to be stronger still to win.

The Scottish strike committee has called on anyone who supports the steel strike to join the picket lines. They said, "This includes members of trade unions and socialist parties".

A picket of thousands can stop anything. Denning knew this and that's why he made his ruling. The Tories know the results of effective picketing too, and intend to deal with the 'problem' with their Employment Bill.

If the Bill becomes law, no-one other than an employee at a particular workplace in dispute with his or her employer could lawfully picket it. The Scottish strike committee's call to anyone who supports the steelworkers to join the picket lines would be unlawful. The picket lines at stockholders would be unlawful. So would be the pickets at Castle Bromwich and at Hadfields. Solidarity strikes, flying pickets (the backbone of the steel strike) and mass pickets like Grunwicks would be unlawful.

The actions most important in winning strikes would be made unlawful by the Tory government.

The TUC and the labour movement must mobilise to fling out the Bill and support the steel workers' picket lines now.



Picket at Hadfields. The Tories' Employment Bill would make it illegal, the police are trying to make it unworkable.

ent slump, as well as stormy political opposition. Even Tory councils are railing against the Government's plans for local government finance. The Tories have not got egg on their faces because of their incompetence. What has knocked them sideways and brought out the divisions in their ranks is the strength of working class resistance. But that resistance is not yet massive enough or bold enough to stop the cut-backs and stop the anti-picket laws. The rank and file has shown its teeth, but it hasn't yet tried to bite the Tories to death. We need to organise for a general strike, one that turns all the separate problems of the Tories into one big problem — the working class mobilised for power.

with foreign steel workers to save their jobs through a shorter working week and working with no loss of pay. Many of the strikers are feeling hardship now, with no strike pay and many not getting social security. Unfortunately the strike has not cleared away many reactionary ideas among the workers. Quite a few say, "We could get social security if we painted our faces black".

At the same time, the workers have learnt many important lessons from the strike. None of them has any illusions in the so-called worker-directors in BSC. Clifford Roberts said, "There is no way the Corporation will get the cooperation and moderate approach we have given in the past".

A great deal of bitterness has been caused by the strike. Pickets say that when the strike is over, many stockists will not get their lorries loaded, and others will lose their lorries by 'accidental' drops of steel on them during loading. ARTHUR BOUGH

OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE RANK AND FILE

IF JOGGING helps Bill Sirs think clearer, then he'd better enter for a marathon before he goes north next week.

The Sheffield strike committee has already passed a motion of censure on him for his handling of the strike so far, and reports from Scottish strike committees reveal that Scottish strikers don't think much of his approach either.

Pat Shevlin of the Scottish strike committee says, "I feel that the rank and file members of the craft unions will reject the latest offer and show that the national negotiators are out of touch with the rank and file, as are the ISTC negotia-

tors. "Bill Sirs is a new secretary and he's the first to call us out on a national strike. We agree with him on that, but disagree with a lot of his methods and tactics. We should have liked to see him go to jail after Denning's decision as a protest, since would have been bailed out after about an hour.

"He has disappointed a lot of people in Scotland who would like to see some stronger action taken".

And a picket at Dalmarnock Rd stockholders said, "We've got to fight now, or we'll have nothing left to fight for. There

should have been a call for a General Strike after Denning's ruling — and as for Bill Sirs, he has never made a good decision in his life. I think he's going to sell us out. If he does, we know what to do with him after the strike is over".

To prevent Sirs from being able to sell out the steel workers, the rank and file must win control of the running of the strike. Any deal must be voted on at mass meetings, not just decided at the top.

Local strike committees should produce their own bulletins and the ISTC should produce detailed bulletins summarising the information

in the local bulletins and telling strikers what is going on at ISTC headquarters and what their representatives are up to.

This weekend, Scottish steelworkers will get a chance to voice their opinions to Bill Sirs. There is to be a mass demonstration in Motherwell on Saturday 16th February at which Sirs, Hector Smith of the NUB, Jimmy Milne (Scottish TUC), Mick McGahey (NUM) and others will be speaking. (Meet at Duchess Park, 10.30am, and march to Motherwell Civic Centre for the rally).

IAN McLEISH

HOW THEY TRIED TO SPLIT THE STRIKE

"A BREAKTHROUGH", hooted the Tory press when they heard of the offer which negotiators of the nine craft and general unions in the steel industry had accepted.

In an act of organised scabbing — uncriticised by the TUC, of course — those unions, instead of joining forces with the ISTC and the NUB, the main unions in the steel dispute, negotiated separately. They even carried on negotiating when the ISTC and NUB refused to talk to BSC.

Now the wretched agreement they cooked up with the BSC has been rejected by the rank and file of the TGWU —

despite a recommendation to accept from the union leaders — and looks like being rejected by rank and file delegates from other unions.

And no wonder! While the negotiators reckoned the offer was worth 14%, the rank and file saw clearly that there was nothing being offered without strings — flexibility, de-manning, and all the other job-cutting measures — and that the offer in any case fell well below their 20% pay rise target.

If all the unions reject the offer, then the Steel Corporation will be unable to provoke the picket-line confrontations it has been planning

on. What it wanted was to have the craft workers turn up for work — whether there was any or not — and demoralise or provoke the picket lines by refusing to turn back.

Although the offer was miserly — there was no new money on the table; everything had strings attached — it must be remembered that the BSC's original offer of 2% was a long way short of 14% (and they were already insisting on job cuts then). The fact that BSC is forced to offer more than it had originally intended shows the strike can win.

ANDREW HORNUNG

BLACK STEEL

It's official-TGWU

After consultation with you at local level by my Executive Officers and with Brothers T. Cronin and J. Ashwell, we have responded to the two unions currently in dispute with the British Steel Corporation to give them maximum support necessary in pursuance of this dispute. In this direction therefore, any assistance which is requested from

you at local level by the local officers of the ISTC it would be much appreciated if you would comply, and advise the individual membership accordingly. This refers specifically to the movement of steel by both road and sea.

MOSS EVANS
JACK ASHWELL
TOM CRONIN

SAFETY-COVER

In last week's Workers' Action, we carried a headline, 'Stop the Steel — and the furnaces', which seemed to call for the removal of safety cover in the steel plants. This was wrong.

Some steel workers have pointed out to us that it would be dangerous to other workers and would give the bosses an excuse to blame closures and loss of jobs on the steel strikers if the furnaces cooled down and cracked. It could also possibly shock less militant steelworkers into turning against the strike.

While Workers' Action would support any workers who take such action against the bosses, we do not advocate it. The bosses are bent on the destruction of thousands of jobs, and the

blame must be laid squarely at their feet.

ON SATURDAY 9th February, Scottish steel workers met to discuss extending strike action. They are now prepared to stop any steel production in Britain for two years if their demands are not met.

After the meeting a letter was sent to Bill Sirs urging a complete call-out of safety cover. Pat Shevlin of the Scottish strike committee said, "Of the 80-odd shop stewards at the meeting, no-one spoke against the withdrawal of safety cover". When asked by the local press if the steel workers were prepared to foul up the industry for two years, he replied bluntly, "Yes".

Workers facing BSC bosses who want to foul up the lives of 52,000 steelworkers with widespread closures are losing patience at the bosses' and the Tories' intransigence.

Disgust at Sirs' leadership

THE LOCAL strike leadership in Sheffield is ignoring ISTC general secretary Bill Sirs' directive to make the private steel firm of Hadfields exempt from picketing. Rumours in Sheffield say this directive from Sirs

arises from a secret meeting between him and Hadfields chairman Denis Norton on Friday night (8th).

The disgust felt by the rank and file in South Yorkshire at Sirs' leadership of the steel strike was reflected

on Tuesday in the unanimous vote by the Regional Strike Committee in Sheffield to censor Sirs for his handling of the strike and particularly his soft line on the private sector.

