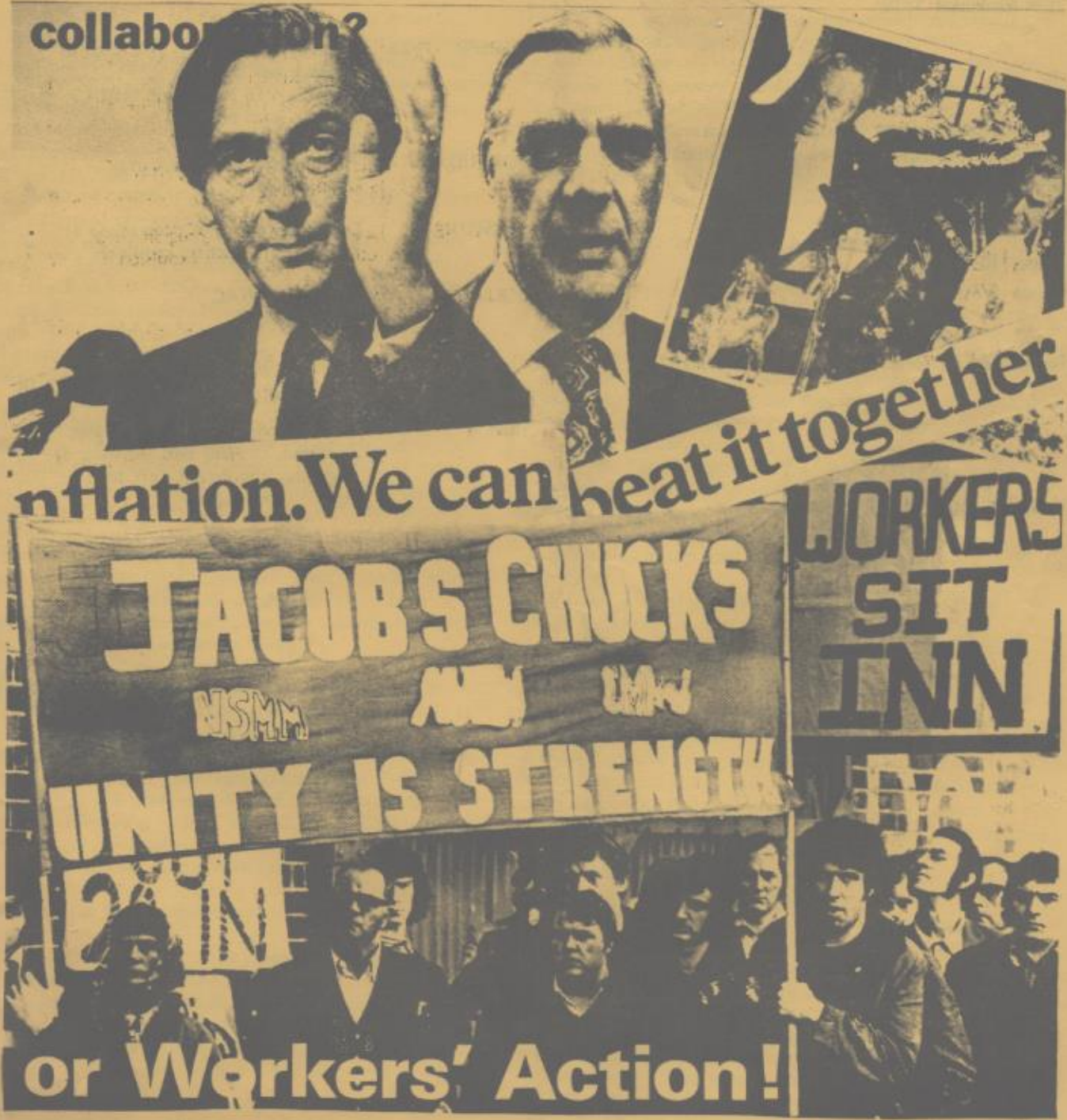


# WORKERS POWER

29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 1975

price 15p

## UNEMPLOYMENT: A Worker's Answer



collaboration?

inflation. We can heat it together

JACOBS CHUCKS

NSMM UAW

UNITY IS STRENGTH

WORKERS  
SIT  
INN

or Workers' Action!

# WORKERS POWER

A Review from Workers Power  
29<sup>th</sup> November 1975

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or Workers' Action!

## TUC tries to sabotage our struggle

The 'official' unemployment figures are moving closer and closer to the 1.5 million mark. One in every twenty workers in Britain is now without work. And the Labour Government intends that this situation will get worse. Harold Wilson promises a bleak and hard winter. The figure of 2 million unemployed is being openly predicted in Government and official circles. The jobs of many more workers are threatened if this Government is to have its way.

Just what are our trade union leaders doing about it? What are they doing to save our jobs and livelihood?

During the summer they endorsed the £6 limit on all wage claims while arguing that unemployment was the main enemy of the Labour movement. Since then wages have fallen further behind the cost of living and unemployment figures have continued to rise. Now they have abandoned the unemployment struggle. Even worse they try to obstruct any rank and file initiative on this issue.

The trade union leaders have put their trust in politely pressuring the Labour Government to keep unemployment levels down. This policy has obviously not worked. In fact it never could. The Labour Government is committed to restoring and streamlining British capitalism. As our jobs disappear, as the Welfare State crumbles, as inflation eats away at our living standards, the Stock Exchange is at its highest point for two years. The Labour Government accepts that workers will have to pay the price for a crisis which is not of their making. The trade union leaders have no alternative to this. They accept cuts and unemployment, hoping only to persuade the Labour Government to soften the blows.

The Government and bosses hope that the threat of unemployment will make workers prepared to accept cuts in living standards. In many factories it is being used blatantly to undermine militant trade union organisation.

The cudgel of unemployment has been used to great effect at Tower Brand, a Tube Investment subsidiary in Wolverhampton. Shop stewards supported the sacking of two militant TGWU members at the factory. The full time official tried to argue with the stewards but got nowhere. When the sacked militants picketed the factory their brother workers refused to speak to them for fear of losing their jobs. With unemployment running at 7% in Wolverhampton, there is little hope of finding a new job.

Unemployment hits hardest at groups of workers least able and experienced in defending themselves. It has opened up divisions between workers struggling to maintain their jobs. Women, black workers and young people are particularly vulnerable to the divide and rule tactics being used by the bosses. [See our article on Blacks and Unemployment further on in this issue.]

But short time working and unemployment also threaten traditionally well organised groups of workers. Both are a threat to the working class as a whole. That is why class-wide action will be necessary to defeat the unemployment programme of the Labour Government.

The TUC bureaucrats have deliberately set out to prevent the mobilisation taking place everywhere against unemployment. They have tried to sabotage the North West Region TUC lobby on November 26<sup>th</sup>. They claim that such action would up-set their policy of whispering sweet nothings in the ear of the Government. With such leaders who needs enemies?

But the bureaucrats have not succeeded in having it all their own way in the labour movement. They have failed to prevent the mobilisation for November 26<sup>th</sup>. Strike action has been called for on that day by London building sites and Islington NALGO. Shop stewards committees and Trades Councils have made it clear that they will be going to London. Crawley Trades Council, for example, wrote to the General Council saying they would do all in their power to mobilise for the 26<sup>th</sup> and condemning the General Council for their class collaboration. Demonstrations are also being called by Liverpool and Leicester Trades Councils in that week. The TUC has got a resounding vote of no confidence in their pussy-footing tactics from rank and file trade unionists everywhere.

But one week of good demonstrations will not destroy the Government's unemployment plans. The bosses' attack will only be repelled if much greater force is used. A clear strategy to fight unemployment must be hammered out.

The battles of the last four years have shown clearly that jobs cannot be saved without militant action. The Government is not a charity organisation. It wants to close down whole sections of British industry. It wants workers to pay for the bosses' crisis. The Government has only been diverted from this course when workers action has forced them to. Even then, it has attempted to make workers pay for keeping their jobs by commissioning 'feasibility studies' and then implementing 'rationalisation'. The bosses say that the workforce must accept wage cuts, speed-up, voluntary redundancy and productivity strings. Short-time and further redundancy plans at British Leyland show that the Labour Government will give cash to the bosses and expect workers to pay.

The bosses want our labour only when there are profits to be made. When the crisis makes it less profitable to employ us or when British bosses' competitive ability receives a blow from their rivals, they want to dump us in the dole queues until business picks up again.

If we accept this argument it will condemn large sections of workers to unemployment or short-time working while other sections are doing enormous amounts of overtime. Since the latter are also working themselves out of a job, it is to the direct benefit of all workers to ensure that hours are reduced to maintain work for all while full pay is maintained. However, work sharing (the reduction of hours to maintain all the workforce) must be under strict shop stewards control.

Only occupation tactics - holding the bosses property in exchange for jobs - can force the hand of employers and the Government. In Leicester this summer an occupation by Peggs' workers saved 40 jobs. The plans for occupation at Chrysler and the current occupations at Personna in Glasgow and Balfour Darwin in Sheffield (both involving large numbers of women workers) point the way forward.

