

# The **Red Mole**

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## AVENGE DERRY

# OPEN THE SECOND FRONT



# VICTORY TO THE IRA

**MINERS' STRIKE: INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSIS**

**SOLIDARITY ACTION IN ESSEX      SOCIALIST WOMAN**

**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE LABOUR LEFT?      RHODESIA**

**ONSLAUGHT IN WEST BENGAL      ELDRIDGE CLEAVER**

*Thousands of Irish workers burnt the British Embassy in Dublin on the night of Feb. 2, 1972.*

# Red Mole

## AVENGE DERRY

The massacre which took place in the Bogside on Sunday, 30 January claiming the lives of thirteen Irishmen will bring home to many people, inside and outside Ireland, the importance of the IRA's role in the Six-Counties. It has been the existence of armed bodies of men engaged in the defense of the oppressed Catholic minority which has prevented the latter from being crushed by the British army. The main lessons of the massacre in the Bogside is that Irish people have to defend themselves guns in hand against British imperialism. The killings themselves bring back memories of Peterloo, the Jallianwalla Bagh massacres in India in 1919 and more recently Sharpeville and Rhodesia. When imperialism decides to answer the grievances of the people with a premeditated massacre, as Bogside so clearly was, they do so in order to inflict a blow from which they hope their adversary will not recover. In most cases they are wrong and the reaction to Derry in the Six-Counties, the Republic and in parts of Britain indicates that British imperialism has made a serious miscalculation.

Since August 9th last year, British imperialism has been under a constant attack mounted by the oppressed Irish minority in the Six-Counties, but this attack has existed on two fronts: first the military struggle and secondly, the mass rents and rate strikes. These two fronts, separated by the logistics of guerrilla warfare, were not only aimed at the same enemy, but were also linked politically through the mass popular demonstrations such as have been held over the last week, culminating in the

20,000 strong march in Derry. The target of all these actions had become the smashing of Stormont, i.e. the statelet of Northern Ireland.

The demonstrations, unarmed and presenting an easy target, were the obvious choice to attempt and break the tightening noose of resistance. The Army had failed completely to inflict a decisive blow against the IRA. The only way to defeat a rates and rents strike is by arresting thousands of householders. This was clearly impossible. The mass demonstrations provided the clearest target. Here lay the real hope of stemming the tide. Here one decisive blow could teach a terrible lesson to those who continued the resistance.

The British Army desperately needed the massacre in Derry to try and demoralise and terrorise the largest Catholic population concentrated in a single town in the Six-Counties. Because Derry provided the most durable resistance, because here the demonstrations were the largest and the most defiant; and because here a salient lesson could be taught to the whole Catholic population of Northern Ireland.

What is this but a war? On one side is British imperialism and the Orange Order and on the other the majority of the Irish working class, spearheaded by the minority in the Six-counties and represented militarily by the IRA. For us as socialists and revolutionaries it is necessary to take sides in this war. The side of the Irish people and the IRA against our own bourgeoisie. As we have stated many times before, Ireland IS the acid test!

In the North what is needed is a co-ordinated strategy to smash Stormont by a concerted armed struggle linked with the mass movement via the rent and rate strikes and continued civil disobedience. But, as we have always argued in the past, a strategy for victory can not be restricted to the Six-Counties alone. It has to envisage

a struggle throughout Ireland. In the South, while the Fianna Fail fakery and their leaders make demagogic noises under the pressure of growing mass discontent hoping thereby to contain it, it is clear that the events in Derry have sharply affected workers in the 26 counties. A spontaneous General Strike against British imperialism has resulted in dockers blacking British ships, airport workers refusing to service British planes, etc. In the eventuality of this leading to occupations of British-owned factories, the demagoguery of Lynch would rapidly be transformed into actions against the workers. To wage a meaningful struggle against British imperialism the Lynch government has to be brought down and today an anti-imperialist government has, of necessity, to be anti-capitalist in character. This would have to be based on Republican and socialist organisations, small farmers committees, trade-unions and other combat organisations.

The recent events have demonstrated the urgency of building a mass solidarity movement in this country. Our fight is in the heartland where imperialist ideology is at its strongest. This makes it vital for us to oppose British imperialism and provide support for the embattled Irish people and those who fight on their behalf. We may have political differences with both the wings of the IRA, but our support for them against British imperialism must be unconditional. The miners out on strike should understand that the troops which fire on Irish workers today will be turned against British workers at some future date. An organised struggle in Britain involving both Irish and British workers is essential to help the fight in Ireland.

The massacre which took place in Derry will be avenged. Sunday 30th January was a day which embodied centuries of oppression. It will be remembered till Ireland defeats British imperialism. That defeat will change the relationship of forces in Britain itself and will be a useful aid to the struggle against capitalism in Britain.

## A TUC FOR STRUGGLE MEANS A TUC AGAINST THE STATE

In any serious struggle it is always necessary to know who the enemy is. Once that is known, then what is necessary is to organise the maximum possible force against that enemy. You do not have to be a great general to work out these simple rules of tactics and strategy. You just need to have the faintest glimmerings of common sense. Unfortunately the leadership of the Trade Union movement at present appear to be so blinded by the fact that there are 260,000 miners on strike they cannot see the wood for the trees. They are all rushing round making all sorts of statements and declarations but ignoring virtually every elementary rule of how to fight.

So far the TUC has failed even to identify the enemy correctly. It spends all its time talking about the National Coal Board, when it is perfectly obvious that it is the government which is actually taking all the decisions. It was the government not the Coal Board which took the decision to impose a 7% norm on wage agreements, as it was the government which defeated the Post Office Workers. Unfortunately the TUC in the past has not understood this lesson, and it does not seem to now either.

When the last Tory government was elected the TUC declared that "we shall continue to examine every question solely in the light of its industrial and economic implications". This statement was supposed to indicate the 'non-political' nature of the TUC's actions and ideas. This was the policy it followed from 1951-1964 and the result was the defeat of the bus workers in 1958, the Selwyn-Lloyd pay freeze, and the beginning of Incomes Policy with the so-called 'National Economic Development Council'. Under the 1945-51 Labour government the TUC pursued the same policy and the result was the 'wage restraint' policy of 1948, the wage freeze of 1949-50, and the attempted imprisonment of dockers leaders in 1950. Even under Wilson the same policy was pursued, leading to the crushing of the seamen in 1966, and the incomes policy and productivity deals offensive. Exactly the same policy is being carried out under this government and the results are equally disastrous, e.g. the public hounding of the power workers and then the defeat of the UPW. Surely it is time to put a stop to all this nonsense, stop pretending that politics can be kept out of trade unionism, and understand what the real situation is.

### POLITICAL STRIKE STRATEGY FOR THE RULING CLASS.

It is unfortunately not the trade unions, but the employers and government who are the

greatest experts on how to run strikes in this country. They know every trick in the book.