Following much wheeling and dealing by Norton, the 400 ISTC members at Hadfields voted to return to work on Monday 11th. The motion which the ISTC men voted on had been printed by Norton and he had helped to organise the meeting. He has also attended shop stewards' meetings in the past few weeks.

These antics reached the level of farce when at a shop stewards' meeting last weekend the chairman announced that a coach was leaving the factory early the following morning. The shop stewards were all told to be on it at a certain time and they would be told their destination en route.

Some militants from the Leeds Road plant asked where they were going, but the Chairman refused to answer. Suspicions were further aroused when Norton came into the room,

and eventually it came out that the coach was to go down to London to picket the ISTC headquarters and demand a quick settlement.

While some of Norton's antics are faintly amusing, there is another sinister aspect to the manoeuvres apart from the scab-herding. Lonrho, who own Hadfields, have had secret talks with representatives of BSC and the Government on hiving off profitable parts of BSC, and Norton appears to be making a play for the managing director's job in any new steel group in the Lonrho empire.

Pickets were out in some force at Hadfields on Monday, and two arrests were made after police charged the picket lines a number of times. On Tuesday the pickets were again harassed by police and five were arrested at the Vulcan Road gate. Eight more were arrested when 200 reinforcements arrived.

The gates at Hadfields will continue to be heavily picketed until the place is shut down again.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

Workers breaking ranks opens door for bosses'

WHAT FOLLOWS is an account of how trade unionism was brought to its knees in a previously 100% AUEW factory: ITT Cannon, in Basingstoke. It is a sharp lesson on how bosses can exploit a combination that is all too common in British industry: the inbuilt conservatism and gutlessness of trade union bureaucrats at a national level; and weak plant level union leadership drawn from skilled grades of workers who have come to regard themselves as an élite which can make 'friendly arrangements' with employers at the expense of those whose interests they are supposed to represent.

Last July, the 13-strong shop stewards' committee was faced with the call to strike in pursuit of the Engineering Confederation's national pay claim. Despite arguments for strong action from women workers and shop stewards Ken Crockwell and Peter Wotten, the majority of the thirteen on the committee were silent and reticent on what should be done. When pressed to a decision they decided to "inform the members and leave it to their consciences", a move guaranteed to create disunity and confusion.

Convenor Roger Parker had previously been a left winger, even being associated with *Workers' Action* for a short time. But he went along with the shop stewards' failure to actively back the national action. One day strikes were useless, he said.

At a meeting of the women assemblers at Cannon's Brook House plant — one of the sections that stood firm for the strike — Parker was asked what he personally would be doing during the strikes. He said he would be working. Uproar immediately followed, with many of the women leaving the meeting in disgust.

Pressure applied through his AUEW branch forced Parker to issue a notice shortly afterwards, admitting that strike action was backed by a national directive. But the damage was already done, and scabbing escalated at Cannon's from week to week, led by the bulk of the 'shop stewards' committee'!

Despite these heavy early blows, those who stuck to their guns and followed the directive were somewhat encouraged by the quick imposition of fines on the scabs by the AUEW District Committee. The fines were promptly endorsed at national level, drawing howling headlines from the rabidly

UNION-BREAKING

right wing *Basingstoke Gazette* about supposed threats and intimidation, and the "misuse of trade union power", which apparently threatened the end of civilisation as we know it.

The scab stewards, however, felt bold enough to defy the District Committee — and far from organising effective picketing of the factory were often first across the line in the morning. To complement this noble action they encouraged attempts to break the blacking imposed by striking sections of the factory during the vast amounts of overtime that they, and other scabs, suddenly began to work.

Pattern

Whispers of direct collusion between scabs and management, based on common arguments and even common forms of words used by both to strikers, began to circulate. Their claims of lack of rank and file support for the strikes were shown to be ludicrous by the way in which the workers now lined up.

Where the stewards stood their ground, so did the section; where the stewards scabbed, the section followed. This pattern extended even to different shifts on the same section.

The Confederation action ended with the Cannons workers starkly divided between two groups of representatives — strikers and scabs. Even now, though, the situation could have been salvaged by prompt action to clear out the scab leadership. The rank and file played its part by passing votes of No Confidence in several of the scab stewards. Roger Parker resigned as convenor moments before the axe fell.

Tragically, it was now the turn of the AUEW national leadership to break this fightback and play into the bosses' hands. John Boyd issued an AUEW circular DR54/79 saying "...no useful purpose would be served by District Committees taking disciplinary action against the few here and there who broke rank. Accordingly, District Committees are instructed not to embark on such actions..."

Assistant Divisional Organiser O'Reilly, in a plush hotel room meeting with the few remaining stewards, said "Forget fines — forget disputes — nothing will be done against them. Have elections. Go back to normal."

Morale collapsed and the Cannon's bosses, sensing their advantage, seized the opportunity with both hands.

In the following week, restrictions on movement were suddenly placed on the striking stewards, and meetings with members were refused. The bureaucrats played out

their role as the bosses' and scabs' best ally to the full by allowing a failure to agree on the issue of stewards' access to members simply to disappear, without trace. The scab stewards were now the only mobile leadership.

The final wedge was driven in by the bosses' shrewd use of the upcoming annual wage negotiations. A ballot sheet appeared, headed: "As a company we are extremely concerned about the possibility of our employees going into 1980 on 1979 wages, and wish to maintain January the first as our annual settlement date." It carried three questions carefully designed to split further those still fighting for trade union organisation in the factory:

■ Do you wish 1980 Term Agreement negotiation to take place with the three-accredited shop stewards only?

■ Do you wish 1980 Term Agreement negotiation to take place with elected representatives from all departments, irrespective of whether they are accredited by AUEW?

■ Do you wish 1980 Term Agreement negotiation to be held over until there is full representation from accredited AUEW shop stewards?

When this ballot resulted in the inevitable victory for the bosses, the management began negotiations with their stooge Works Committee, alone, knowing that the three remaining AUEW stewards would not sit down with scabs. The debacle was complete. A scab Works Committee ruled the roost, and the remaining stewards were left saying, "We're non-existent now. We've just got a bit of card that says we're shop stewards... There's no law the management can't break and apologise for it afterwards."

Feeble

The groundwork for defeat was laid by the Confederation leadership policy, with a claim and a policy of action that was minimal enough to allow a get-out for feeble plant level leadership of the type at Cannon's, enabling it to say, "There's nothing in it for us; why lose money?" The bosses leapt at the chance they were offered on a plate, to smash the union organisation in the factory.

The vast majority of engineering workers, although they recognised the criminal feebleness of the claim and the action called for, avoided the type of trap which was sprung at Cannon's, through basic working class solidarity.

For any who doubt the wisdom of sticking out under difficult conditions, Cannon's, with its new, tame and obedient Works Committee is a stark warning of the consequences.

MARTIN TIMMINS
ALASDAIR JAMISON

The steel strike and Stanton

One major BSC plant — at Stanton, in Derbyshire — has not joined the strike. Mass pickets have been organised at the plant by steelworkers from South Yorkshire, but officials of the GMWU, the main production workers' union at the plant, are still instructing their members to cross the picket lines.

Their excuse is that Stanton is governed, not by the steel agreement, but by the national engineering agreement.

In WA163 we printed an article which criticised the Socialist Workers' Party at Stanton and Geordie Barclay, an SWP member who was formerly associated with this paper, for their failure to campaign for a strike at Stanton. Geordie Barclay has written to us rejecting that criticism. Pete Radcliff, a WA supporter at Stanton, replies.

Comrades,
The *Workers' Action* newspaper no.163 contained an article which was a cowardly

lying, sectarian crude hatchet job on me.

I allege that the attack was cowardly as it was not signed. I can only assume that the author must have been a Mr. Peter Radcliff, who is the only *Workers' Action* supporter on the Stanton complex.

The article comes dangerously close to accusing me of scabbing.