But these tactics will not win in isolation. That is why we must fight to build in every area trade union committees against unemployment. These committees must not just be platforms for flowery orators. They must have a clear pro-

gramme and perspective for action. The crucial test for these bodies will be whether they can marshal in the locality real support for groups of workers fighting redundancy. They must take responsibility for picketing, strike fund collecting, blacking and factory gate meetings in support of workers in struggle.

They must also initiate a clear campaign against the threat of redundancy in the entire labour movement. Most importantly, they must fight for trade union registration of the unemployed, for immediate bans on all overtime and for the 35 hour working week with no loss of earnings. These policies can win immediate support in the trade union movement. Only local trade union committees against unemployment can make sure that these policies are actually fought for in the factories and workplaces.

Occupations by threatened sections of workers can win if supported by the trade union movement through rank and file unemployment committees. But these struggles immediately pose the question - What are we fighting for?

Already we have seen 1¼ million workers lose their jobs. They are our responsibility. We must ensure that the trade unions and anti-unemployment committees organise and fight for workers already unemployed. When our schools are disintegrating, our hospitals hopelessly inadequate and pathetic housing programmes being abandoned, the entire labour movement must campaign for a programme of public works under the control of the trade union movement. We cannot accept a system where hundreds of thousands of building workers are unemployed while housing, school and hospital programmes are being cut.

We must demand that the Labour Government immediately nationalise all firms that cannot guarantee full employment. But we are not interested in nationalisation that leads, as in the Coal Board or British Steel, to massive redundancies and to workers paying the price through deteriorating pay and conditions. We must say that the bosses must pay the price for the crisis they have created. That is why we must demand nationalisation with no compensation to the owners

who have created the crisis. The workers must not pay the price. We have not caused the crisis. We shall not pay for it.

We must organise ourselves to save our jobs but our struggle does not end there. If we can develop our power and organisation we need never return again to the present relationship with management. Of course we should never sacrifice our trade union rights and independence. We should not accept responsibility and joint 'participation'. But we must continue to organise to protect the interests of workers more than ever before. We must insist that all books and committees are open to workers inspection whenever we see fit. We must build our strength to veto any management decision we do not agree with - those which affect us adversely. We must develop the power to say yes or no to all management proposals for production, planning and conditions.

The struggle for our jobs raises the question of who should control. In the fight to save jobs and guarantee full pay we must insist that we will decide what we produce and how we do it. That is what we mean by workers control.

The Labour movement must demand not only nationalisation without compensation but also that the Labour Government recognise the right of the workforce to veto all decisions of management. Occupation committees must ensure that this demand is part and parcel of their fight against unemployment. The plight of workers on the Scottish Daily News and at Triumph Meriden shows just how important this demand is.

The trade union leadership cannot save our jobs. Their cringing tactics prove this. We will have to organise for ourselves. But that organisation must have a clear strategy and programme if it is to win.

**WE ARE FOR:** A 35 hour week with no loss of earnings

An immediate ban on all overtime.

Trade union registration and organisation of the unemployed.

The Labour Government implementing a programme of public works.

The occupation of all firms threatening redundancies.

Nationalisation with no compensation of all firms who cannot maintain work or full pay.

**WE SHALL NOT PAY FOR THE CRISIS:**

No to participation and joint responsibility.

Fight for our right to veto management decisions - the Labour Government must recognise that right.

# *perspectives :* WAGES

**£6 is not our limit -**

**it must be smashed**

The £6 limit has meant that our wages are rapidly falling behind the rising cost of living. The Government is now talking about a £3 or £4 limit next year and anticipating a 5% to 10% fall in real living standards.

Rolls Royce workers in East Kilbride have put in a claim for £15. This is a direct challenge to the Labour Government's pay policy. But the Trade Union leadership has accepted the wage cutting £6 limit. The NUM executive has now decided to go for the £6 only.

Throughout the country groups of workers are finding that bosses will not even yield the miserable £6 without a fight. Women clothing workers have been the latest to discover this. Over 1500 members of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGW) at the Courtauld-owned Northgate Group of factories in Cheshire are on strike for the full £6. They have refused a £3.60 offer.

At Kayser Bonder, a Courtauld firm in Merthyr Tydfil 400 women strikers are sticking out for £6 and say they are going to fight till Christmas to get it, if that is necessary. The NUTGW South Wales area officer has refused to make this strike official for what she calls "constitutional reasons"; this in spite of the fact that the strikers' claim is in line with this year's TUC economic resolution - "No worker should receive less than £6 per week increase".

But the Union official's cowardice is matched only by the brazen face of the boss. Using the Wilson-Healey get-out clause that the £6 is conditional on employers' ability to pay, Courtauld's management are pleading poverty!

Another danger: We must not allow the battle for jobs to obscure the fight to maintain and improve workers' living standards.

**WE SAY:** Break the £6 wage limit. Our wages have not caused the crisis. We have not caused unemployment and inflation.

Maximum support for all workers struggling to achieve the full £6.

No productivity strings or selling of conditions for wages rises.

No let up in the women's Equal Pay battle.

Militants must prepare now not just for this year's pay battle but for next year's claim.

**WE MUST DEMAND:**

No limit on free collective bargaining. No to any Incomes Policy under Capitalism.

For lump-sum increases large enough to at least compensate for our loss of earnings over the last year.

In addition we must fight for automatic 1% wage rises for every 1% increase in the workers' cost of living.

A £1 weekly rise for every 1% rise in the Retail Price Index.

The Trade Union movement must develop its own index of living-costs. We don't trust the phoney figures of the Government and employers.

These policies can form the basis for a united class fight to maintain our living standards. They are the only answer to Healey's and the CBI's intention to divide us again on sectional and craft lines with their plan for percentage increases - their incomes policy.

Militants in all industries that support these policies must unite now. We must not leave the initiative for formulating the next round of wage claims with those who have presided over wage cuts this year.

# WORKERS POWER

# PORTUGAL

## THE BOSSES' ORDER IN DISARRAY

The last two months have been the most important period in the history of the Portuguese revolution. With the ruling class preparing for further attacks, the situation now hangs in the balance. The working class and rank and file soldiers must strengthen and extend the mass movement which grew up in response to the Sixth Provisional Government's attacks. They must turn this into an offensive for workers power and socialism or the Portuguese people face a bloody return to fascism.

When the Sixth Provisional Government took over at the end of September, its programme promised a crack down on 'indiscipline' in the army, respect for private property, censorship of the media and the breaking up of all private militias, meaning armed workers and left organisations. To back up these moves, it attempted to set up a reliable security force, AMI (Military Intervention Group), as an alternative to the 'too Left wing' COPCON.

So far the Government's attacks have been beaten back by the combativity of workers and rank and file soldiers. The weapons armistice has been treated with derision. Threats of up to eight years imprisonment and fines of up to one million Escudos for possession of weapons yielded only two out of the estimated 10,000 missing from armouries. The power of the neighbourhood and workers commissions and the rank and file soldiers' organisation, SUV (Soldiers United Will Win) has been extended. Seizures by armed farm workers of the large southern farms have continued.

The Government's first attack, and defeat, came at the end of September when they imprisoned two soldiers for distributing leaflets of the newly formed SUV. A demonstration the next day was a massive show of support for SUV. Twelve thousand soldiers and eighty thousand workers marched through Lisbon and commandeered buses to take them fifteen miles to the prison where they successfully freed the two men.

### THE FIGHT FOR RADIO RENASCENCA

Two weeks later the Government ordered troops to occupy the radio stations. This was a pretext to close down Radio Renascenca, once the official Catholic Church radio, where a struggle for workers' control had been going on for over a year. The Government moves were also an attempt to impose control of the news by the MFA information agency. Within hours of the close-down large crowds were protesting outside the Information Ministry. Ignoring attempts by Carvalho to head the movement off and leave the situation in the hands of COPCON, the assembled crowds went to the stations where discussion with the occupying troops led to them going over to the workers.

The Government retaliated by ordering loyal commandos to occupy the transmitters, thus silencing Radio Renascenca. The studios however remained occupied by workers and left COPCON units. Fearing intervention by the paratroops, all stations were guarded by armed troops and civilians during the nights of Monday 29<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> of September. The Republica offices were also guarded. The Government had succeeded in stopping Radio Renascenca's broadcasts but the mood in the ranks of the army had been clearly demonstrated. During the next weeks a campaign for the re-opening of Radio Renascenca developed with the worker-controlled newspaper Republica playing an important role in publicising the issue. The studios remained occupied by workers and the transmitters by commandos. The neighbourhood commissions at Buraca mounted a permanent picket at the transmitter gates and the commandos were eventually withdrawn a few days before a forty thousand-strong demonstration re-opened the stations. Hostility from the local population is claimed to have played an important role in the commandos' withdrawal.

After three weeks off the air, Radio Renascenca was re-opened by the demonstration which was supported by fifteen soldiers commissions and fifty workers commissions from the Lisbon area. Unable to cope with mass mobilisations and the disloyalty of soldiers, the Government eventually used crack troops to blow up the transmitter, silencing Radio Renascenca on Friday October 7<sup>th</sup>.