Firstly they know that if you want to defeat a strike you must always ensure that the workers come out at the most unfavourable time possible. Last year for example coal stocks were exceedingly low. An all out strike by the miners would have had a great chance of success even carried on without support from other unions. Therefore at that time it was necessary to avoid a strike. This was done by making friendly noises to the leadership of the NUM. This year however coal stocks are far higher, and therefore the government wants to provoke a strike and can afford openly to kick the NUM leadership in the teeth by withdrawing any improved offer.

Secondly. It is necessary to decide exactly what you want to get out of the situation. In some cases all that is required is a compromise. In that situation it would be silly to shut doors for the future by needless provocations. For example, in the case of the police it would be quite unnecessary to have a confrontation on pay. They do not play any real role in the economy, and in any case are needed to deal with pickets, revolutionaries, the Irish etc. In the case of the police therefore large increases can be given (16 per cent last year). In other cases however it is necessary to go for the kill. Then all forces must be mobilised. In the case of the power workers last year, the entire press and publicity machine was called into action. In the case of the UPW no trick was too low. The tactic in these cases is completely to humiliate your opponents. To do this what is needed is not co-operation but open insults. Thus the miners' leaders who in earlier years were referred to as 'pillars of the community' for allowing the loss of 400,000 jobs, must be offered insulting pay increases, which in any case are later withdrawn, and then ignored. The 'upstarts' of the working class must have it made clear to them precisely who calls the tune. Similarly, the leaders of the ETU, who accepted endless productivity deals, were dismissed without a word when it was necessary to go further than the productivity deals approach.

Thirdly and most importantly, it is necessary to divide off your opponents so that they can be lined up for the chop one at a time. Therefore when it came to the UPW it was necessary to separate them from the POEU and the railwaymen. If they had all struck together they would probably have won. Taken on individually they could all be defeated. Similarly in the case of the miners, at all

costs they must be separated from the power workers, the dockers and the engineers. They can all be defeated individually, and the decisive defeat of the miners would by itself demoralise all the others.

It can therefore be seen that a huge range of tools are available to the government and the employer to defeat the miners. The key thing however is that they need a machine to co-ordinate and run the whole operation. That machine they find in the state and all its functionings. It is the civil service and staff of the nationalised industries who do the calculations which allow the government to know when is the best time to force a strike. It is the police who do the actual work of breaking up the picket lines so that the essential supplies of capitalist industry are kept moving. It is the enormous apparatus of government propaganda (politely known as 'public relations') which ensures that the newspapers, radio and television continually keep putting out the right line, and that every sign of a crack in the strike is given massive coverage. It is the state controlled negotiators who stagger the length of pay negotiations and ensure that the unions' struggles do not coincide and therefore that solidarity is most difficult. Finally it is the state that decides what the limit of 'acceptable' pay settlements is.

The TUC may think that politics can be kept out of trade unionism; but the employers and the government know however, that it is the state, and therefore politics, which is the key weapon for defeating the trade unions. It may be possible to win strikes against isolated employers without taking politics into account, although even that is doubtful, but it is completely impossible to ignore politics when the entire policy of all major employers is co-ordinated and determined by the state machine. The strategy of the TUC is rather like that of a man engaged in a fist fight who is suddenly faced with an opponent who threatens him with a broken bottle, but ignores the threat on the grounds that, according to the Queensberry rules of boxing, fighting with bottles is not permitted.

### POLITICAL STRIKE STRATEGY FOR THE TRADE UNIONS.

The present policy of the TUC is producing absurdities. For example there are at present thousands of miners taken from every corner of Britain trying to prevent coal, oil, sulphuric acid, and a hundred and one other things being shipped into the power stations. This is having some effect, but at a tremendous cost in terms of effort, time and money.

Meanwhile thousands of other trade unionists continue to work inside the Power Stations while their own pay agreements come up for negotiations.

The situation is completely ridiculous. To take just one example at Didcot power station a tremendous collection of Warwickshire miners, students from Ruskin trade union college, and students from Oxford University have been trying to close down the power station by stopping oil going in. This means carrying on a 24 hour picket and fighting all sorts of management tricks. Meanwhile members of trade unions, many of them in the same unions as the Ruskin picketers, continue to work inside. If the miners are defeated then the power workers can kiss goodbye to their hopes of a rise above the 7% norm, yet they are forbidden by their own unions from taking any solidarity action. The TUC simply sits by and watches this ridiculous situation.

It is in fact possible to defeat the government if every point of its attack is dealt with.

1. The government has picked a time when coal stocks are fairly high. This advantage can however be wiped out by sympathy strikes in the Power Stations and blacking of coal in all other sections of the economy.

2. It is absolutely vital to the government that this strike be won and the miners be defeated. That is why they have put all their weight behind defeating it.

Equally however, the government prestige and policy would be in tatters if the strike were won. For this reason the unions must decide that nothing short of complete victory will satisfy them.

3. The way to defeat the government is not to allow the government to decide when the negotiations will occur and therefore when the strikes will occur. A committee should be set up to work out a joint programme of strikes in all industries in which negotiations are pending. This means in the first place in the mines, the docks, the power industry and the engineering industry.

What is necessary for such a strategy however is to cease the pretence that the miners strike is not a political strike. Once this is done then the actual measures necessary to win are relatively simple to think of. Co-ordinated action by the entire trade union movement can destroy the economic policy of the Heath government. All that is needed is first to understand who the real fight is against.

—A. Jones

# STRIKE INTERVIEWS

## Kent Miner's Wife

Three weeks ago my husband was getting £35 a week. Now he gets £30 since they replaced the contract system. He gets two weeks holiday pay at £21.05. The miners also get seven rest days a year, three of these days are chosen by the worker and the other four decided by the Union and the Government. When the miners were offered a pay rise a few years ago they were also offered an extra weeks holiday, but this was not to be implemented for three years. The press did not mention the three year delay. The surface workers get about £18 a week. That's only about £14 in take home pay after the rent has been paid. Kent miners get the highest pay in the country, but the worst conditions.

**What are the safety conditions like in the colliery?**

The ambulance comes from the pit to the medical centre two or three times a day. You can't help thinking it's your husband. All the wives along the road come to the windows to see. Last year a twenty four year old boy, an electrician, was electrocuted. So many thousand volts went through him that he didn't stand a chance. He left a wife and two young children. There's so much pressure on the worker to hurry up. My husband works as a ripper starting new faces. He works with a pick and a shovel, they reckon the work has all been mechanised, but it's hard work. Once he asked for more timber to prop up the coal face. He was told to

keep going. Three days later he went to work and saw a great pile of timber props in the entrance. He was told to timber up quickly as the mines inspector was coming.

My husband has a nightmare where he is holding up the ceiling with his hands and telling me to get out quick because the wall is going to collapse. He was staying with a young couple in London when going round picketing and woke them, crying out in this nightmare. Often he works in water up to his waist and at other times crawl along. He gets an extra 25p a day for working in water. Many of the men have dermatitis from working in water. Many have silicosis. Their lungs when they die harden up like concrete. The miners' pension is £1.50 a week. The Union hasn't fought to raise it because two-thirds of the miners never live to draw their pension.