On January 8th I organised a mass meeting of my shift. When I spoke I called for a strike on the basis of supporting the national steel strike because it was a response to a blatant attack on trade unionists by a Tory government. I said there was no monetary value for my people as we did not come under the heavy steel agreement, but we had to be more responsive than most because we were employed by the same employer.

The meeting listened to me. A brother shop steward spoke next, he said he disagreed with me and he felt we should hang on until we were laid off.

Mr. Radcliff was next. His message was we should be out supporting the local NUB as it would have a bearing on our local claim in May. He was howled down and I sensed that I had lost my support after he spoke.

That has nailed down the lie that I didn't call for a strike. I have 200 witnesses.

I was accused of vetoing a leaflet; of this I am guilty. I withdrew the leaflet because it

A SCURRILOUS ATTACK?

was wrong. The leaflet said that the spun plant workers should support the steel workers because it had a bearing on our local claim. On the surface this appears OK. It took me two days to spot the mistake.

Last year just before the engineering dispute we received a letter from our national official saying that we were not to take part as we traditionally followed heavy steel negotiations. A resolution was put to the branch that we followed engineering conditions and negotiations and that the full-time official should be censured and his instruction withdrawn. This resolution was passed unanimously; the proposer was Mr. Radcliff, the seconder myself.

That means that if the leaflet was right we were wrong with this resolution; if the resolution was right the leaflet was wrong. Mr. Radcliff now wants to make a U-turn; I don't. In November when the engineering negotiations start again, will Mr. Radcliff make another U-turn? If he keeps on like this he will meet himself coming down the street one day.

I am accused of putting a weak, vague leaflet out in place of the one I withdrew. The leaflet that was put out was the national SWP leaflet on steel.

I said the article was a sectarian attack on me because my real crime in the author's view is that I have joined the SWP. *Workers' Action* has called for unity of the left on frequent occasions. Is this how they are going to achieve it?

I said it was a crude hatchet job on me; it was a wrecking exercise — the article did not even call for a change of leadership.

I demand that *Workers' Action* print a retraction of the slanderous remarks made against me.

Yours fraternally,
Geordie Barclay

REPLY

Comrade Barclay does not answer the criticisms levelled against him and Ilkeston SWP by myself in *Workers' Action* 163. He makes hardly any reference to the leaflet circulated by the SWP around the Stanton BSC works on which the criticisms were mainly based.

That leaflet, headed "Support the Steel Strikers", after giving the background to the dispute, made two references to the need for support. "If the steel workers are going to hold back the Tory attack, they will need the help from all other trade unionists... The steel strike could be long and bitter. We need to organise support now."

No mention of strike action, either immediate or eventual,



Pete Radcliff

and this at the BSC works which from the very first days of the dispute has been the major break in the BSC workers' unity. Many Stanton GMWU workers would agree with the SWP's leaflet on the general need to support the steel strikers. But the SWP didn't say what to do specifically at Stanton.

Some workers, including Cde. Barclay himself in the first days of the dispute, argued that continuing to work and collect wages whilst comparatively few iron pipes were being turned out, were

the best way to support the strikers.

The vast majority of Stanton workers come under the national Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions engineering agreement. But there is also, as with most workers under that agreement, a local agreement which raises pay above the minimum level achieved nationally.

As the leaflet stopped by the SWP said "in the past few years, in our local negotiations we have got whatever the ISTC has got. BSC bosses confronted local strikes, like the Spun Plants' strike in 1977, delayed negotiations after 1978 or bought time as with last year's lump sum payment, until they found how little they could force the ISTC to accept."

If steel workers get beaten now, then we will get nothing, when local negotiations start in May... All out with the national strike."

I think that is sufficient to show that Cde. Barclay's allegations about my U-turn or calls for withdrawal from the CSEU agreement are nonsense.

The problem is not whether Stanton GMWU should participate in one national strike or another (in engineering or steel). The fact is that the wages are connected to both agreements. The problem is that over the past six months, we have been instructed to scab on both strikes by our GMWU National Officer Frank Cottam.

The actual problems in arguing for strike action have been virtually the same in both the engineering and steel workers' disputes. The rank and file, demoralised after losing a long unofficial dispute two years ago and with weak links with other unions in both the engineering and steel industries, are used by the GMWU officials to

spread scepticism about the national strike and justify the scabbing.

The only hope for Stanton workers is to strengthen our links with both engineering and, in particular at the moment, with other steel workers.

This means that militants in Stanton GMWU must now put forward a clear call for strike action, which, coupled with massive pressure on the officials and mass picketing could retrieve a seriously deteriorating situation.

It is by this yardstick that we judge and criticise the behaviour of Cde. Barclay and the SWP.

It is true that at the mass meeting on the night shift on 8th January, he did give his opinion as being in favour of a strike, although the rest of his report of that meeting is, to put it mildly, highly coloured. In any case, that meeting took place after the article he objects to had been written. His actions on that night can hardly be used as the excuse for the failures of the SWP in the previous week, and it is the SWP that were the prime target for my criticisms in that article.

They sabotaged the attempts to set up a group of rank and file militants at Stanton in support of the steel strike. Such a grouping could have prevented the mistakes that have already been made. But the SWP's only real concern at Stanton has been to gain members; you can be for joining the strike or against it, for or against taking punitive action against GMWU workers who are not striking; as long as you carry an SWP card it doesn't really matter.

We expect something more from the organisation that so arrogantly proclaims itself the new party and the new leaders of the working class.

PETE RADCLIFF

INTRODUCTION

by Colin Foster

FOR THE BOSSES' PRESS, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan is a chance to reassert all its cold war propaganda about what "communism" means: Russian tanks rolling in and the imposition of a police state.

The prime model for the cold war image is the experience of Eastern Europe. There, "communism" — or, at least, the system of nationalised industry and planned economy typical of the USSR — was indeed introduced under the control of the Russian Army, at the same time as bureaucratic dictatorships. The experience of Eastern Europe in the 1940s has been used by right wingers and social democrats ever since to argue that communists and revolutionary militants represent "authoritarianism" and "tyranny".

A clear Marxist analysis of what happened in Eastern Europe is therefore important not only to understand what is happening in Afghanistan now, but to explain the real difference between communism and Stalinism.

The events in Eastern Europe were closely followed and thoroughly discussed at the time by the revolutionary Marxist (Trotskyist) movement. By 1951 they concluded that "by virtue of their economic base, of the structure essentially common to all the countries of the buffer zone, characterised by new production and property relations proper to a statified and planned economy, essentially like those of the USSR... we have to consider these states as now being deformed workers' states". But at the same time they insisted: "in recognising the bureaucratic action in the buffer zone countries we not only do not attribute any progressive character to it, not only do we continue to consider it as counter-revolutionary as a whole, but we underscore the limits of bureaucratic possibilities..."

The conclusions may seem contradictory: action which was counter-revolutionary as a whole leading to revolutionary and progressive transformations in the economic structure of the East European countries. The Trotskyists argued that the contradictory development was a reflection of the contradictory nature of the USSR. With the isolation of the workers' revolution in a backward country, a reactionary and anti-working class bureaucracy had arisen on the basis of a fundamentally progressive economic structure. Where imperialism and the bourgeoisie were weak, and when the working class was weak or could be crushed, that bureaucracy could extend the economic structure to other areas — but by its own methods. The reactionary effect of those methods — the political atomisation of the working class in Eastern Europe, the fact that the whole operation was part of a carve-up of the world in which the Stalinists helped to maintain capitalism in Western Europe, the boost given to the bureaucracy, the political demoralisation of the world working class — vastly outweighed the progressive import of particular economic measures.

Class power

In this and future Magazine Sections, we will trace the Trotskyists' arguments through the documents published at the time.