### THE METAL WORKERS FIGHT

Another important defeat for the Government was at the hands of the Metal Workers Union. A struggle over pay and conditions led to the Fifth Government agreeing to the workers demands. However, many employers refused to concede and the Sixth Government reversal of the earlier agreement led to a one-day national strike of 200 000 metal workers on Tuesday October 7<sup>th</sup>. The strike was also against the Sixth Government's introduction of laws allowing for lock-outs and dismissal of strikers. Tens of thousands of metal workers demonstrated in the main cities that evening. In Lisbon this culminated outside the Ministry of Labour with a massive rally eventually dispersing when the Government conceded most of the demands and waved the lock-out rules for the metal workers, although they still remain for the rest of the working class.

## THE CRACK DOWN IN THE ARMY

The Sixth Government has appointed right wing commanders in all three military regions and attempted to purge revolutionary soldiers and officers. These moves have been resisted. This struggle reached a peak in the Northern Military Region when the regional commander, Pires Veloso, tried to close a left-wing unit of lorry drivers (CICAP). This small unit of 150 men received support from the left-wing artillery regiment, RASP. CICAP's isolation was overcome by RASP occupying its own barracks and opening them to CICAP and sympathetic soldiers from other units. The red flag was raised - the struggle began.

Left-wing troops demanded immediate re-instatement of CICAP, a guarantee of no victimisation of any soldier involved in the struggle and the dismissal of Veloso. Local workers commissions and the metal workers supported the struggle. When a demonstration was called by the PPD (a right-wing, anti-working class party whose members claim to be Social Democrats) to support Veloso, a large crowd of workers gathered outside the barracks to demonstrate their support for the soldiers inside. The PPD demonstration marched on the barracks armed with pistols, hunting rifles and some automatic weapons and clashed with the defenders. Unarmed soldiers from the barracks tried to separate the two sides but were attacked by the PPD. The RASP soldiers then brought out two tanks to disperse the right wing. There were fifty-six casualties during the night and this led to a permanent vigil being kept by the workers armed with clubs. Streets leading to the barracks were blocked and up-rooted cobblestones stockpiled for any further right-wing attacks.

Intervention by the army chief of staff, General Fabiao, led to the concession of the first two demands. CICAP was to be re-instated in new barracks and a guarantee of no disciplinary measures was given. However, the army leadership obviously intends to ignore this agreement since disciplinary measures have begun. Furthermore, a proposed meeting on October 24<sup>th</sup> to assess the situation and continue the struggle for Veloso's removal was stopped by right-wing officers.

Faced with the militant response of the working class and rank and file soldiers to the attacks of the State, the Government finally managed to mobilise a demonstration in Oporto on October 25<sup>th</sup> to support its policies. The Prime Minister, Admiral Azevedo, flew in to speak to this massive demonstration organised by the Socialist Party and supported by the PPD and CDS. (The latter is a right-wing group which provides a haven for fascists.) These organisations mobilised all over the North of the country for the event which was portrayed by the Government controlled television as a great victory. Young girls presented Azevedo with flowers and martial music was broadcast as an accompaniment to pictures of the demonstration. The right-wing newspaper *Journal de Noticias*, was able to say the next day "At last there is an alternative to the Left".

## THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY (PCP)

Weakened by the fall of Goncalves and the Socialist Party mobilisation against it in the North, the PCP was prepared to compromise by taking part in the Government with the PPD. Having opted out of the United Front with the revolutionary left, the PCP moved to the right to maintain its position. By

its participation in the Sixth Government it is implicated in all the anti-working class moves which that Government has made. It has either abstained or given only half-hearted support to the struggles against the Government.

At the same time it has been forced to be verbally militant and attempts to play a dual role. While participating in the Government it uses mass mobilisations as a sop to its working class base, using this base as a stage army to bolster up its attempts to carve out a better position in the state apparatus. The PCP uses its control over the workers and neighbourhood commissions in the Lisbon area to launch demonstrations backing its governmental manoeuvres. For instance, when the Sixth Government was being formed, a demonstration was called with good general anti-fascist and anti-CIA slogans; but the main slogan, "For a Government to defend the gains of the Revolution", implied that more PCP representation in the Sixth Government could do that. The PCP has attempted to channel the mass movement against the Sixth Government into support for a return to the laws of the Fifth.

They have built a cult around Goncalves which causes further confusion. (Their supporters carry pictures of him on demonstrations and copies of his "sayings" are on sale.)

With the revolutionary left raising no clear workers' demands on the Government which could act as an alternative, the danger is that the mass movement against the Government may well be led back under the safe wing of the PCP.

However, the PCP by no means has guaranteed control of future movements. There are splits and regional differences within it. When it left the United Front and joined the Government, groups of worker-members defected to the left in several areas. In some areas there are semi-organised rank and file oppositions. These do not represent a real break but are an expression of left moves amongst the working class and dissatisfaction with PCP participation in a right-wing Government. Because of lack of political development these movements are easily headed off by the verbal mirativity of the Party leadership.

A major difference exists in the PCP in the southern farming areas of Alentejo, where there is wide spread seizures of large farms by armed workers, ejection of landlords and formation of collective farms. After initially criticising the occupations, the PCP has been forced to support them because of the revolutionary fervour of the population and because its own members in the region were leading the struggles. The Reform Agraria movement which is an attempt to co-ordinate and centralise the running of the co-operatives, is enthusiastically supported by the PCP and it has great influence within it.

The majority of the leadership and rank and file of the Party remains to the left of European Stalinism. The only split in the leadership is a right opposition group, which favours a coalition with the Socialist Party. This group is heavily influenced by the Spanish and Italian CPs.

## THE PORTUGUESE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSP)

Occupying the majority position in the Sixth Government, the PSP has been responsible for all the anti-working class legislation. It is difficult to assess what remains of the working class support it had at the time of the election, for its electoral strength is not reflected in organisational form.

Its mobilisations in Lisbon against the radio station occupations by workers and soldiers are almost totally white

collar and petit-bourgeois in composition. However, the illusion it has peddled of economic prosperity going hand in hand with stable social democratic government (using the examples of West Germany and Sweden) has struck a chord. It obviously has support amongst backward sections of the working class, especially in the North.

Its joint slates with a Maoist group, the MRPP, succeeded in winning union elections and withdrawing several of these union from the CP dominated Intersyndical. However, there are signs of splits by organised Socialist Party workers as the right wing nature of the Government becomes more and more obvious. For instance, when Soares denounced the metal workers' strike at a SP rally in Oporto, the metal workers' contingent left in protest.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

The development of the Revolutionary United Front (FUR) which is composed of six non-Maoist groups to the left of the CP, has had an important impact. The Front began when the CP used the revolutionary left to defend its position as the Goncalves regime collapsed and the Socialist Party launched its attacks in the North. When the CP left the Front and joined the Government, FUR was launched and made some gains amongst CP workers.

Since then FUR has made important initiatives. During the struggle around the radio stations it provided the lead together with the Maoist UDP. Similarly FUR and the UDP has influenced the development of SUV.

However, FUR's lack of programmatic clarity and the diverse politics of the groups within it mean that this progress will be difficult to maintain as the tasks facing revolutionaries become sharper with the escalation of the crisis. Held together by the healthy but insufficient sentiment that 'it is better to work together than apart' the groups within it constantly split on the very questions that such a front should answer in a united voice.

#### THE SITUATION IN THE ARMY

Government strategy has been to attempt to isolate and purge left wingers and to dissolve units controlled totally by the left. There are continued attempts to dissolve COPCON and the Military Police - one of the most revolutionary units in Lisbon. These moves are being successfully resisted in the Lisbon area, the South and in Oporto. The Government's attempt to set up AMI has met with much resistance; many units have refused to serve in it. The Government has now re-issued automatic weapons to the Republican Guard, instructing them to take over the functions of COPCON.

The Government cannot rely on any section of the army exposed to discussion with the civilian population. This is why it had to blow up Radio Renascença's transmitter, since the occupying troops' loyalty might have changed. Inducements of 5,500 Escudos a month as opposed to the conscript monthly wage of 250 Escudos were used in the attempt to strengthen AMI. This has resulted in the re-inlistment of many right-wing ex-commandos and paratroopers. The Government is also attempting to transform the armed forces from conscript recruits to a regular service and aims to disband the units most radicalised by the experience of the summer.

The organisation and spreading of the rank and file revolt in the army has been greatly assisted by the development of SUV. Beginning in Oporto, there have been big mobilisations in every major town. Despite SUV's strength, fears of victimisation cause soldiers to wear masks to avoid recognition on demonstrations. There are dangers of the movement being headed off since the less right-wing moder-

ates like Fabiao and Carvalho are suggesting that SUV should be legalised and incorporated into the MFA. To avoid this and to continue its development, the programme of SUV must be extended. To consolidate and translate its support into a stable organisational form, the fight must begin for election and recall of all officers by mass meetings of rank and file soldiers. Without this, the fear of victimisation will continue and existing high levels of consciousness may diminish.

The CP played no role in setting up SUV and initially opposed it; but it is now forced to support it. A CP takeover must be resisted although such a move is unlikely. The setting up of SUV caused important developments in the Navy. A rank and file movement (CDAP) already existed. Its CP leadership refused to support SUV but a rank and file revolt led to the reversal of that decision.

The development of SUV has been the most important development in the armed forces over the last two months. Before revolutionaries argued for the need to exacerbate the splits in the MFA but this has been speedily bypassed. The Revolutionary Council is now firmly in the hands of the right-wing and the arena of struggle is between the rank and file and the hierarchy.