**How has the village been affected by the strike?**

There has been more togetherness than since the war. I wouldn't live anywhere else for the neighbourliness and comradeship. Everyone is behind the strike. There's one shop in the village and the people in the shop have been making cups of tea for the pickets. Two men who were on the club on sick pay signed off when the strike came because they wanted to be on strike with the rest of the men. They did this although they could have got more money off sick than from the Social Security when on strike.

Two years ago the rent officers visited the village. They were going to double the

rents but a tenants association was formed to fight this. Anyway the rents tribunal came and the rents were frozen. The houses in the village are all owned by the N.C.B. One winter there was 18 inches of snow in the lofts, the roofs were so poor. The Coal Board had to put new roofs on all the houses. I suppose they'll try again to increase the rents if the miners get a pay rise.

The village is quite isolated. There's a bus three times a day. When my husband takes the car away for a few days picketing I'm a prisoner here. Our car is our luxury.

**How have the wives participated in the strike?**

Well, many of the wives work in the pit canteen or as cleaners in the office. About two-thirds of the wives work to supplement the family income. I went to London last Tuesday to lobby parliament. One seat in the public gallery had been reserved for a miner's wife and I was chosen to take it. When it came to question time half the Conservative MPs walked out including Heath and Home. I read in the paper the next morning that in the vote the government had had a majority of 30. I don't think they should have been allowed to vote if they had not listened to the debate.

A lot of the wives have been picketing with the men, but it's sometimes difficult for those with kids.

**How is the strike progressing?**

When it started no-one knew what to expect. We had only had strikes of two or three days. The first two days of the strike were very quiet but it all started on Wednesday. There was a call to all go to Kingsnorth Power Station, and everyone went flying off to picket.

The support for the strike has been marvellous. The officials in the village have had 50p

stopped off their pay for the strike fund. They want to be out on strike with the men, but it depends on the Union.

The miners are determined to win. They don't like what Joe Gormley says on television. They won't go back down until they get what they are asking for. They have been working to rule since November 1. Winter is the only time for miners to go on strike. It's industry we want to hit, not housewives or old people. They say the miners knew the strike was coming and so were able to stock up with coal, but it's not true. There is always a pile up of coal tickets in November and with the work to rule there hasn't been much coal coming out of the pit. The school may close soon if it runs out of coal and then I'll have to provide dinners for the children. At the moment the miners' children are getting free school dinners.

**What have you thought about press reports of the strike?**

They keep playing up the question of safety in the mine. They also keep talking about old age pensioners and how they are suffering, but I had a letter from an old lady, a grandmother, a few days ago expressing support for the strike.

The press tries to make the miners look illiterate and stupid. They think that because they work in dirt they also live in dirt.

Italian television came here and interviewed the wives after our visit to London. And we also had a reporter from the Sunday Telegraph. He came and asked me what my husband was doing in his spare time. My husband has been away picketing most of the time since the strike started.

—Kate Lane  
(Canterbury Socialist Woman Group)

## 'Mineworker' Editor

DAVE DOUGLAS, EDITOR OF RANK-AND-FILE PAPER, *THE MINERWORKER*.

**What effect has nationalisation had on the mining industry?**

Clearly many workers saw the nationalisation of such a big and basic industry as the beginning of the end for capitalism in general. What did they actually get? Firstly a notice on every pit gate saying, 'This pit is now the property of the people managed on their behalf by the National Coal Board', also a flag. More substantially came a huge safety reform programme and the bringing of the industry into something like a civilised method of operation. However, the workers turned up for work only to see the self-same gaffer who had served the owners previously. There was no control, it took very few years to learn that the Coal Board boss was the same kind of enemy as the private boss. The role of the Coal Board henceforth was to provide cheap fuel to private industry and a source of easy plunder to the mine supply industry; the miners meanwhile were to become the whipping boy as agents against inflation.

**How far has rationalisation weakened the miners?**

In just over ten years to the present time NUM membership dropped from almost 800,000 miners to just under 300,000 today. Unemployment among miners is twice the national average and behind that figure lie miles of destroyed villages, thousands of uprooted communities of men from the

North and Scotland who drifted from one area to another as the coalfields declined under the ravages of Robens. In ten years 15,000 men moved en bloc to exile among strangers, hundreds of miles away from their families and homes.

The response of the union was one of total surrender. Not one official strike against closures and redundancy. Just the reverse in fact, as the union bureaucrats such as Will Paynter burst a gut to help in the massacre. The men themselves over a long period fell into the mesmerised belief that the least trouble, the smallest strike, would lead to the closure of their collieries.

About three years ago the mask fell off, as the Coal Board had no apparent policy about closures. I, myself, was moved from a profitable gas coal pit to work at a colliery in Yorkshire making a healthy loss each year. Coking coal pits all over Durham were being closed, while the same fuel was being imported to the tune of 11 million tons a year.

**What was the response of the miners to all this?**

All over Wales, Scotland and Yorkshire the miners were waking up and mobilising towards a new offensive. Just before the surfacemen's strike of four years ago a new militant and political climate was emerging. We in *The Mineworker* were a reflection of it. We had seen that in every country militants were beginning to struggle, holding meetings,



publishing leaflets, forcing through motions in the branches for an aggressive fight, but all in an unco-ordinated fashion. We resolved to call together from every area the leading militants, socialists and revolutionists in a broad united front based upon a common anti-capitalist struggle.

At the first meeting we christened ourselves The Mineworkers Internationale and adopted (after great difficulty with some of the CP comrades) a revolutionary programme and international perspective of giving voice to the miners of the world in our common fight against oppression. We helped in the Doncaster-Derbyshire area to build up a co-ordinated plan towards a national strike in support of the surfacemen which most people will remember resulted in an unofficial strike in what were to become the militant centres of the present period and recent struggles, i.e. Yorkshire, Wales and Scotland. We intervened in this fight with copies of the political voice of our group, *The Mineworker*, our message then as now as to draw out the political nature of all strikes in this epoch.

**What in your opinion is the political significance of the strike?**

This present strike is the climax of the British class struggle of recent years, and

marks a new phase of anti-capitalist fight. It is doubtful if a better example of how the class confronts capitalism in the course of what is ostensibly a wages claim can be found. The Tory government has laid down the wage-rise level far below that necessary to keep pace with the rising cost of living. In this way they hope to reduce our living standards, this is an absolute necessity for capitalism in its state of crisis. The miners in a fantastic burst of class confidence will have none of this, they are driving forward to increase their standard of living and in so doing they become a catalyst in the anti-Tory struggle.

The miners have shown that it is not some kind of security they are looking for under capitalism, this is witnessed by their refusal to man safety posts or move machinery. The fight itself is more important than the wage claim. Never in my experience have men been more determined to fight, on the last shift on the last day miners emerged from my own colliery singing union songs and mimicking student demonstrations, chanting and linking arms. If news had been declared at that time that the strike was off there would have been a riot.

# DEMOS, DEMOS.... AND POLITICS

An estimated 30,000 students (and one trade union contingent) converged on London over the weekend 22/23 January to demonstrate their opposition to the Government's proposals for the 'reform' of students unions. Most stayed the weekend in the various London colleges occupied for this purpose, with LSE and North London Poly having the added attraction of using the sit-ins as direct challenges to their college authorities.