During World War 2 the Trotskyists stressed the defence of the USSR against imperialism. The workers' revolution of 1917 had smashed the class power of the bourgeoisie, and established a statified and planned economy in which the accumulation of capital was no longer the economic regulator. Those social gains, though gravely distorted, had not been overthrown by the usurping bureaucracy. The continuing power of those social gains was shown by the tremendous industrial development of the USSR, which contrasted sharply with the crisis and decay of capitalism. The bureaucracy was not a new ruling class, corresponding to and playing an essential role in a new economic system, but a parasitic growth on the backward and beleaguered workers' state.

In the war of German imperialism against the USSR, what was at stake was first and foremost the social gains of 1917. Those gains must be defended, despite the bureaucracy, and by methods quite different from the bureaucracy's: while siding with the USSR against imperialism, the Trotskyists did not at all support the war effort of the imperialist states (Britain, USA, etc.) allied with the USSR.

From late 1944, with Germany obviously heading for defeat, the emphasis changed. "There can be no question of abandoning the slogan of the defence of the Soviet Union", wrote the US Trotskyist leader J.P. Cannon in October 1944, "in principle it retains all its validity and will most likely acquire burning urgency again at a later stage of events. But to continue to shout this slogan in the present situation would be the greatest political ineptitude, putting us out of tune with events. All our emphasis now must be placed on the defence of the European revolution against the conspirators" [i.e. the imperialists and the Stalinists].

The Trotskyists, however (and not unreasonably), saw an advance of British and US imperialism into Eastern Europe and even against the USSR itself as probable. They considered that the USSR bureaucracy must soon fall either under the blows of imperialism or of workers' revolution, and thus the Russian Army could only play a limited role as a counter-revolutionary force. All the emphasis had to be on fraternisation of the East European workers with the Russian workers in uniform.

As early as 1944, this view was criticised by some comrades, notably Felix Morrow in the USA, as underestimating the counter-revolutionary potential of the Russian Army. The justice of these criticisms was soon recognised by the majority (though Morrow himself developed the criticisms into an all-round fatalism and pessimism which quickly led him out of the revolutionary movement). In March 1946 the Trotskyist movement held its first world conference since 1938. As a result of discussions at and around that conference, the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, in June 1946, published a unanimous call for the withdrawal of all occupation troops in Europe,

Communism against Stalinism in Eastern Europe: the USSR and the workers

both imperialist and Stalinist.

We reprint that resolution. In making their call, the Trotskyists did not disregard "the progressive economic measures carried out in the territories occupied by the Red Army", nor the "tendency towards structural assimilation with the USSR" noted by the March 1946 conference; but the overriding consideration was to develop "the free revolutionary activity of the masses".

Two years later, at the Second World Congress of the Fourth International in 1948, the Trotskyists adopted a major document on "The USSR and Stalinism", drawing a balance sheet of the activity of the Russian bureaucracy during and after World War 2.

We are reprinting that document, too: With hindsight, it has many weaknesses. The whole analysis takes as its starting point extreme instability of world politics and especially of capitalism. That view made a lot of sense at the time. In 1946-7, US workers had launched the biggest strike wave in history up to that date. In April-May 1947 and again in November-December 1947 there were mass strike waves in France, involving more workers than June 1936. Greece was deep in civil war. The Vietnamese people were fighting for liberation, and the Chinese Communist Party had launched an offensive against Chiang Kai Shek. The Trotskyists expected the loss of important colonies or semi-colonies to hit hard at the still precarious advanced capitalist economies.



Stalin, Truman, Churchill: conspirators against the revolution

With hindsight, however, we can see that the Trotskyists grossly underestimated the ability of imperialism to reorganise and prosper within narrower frontiers, and that they also underestimated the solidity and power of the Russian bureaucracy. Their picture of the bureaucracy precariously balancing between rival pressures was misleading, leaving out the relative stability which the bureaucracy gained from the political atomisation of the working class, correctly noted by the Trotskyists.

Correspondingly, they underestimated the bureaucracy's room for manoeuvre in the USSR and its relations in the East European states. The 1948 document argued not only that those states were still capitalist, but also that a wholesale transformation of them was extremely unlikely.

The chief aim of the document, "The USSR and Stalinism", was to stress the need for a sharply hostile attitude by revolutionaries to Stalinism. Some of the terminological experiments by which it tried to do that were not useful. For example, the furious denial (in the later sections of the document) of the possibility of a left turn by the Stalinist parties, even a pseudo-left turn like that of 1939-41, served not to clarify the Trotskyists' hostility to Stalinism but to help disorient the Trotskyists when the Stalinists did make a "left" turn under pressure of the Cold War.

Some conclusions of the greatest importance from the East European experience are, however, summed up in the document. When the Russian Army occupied eastern Poland in 1939-40, it was greeted by many as a liberator, and its advance was accompanied by mass anti-capitalist mobilisations (though those mobilisations were soon strangled by the bureaucracy). In 1944, the Trotskyists could expect the westward advance of the Russian Army to

evoke a similar response — on a scale the bureaucracy could hardly strangle.

In reality, the role of the Russian Army was sharply and directly counter-revolutionary. In some countries there were, later on, limited mass mobilisations against capitalism — but under strict control, and only after any immediate threat of thorough-going revolutionary workers' action had been suppressed.

Thus the Trotskyists concluded: "Furthermore, in the present situation, Stalinism is a mortal foe of the socialist revolution, not only through the counter-revolutionary activity of the Stalinist parties, but also through the use of military force by the Kremlin to stamp out all revolutionary manifestations in Eastern Europe, which would be repeated tomorrow on an even larger scale in Europe and Asia. This necessitates the greatest preparations and efforts to protect the future revolutionary uprisings from the Stalinist counter-revolutionary violence."

"It follows from all these considerations that even in the case of war, we continue vigorously to pursue the struggle for the political revolution inside the USSR and everything it implies."

"...It will be necessary to continue this revolutionary class struggle consistently and uninterruptedly in the case of the occupation of any given country by the Russian Army, even though the revolutionary forces clash with the Russian army, and also in spite of the military consequences which this might entail for the Russian army in its operations against the imperialist military forces. In any case, the use of military means remains subordinated to the necessities of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat in whatever countries it may be."

In other words, in any real or apparent clash of priorities, the workers' direct struggle takes precedence over the military defence of the USSR.

The Trotskyists did not change this conclusion when they changed their view on the class nature of the East European states. But in the same period as they were changing their position, shifts were taking place in their political outlook which later did obliterate, for some of them, the sharp anti-Stalinist conclusions of 1948.

Dwindling forces

From 1948 to the early 1950s, the Trotskyists' forces were dwindling. Thousands declined to hundreds, hundreds to dozens. At the same time, huge social transformations were carried out by Stalinist or neo-Stalinist forces not only in Eastern Europe but also in China. Especially after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, many Trotskyists (notably Michel Pablo, then secretary of the Fourth International) became convinced that history was running along the lines of a general confrontation between imperialism and Stalinism. In this confrontation, the side of Stalinism was the side of the Revolution. Pablo expected a Third World War: the expectation was not unreasonable at the time, but Pablo transformed it into a virtually guaranteed scenario for the next couple of years. He argued that the world Revolution which would emerge from that War would eventually overthrow Stalinism as well as imperialism. But in the immed-

iate future his perspective for the Trotskyists was to side with the process of Revolution (i.e. the struggle of Stalinist states and movements against imperialism), trying to help it along, while of course making some propaganda for Trotskyist ideas.

The 1948 document had stressed the need for an active independent working class policy, even during clashes between imperialism and Stalinism in which revolutionaries have to side with the Stalinists. Pablo blurred the role of anti-Stalinist working class initiative almost into invisibility; it was all part of a general process of Revolution, and the Stalinists' battles against imperialism were equally part of that process.

In 1953 the workers of East Berlin rose up against Stalinism. Pablo and his co-thinkers refused to raise the call for withdrawal of Russian troops *except* tied together with the call for withdrawal of imperialist troops from West Germany. Other Trotskyists rightly condemned this refusal as a concession to Stalinism.