The Sixth Government has failed to destroy the gains made by workers and soldiers since the coup. Workers in towns and countryside have continued to build their own organisations.

However, the Government has far from given up. It has recently prepared an economic programme as part of its efforts to obtain aid from international organisations like the EEC. Wide ranging economic cuts including rationing of basic foodstuffs and wage restraint are included. It proposes the freezing of industrial wage negotiations until the end of the year. However the document also recognises that its application is likely to provoke "serious political problems". "Consequently its formal announcement is likely to be delayed until the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces Movement has completed the task of restoring military discipline." (Financial Times: 12. 11. 1975)

The Lisbon building workers' strike for 40% increases, the seige of the Prime Minister and Government show that the workers have not been beaten back. Their victory clearly demonstrates to the Government just how serious these political problems will be.

But the bourgeoisie will not politely leave the stage. They will try every trick in the book to keep their property and power. If they are allowed, they will find a government with the political colouration to aid them in this task. As a senior economist at the Bank of Portugal said, "Force will have to be used and the standard of living pushed down. The important thing is that the government must have the political complexion to drive this through"

The bosses are already training troops in Spain and constantly developing new strategies. Backed by Wilson and the Common Market, they will resort to all forms of sabotage and provocation to reassert their power. They have the support and advice of the entire machinery of American and European capitalism. They will stop at nothing.

Portugal must not become another Chile. The danger of this is clearly realised by many workers. Hence the aggressive slogan "Portugal will not be the Chile of Europe" is shouted by workers on many demonstrations. The gains of the workers and soldiers must not be drowned in blood. Only the development of workers power can prevent this. Either the Portuguese workers go forward to the seizure of power or the entire international workers' movement will suffer a mighty setback.



# CRISIS IN IS

## Leadership's lack of programme at root of Left Faction expulsion

At the end of October the entire Left Faction of the International Socialists was expelled from that organisation.

Hiding behind the treacherous pretence that the Central Committee was only purging IS of the disruptive elements in the Faction, over half the faction membership was expelled

or suspended between mid-August and the beginning of October. The National Secretary explained in a circular to branch secretaries that while being a member of the Left Faction was not forbidden, 'promoting factional policies' or 'factionalising' was. In short an IS member might belong to the Faction as long as they did absolutely nothing about it. This was vividly illustrated by the expulsion of the Faction Secretary in mid-September for — in Jim Nichol's own words — "continued organisation of factional activity".

Intimidation failed to stop Left Faction members from fighting for their politics. The leadership were therefore forced to resort to the block expulsion of the Faction.

The Left Faction organised a joint meeting with the IS Opposition on the issue of the backdoor expulsions. The attendance of 100 IS members from all over the country put paid to the leadership's hope that they could quietly rid themselves of the Left Faction without the membership being any the wiser.

*Conference 1975: The number of delegates drastically cut.*



*Pictures: Andrew Ward and Chris Davies (Report)*

a statement  
from

## WORKERS POWER

the former Left Faction of IS

At this meeting, seeing the low-profile tactic in tatters, Steve Jeffries delivered the Central Committee's verdict: The Left Faction — if it had the temerity to exist at the end of October — would be expelled forthwith.

The policy of backdoor expulsion was a direct continuation of the leadership's refusal to politically debate with us as a faction. Most notably during the so-called pre-conference period they produced not one written word against our positions and their supporters consistently

argued against our representation at district aggregates.

IS members are being given the miserable argument that democratic centralism does not permit factional activity in the nine months between conference discussions. This period permits only the implementation of national policy wheresoever and by whom it may have been decided. This is, in itself, a grotesque and one-sided distortion of democratic centralism. As if the issues posed by the class struggle kept to a timetable like a suburban bus. The leadership themselves have no intentions of sticking to such 'rules'. They have not taken the membership or conferences seriously.

The last 'conference discussion' was disrupted by their decision to restructure the basis of discussion and delegacy. What perspectives came out of the conference that followed these manoeuvres?

### **gimmicks**

Despite the most severe economic crisis of British and World Capitalism since the Second World War, the conference had no perspective for the class and nothing for the membership to implement. Instead the leadership has been forced to cast around



IS hides behind the 'Social Democracy Out - Workers Democracy In' slogan because it has no strategy for the road to Workers Power.

PICTURE: CHRIS DAVIES (REPORT)

for new gimmicks and answers to orientate the membership and enthuse sagging morale.

The September Council was presented with a new scheme from the Central Committee to build the Socialist Workers Party out of readers of Socialist Worker. None of this was discussed with the IS membership. Since then the 'Right to Work Campaign' has been conjured up as a route to building both the Rank and File and IS's periphery. These policies have no consistency except a perpetual distrust and contempt for the seriousness and patience of IS members.

These methods have not developed overnight. The history of IS has been a series of increasingly less successful campaigns and solutions. The absence of a serious democratic-accounting of the leadership's schemes ensures that most 'answers' become quietly forgotten.

The factory branches were to be the bridge to the party. Then it was to be the workers' paper with Paul Foot as editor. Now the organisation has been galvanised to 'hate the Labour Party'.

None of these issues was ever seriously debated and decided by conference. Even the factory branch campaign - 'build 80' etc - was launched several months after the conference supported careful and cautious recognition of them. They were all swung upon a thoroughly unprepared membership.

### worker leaders

Throughout these chops and changes the composition of the leading committee has remained remarkably consistent. Annual 'prize' workers have come and gone in a welter of rhetoric about the worker leadership. Despite all the talk, the

worker members have remained manipulated and increasingly demoralised by the only undeclared and unprincipled faction in IS - its leadership. Treated like prize bulls one year, they have consistently been declared backward looking elements by the next.

### economism

The IS leadership is totally unwilling to present the most rudimentary political and organisational proposals for debate by the membership.

#### Why?

Partly because their half-baked schemes would not stand up to the test of serious examination. The leadership are increasingly incapable of providing a clear strategy and coherent tactics.

#### But this is not the entire answer.

We do not think that the leadership in IS has been seized by a group of incompetents and bunglers. Their errors, in fact, go much deeper than a series of increasingly farcical mistakes.

To build without a programme, i.e. an operative strategy for the party and class, is to build on sand. IS has done serious and often splendid support work for workers in struggle (in every way a crucial task). But its socialist policies have remained on the level of abstract propaganda for socialism and workers' control.

To those of us who pointed this out, attacked it as Economism and called for a programme, the leadership replied 'that we were "not in a transitional period" Apparently Socialism was a long way off; so meanwhile we had to take (and leave)

workers' struggles as we found them!

This faith in the eventual spontaneous politicisation of the industrial struggle served IS well in the period from 1968 to 1972. A recipe of 'more militancy' and 'hate the Tories' meant IS could stand as a pole of attraction. The effects of unemployment, inflation and a Labour Government made such a recipe increasingly inadequate. IS has not been able to cut with the grain again.

The deep and prolonged crisis has revealed a leadership without any serious answers. No answers, for example, as to how to fight inflation. IS chased after 'big claims' - 30% plus - until the Mark II Social Contract imposed the £6 limit. Before that, it had simultaneously condemned threshold deals and then lamely joined in when masses of workers fought to get them. While all the time rejecting the rising scale of wages (lump sum increases for each increase in the workers' cost of living index) as a disastrous check to militancy, Cliff saw inflation not as a danger but as the 'Locomotive of revolution'.

### reformism

When the £6 limit was imposed, the IS leadership turned in frenzy on the Labour Party. Previously IS had contented itself with making fun of the Labour Party for its falling votes and diminishing ward membership. It was incapable of addressing the confusion sown by reformism in the working class, of providing more relevant answers than 'more militancy', 'hate Labour' and 'build the Socialist Workers' Party'. Ignoring the firm hold of reformist ideas via the Trade Union bureaucrats and the sobering

effects of unemployment and inflation on industrial militancy, IS has neither the political nor organisational means to tackle these key problems.

IS will neither put demands on Labour so as to mobilise against them nor outline clear alternatives to the old, inadequate, sectional methods of trade union struggle.

## offensive

We think that such an alternative can only be posed in terms of a clear transitional programme. This programme will be indispensable for transforming defensive class struggles into a class offensive. It would outline a clear Workers' Alternative to the crisis, and the strategy and organisation necessary to turn the crisis against the bosses. It would be the basis of an offensive leading masses of trade unionists and others into the direct struggle for workers' power.

With the crisis thundering "Who shall pay - the workers or the bosses?", "What is the alternative?" and "Who rules this country - the Government or the Unions?", the IS leadership still intends to play things by ear - to suck it and see. They continue to scramble for a magical set of gimmicks and campaigns to keep their organisation on the road.

Having rejected transitional politics, they have no alternative. Behind the hysteria

*Lenin: Had he no time for democratic centralism or a political programme?*



of "Social Democracy Out - Workers' Democracy In" and "Social Contract or Socialism", lies not one shred of programme or strategy for the road to workers' power.

Tony Cliff has written a biography of Lenin and a series of journal articles in an attempt to enshrine this methodology. Lenin the revolutionary, not surprisingly, had no time for democratic centralism or a political programme.