This demo was dramatically smaller than the pre-Christmas NUS estimate of more than 100,000. This confirmed the view of those who predicted that the DES manoeuvre of postponing a decision on the proposals for a year would affect the size of the mobilisation. Most students, under the illusion fostered by the NUS leadership that nothing more is at stake than an economic cut-back on their clubs and societies, saw no pressing reason to appear on the streets. Having mobilised on a completely apolitical level, nothing more could be expected.

## POLITICAL AUTONOMY IS INTERVENTION IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

As we have consistently argued in the pages of *The Red Mole*, the Government proposals are an attempt to destroy the influence of revolutionary students on the rather larger radicalised mass. Their particular concern is to block off any large scale mobilisation of students against the State—particularly in solidarity with workers' struggles and anti-imperialist struggles. Given this, an essential weapon in fighting these proposals is precisely the strengthening of this sort of activity and the winning of broader layers of students to this perspective. This is what strengthening the power of students actually amounts to—their only power being political.

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Students Unions (LCDSU) was set up with just this perspective. At its second national conference the previous weekend (see *The Red Mole*, 35) it had decided to make a major intervention on the question of the miners' strike. This had the aim of taking forward the fight against the Government's student union proposals as much as for the concrete help that could be offered to the miners. This demo provided a superb opportunity to put this perspective into effect. The objective of the march would be to demonstrate solidarity with the miners outside the offices of the National Coal Board.

The LCDSU came to the assembly point at Hyde Park as one contingent, marching from Euston Station via Malet Street and picking up its supporters on the way. Refusing the attempts of the NUS stewards to split it up at Hyde Park, it raised the demand that a miner should put the case for going to the Coal Board to all the other students assembled there. This was refused—not, however, before scuffles had occurred between the NUS stewards and supporters of the LCDSU. **TO THE COAL BOARD: THE MINERS' STRIKE MUST WIN!**

Once arrived at Trafalgar Square, the only bright spot in all the speech-making was a speech by Mike Cooley. Digby Jacks, who ended the dirge, made passing reference to the miners' struggle but made no attempt to get the march to go there. The end of his speech was the signal to line up supporters of the LCDSU for the march to the Coal Board, and led by the DATA banner, about 5,000 students set off. No police opposition was encountered this time although they completely surrounded and cut off the Coal Board itself.

The concentration in this way of the forces which we could mobilise had an impact in a way that our dispersed forces on a picket line could not. The question of mass student support for the miners raised here (as elsewhere) the issues involved in a much sharper way than revolutionary organisations could with just their own forces. Not only does it give much greater weight to the struggle for our politics in the colleges—actually challenges an offensive against us and raises the fight to a much higher level; not only this, but such an action adds a not insignificant weight to the importance of this issue in society generally. This also puts the trade union bureaucracy on the spot and quickly reveals their position. Their abhorrence of mass student action in solidarity with the miners has already in several instances brought them into conflict with their own men.

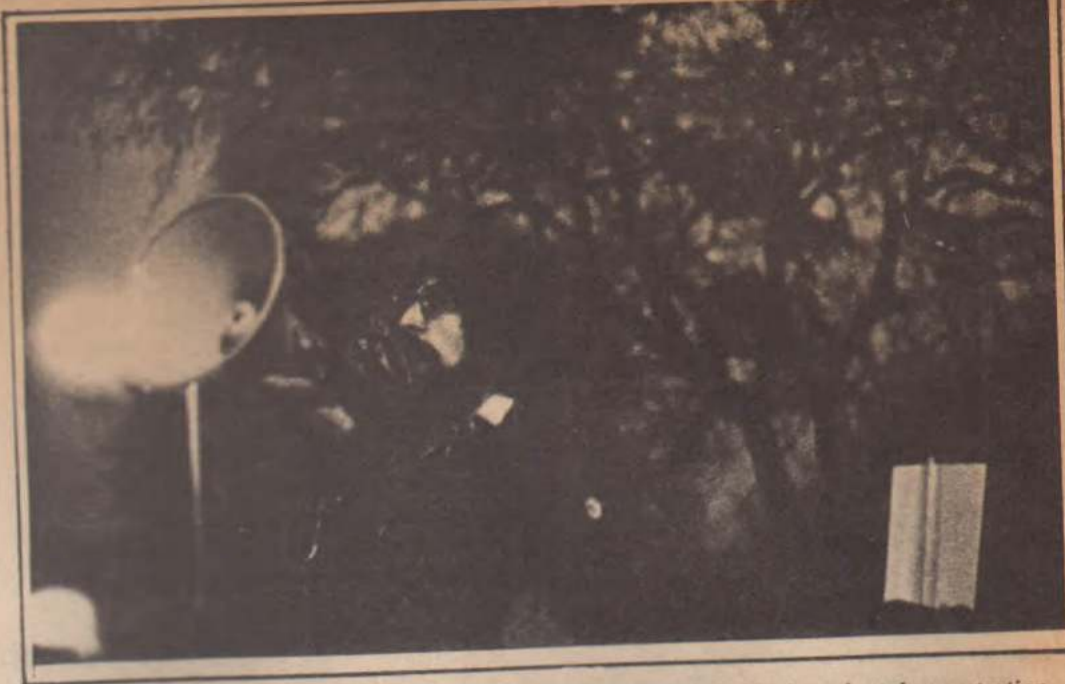
## FOR UNITY WITH THE MINERS: AGAINST UNITY WITH RIGHT WING STUDENTS

As students have no economic power, the question of student unity cannot be posed as an end in itself, but must be around clear

political principles. A student demonstration is strong as much for its political depth as for its size. It can only be a weakness to unite with right wing students, more especially since they are *opposed* to unity with the workers in struggle. As Steve Vines, Union President at the University of Reading, put it to the students outside the Coal Board offices: "The NUS are full of words about solidarity with the workers, but they leave it up to us to take action. It is they who are splitting the Union by their complete lack of leadership in this kind of action."

It is quite clear that the LCDSU action here has posed in a clear way an alternative strategy to the CP leadership of the NUS. What we have posed is the mass activity of students in the class struggle not only on this occasion but in other actions that have been taken up and down the country. In this way and in this way only a *real* fight against the Government's student union proposals can be conducted and a continuing role for students in the class struggle forged.

—J.R. Clynes



## teachers conference

On the weekend of 12/13 February, the teachers' paper *Rank and File* is holding its annual national conference. On the Saturday morning one of the main discussions will take place around the theme—Aims and Principles of *Rank and File*.

Since the journal was set up about three years ago, there has been one set of principles, published in issue 7. For this conference there have been two papers circulated to *Rank and File* supporters. The first of these, written by some I.S. teachers, is based upon an extension of the old aims and principles. This document first explains that a radical transformation of society is necessary, and then goes on to demand the democratization of schools and the union—as interlinking factors and with no explanation of which is to be the priority for the organisation.