By the late 1950s nearly all Trotskyists had dropped the idea of the immediately imminent Third World War, and the more extreme conclusions of the early 1950s. Much of the fundamental outlook of the early 1950s, however, remained in the Trotskyist currents — including sharply "anti-Pabloite" currents. In the position of support for the Russian invasion of Afghanistan taken by the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, we can see again the idea of the struggle between imperialist and Stalinist blocs being a supplement to, or even a possible substitute for, the workers' class struggle.

For that reason, too, it is worth re-examining the analysis made in the 1940s.

COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Why Marxists said: Russian troops out

Resolution on the withdrawal of occupation troops, adopted unanimously by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, June 1946.

IN THE period of tension, in which compromises ensuing from the recent world war are adjusted, the military occupation of spheres of influence in Europe and in the world serves the imperialists and the Soviet bureaucracy as pledges in their current policy as a trial of strength. Meanwhile, the reactionary effects of this occupation are becoming more and more obvious.

The military-occupied countries, already ruined by the war, are growing even more exhausted, crushed under the weight of the occupation costs and of foreign control over their resources and their economy; at the same time the free development of the mass movement is fettered by the reactionary military apparatus of the imperialists and the Soviet bureaucracy.

The continuation of military occupation entails an accentuation of the economic decomposition of Europe and the colonial countries and the strangling of their revolutionary movements.

Moreover, prolonged military occupation results, within the victor countries themselves, in the maintenance of a burdensome and costly military apparatus and permits the

building and selection of cadres and troops designed to be used eventually against the workers of those countries.

The maintenance of important military forces, the occupation of territories in Europe and throughout the world, and the holding of millions of Japanese and German workers as prisoners of war, utilised as an extra-cheap labour force, are the direct continuation of the war. Consequently, the continuation of the struggle which the Fourth International and its sections have carried on throughout the war for the disintegration of the armed forces of capitalism, for the fraternisation of the workers of all countries, 'Allied' or 'Enemy', in uniform or out of uniform, must find its expression in a struggle against the maintenance of the military apparatus, against military occupation, for the liberation of all prisoners of war, and for the international solidarity of the proletariat.

In this struggle the Fourth International denounces any and all pretexts which cover up this reactionary policy of the imperialists and of the Soviet bureaucracy. In opposition to the machinations of their secret diplomacy, it sets up the slogan of the right to self-determination of the peoples of the European and colonial countries.

The Fourth International demands the withdrawal of all foreign armies, including the Red Army, from all occupied territories. It opposes all annexations, reparations, forced transfers of populations and the detention of millions of German and Japanese workers as prisoners of war, either by the imperialists or by the Soviet bureaucracy. The Fourth International recognises no other frontiers than those drawn by the culture and freely expressed preferences of the populations concerned.

To the impasse into which the policy of the imperialists and of the Stalinist bureaucracy has led, to the bankruptcy of the peace conference and of the United Nations Organisation and to the threat of the Third World War, the Fourth International counterposes the revolutionary struggle of the exploited masses of all countries for the triumph of the world socialist revolution and the Federation of the Socialist United States of Europe and of the world.

In demanding the withdrawal of the Red Army from the territories it occupies, the Fourth International nowise abandons its slogan of unconditional defence of the USSR. The Fourth International likewise defends the progressive economic measures carried out in the territories occupied by the Red Army. But the defence of the planned state economy of the USSR as well as that of the progressive reforms carried out in Eastern Europe cannot be assured by purely military means, and especially not by the occupation of territories for a strategical purpose. Real defence is based first of all on the free revolutionary activity of the masses which must assure the total victory of the proletarian revolution. The masses of the countries at present must feel absolutely free, without any pressure, to determine their own fate. The occupation of these countries by the Red Army, the burdens imposed upon them, their treatment as defeated countries, can only harm the fundamental interests of the world socialist revolution and dangerously compromise in the eyes of the masses the defence of the USSR against imperialist attacks. Examples in this sense are already numerous (elections in Hungary, Austria, Germany).

Consequently, the unconditional defence of the USSR cannot, in the zone occupied by the Red Army, lead to any policy of support even provisional or temporary, with this

or that bourgeois or petty-bourgeois clique or organisation which banks on the bureaucracy, as against bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties which bank on imperialism. It can be applied only by an energetic carrying out of uncompromising class struggle of the proletariat against its own bourgeoisie. That is why the slogan 'immediate departure of the occupation troops' and an energetic campaign against the barbarous methods of the bureaucracy are alone capable of rehabilitating the policy of the defence of the USSR by clearly indicating that the defence of the USSR nowise justifies the crimes of Stalin.

Where, however, reactionary movements arise which, with the backing of the imperialists, attempt to overthrow the more or less stultified economy and restore landlordism in order to establish a base for attack against the Soviet Union, we oppose such a movement and fight alongside the Red Army for the defeat of the imperialists and their agents, until the workers in that country are able to stand alone against the bourgeois counter-revolution.

In the application of this general policy, the sections of the Fourth International will emphasise it differently according to the position of their own country.



The British and French sections as well as the American Trotskyists put forward the slogan of the withdrawal of the troops of their own imperialism from all the countries which they occupy (Europe, India, Indonesia, etc. etc. for England; Europe and the colonies, for France; Europe, Philippines, China, etc., for the USA). The Bolshevik-Leninists of the USSR denounce the anti-working class policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the occupied countries and demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops, but the sections in the occupied countries will emphasise especially internationalist and revolutionary fraternisation with the soldiers of the occupying armies, fraternisations to which they will subordinate the campaign for the withdrawal of these troops. Our comrades in all zones of occupation must present the policy in such a way that it cannot be used against the Soviet Union to the advantage of the imperialists.

Fourth International, New York, August 1946. Some opening paragraphs relating to recent diplomatic manoeuvres in 1946 have been omitted

The USSR and Stalinism

Theses adopted by the Second World Congress of the Fourth International, April 1948.

The Historical Significance of the Developments in Russia

1 Thirty years ago the Russian workers and poor peasants, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, overthrew the power of the capitalists and landowners, expropriated the exploiters and laid the basis for an unprecedented overturn in all social relations of old Russia. For the workers' vanguard of the whole world, and particularly for the Bolshevik leaders of the October Revolution, this was only the starting point for the world revolution. Only a link-up with the advanced proletariat of Central and Western Europe, with their modern technique and superior culture, could enable the Russian workers to overcome the difficulties arising from their conquest of power in a country so backward in its development of the productive forces, in the specific weight of the proletariat within the general population, and in the cultural level of its working class.

The Bolshevik leaders considered that in the long run the historical alternative to this international victory of the revolution could only be the restoration of capitalism in Russia and the transformation of the country into a colony of world imperialism.

The history of the last thirty years has shown clearly that building a classless society within a backward national framework is only an illusion. In Russia today there are more obstacles to the victory of socialism than at any time since 1917. But at the same time, the classes expropriated in 1917 have not been restored to power. Instead of

becoming a powerless colony of imperialism, Russia has become the second military and economic power in the world. This historical variant was not foreseen by the Bolsheviks or by any other tendency in the workers' movement. This is where the main difficulty lies for a Marxist understanding of the Russian question.

2 It is equally difficult either to express in a single formula the tendency of the Soviet Union's evolution during these thirty years or to apply to it abstract norms like 'progress' or 'regression'. The monstrous growth of the state, the most totalitarian police dictatorship in history; the pitiless crushing of the proletariat; the choking off of all intellectual freedom: the renewal of national oppression; the new rise of the orthodox Church; the restoration of the slavery of woman, 'equal' to man only in order to sweat in the mines or the yards; the introduction of compulsory labour on a gigantic scale — all this certainly constitutes an enormous regression from the Soviet democracy of the first years of the revolution.