The Socialist Workers Party turn will not answer the problems confronting IS. The sudden new sectarian turn against the Broad Left and the launching of the so-called Engineers' Charter, the prospects of a Walsall IS candidate without a programme or support in the area and the new answer to slow recruitment (those who don't join are the best members of all and will lay the basis for the new revolutionary party) are the stunts of a sect - not the reasoned and consistent strategy of the revolutionary party nucleus. Only by further diminishing internal discussion within IS and preventing contact between IS members and other contending forces in the labour movement will the leadership hold this proto-sect together.

Workers Power will be producing a review magazine carrying the same name. It will be published every three weeks and will define, in a topical way, where we stand on the major questions facing the working class movement, both nationally and internationally. The first issue will be centred around the fight-back against unemployment, and the deepening crisis in Portugal.

If you want a copy fill in the subscription form over-leaf.

# WORKERS POWER

## What did Left Faction stand for in IS?

## How did it begin?

It commenced in 1972 as a response to the leadership's position on Ireland. One bomb in Aldershot immediately exploded any pretence on their part to argue for support for those fighting the British Army in Ireland. Since then IS's Irish work has diminished to virtually zero.

We objected to this failure to argue for clear Internationalist politics in the British working class. We have consistently opposed IS's opportunistic and unpolitical approach to international work and the building of the International. How many IS comrades know the political programme of the PRP (B-R) or the criticisms of IS made by the Socialist Workers' Movement in Ireland? If comrades do know, we can be sure they were not told by the IS leadership.

## strategy

This failure to argue clear politics was not, we argued, because of an absence of abstract propaganda for socialism or a planned economy. IS has a surfeit of this. It was because IS had no clear programme and strategy for the class.

We opposed the draft programme offered by the Cliff leadership. We said it was a useless mish-mash of history lessons, rosy portrayals of the future and endless lists of elementary and immediate demands. As such it could never be offered to the class as IS's alternative. We were right. That programme never saw light of day, let alone the test of shop floor battle! It was quietly buried by those who commanded us to obey the conference they so brazenly held in contempt.

IS could never develop a programme for the class as a result of the contemplations of cloistered leaders. Only the experience of the membership could develop a programme and a correct line and orientation for the organisation. As a result, we have always argued consistently for democratic centralism and against the violent twists and turns that have resulted from a lack of serious democratic accounting in IS.

ere not taken in by the baloney "Workers' Leadership", seeing it est, a token and at worst the smoke-screen for further manipulation. A workers' leadership can only emerge as the result of genuine democratic argument - any other 'committees of workers' were sure to get in the way of the leadership and had to be declared backward looking or no longer sufficiently proletarian!

We have argued for a consistent fight to build a genuine rank and file movement independent of the swings of the IS leadership. We have always argued for a serious, alternative, workers' programme for the crisis as an answer to the illusions and blind alleys of reformism. We have argued for women's politics not to be an optional extra but central to the battle for our ideas in the working class movement. We are proud of the consistency and correctness of our ideas.

### purge

We attempted to remain in IS on a principled and perfectly open factional platform. The alternative was the unprincipled gossip world of secret factionalism. The IS leadership has expelled us for the former.

We consider the mounting crisis increasingly reveals the inadequacies of the politics of this leadership. The internal regime makes correction and new direction impossible. The leadership will first try to smother and ignore argument and differences. If they fail in this they will reply with expulsions once again. We are confident that they will be forced to purge the membership in the immediately foreseeable future.

### the Party

We will argue for our politics outside IS. The increasing bankruptcy of IS makes ever more urgent the need to build the revolutionary party. Some comrades in IS are not yet clear to what extent the organisation is reformable or, on the other hand, only going through a 'bad patch'. We urge them not to wait and see but to argue their differences openly before the membership. Only in this way will they put the IS leadership to the test.

We are committed to building the party. The crisis of capitalism poses the need and possibility most sharply. IS cannot meet that challenge. We appeal to all IS members sickened by the political bankruptcy and bureaucratic practices of the International Socialist leadership to join us in that fight



The Left Faction argued for an alternative workers programme as an answer to the illusions and blind alleys of reformism.

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On the previous four pages we have reprinted a leaflet which Workers Power issued to IS members shortly after our group was expelled from the International Socialists.

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# THIS WAY FOR THE PORTUGUESE WORKERS REVOLUTION

The summer offensive of the 'forces of order', spearheaded by Mario Soares's Socialist Party and the 'moderate' grouping in the AFM around Fabiao and Antunes, resulted in the installation of the Sixth Provisional Government headed by Admiral Pinheiro de Azavedo. This government has two central tasks; to restore the armed forces as disciplined tools of the State power; and to rest from the workers the gains they have made in terms of wages and conditions. In addition, it must arrest the encroachment on management autocracy by the various forms of workers control.

So far the Government has failed to achieve its first aim which weakens it considerably when it comes to the task of disciplining workers. The Government chief hopes of achieving its goals are to organise or rely on:

- Provocations aimed at the left to produce an outbreak which could be used to crush the vanguard at the same time isolating them from the great mass of workers and peasants.
- The dead weight of the SP, CP and the Intersyndical bureaucracy holding back the working class long enough to demoralise both soldiers and workers.
- The further demoralising effects of the economic crisis; prolonged and severe unemployment and inflation.

However, no serious shift of class forces in the bourgeoisie's favour has yet occurred. The workers and soldiers movement are gathering momentum. The next few months, even weeks, could be decisive. In this period the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary workers are crucial to the fate of the revolution.

The question is now posed - will the workers in the factories and fields and the soldiers in the barracks find the road to insurrection, then establish the dictatorship of the proletariat; or will the bourgeoisie and the army high-ups establish a crushing Bonapartist dictatorship (perhaps decorated to a greater or lesser degree as a "pluralist democracy")

Crucial problem areas for the fate of the Portuguese revolution are:

## REVOLUTION

### THE UNITED FRONT

The hold reformist parties still have within the working class, their power to confuse and obstruct the mobilisation of the class for the crucial offensive and even for defence of previous gains, necessitates the fight by revolutionaries for a workers united front against reaction.

The present FUR (Revolutionary United Front) is totally inadequate for this purpose. It does not include the CP, the largest and most influential party in the working class. Its manifesto is an ideological muddle - too long winded and imprecise for the agreed slogans of a united front and too compromised for the programme of a revolutionary party. A united front requires limited but precise fighting slogans that attempt to win all workers and soldiers organisations to them while allowing the clearest delineation of political tendencies within that front.

What immediate issues must be taken up by a united workers' movement? What issues point the way to the only solution - workers power? Revolutionaries should fight for a united front which takes up the following points.

- For armed workers defence squads, Support SUV; full political rights for soldiers; for the election and right of recall of officers, DISBAND THE AMI AMI. Against the selective disbanding of revolutionary units. For the disbandment of the standing army and its replacement by a popular militia. Work or full pay (average industrial wage) for all demobilised units - transform these units into workers defence guards. Units of these guards to enlist, arm and train workers.
- For united local councils of delegates from the workers, tenants and soldiers commissions. For a national congress of delegates from these organisations, BUILD WORKERS COUNCILS.
- Assistance to the peasants. Give them interest free credit and cheap fertiliser. Nationalise all middle-men enterprises and replace them with a non-profit making State marketing agency under

- workers and peasants control. Nationalise all large farms (latifundia) under workers control. Legal recognition of all land seizures and occupations by farm workers. Defend and extend these seizures, interest free credit and cheap fertiliser to the agricultural co-operatives.

- Against economic sabotage. For measures which annul the effects of the economic crisis on the working class. Nationalisation without compensation and under workers control of all large firms and enterprises. Workers inspection and control. Abolition of business secrecy. Support for all wages struggles - for a sliding scale of wages against inflation. For a public works programme under workers control. Work or full pay for all unemployed. Workers control of the media - defend the papers and radio stations under workers control.

## WORKERS COUNCILS

The Portuguese working class has shown immense creativity in the variety of fighting organisations it has built. For instance, workers and neighbourhood committees of struggle. This it has done despite constant attempts by the whole spectrum of Stalinism from the PCP to the MDP to bureaucratised them or subject them to their sectarian strangle hold.

The urgent task is to draw delegates from these bodies into local councils and, ultimately, a national assembly. Important elements of dual power are emerging. The task is to speed and strengthen this development and open the road to workers power. Dual power is a highly unstable situation which must be resolved one way or the other. To develop workers councils, all sectarianism must be laid aside - all bona fide delegates from workplaces must be admitted, whatever workers party they belong to. Any attempts to limit their membership to 'revolutionary' workers or to exclude certain parties or to proclaim the councils anti-party will prove disastrous. The broadest masses of workers, rural and urban and the widest layers of soldiers and sailors must be drawn into these bodies. They can form a massive bulwark against reaction immediately. With the correct leadership, they would be the most powerful lever for achieving workers power. To enable workers in these councils to assess the right lead - the most correct strategy - there must be absolute freedom of expression and caucus for all workers parties.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The multiplicity of revolutionary groups has helped produce a certain anti-party sentiment amongst the most militant sectors of the Portuguese working class. The representatives of 'official' Trotskyism, the LCI and the PRT, stand largely on the sidelines.