The other document has been produced by IMG teachers. They argue for the establish-

ment of *Rank and File* as a united front paper—within the National Union of Teachers—working to change the union. The unity of the left would be based on four principled demands.

## bathgate s.s. occupied

Over fifty miners occupied the offices of the Bathgate Social Security offices, which serves a number of the pits in Scotland, on Wednesday 26th January as part of a campaign organised by the NUM to make sure that the miners get their full SS entitlement while on strike. Also taking part in the action were members of the Cumberland and Clydebank Claimants and Unemployed Workers Unions, and militants of the IMG.

At the offices staff were taking no details of the men's situation save that they were on strike and single, before handing them a pre-written refusal slip. Faced with a mass claim the SS staff first tried to outflank them by calling claimants to other interview coun-

ters, but eventually gave up and called the police, who arrested three people.

However, payments have already been made to single strikers by this office, and the NUM and the CUWUs intend to repeat this kind of operation as often as is necessary until all claims of this kind are met. The announcement of the occupation at the miners' demonstration in Edinburgh last Saturday was greeted by a standing ovation from all those present.

## coventry face closes

Comrades from the Coventry area report that there has been no loss of solidarity among the miners despite the enforced closure of the Daw Mill face due to spontaneous combustion—which apart from the loss of £½ million worth of machinery has also put 150 miners on the dole.

The strikers are also getting solid support from the colleges in the area, almost all of which have voted them money.

## THE OLD, OLD STORY...

The situation where union solidarity is broken up by the union leadership's failure to wage a united struggle is unfortunately not a new one. It has happened only too often. Here, for example, is a description of two strikes in the United States at the beginning of the century—which show only too clearly that failure to wage a united struggle leads to defeat for *all* sections of the working class.

"Take for example the first street car workers strike in San Francisco.....Not only were all motormen, conductors and ticket agents organised.....but all the barmen, linemen and repairers, and many of the repair shop

workers...also the engineers, the firemen, the electricians, the ashwheelers, oilers, etc. in the power stations. The strike ended with a signal victory for the workers; this was accomplished because the workers had quit their work spontaneously.....In the second strike of street car workers in 1907 the absolute failure, the complete disaster, was solely due to the fact that the workers, separated in several staff groups, could not strike together and win.....if the investigator will follow the investigation of facts and underlying causes, he will be surprised to see how the employers take advantage of this divide-up policy. He will see how the capitalists gleefully helped to pit one portion of the workers against others in the same or other industries, so that the latter, while busy fighting amongst themselves, had no time nor strength to direct their fight against the employers and exploiters." ("Why Strikes are Lost"—W. Trautmann)

Sixty-six years later the TUC still hasn't learnt the lesson.

Following the incident at Dover docks where a miners' strike picket was threatened by a scab lorry driver wielding an iron bar (see



Director of Public Prosecutions  
12 Buckingham Gate London SW1  
Telephone 01-834 6912 ext

Alan Hammond Esq.,  
65 Cromwell Avenue,  
London, N.6.

Your reference  
Our reference EPB/PF.138  
Date 26 January, 1973

Dear Sir,

In answer to your letter of 19th January, 1973 with its enclosure, it would be necessary for the prosecution to prove that the truck-driver carried the bar with the intention of using it to injure. It therefore he was merely holding it so as to cause the pickets to move back from his truck so that he could drive away without danger to himself or anyone else, I do not consider that an offence would be established.

I do not therefore propose to take any action in the matter.

Yours faithfully,

PR Bann

# AVENGE DERRY

## Build a Mass Solidarity Campaign!

Derry will be avenged only by the extension of the struggle against British imperialism in both the North and South of Ireland. And after this massacre it is clearer still that the mass struggle in the North cannot be fought and defended without arms. Yet of the many protests which Monday's *Morning Star* urges should 'flood Downing Street', few enough will help militants in Britain to draw the necessary conclusions from this. All shades of liberal and reformist opinion will today be protesting against the actions of the British Army—but at the same time they will more or less openly be pointing the finger to the IRA as the main enemy of 'peace' in Ulster.

The reaction of the British press to Sunday's killings throws into sharp relief the need to make support for the IRA a central task of the solidarity movement in Britain. Running through many of the reports is the idea that the main responsibility for the killings lies with the IRA. Imperialism's use of internment, the presence and high concentration of British troops, the terror tactics and the murder, are all justified as being regrettable aspects of a necessary campaign against what it dubs a cancer within

the Northern Catholic community—the IRA.

A solidarity movement in Britain has to have as its main task the combatting of such mystifications. This can only be achieved by showing that at this period the struggle of the IRA is the legitimate continuation of the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination. For militants who take the side of the oppressed minority of N. Ireland against the Stormont regime, the N. Irish State, and therefore British imperialism, it is vital to solidarise with the IRA, the only force capable of giving an immediate perspective of struggle against an enemy which is determined to crush the resistance of the Irish people. A refusal to take up this position, in the present situation, means running the risk of falling into the arms of the British bourgeoisie, which is desperate only to smash the IRA before clinching a political deal with Lynch, Stormont, and the reformists in the N. Ireland opposition who are prepared to sell out on the national question and accept less blatant but equally exploitative forms of imperialist domination. The Irish Solidarity Campaign has been fighting within the British left and in the movement against internment for a princi-

pled position of solidarity with the IRA. Founded fifteen months ago, and now organising around its paper, *The Irish Citizen*. ISC is a unique organisation: neither an Irish organisation in Britain, nor an organisation of British people in solidarity with the Irish struggle, it is an attempt to combine both of these and make use of the links between the two to grease the slope of British imperialism's decline. The Irish workers in exile are crucial to the building of an effective solidarity campaign: but it is of great importance for them to have the support of British militants. The student left, and all the youth who recognise the existence of British imperialism, have been the first to begin to respond to this need. The third sector which must be brought into the struggle, is the organised British working class itself. However it is a fact of history that the British workers have rarely understood the necessity to make common cause with the nations oppressed by British imperialism. Their organisations have been dominated by the ideology of Fabianism and by a privileged bureaucracy which considers that collaboration with the ruling class, and gradual reform within capitalism, is the proper route for British workers.

Yet the British working class will be won to the support of the struggle in Ireland, which comes at a time of deep crisis for imperialism, and at a time when the ruling class attack on British workers is leading to a questioning

of social democracy among the militants. The point, though, is that they will not be won through a campaign which capitulates to imperialist ideology on the Irish question because the left in Britain fails to support the most effective enemies of its own bourgeoisie.

The argument that the campaign in the imperialist country should be based on the lowest common denominator of demands, is a betrayal not only of the Irish struggle, but ultimately of the struggle of the British working class against the most experienced imperialist ruling class in the world. A defeat for that class in Ireland would greatly weaken its hold within Britain itself, preparing the way for the day when not only do the working class not want the old way, but the ruling class cannot carry on in the old way; for as Lenin pointed out, "only then can revolution triumph". We call for the building of a mass solidarity campaign because a campaign on any other lines will not only fail to provide the maximum aid for the Irish in their struggle but will equally fail to advance in any way the sharpening class struggle in Britain.