But the uprooting of all semi-feudal vestiges, the complete elimination of economic domination by world imperialism, the extraordinary upswing of industry, the transformation of millions of backward illiterate peasants into industrial proletarians who have thus become conscious of modern wants, the rapid development of old towns and the accelerated appearance of new ones, the penetration of electricity and the tractor into the countryside — all this undoubtedly constitutes progress in relation to the semi-barbarous Russia inherited by the revolution from Czarism. This *contradictory process* requires careful avoidance of schematic judgments, in order to analyse precisely present-day Soviet society and to determine its internal tendencies of development.

3 History has not yet pronounced its final verdict on the USSR. Its economy, its state, its culture are undergoing constant change, which is far from having reached a definite conclusion. The composition of its social strata is subject to continuous and rapid variation. The proletariat, which emerged from the Czarist regime with the stirring memories of the October Revolution and entered upon the road of industrialisation twenty years ago with enthusiasm, has given way to a working class newly drawn from the peasantry, whose immense creative energies are crippled by the Stalinist dictatorship. The peasantry of today, transformed by the tractor, the *kolkhoz* (collective farm), and the terror of deportations, only resembles superficially the old Russian peasantry. The workers' bureaucracy, composed of upstart revolutionaries, has changed into a more or less closed caste, desirous of reviving the customs and nationalist traditions of the former ruling classes.

In spite of its complexity two striking features emerge from this picture. The sum total of the production relations inherited from the October Revolution has proved to possess an infinitely higher capacity of resistance than the Marxists had foreseen. The decisive *historic* significance of the revolution is thus borne out in full measure. But at the same time, the possibilities of reaction and regression in all fields, including the economic, within the *framework of these production relations*, have been shown to be infinitely vaster and more dangerous than anyone could have thought. These two factors must stand out clearly from our analysis.

The same complexity likewise appears in the present situation of the USSR, as it has emerged from the war and the first years of the imperialist 'peace'. Although the Soviet Union has come out of the war as the first military power on the European continent, it has not improved either its internal or international situation, relative to capitalism. Internationally, the policy of pillage and bureaucratic expansion

COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

ism has in no way succeeded in altering the relationship of forces, which has deteriorated as a result of the constitution of a single imperialist bloc. Internally, the reconversion of economy was carried out through a series of violent collisions which assumed the form of a real crisis. The bureaucracy has only maintained itself because of the unstable equilibrium between the proletariat and the restorationist tendencies in Russia itself, and between the world proletariat and the world bourgeoisie, has not yet been upset in one direction or another. But the bureaucracy has proved more than ever incapable of eliminating any of the contradictions undermining its power. More than ever before, the fate of the USSR depends on the fate of the class struggle on a world scale, and for the degenerated workers' state the fundamental alternative remains: *Forward toward socialism, or back toward capitalism.*

The Social Nature of the USSR

4 It was the proletarian revolution, i.e. the conscious action of the proletariat, which in 1917 swept away the power of the capitalists and landowners. The production relations resulting therefrom — nationalisation of the land, sub-soil, and of all the means of production, monopoly of foreign trade, expropriation of foreign capital, the beginning of conscious planning of economy — did not correspond to the level of development of the productive forces and could not, therefore, depend upon the automatic functioning of the economy. Historically, such production relations can only be definitively maintained and developed on the basis of *workers' control* of production, the ever deeper transformation of the proletariat from the *object* into the *subject* of economy. The abolition of this workers' control, the complete exclusion of the proletariat from any participation in planning, can only widen the gap between the given production relations and those that guarantee the abolition of exploitation of man by man. In this sense, historic development has clearly changed direction in Russia. What remains of the conquests of October is more and more losing its value as a motive force for socialist development. If these production relations have not yet collapsed, this does not mean, however, that we are witnessing their economic 'stabilisation'. On the contrary, as in 1927 and 1937, the automatic economic process in Russia — abstracting therefrom the factor of the political dictatorship — would even today rapidly lead to the predominance of small handicraft and peasant production, which would effect a complete link-up with the capitalist world market. That not all of the October conquests have been overthrown, is due to the fact that the political expropriation of the proletariat was brought about, not by the old possessing classes or the new peasant bourgeoisie, but by the bureaucracy, whose social privileges rest on the production relations established by the revolution. The political dictatorship, today as twenty years ago, is decisive in preventing the complete collapse of planning, the breakthrough of the petty capitalist market, and the penetration of foreign capital into Russia. However, in its bureaucratic form, this very dictatorship undermines more and more the production relations on the basis of which it keeps alive.

5 Thanks to the dynamism of the production relations bequeathed by the October Revolution, the bureaucracy was in a position to crush peasant and neo-bourgeois pressure in 1927. As a result of the world retreat of the revolution and the exhaustion and discouragement which it meant for the Russian proletariat, the bureaucracy was able to politically expropriate the working class. By applying the advanced technique of the capitalist countries to the conquests of October, it could ensure a tentative development of the productive forces in Russia. This fact has given the country an overwhelming superiority of development-potency, compared to Czarist Russia, the Japan of the Mikado, and Hitler's Germany. Any attempt at simplification which tries to confuse the economic basis on which Stalinist Russia is built, with the monstrous degeneracy of its social superstructure can, in view of these facts, only arrive at an idealisation either of a 'last stage' of capitalism, or of a 'new exploiting class'.

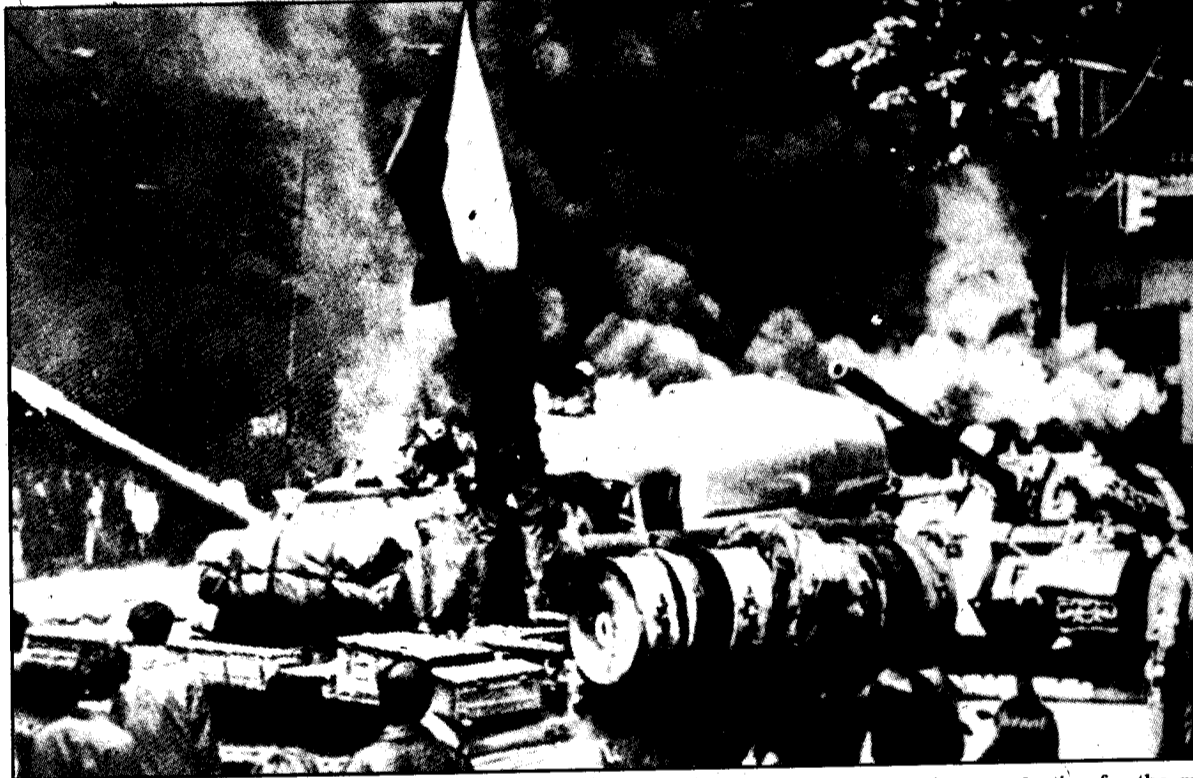
However, at the same time, the bureaucracy has been incapable of ensuring a harmonious development of production, a diminution of the contradiction between town and country, an easing of the sharpness of social contradictions. To attain these ends, economy would have had to be oriented first and foremost toward a satisfaction of the needs of the masses; the aims of the plan would have had to be calculated and controlled by the intervention of millions of producers, economic progress would have had to be measured in terms of the progressive rise of the masses' level of consumption and education. However, the bureaucracy defends the essence of the production relations inherited from October only as a basis for its privileges, and not as a basis for socialist development. Under these conditions, the preservation of the regime which collides more and more with the immediate and historic interests of the masses, could only be accomplished through the imposition of the most totalitarian police dictatorship in history. The development of productive forces, while developing the needs of the whole population, has only assured the satisfaction of these needs for a privileged layer and has tremendously accentuated social inequality instead of reducing it. The bureaucratic regime, substituting a spirit of lucre, coercion, arbitrariness and terror for revolutionary devotion, creative energy, the critical spirit and free initiative of the masses as the motive power of planning, has corrupted the latter at its roots and has more and more robbed it of the possibility