The Maoists stand immobilised by their Stalinism; the Third Period 'Social Fascist' line added to the stages theory which rules out the proletarian dictatorship, leads to a combination of hysterical ultra-left phrase-mongering (and obstruction of the united front) with a Menshevik shrinking from the perspective of workers power.

Left centrist groupings such as the MES and the PRP are more healthy in the short run - both have assisted, propogandised and initiated the formation of workers and soldiers rank and file organisations.

But the Portuguese revolution is moving into a stage where

the question of the party resolves itself into the question of what programme or which strategy leads to victory.

The PRP has many correct elements of such a strategy. It has broken with the Stalinist stages theory and in practice and theory recognised the international nature of the Portuguese revolution. At the same time it has rejected the seductive 'left' nonsense of 'Social Fascism'.

But what are its weaknesses? Some are associated with its strengths - a certain militarism led to sowing illusions in Carvalho and the left officers. Another important weakness is PRP's lack of clarity about the united front and the relationship this front should have with the CP.

The PRP tends to see things in the light of logistics rather than politics. For this reason it seriously under-estimates the question of a programme. Its slogans hover between maximalism - "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat" and the immediate demands of the day. Its programme, such as it is, lacks any clear understanding of transitional politics. Its tactics are confused and eclectic, particularly on the united front. To suggest as IS does that all this would be solved by a daily paper and mass recruiting, is lunacy. The PRP must develop quickly a revolutionary programme or become a serious centrist obstacle to the revolution (joining the Maoists and the MES). In outline such a development would mean:

- Building, developing and centralising workers organisations into effective centres of struggle and potential organs of power.
- Launching the fight for the united front - with all workers parties if possible; certainly with members of all workers parties.

Revolutionaries should take up within the united front and the workers councils:

- The fight for a workers answer to the capitalist crisis.
- The fight to dissolve the armed forces as part of the bourgeois state machine; to win soldiers to the side of the working class.
- Internationalism - all support and assistance to the Spanish workers and the MPLA in Angola.
- The task of re-building a revolutionary International on a Leninist basis.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

The revolution, itself owing an enormous debt to the heroic national liberation struggles against the Portuguese colonial occupation forces, exerts an enormous influence on developments in Europe and beyond.

The Spanish revolution will bring enormous assistance to the Portuguese workers. But to suggest a policy of waiting for Spain is disastrous. The seizure of power by the Portuguese workers would be the biggest stimulus to the Spanish working class and all oppressed nationalities. A Workers State in Portugal could lend a Spanish up-rising material support.

For revolutionaries in the rest of Europe, Portugal is a vital issue. Maximum assistance must be given to the Portuguese workers and soldiers and solidarity action stepped up. Direct links must be built between workers' organisations.

The correct analysis of the Portuguese revolution is a touch stone of revolutionary strategy and could act as the focus for the re-construction of the International and its programme.

# SOCIALISTS, ABORTION

## and NAC.

**"If a woman's choice has anything of an individual character about it, she won't be forgiven by bourgeois society. This attitude is a kind of throw back to the traditions of tribal times. Society still wants a woman to take into account, when she is making her choice, rank and status, and the instructions and interests of her family. Bourgeois society cannot see a woman as an independent person separate from her family unit and outside the isolated circle of domestic obligations and virtues..... Contemporary society goes even further than ancient tribal society in acting as women's trustees....."** [Kollantai: "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle"]

As international Women's year draws to a close, abortion remains the only issue affecting women that has received any major publicity. Equal pay, equal opportunity, the provision of nurseries, unionisation - all the main demands of the women's movement and socialist groups agitating for women's equality - have been relatively ignored in the face of the increasingly urgent issue of abortion.

Although the quotation introducing this article was part of Kollantai's polemic against the bourgeois family and traditional shackles of marriage, her analysis if applied to the present abortion debate illuminates points essential to that debate, polarised as it now between the positions of SPUC and NAC.

SPUC considers its members, as a largely religious group, are 'free' to characterise abortion as a 'sin' against 'life', while the rest of society must be un-free to control their reproduction. They represent the extreme bourgeois concept of 'contemporary society acting as trustees'. Within a class society this means that a small group of people assume that they know what is best for society as a whole. This assumption also implies that the majority of society could not possibly know what its real necessities are. SPUC's demand for restrictive legislation on abortion would lead to a return to back-street abortions and racketeering.

NAC and the pro-abortionists emphasise the slogan "A Woman's right to choose" - the ability of women to control their own reproduction. This slogan embodies the notion that the masses are not a bunch of ignoramuses and that each one of us has the ability and should have the right to control our own lives. Under capitalism such control eludes us. No woman and especially no working woman, is free to control her own life even when she has control of her reproduction. But once women do have control of their reproduction, they are also free to choose participation in a movement to control not only their own lives but also to change the whole conditions of our present society - the conditions of exploitation at work, inadequate housing, bad schooling and a rotten health service - the conditions of capitalist society.

By freeing the individual to choose that control we are not acclaiming 'bourgeois individualism' but providing the potential right for women, and men in some instances, to be free to participate in the society and change it. In supporting a "Woman's right to choose" we must not use it as just a rallying cry against SPUC; we must extend its potential

to embrace our long term aims. Neither must we support it merely as a necessity for the woman worker as the housing problem becomes more acute and prices continue to rise. All women including white collar workers, secretaries and housewives, should have the right to choose whether to have children or not, and the right to be independent of the 'family' if they so want.

The aims of the 1967 Act were to allow abortion for the 'casualties' of the system but to uphold restrictions for the mass of women. Abortion on demand was to be resisted. This was social engineering on the part of the Labour Party. It is in tune with 'limiting problem sections' of the working class. It is in line with Sir Keith Joseph's rantings about 'classes 4 and 5'. Abortion on demand is a class issue as it challenges the bourgeois concept of marriage, the family and women as reproducers of labour power, and it contains the notion that women as well as men should be free to participate in changing the class nature of our society. It prepares the ground for women's equal participation in changing the class nature of our society.

### AFTER THE 1967 ACT

Abortion remained a controversial issue after the 1967 Act and after four years the Government set up the Lane Committee to review its working. That body found the Act had provided improved conditions for women seeking abortions. Its recommendations that the N.H.S. provide better abortion and contraceptive facilities and reduce private sector abortions were ignored by the Government. Although the Lane Committee's recommendations were taken up by the long-standing Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA), it had no clear perspective for political intervention and failed to demand abolition of the private sector.

The initiative was seized by the right with the introduction of the anti-abortion James White Amendment Bill. ALRA, under pressure from the women's movement in 1975 launched 'A Woman's Right to Choose' campaign against the Bill.

In February 1975 NAC was formed with the main aim of fighting restrictive legislation on abortion through grass-roots action. Here was the chance at last for the women's movement and its potential periphery to agitate on a broader scale and develop its own politics and to move on from the development of the theory of woman's position under capitalism.

After the successful activities of the spring and summer and the spread of NAC groups all over the country, most people involved saw it still as a campaign to fight AGAINST the return to back-street abortions and FOR a 'woman's right to choose'. At present the main aim of NAC is to fight the re-appointment of the Select Committee which followed the fall of James White's Bill.

In the last months, NAC's political orientation has not changed radically. It essentially remains a campaign to fight restrictive legislation. But this orientation was verbally contradicted by the reiterations at the recent conference of the need for the campaign to move on to the offensive. The adoption of the slogan "Free abortion on demand - A woman's Right to Choose" rather than just "A Woman's Right to Choose" was indicative of this healthy if confused feeling in the campaign. How this in practise changes the orientation of NAC is unclear. Unless "Free abortion on demand" is seen as a political demand on the Labour Government for improved NHS facilities and adequate financial resources, then it is a meaningless slogan. It is clear that the Government is not interested in an efficiently run NHS for people's needs. While they complain there is no money available to improve the NHS, the fact is that it could be run more economically. (If the 56 000 terminations currently performed on the NHS were performed in outpatient clinics there could be a saving of £1 million pounds a year according to the medical journal 'Pulse'.)

But we are not interested in merely propping up a failing capitalist organised health service. We must demand that the private sector performing abortions is stopped and all abortions are freely available on the NHS.

At a time when the NHS is visibly crumbling, when doctors have for the first time begun to act militantly, when hospitals are being closed up and down the country, NAC must make it clear what "Free abortion on demand" really means and against whom it is directed. NAC must take up in all its agitation the following immediate demands as a challenge to the Parliamentary Labour Party:

Free abortion on demand up to the 12<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, available in day clinics under the NHS. With the expansion of provisions for early terminations, late terminations would be more scarce.

For exceptional cases free abortion on demand up to the 24<sup>th</sup> week must be available on the NHS with the necessary medical advice provided.

With the establishment of the above provisions

The private sector must be abolished. End all exploitation of women wanting abortions.

Services under the private sector must be incorporated into the NHS.

Free, safe contraception to be widely available on the NHS.

More money to be made available for research.

These immediate demands around which NAC should be concentrate its activities, cannot be isolated from the broader political context. NAC should be locally and nationally involved in the broader movement that is emerging to fight cuts in education and housing. Where cuts campaigns exist, NAC groups should be actively participating in them and making the links necessary for both campaigns to be forceful enough to challenge local councils and the Government. It is not adequate to merely broaden the campaign by leafletting factories where women work or pass motions through the Trade Union branches, although the TUC must be forced to fight for its commitment to "Abortion on demand".