**SELF-DETERMINATION FOR IRELAND!  
WITHDRAW ALL BRITISH TROOPS  
IMMEDIATELY!  
RELEASE ALL IRISH POLITICAL  
PRISONERS NOW!  
VICTORY TO THE IRA!**



Irish workers on strike march on the British Embassy in Merrion Square, Dublin.

## World-wide Response

**BELFAST:** Students at Queen's University, Belfast, occupied the Vice-Chancellor's block and other parts of the administration block on Monday evening in protest at the Derry massacre the previous day. In the afternoon a mass meeting of over 3,000 students was held which among other things called for the withdrawal of troops to barracks and supported the three-day strike which had been called. After the meeting 2,000 students marched (illegally) on the Army Headquarters in Belfast; seven marchers were arrested, including one Englishman who had previously bought himself out of the British army.

The main purpose of the occupation of the University which followed was to attack the university authorities for refusing to take any stand on the Derry massacre. As one of those occupying pointed out: "After World War Two the British government condemned the German Universities for not condemning the growth of Nazism. Now the same situation is developing in the North, but all they can talk about is 'academic neutrality'."

**OXFORD:** Members of the International Marxist Group and others occupied the Army Recruiting Office in St Giles for almost eight hours on Tuesday in a demonstration of solidarity with those shot down in Derry. The comrades moved in as soon as the office opened in the morning, and shortly afterwards the building was cordoned off by about fifty policemen; but no immediate attempt was made to remove the occupants, partly because they were supported by a further picket 70-80 strong outside the office.

While the occupation continued, 400 other people gathered at Balliol College in the early afternoon and after brief speeches also marched to the Recruiting Office via the High

Street. There they took over the road; linked arms, and sat down bringing the traffic to a halt. The police then attempted to clear the road, but to have any chance of success were forced to bring over many of those assigned to guard the occupation. As soon as this happened, in a pre-arranged and highly skilled operation, a small body of the demonstrators moved rapidly over to the Recruiting Office and were able to get out all the occupants without a single arrest being made. Shortly afterwards, however, police started arresting people in the main body of the demonstration, and by the end of the afternoon, when the demonstration had dispersed after marching to the police station, the total of those arrested had risen to fifteen.

Only one thing marred the success of this demonstration: the fact that the major emphasis of the I.S.'s intervention (in collaboration with the C.P.) was to denounce the comrades of the IMG for occupying the recruiting office; and further, to refuse then to co-operate in the evacuation of those occupying the office. It seems to be a characteristic of this group nowadays (e.g., also the march to the Coal Board) that not only do they oppose any such actions as 'adventurist', but even if the operation is proved successful they merely compound their original mistake by continued denunciations, instead of making any attempt to deal with the problem politically.

**LONDON:** On Monday afternoon students from the London School of Economics and elsewhere marched from LSE to Whitehall. Later, at 6 pm, there was a mass rally outside Downing Street. The same night Bernadette spoke to a packed meeting organised by West London Anti-Internment League, which was followed by a march to the army recruiting center in White City.

On Tuesday there was a march in South-East London to Woolwich Barracks, and on Wednesday a mass demonstration organised by the Republican Movement (Provisional) marched to Downing Street bearing thirteen coffins. Among those on strike on Wednesday were students at Enfield College of Tech-

**LANCASTER:** The Senate House at Lancaster University was occupied on Monday night. On Tuesday there was a demonstration to Heysham, the port for Belfast, after a meeting of 600 students had called for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. On Wednesday another mass demonstration was held through the centre of Lancaster.

**YORK:** All normal life at the University has virtually ground to a halt, following the Derry massacre. Two demonstration and a teach-in have so far been held, with the numbers involved growing to almost a thousand. A large plate glass window in the Army careers office was smashed during Monday's demonstration, and there were 28 arrests.

**PARIS:** Sixty militants of the Ligue Communiste, French section of the Fourth International occupied the office of British Railways, in La Madeleine in the centre of Paris, on 1 February 1972. The commando action was watched by a crowd of many hundreds of Parisians. From the top of the building a Red Flag with the symbol of the Fourth International was flown, while four large red banners were draped from the windows. On these were inscribed the slogans: "Solidarity with the IRA", and "Victory to the Irish revolution". In addition a flag was flown bearing the slogan "For an Independent Socialist Republic of Ireland". This demonstration was the first action in a campaign which has been launched by the Ligue Communiste in Paris and other major cities of France: in the next few days, meetings in solidarity with the IRA will be taking place in the capital as the campaign gathers momentum.

**WEST BERLIN:** A demonstration of over 1,500 people, led by members of the GIM (German section of the Fourth International) marched to the British Consulate-General and called for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

**STOCKHOLM:** Sixty militants of the RMF (Swedish sympathising section of the Fourth International) occupied the BEA offices and are mounting a continuous picket on the

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### IRISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

The Irish Solidarity Campaign holds alternate forums and business meetings every Friday at 8 p.m. at the General Picton pub, Caledonian Road (junction Wharfedale Road) nearest tube Kings Cross.

Friday, February 18th: John Palmer of I.S. on "I.S.'s Analysis of the Struggle in Ireland".

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One of the most interesting things about the last two years of working class struggles has been the complete inability of the Labour Left to play any significant role whatsoever. In the great industrial struggles the constituency left has played no role, and the 'great debate' between Jenkins and Foot evoked virtually no interest compared to, for example, the tremendous debates on German re-armament in the early 1950s. As so many political strategies either base themselves on a rise in the Labour left, or at least see it as a necessary stage through which the working class must pass, it is necessary to analyse carefully whether the present insignificance of the constituency left is purely a temporary phenomenon, or whether it reflects more profound underlying causes.

## historical survey

One of the most remarkable things about the Labour left has always been its helplessness. A first examination must therefore look at its fundamental inability even within its own reformist terms, to make any dent whatsoever in the policy of the Labour Party.

Probably the best organised and certainly the most militant of all constituency 'left' groupings was the Socialist League of the early 1930s. This openly discussed the question of 'unconstitutional' action, opposed the League of Nations as an "International Burglars Union" and called for a "Workers Government". The League became one of a core of left groupings that included various supporters of the C.P. and Bevan. Bevan was at that time going through a militant period and declared himself in favour of the General Strike as a political weapon. However, behind all the show of militancy in fact the Socialist League and the people around it were reformists to the core. When the Socialist League was banned by the Labour leadership it tamely dissolved itself. When Bevan declaring the danger of the "fascist threat" formed a Workers Defence Group he did not instruct it in how to fight but instead took it on long hikes across the South Wales mountains. Nevertheless, compared to later 'lefts', the Socialist League and its followers were a positive hot bed of revolutionary fervour and agitation.