of guaranteeing itself a new upswing of the productive forces.

6 The fundamental contradictions of present Russian economy are the following:

a) Contradiction between the production relations on the one hand ('collective ownership of the means of production'), the maintenance of which imperiously demands the restoration of *workers' control*, the progressive introduction of *workers' management* of production; and on the other hand, the bureaucratic management of the State and economy, which increasingly endangers the maintenance of this collective ownership, threatened by the pillage of the bureaucracy ('the bureaucracy digs into collective property as into its own pockets') and by the more and more pronounced tendency toward stagnation in the development of productive forces. This is concretely expressed by a more and more manifest diminution in the rate of accumulation.

b) Contradiction between the tendency toward centralisation, coordination and conscious planning of economy inherent in the production relations and the tendency toward primitive accumulation, the crystallisation of a 'parallel' economy of simple commodities and toward anarchy, resulting from the failure to satisfy the masses' needs by the bureaucratically managed economy. "The tendency toward primitive accumulation, created by want, breaks out through innumerable pores of planned economy" (Trotsky).



The more the bureaucracy tries to embrace in its plan all of the country's productive forces, the more the latter escape its hold. Theft on a gigantic scale, migration of millions of workers, peasants and even technicians, the development of the free market, both peasant and handicraft, are the clearest signs of this tendency. To counteract these, the bureaucracy can no longer appeal to material interest. It must resort primarily to terror. Large-scale compulsory labour camps, the regimentation of the whole of social life, the arbitrary imposition of all living and working norms, give more and more of a caste character. In this trait is summed up the reactionary role of the bureaucracy and its incapacity really to keep in check the disintegrating forces which it has itself unleashed. Under these conditions, the progressive character of the production relations means nothing else but that a change in property relations is not necessary for the overthrow of the bureaucracy. The production relations and bureaucratic management are more and more inextricably bound up. Consequently, the progressive character of the *Russian economy*, which is determined by its capacity to develop the productive forces, tends to become eliminated by the bureaucracy. The greatest attention must be devoted to the study of this development.

7 In 1936, Trotsky defined the social character of Russia as follows:

"The Soviet Union is a contradictory society, halfway between capitalism and socialism, in which:

- a) the productive forces are still far from adequate to give the State property a socialist character.
- b) the tendency towards primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy;
- c) norms of distribution preserving a bourgeois character lie at the basis of a new differentiation of society;
- d) the economic growth, while slowly bettering the situation of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged strata;
- e) exploiting the social antagonisms, a bureaucracy has converted itself into an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism;
- f) the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses;
- g) a further development of the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism.
- h) on the road to capitalism, the counter-revolution would

have to break the resistance of the workers:

i) on the road to socialism, the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy. In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living forces both on the national and the world arena" (The Revolution Betrayed).

8 What alterations have to be made in this analysis following the development of the past eleven years?

As before, the social differentiation is the result of bourgeois norms of *distribution*; it has not yet entered the domain of ownership of the means of production. But the bureaucracy has more and more tried to stabilise and maintain all of its privileges within the framework of a closed caste. This can clearly be seen from the new inheritance laws, the new family legislation and the efforts to exclude once and for all workers' and peasants' children from higher education. The introduction of the system of government bonds increases and stabilises the privileges of the bureaucracy but does not in any way indicate a tendency toward the 'sharing' of a profit realised on real capital, corresponding to the fictitious capital represented by these bonds.

The tendency toward primitive accumulation has strongly developed in the peasantry and has again openly penetrated the towns by means of cooperative industry and trade. The *private* employment of wage earners is extending both in the towns and in the country, but remains restricted to the private satisfaction of needs of consumption by the privi-

leged elements and to artisan production for the market. The introduction of a system of forced labour on a vast scale appears to be the only means whereby the state can get the workers to use all their labour force in the framework of the state sector of the economy. The economic development no longer improves, but aggravates the living conditions of the broad masses of workers and is incapable of maintaining anything beyond the privileges of the bureaucracy. Not only does collective ownership in Russia today not have a socialist character, but it is becoming more and more inadequate to guarantee by itself, that is, without the political overthrow of the bureaucracy, any further economic progress. The fall of productive forces resulting from the war only emphasises the tendency inherent in bureaucratic management, of becoming more and more an absolute brake on economic progress.

The social revolution still lives in what remains of the conquests of October and in the vanguard layers of the working class. But the bureaucracy has in great part succeeded in extirpating the memories of the real revolution by physically liquidating almost the whole revolutionary generation of October and the civil war. The new proletariat, which has developed from a peasant milieu under the conditions of the ferocious Stalinist dictatorship, must gain consciousness of its immediate interests instinctively, through its hatred of the bureaucratic usurpers. A new revolutionary selection, carried by a new mass upsurge, which can only be the result of a powerful revolutionary wave outside of Russia, will alone be able to restore to the proletariat a clear consciousness of its historic mission.

If we continue to apply the term 'degenerated workers' state' to this social organism, we are perfectly aware of the necessity to constantly bring up to date the complete and precise meaning of this definition. In reality, it is impossible to give any exact definition of present Russian society without a lengthy description. The relative superiority of this formula in comparison with all the others proposed up till now lies in this, that it takes into account the historic origin of the USSR and at the same time emphasises its non-capitalist character and the instability of its social relations, which have not yet acquired their final historic physiognomy, and are not likely to in the next few years.

Fourth International, New York, June 1948.

To be continued.

Rate rises win out in Lambeth

AT A SPECIAL GMC meeting last week, Norwood Constituency Labour Party voted to support Lambeth Council's proposed rate increase. A motion calling for no cuts and no rate increase was defeated 34 votes to 21. Stopping the rate rises will now be very difficult, since Norwood, a strongly left wing CLP, was the leading force for the "no rate rise" policy adopted last July.

The meeting started with the Trades Union Council delegates asking that they be given the right to vote and to propose the Trades Union Council motion calling for no cuts and no rent and rate rises. The previous GMC had nodded through as a last item of business a report from the TUC liaison officer which listed TU bodies not entitled to delegates because affiliation fees had not been paid. The list included the Trades Union Council.

The Trades Union Council and Norwood GMC have had an arrangement for some years whereby the GMC sends two observers to the Trades Union Council and the latter sends its two delegates to Norwood, with the annual £2 fee for its delegates informally waived on both sides.