As many women do not work, local orientation should be towards women on estates and to activity on the cuts immediately affecting those women. Involving health workers in such campaigns is central to such an orientation.

We must work in NAC to improve it not to take it over. IS has the latter aim and that of trying to convince people they should join IS. This tactic is merely disruptive as demonstrated at the October Conference where they lost all their arguments through take-over attempts and the alienation of most women present. Work in NAC is an essential part of United Front activity where opportunism has no place and where we must work with the genuine desire to build the movement and extend its aims.

## The Crisis, the Left and Our Perspectives.

The emergence of yet another grouping on the British left is more likely to be greeted with despair by workers and militants drawn towards revolutionary politics than by rejoicing. The last year or so has seen a further splintering of the Trotskyist groupings. Serious comrades may be forgiven for exclaiming, "On no - not another!". Why have all these splits occurred in this particular period?

In the metropolitan capitalist states, the last few years have seen the definitive passing of the long period of stabilisation which characterised the third quarter of the century. A series of dramatic events have signalled the ending of a whole period and heralded the onset of a new phase marked by serious and prolonged capitalist crisis. (The triumph of the Vietnamese national liberation movement has heralded the decline of American imperialism and toppled the US from its position of unchallengeable supremacy.)

As the gendarme of imperialist order, US money and military aid had everywhere installed or propped up reactionary regimes. In Spain and Portugal, Greece and throughout Latin America, military and semi-fascist regimes lent on the working class and the rural masses. In South Africa the southern quarter of the continent seemed an impregnable barrier for racist barbarism. In the Middle East the forces of expansionist Zionism had defeated all but the heroic guerilla fighters of the Palestinian people. Within a few years all of these pillars of reaction have suffered severe shocks from the anti-imperialist movements and from the re-emergence of the basic internal contradictions of world capitalism.

For the first time in decades the anti-imperialist struggle and the working class struggle have come together in the crisis of Portuguese colonialism. This holds profound consequences for both southern Africa and for Europe.



British capitalism, senile and bearing the accumulated weight of 50 years of decline, acted after 1945 as a servant to US imperialism. With the crisis of its master and the increasingly violent competitive war for world markets, the British ruling class is forced into ever sharper attacks on the conditions and organisation built up by the trade union movement since the last war. The miners strikes of 1972 and 1974, the latter unseating the Tory Government, heralded a period of acute class struggle not witnessed since the 1920's. The Irish national movement, dormant since that period, has broken into armed conflict that has reached the proportions of open war.

In these circumstances, revolutionaries, their politics and their tactics are put to the test with increasing sharpness - a test which is showing the fundamental weaknesses of all the major tendencies of British Trotskyism. What are these weaknesses?

Firstly Economism; the under-estimation of the conscious ideological struggle and the consequent belief that the working class will spontaneously evolve the strategy necessary to take power. This tendency develops a basically social democratic split between propaganda (Socialism) and agitation, (trade union and economic struggles). It, of course, sincerely believes that the bread and butter issues will evolve into the struggle for Socialism. All these 'revolutionaries' have to do is to give a bit of organisational encouragement to this trend and generalise it.

This tendency rejects the Leninist and Trotskyist conception of the Party as built around a strategic transitional programme which means an active fight to transform the 'actual struggles' - the day-to-day trade union routine - into a conscious and coherent offensive against capitalism.

Such a programme does this, not on the basis of voluntarism nor because it would be nice for revolutionaries. The transitional programme depends on the objective need for transitional struggles as the only answer to a capitalism greedy to restore itself on the crushed back of a prostrate working class. The choice is increasingly stark; either the goals and methods of trade union struggle as we have known them for 30 years are consciously transformed or the gains of that period - wages, conditions, social services - will be lost.

Either new organs of struggle are forged - a national rank and file movement, combine committees, councils of action - and old ones transformed - the union branch, shop steward committees, trades councils - or the trade unions will suffer decline and perhaps destruction. Since 1969, the British ruling class has set as its task the drastic weakening of the trade unions and particularly the shop stewards organisation.

But the very size and strength of the trade unions breeds a certain complacency and inertia. This affects trade union militants as well as revolutionaries.

The IS group and Tony Cliff probably encapsulate the Economist tendency in its purest form. But many 'orthodox' Trotskyists have turned the transitional programme into a barren and inoperative totem - they act in practice no differently to the Cliffites.

A further danger running parallel to the accommodation to pure trade union consciousness, is accommodation to parliamentary reformism. Though the latter is very much a junior partner to trade unionism, it may prove more attractive to Trotskyists who (mistakenly) recoil from the apolitical nature of trade union routinism. The logistics of accommodating to Parliamentary reformism are far more manageable. Trotskyists have always been able to take over its youth movements and hold their own alongside the Tribune left reformists and assorted CP fellow-travellers.

The danger is that the Labour Party is seen as the battle ground for the soul of the British working class and that in this battle revolutionaries simply amalgamate with the left against the right. From this all kinds of follies arise. "Make the left MPs fight", "Kick out Wilson", "Labour to power on a Socialist Programme". Talk of a "class struggle, prolet-

arian tendency" being forged in unity with Tribune is sometimes heard.

All these slogans and positions sow criminal illusions in the left fakers, Tribunites and Benn-type mavericks. Of course their authors think they will expose the left of the Labour Party and thus Social Democracy. But the great exposure never seems to come off. Meanwhile any honest Labour Party worker who is not in on the secret takes these slogans seriously.

All these positions whether whispered within the Labour Party by entrists or shrieked from outside by hysterical sectarians, point in the wrong direction - away from transforming direct industrial action into direct political action. Of course it is necessary to challenge the Labour Party - to expose it - and to put demands on it. But these demands must be put by real forces, forces capable of doing the job themselves when the reformist politicians, left as well as right, slink into the background, failing to live up to their promises or openly betray the class.

Tailoring ones politics either to the spontaneous issues of the factory floor or to the left/right battles of a reformist party are both forms of adaption.

Two further possible reactions are abstract propagandist sectarianism - sorting out theory in small colonies of intellectuals - or total absorption in a broad movement such as the women's movement or the narrower circles of Irish or anti-fascist work. These reactions are possible because of the philistinism and concessions to national and male chauvinism of the large groups.

How does Workers Power - a very small grouping - intend to avoid these pitfalls and offer a positive alternative.

The task we see as central is the raising of transitional politics in every major workers struggle. This implies a fight to maintain a central orientation towards the fighting organs of the class - the trade unions. We will raise in the trade unions a transitional programme which outlines a workers answer to the crisis. To avoid fetishising this programme we realise that particular demands have to be raised agitational and translated and explained in the clearest possible terms.

This is not to under-estimate the importance of the programme as a whole, though here we must observe that the 1938 document, its demands and its basic method need to be re-applied to the new imperialist crisis of the late 70's.

This is not a national task alone. That would be to turn Trotsky's international programme into the property of a national sect. The re-elaboration of the Transitional Programme is a central part of the struggle to re-create a new International based on the method of Lenin's Comintern and Trotsky's Fourth International.

We recognise that on the Trotskyist left today there is a multiplicity of tendencies. We do not believe that any group can have a monopoly of theoretical correctness and orientation. We believe the task facing us is one of regroupment around a clear programme - a clear strategy and precise tactics.

We are not in favour, however, of an amorphous political swamp where a thousand schools of thought vie with each other. We see as crucial to revolutionary regroupment a number of basic positions:

## INTERNATIONALISM

- A clear line of unconditional support for those fighting British imperialism in Ireland and for the defeat of the British troops.
- Serious activity in the British working class movement to combat chauvinism on the Irish question.
- Opposition to racialism - for black peoples' self-defence and organisation.
- For united action to drive the fascists from the streets.

As Ireland and racialism are the acid test for British revolutionaries, Portugal tests the strategy of all national and international Trotskyist groupings in the sharpest way. It lays the basis for international regroupment and the fight to recreate a democratic centralist International on a re-developed programme.

#### THE TRADE UNIONS

- Orientation towards the mass fighting organisations of the working class - centrally the trade unions.
- Against the trade union bureaucracy, left and right, and all class collaborationist and chauvinist policies.
- For a rank and file caucus in every industry and workplace.
- For a genuine, mass national rank and file movement aiming to: unite workers for militant policies; transform the unions, establish rank and file democratic control and thus oust the bureaucracy.
- For open revolutionary socialist leadership of such a movement on the basis of a political strategy - a transitional programme.

#### THE LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Party is a capitalist party with mass support from workers. It is not a two class party nor are its left reformists a proletarian tendency. It can neither be ignored syndicalist fashion nor transformed into a revolutionary party. Entry work must be a tactic. It must not become a strategy or central orientation as it can never end with the Labour Party seizing power for the workers. An entry tactic is a matter for concrete assessment which takes into account firstly, the Labour Party's current relationship to the class and mass struggles, and secondly, the size and influence of revolutionary groupings. No programmatic concessions can be made to this tactic. The central task of the coming period is the building of an independent revolutionary party.

#### THE UNITED FRONT

- For a clear non-sectarian policy of participation in all broad movements or united fronts of an anti-capitalist nature, raising there a Marxist class analysis.