The next significant oppositional movement to appear inside the Labour Party were the Bevanites of the early 1950s. This was possibly larger than the Socialist League but was never a serious threat to the Right. In October 1952 the Bevanites won a considerable victory at the Labour Party conference when the Labour leaders Morrison and Dalton were removed from the National Executive Committee (NEC). Bevanites were elected to six of the seven NEC places voted on by the constituencies. However, in exactly the same month the Parliamentary Labour Party voted for an end to organised groups in the Party. The Bevanites tamely disbanded. In any case the Bevanite revolt of the 1950s bore only a superficial resemblance to the Socialist League of the 1930's: it was a 'left-wing' movement but it advocated no unconstitutional action, nor, more importantly, did it anticipate any from the right.

The last real fling of the Labour left was in the nuclear disarmament debates of the late 1950's. This was a far smaller and less organised affair than either the Bevanites or the Socialist League. In 1960 it was estimated that the left wing 'Victory for Socialism' group had 400 members, while the right wing Campaign for Democratic Socialism claimed 3,011 members in the constituencies and between one fifth and one third of the C.L.P. Executive members. (Figures from *The Newsletter*, 30 Jan. 1960, S. Haesler, 'The Gaitskellites') The left having won, on the issue of nuclear disarmament at the 1960 Conference, it then plunged into headlong retreat. First they arranged a compromise with the right, which led to a defeat at the 1961 conference. The left then fell in behind Gaitskell at the 1962 conference as he spoke of "a thousand years of British history" and the necessity to avoid joining the foreigners in the Common Market.

The decline of the constituency left was finished off by Wilson. Under the flurry of the nonsense about the "White hot heat of the technological revolution and a series of

'left' speeches, Wilson swung the Labour Party even further to the right at a rapid rate. The old emphasis on the welfare state was dropped, opposition to immigration controls was abandoned, even the pathetic promise of the nationalisation of the road haulage industry was given up. The left however ignored every bit of this in a wave of adulation unknown since the heyday of Bevan. Even after the Wilson government had sent military aircraft to South Africa, delayed pension increases, supported the Americans in Vietnam, and done precisely nothing about the economic power of capitalism, *Tribune* still talked of "the spirit which Harold Wilson has displayed on many previous occasions" (*Tribune* 20th November 1964). Even when it came to the 1966 elections, after Wilson had been in power for a year and a half, the left was still relatively euphoric. Michael Foot wrote in the election issue of *Tribune* that "March 31st (election day) will mark one of the essential days in the forward march". *Tribune* then went on to declare that the essence of Wilson's programme was "Pensions up, Rent Act Security, Unemployment down, Prescription Charges off..." After another year of Wilson cuts, freezes, red-baiting and union bashing the Labour left sunk into an embarrassed silence from which it has not yet emerged.

It is this relapse into practical irrelevance and even silence that has to be explained. In the past if the left of the Labour Party has always been unable to really challenge the leadership, nevertheless it has at least been able to put up the pretence of a fight, and thereby create a political focus for the struggles of the working class. Is its apparent inability to do this due to the spinelessness of a few individuals, or to a very temporary situation? Or is it due to deeper causes? To answer that we must analyse more carefully the reasons why the 'left' has never been able to mount even a real reformist challenge to the leadership.

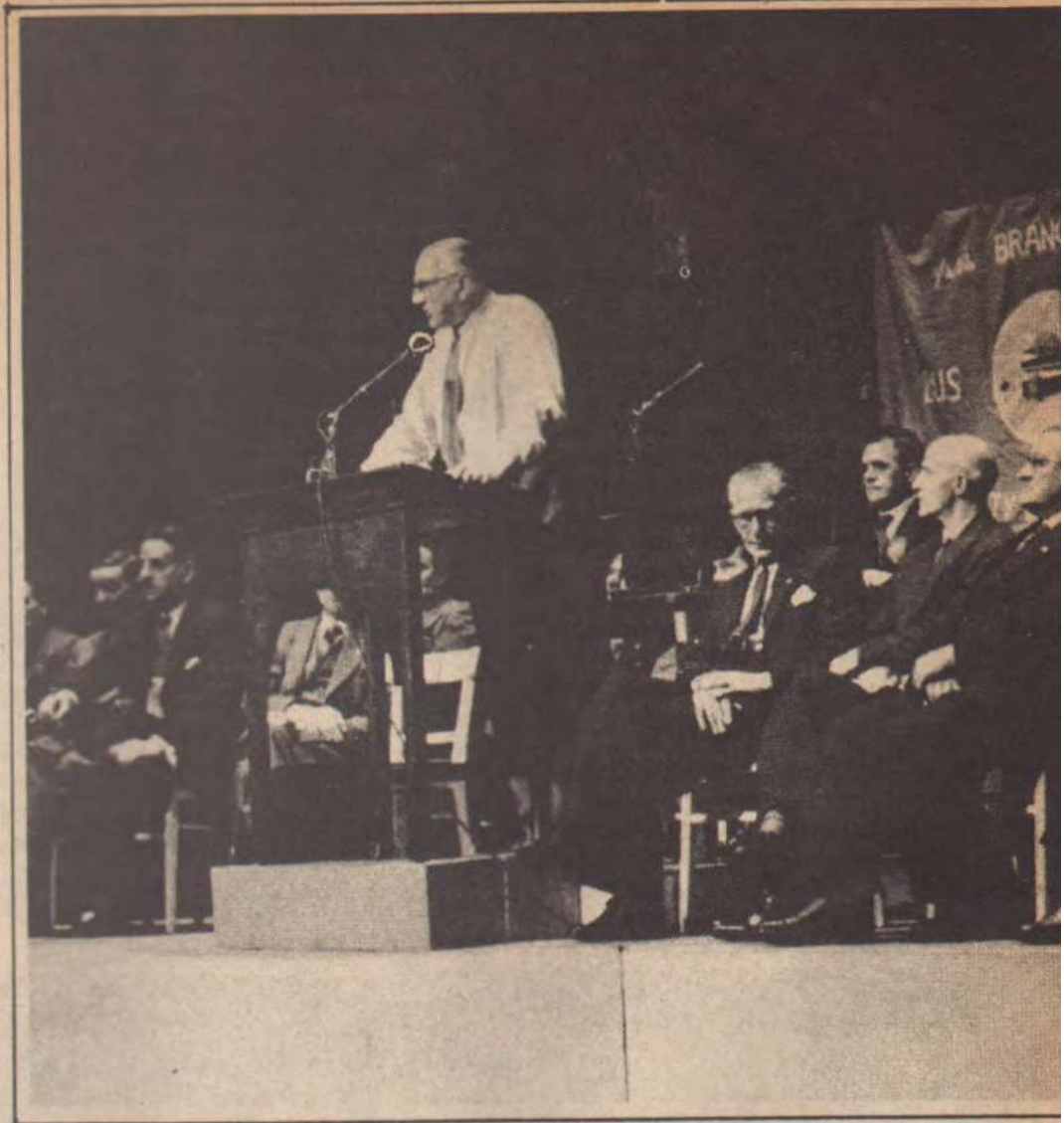
## electoralism

The most basic point that unites the Labour left and the Labour leadership is the belief that socialism can be achieved through Parliament. This has fundamental effects for their political practice. Once this Parliamentary viewpoint is accepted, then politics becomes defined as what occurs at or around elections. The struggle in the factory, not being around elections, is then simply seen to be the 'trade union struggle'. The best that can be hoped for here is that the trade unions will cast their votes in the right direction at the Labour Party conference, will campaign for their members to vote Labour, and most importantly of all, will give money for the electoral campaigns of the Labour Party. For the Labour Party, including the left, any kind of political action other than that around Parliamentary and other elections is inconceivable.