The technicality was seized on just as the GMC was having its most important debate of the year. And the special meeting, according to rules, could not vote to accept a cheque from the Trades Union Council; the matter had to wait until the next ordinary GMC!

This is the sort of manoeuvre to be expected from the movement's right wingers, in Islington or in Southwark, but not in a socialist Party, said Vanessa Wiseman Trades Council President and delegate to the GMC. (Everyone protested when Norwood GMC's motion to the Labour Party annual conference, calling for Troops out of Ireland, was knocked off the agenda... because Norwood did not pay its affiliation fee on time).

Speakers in support of the no rate rise policy pointed out that it represented a principled stand against making the working class pay the cost of the bosses' crisis. We must confront the Tories. The way to win is to prepare for strike action and mass resistance, as well as rent and rate strikes in the borough, if the Tories send in commissioners or the Receiver.

Council leader Ted Knight

and others supporting his policy of rate rises argued that there is no time to fight now. Lambeth will be alone now, they said, but in November it could stand together with other inner city boroughs whose rates are above Tory Minister Heseltine's limit.

No answer was given about what the Council will actually do in November, or whether it will raise rents if the Tories threaten otherwise to take away £3 or £4 million of housing subsidy.

It was ironic that those who argued in the meeting that the rates are not the issue, and that Norwood has always taken a stand against the cuts, were precisely the same people who last year argued for a £3 million cut. It is also ironic that the manoeuvre against the Trades Union Council was in the end not necessary because the two votes would not have changed the decision of the GMC.

All it has done is to create a very bitter mood, and a resolve among those opposing the rate increase to fight on and never to rely on such 'allies' as the Council leadership to fight the cuts and the Tories.

S.M.CHEUNG
TUC delegate, Norwood GMC

Workers' ACTION

Leicester moves for unity

SIXTY DELEGATES from Trade Union branches, Labour Party wards and local community groups attended a conference called by Leicester and District Trades Council on the cuts and public spending, on February 9th.

Up to now the fightback against the cuts has been divided and weak despite an attempt by students at the Polytechnic to build links with trade unions. The Trades Council conference represented a major step in the building of a united campaign.

Jim Marshall, MP for Leicester South, told the conference that the steel strike, alongside a strike in British

Leyland, could lead to a general strike. But he argued that the decisions on how Labour councils fight the cuts must be taken at national level so that councils do not end up standing alone.

Roger Poole, Assistant National Officer of NUPE, pointed out that the trades unions and Labour Party were two wings of the same movement, and called for unity in our movement against the Tory offensive. In line with NUPE's national policy, he argued against opposing rent and rate increases, on the grounds that it would be a greater social cost to lose the services than to put up the rates.

Jo Richardson, MP for Bark-

ing, spoke on the offensive against women's rights, through cuts in social services and the Corrie Bill.

The conference's decisions were clearly to the left of what the guest speakers had said. After much debate the conference overwhelmingly decided to fight for no cuts and no rent or rate increases. It also passed a motion on women and the cuts and decided on special representation of women on the committee set up from the conference to continue coordinating the fight against the cuts.

The committee will also include delegates from both City and County CLPs, Trades Councils, trade union branches and other groups.

G & M blacks sugar for Chix

"HELP US make sweets for children... You're not just a number at Chix", coos the notice outside the Chix factory in Slough. It doesn't say that you'll take home only £38 per week; that you'll work in filth, and get a 10 minute tea break when you'll have to wash in cold water in one of the four toilets for the workforce of 120; that even if you've got a doctor's note saying that you're pregnant and should do lighter work you won't be moved: one woman had a miscarriage after the supervisors refused to move her to a lighter job. You also won't be allowed to join a union.

The Asian women workforce has been out on strike for recognition of their union, the G&MWU, and for negotiating rights, since the 10th October 1979. The union in the factory was formed in July and 90% of the workers joined it. Then the bosses flatly refused to recognise the G&M's right to negotiate on the women's behalf. They cancelled meetings with the union,

and eventually said on the 9th of October that under no circumstances would they recognise the union. The workers held a meeting next day and decided to strike: as shop steward Mohammed Yasin said, "We'll stay out till we get union recognition or the factory closes".

The owner of the company, Dennis Rose, modelling himself on George Ward, lost no time in recruiting a scab workforce who are mostly white. Realising he'd have to pay them more, he offered up to £1.75 an hour (double the previous rate), transport to the factory from their homes and a creche for the children. This quite deliberate discrimination against the Asian women, many of whom have worked there for up to twelve years, has hardened their resolve to stay out and win.

Support for the strike has been coming in from all over the country, other workers seeing it as a Grunwick-style dispute (though we must win this one, and not be hived off by the G&M), and mass



pickets are held every Wednesday.

Especially support on the picket line has come from the Ford workers of Langley, and the G&M workers at Tate and Lyle have blacked all sugar supplies to Chix.

Sugar is now coming from the British Sugar Corporation through an intermediary company, and blacking of these supplies by G&M members at the British Sugar Corporation is being organised by the union. After the company's

latest pronouncements, four weeks ago, that they'd take some of the day shift workers back but none of the night shift, and that they wouldn't recognise the union, the pickets suspect that Dennis Rose is getting money from the

National Association for Freedom — the right wing organisation that baled out George Ward for so long.

The strikers get £10.50 a week strike pay, so money is very short. Send donations to M. Anwar, 271 Goodman Park, Slough.

LCC: Waiting for the next Labour government?

At a one day conference on Saturday 9th called by the Scottish Labour Coordinating Committee, "In defence of a Caring Society", Audrey Wise struck the keynote, speaking on the economic background to the cuts. We have to make the case for public expenditure convincing to the public at large, she said. The reason the Tories and Labour before them are able to get away with cuts is that working people are conned by the idea that the country can't afford it, that the public sector is parasitical.

We should reply, said Audrey Wise, by arguing that increased spending will create jobs. With the back-up measures of leaving the EEC and enforcing import controls it could get the economy back on its feet.

A Socialist Organiser supporter, speaking from the floor commented, "You wouldn't think there were 100,000 steelworkers out on strike now for jobs and pay". The struggle in steel highlights the need for inter-

national workers' solidarity which import controls could only cut across.

Audrey Wise's strategy was at best one for a Labour Government in four years time, but not for a fightback now.

In reply, Audrey Wise said she was in favour of action now — but denounced the critics as adventurists!

In the afternoon workshops too the discussion mostly confined itself to good policy advice for Parliament and the Council chambers with the usual socialist spice added.

The conference attracted about 150 trade unionists and activists. The organisers announced their aim as organising and coordinating resistance to the cuts. But there were no real action proposals that could be voted on.

Scottish LCC Secretary Mick Connarty rounded off the conference by attacking any talk of no rate rises, and doing so in the name of the LCC. It may be his position but certainly I didn't see any voting.

Why our union branch voted for general strike

AT OUR January branch meeting at CWS packing factory Manchester I submitted a motion saying the TUC should back the Welsh TUC call for them to organise a general strike after the 10th of March and should break all collaboration with the Tory Government.

Before the meeting, I had already sounded out some fellow workers to support the motion, and one of them told me that he knew two army reservists who had received call-up papers in the event of a national emergency.

Swayed particularly by the fact that a number of TU officials had been talking of a general strike, and that food workers can be particularly singled out in a state of emergency due to the government having powers to force food workers to work or face severe penalties, the 45 members attending the meet-

ing unanimously supported the motion.

One member told the meeting that her husband, who is an ex-regular, had received call-up papers as well. We would have to side with the workers or be forced to scab in the event of a general strike.

Is this call-up to deal with the water workers who may be about to take action, or are the Tories organising the forces of the state in case a general strike takes place? Either way, our members were convinced that the answer is to fight back with all the strength of the working class movement.

The motion has been submitted to Manchester Trades Council and they will debate it on 21st February.

We've got to organise too.
JOHN DOUGLAS
Branch Secretary
(in a personal capacity)

Workers' ACTION

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