In the women's movement for example, active support for all equal rights demands and against legal disabilities and restrictions (equal pay and abortion).

But we recognise that the social enslavement of women can be tackled at root only by the struggle against capitalism. Never-the-less women's struggles to overcome oppression must not wait until the revolution. They must become an integrated part of the struggle for Socialism. Emancipation of women will be won only when women fight for it and lead this fight.

Resolute criticism and struggle must be carried out against petit-bourgeois feminism, radical or socialist. There must be a central orientation towards working class women who suffer both oppression as women and often super-exploitation as women workers.

The nucleus of the British revolutionary party does not exist in any of the large revolutionary organisations. Our experience has convinced us that IS, the largest group, cannot build that party. Those who have broken or are breaking with the dead-ends represented by the leaderships of the major tendencies (compromised as they are by Economism, sectarianism and opportunism) must make a serious attempt to develop an alternative strategy capable of building the party on firm foundations.

To such a task we dedicate our small resources. We welcome into our ranks comrades with a similar perspective. We shall fuse our organisation with any grouping sharing the same fundamental political principles.

## IRELAND:

### Revolutionary

### Marxism

## must give new lead

The outbreak of the latest inter-Republican feud signals the most serious and profound state of demoralisation, confusion and fragmentation within the anti-unionist population since the outbreak of mass civil conflict six years ago. Whatever the stated reason for the feud (and let there be no doubt about it - the Provisionals' reasons in no way justify the murder of political opponents, despite the lack of sympathy for the Officials in view of their own murderous and lying campaign against the IRSP), the present conflict only serves to underline the total political bankruptcy of Republicanism, whether in its purely nationalist form or in the Stalinised version of the Officials.

At a time when the anti-Unionist population need more than ever to see the possibility of building, uniting and strengthening resistance in the face of mounting British Army terror, the continued existence of internment, and the potential Loyalist military and political 'take-over' (despite temporary divisions), Republicanism (whether of the Provisional, Official or IRSP variety) has shown once again it is incapable of regaining the mass support and involvement of sections of workers. Republicanism cannot provide the elements for a strategy or consistently give the lead in the fight for its principal demands. The Republicans' divorce from the concerns and needs of the Catholic working class as a whole, has forced many of them to adopt more and more conspiratorial tactics (the bombing campaign in England of the Provisionals; the attack on the Loyalist para-military by the IRSP's military wing) or slick manoeuvres (the incident centres - ceasefire - slow release of internees). Both 'tactics' can be seen as the outcome of conflicting pressures upon the Provisional leadership, on the one hand from their activists to step up the campaign and on the other from a tired, war-weary population who see no strategic or tactical point in the bombing campaign. [The present feud can be seen as the heightening of these conflicting pressures upon the Provisional leadership.]

But the impotence and failure of republicanism should produce no surprise (or regret) among revolutionary Marxists. What is cause for regret is the tragedy that thousands of the most active and involved workers in the anti-Unionist find themselves virtually leadershipless in the face of the combined effects of a major political, economic and social crisis whose ultimate effects, if nothing is done, may be the establishment of a proto-fascist Ulster state. The full responsibility for this rests fairly and squarely with those so-called revolutionary socialists of the SWM, PD, RMG and IRSP who either through the crudest economism or the most blatant capitulation to nationalism have failed utterly to outline or fight consistently for a revolutionary Marxist strategy which would be cap-

able of breaking sections of anti-Unionist workers away from the conspiratorial idiocies of Republicanism.

The present situation in the 32 counties - mass unemployment, raging inflation - attacks upon wages, conditions and social welfare - growing State repression in all spheres of life - retreating and increasingly demoralised sections of workers everywhere - highlights the crucial need for all revolutionary Marxists, who now realise the impotence of Republicanism and the sterility of Economism, to begin the fight to halt the retreat happening on all fronts. What must be done as quickly as possible is the drawing up of a balance sheet of the strengths and weaknesses of the class as a whole in the light of the defeats and set-backs of the last decade. This must be the first step in the production of a revolutionary international programme for which co-operation, debate, discussion with British revolutionaries and Marxists of other nationalities is paramount.

At the same time, practical steps must be taken to propagandise and agitate for the building of United Front committees on the question of repression in the North initially, and rank and file committees on the issues of unemployment and inflation on a 32 county basis. Only if these are built can the Irish working class as a whole defend itself against the onslaughts of British Imperialism, Irish capitalism and Ulster Loyalism.

Neill Bell (N. IRELAND)

# High - time the British Left took sides

After an initial period of confusion when British troops arrived in force in the Six Counties, it is now clear to most on the British left that despite the present 'truce' that there is open if undeclared war in Northern Ireland. That war is between the Republican working class and British Imperialism. Those who are genuinely confused, or those who seek to confuse, should have this made absolutely clear to them. Ireland is no more complex an issue than most other imperialist confrontations, in fact it is a classic example of the old imperialist tactic of divide and rule. That there is a large pro-imperialist bloc in Ireland should therefore surprise no socialist who has any knowledge of Imperialism's history of exploitation around the world. In all these situations the correct reaction of socialists living in the Imperialist country was to support the anti-imperialist forces struggling against their own army and government.

Why then do so many on the British left fail to make, or even understand, this elementary point of socialist internationalism? Why is it that arguments about "terrorism", "divisions in the working class", the "non-socialist nature of Republicanism", drown out the elementary socialist message of solidarity with those fighting against British Imperialism? The answer to all these questions is to be found not in Ireland but in Britain.

Britain is the oldest and most experienced imperialist power in the world. Despite its present decline as a world power, the effects of Britain's past dominance has left a heavy ideological imprint on the British working class. Idea about the "national interest" and "ours boys" in Ireland are but notifications of previously more confident ideas about "King and Country" and the "white man's burden". Even though the material crumbs of privilege which British workers used to pick up from Britain's plundering of the world hardly exists any more, the past and present imperialist ideology blinds and hampers most British workers, including many fine militants, from seeing that struggles like that in Ireland are in their own objective interest.

When and if the Republicans plant bombs in Britain (a misguided and backward tactic), it should be recognised that this in itself while strengthening and reinforcing British chauvinism does not create it. This has been created by history.

What then are the positive arguments for supporting the struggle in Ireland?

The first and most important reason is that this struggle can only assist the fight for socialism in Ireland. This is because any fight against British Imperialism even though it is thoroughly nationalist, is in reality a struggle against capitalism. The fact is that capitalism in Ireland is either British owned or dependant on British capitalist domination. Moreover, a real struggle against Imperialism must primarily mobilise the Irish working class as well as other oppressed people like fishermen and small farmers. Who else has any real interest in fighting. A movement to smash the Northern Ireland sectarian state will destroy the basic institution which creates and perpetuates that sectarianism. Once that State can no longer guarantee sectarian privileges for Protestant workers then Irish working class unity can be seen as a concrete alternative to whole layers of them.

Whilst we believe that republicanism is unable to lead the Irish working class right through to these objectives, we also recognise that so far it has been the only real force to push developments in this direction. Therefore, any socialist party in Ireland cannot dismiss the national struggle and its leading movements. They must show in practice that the socialist way is the best way to solve the problems of the border; sectarianism and British domination.

But it is no good us preaching to Irish workers about the best way to achieve socialism and defeat British imperialism. We talk primarily to British workers and thus we pitch our arguments accordingly. We have a duty to shout loud and clear that the Irish people have a right to self-determination and that we support any one who struggles to that end be they nationalist, revolutionary socialist or anarchist. We would prefer it if they were revolutionary socialist, we would prefer it if their tactics did not include retrogressive bombings in this country. But our primary duty is to explain to British workers that the British State is not their state but the sole property of the bosses and that a defeat for the British ruling class in Ireland would be a victory not only for the Irish struggle but also the British working class. It is interesting to note that the left have been slow to take up these positions on Ireland while the National Front has been making links with the UVF and in this country making extensive anti-Irish propaganda amongst the working class. Like-wise the Monday Club and the Conservative party as a whole not only sympathise with right wing Unionism but also use Ireland as an excuse to demand that the government bring in measures such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign, a pacifist group, are the latest to suffer from the catch-all conspiracy laws.

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Their crime was to inform British soldiers of their legal rights under British law concerning conscientious objection and avenues out of the British Army. Enoch Powell uses the Irish issue in an attempt to bring reactionary ideas into the forefront of British politics.

The right wing has made the most out of the Irish national liberation struggle; the British left can no longer dither on the sidelines. A refusal to solidarise with the Irish struggle is not only a stab in the back for the Irish anti-imperialist movement, it is also a refusal to combat one of the most poisonous tendencies in the British working class - British chauvinism and anti-Irish racism, a tendency which will, if not combatted, contribute to the destruction of the working class movement in this country.

To prevent the possibility of such a defeat we must mobilise active support inside the British labour movement for the building of the Troops Out Movement on its limited yet principled platform of "Troops out Now" and "Self-determination for the Irish People" is central to this aim.

To this end we must mobilise for TOM's December rally, and one following on February 1<sup>st</sup> to commemorate Bloody Sunday. Wherever possible, we must strive to promote mass labour movement delegations to Ireland; TOM is organising these over the coming year.

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