The organisational forms of the Labour Party are then determined by this set of ideas. The most suitable units for organising for elections are obviously geographical ones that correspond to the electoral boundaries: hence the constituency parties. However, these geographical units are not directly connected to the point of production and would therefore be useless for attempting to influence the course of struggle in the factory. This point however, does not worry the Labour left because once politics has been defined as occurring around elections, then the struggle in the factory is simply the trade union struggle which it is obviously the job of the trade unions to deal with. At most the constituency Labour left gives passive support to 'trade union' struggles, collects money etc., but in no way intervenes directly to attempt to alter the course of the struggle.

This situation of split between the constituency based sections of a Labour or Social Democratic Party, and the struggle within the trade unions has been increased by the whole history of the Labour Party. Firstly, it has been truly said of the Labour Party that of all Parliamentary Socialist Parties, it has always been the most dogmatic—not in its socialism, but in its Parliamentaryism. This has meant that the Labour left has never had any tradition of extra-Parliamentary struggle which would allow it to appeal directly to the men engaged in the factory struggle.

# WHATEVER HAPPENED



May, 1958: Frank Cousins general secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union addresses a conference.

Secondly, the particular division between politics and trade unionism which exists within the Labour Party has always been part of an unwritten understanding between the Parliamentary leaders and the trade unions bureaucracy. This understanding has been that the trade unions will use their vote to keep the right wing in control in the Labour Party, in return for which the Labour Party will keep out of the affairs of the trade unions. The old right wing union cry of "Keep politics out of the trade unions", therefore has its counterpart in the Labour Party leadership's cry of "Keep the trade unions out of politics" (i.e., support the right wing).

This arrangement within the Labour Party has historically worked to the advantage both of the union bureaucrats and of the Parliamentary leaders. It prevents any left challenge to the L.P. leadership succeeding and it enables the T.U. leaders to avoid facing any political challenge within their unions. In the struggles of the 1930's it was always the trade union leaders who used their votes to defeat the Socialist League and its followers. In 1935 the 75 amendments of the Socialist League to the NEC policy document were all defeated by the union vote. In the struggle against the Bevanites the union bureaucrats never wavered in their support for the right and they never hesitated to use any means they thought necessary. When faced with a hostile audience of Bevanites at the 1952 conference Deakin, head of the TGWU at that time, declared that "You know that you would listen if you wanted to get money from the trade unions". At the 1954 conference it is probable that Deakin was instrumental in applying pressure to the Woodworkers Union Executive to reverse the democratically taken decision of its conference to oppose German rearmament by threatening to use the bloc vote to have a representative of the Woodworkers thrown off the NEC. The unions were also instrumental in seeing that in 1954 Gaitskell was elected Party Treasurer against Bevan and from there went on to be Party Leader. The importance of this union bureaucracy wheeling and dealing was fully recognised and appreciated by the Labour Party leadership. Shinwell at the 1952 conference openly declared, "Thank heaven for the trade union movement at this time. Thank heaven for what is called the block vote."

Once this situation is understood, then the historical dilemma and powerlessness of the Labour left can be understood. To achieve any real results in the Labour Party it would have had to have been able to challenge the positions within

the unions of the bureaucrats. That would have meant organising politically directly inside the trade unions. But once the left tried to do that it would have been forced by the logic of its positions to take up political positions on all the struggles within the factory. It would have had to have broken with the very idea that politics is concerned with elections that is at the heart of the ideas of the Labour Party. If it had been forced to admit that the extra-parliamentary struggle could be a political struggle then the door would have been opened for the break up of every idea of a specifically Labour left. It would also have meant that the leadership of any such movement could very easily have passed out of the control of the handful of Parliamentarians who have always considered it their 'right' to lead the working class. From this prospect the left naturally shied away like the Devil from holy water.

From this picture we can now see clearly the reasons for the complete helplessness of any specifically Labour left. The constituency left could never challenge the Labour leadership without first challenging the trade union bureaucracy, and it could not organise to challenge the trade union bureaucracy without breaking with the very ideas of the separation of trade unionism and politics which are at the very heart of the Labour Party. Even the best of the socialist militants of the Labour left were completely trapped in this dilemma and it rendered useless and futile all their activities. It is in this fundamental dilemma that the complete powerlessness of the constituency left must be sought and not in some theory of 'conscious betrayal' on the part of the many deeply committed socialists which the 'left' has attracted over the years. (With the leaders of course it is another story. Corruption and betrayal were only too frequently conscious and calculated here.)

## left's dilemma

The way in which the Labour left has historically tried to get out of its dilemma of being unable to challenge the trade union bureaucrats is by an alliance with the CP. This however in no way solves its real problems. The 'left' is still faced with the trade union bureaucracy, and in any case the historical twists and turns of the CP periodically make collaboration impossible. Unable, because of its situation as a specifically Labour left, to gain a base inside the trade unions the constituency based opposition has only ever been able to count for anything when the political, social and economic

# TO THE LABOUR LEFT?



Meeting of London busmen



Aneurin Bevan

mic situation is such to maintain mass working class involvement in the constituency parties. Once this position is understood, then we can understand both the conditions for the periods of importance of the Labour left, and for its periods of decay and insignificance. The stability of the old set up we have described is based on the two conditions that the political focus of the life of the working class remains within the constituency parties, and that the Labour Party keeps out of the affairs of the trade unions. If either of these two breaks down, then the whole structure becomes completely unstable. If the constituency parties cannot channel the political energies of the working class, then the trade union bureaucrats come under intense pressure from below and are forced for their own self protection, into conflict with the leaders of the Labour Party, thus breaking one of the agreements on which the stability of the political system is based. If, to take the other premise, the Labour Party leadership interferes in the affairs of the trade unions then again the political system breaks down. To defend themselves the trade union bureaucrats are forced to fight politically against the Labour leaders. In so doing however they create an alternative, and in fact far more powerful, focus for the political struggles of the working class than that to be found in the constituency Labour parties. Quite obviously even in terms of the struggle inside the Labour party the weight of the unions is far greater than that of the constituency parties (as the experience of Bevanism showed only too clearly). In addition the trade unions can carry on the struggle in a period which extends outside the activity around elections. Once, however, the political struggle begins to flow through the trade unions then the Labour left finds itself isolated and helpless precisely because, as we discussed earlier, it is forced by its whole ideology of Labourism *not* to organise directly in the trade unions. What in fact characterises the present period is precisely the simultaneous ending for interrelated reasons of *both* the premises on which the old Labour political order was based. **Firstly**, and most obviously, the crises of British capitalism, with its consequent need to clobber the trade unions, has led the Labour Party to be forced directly to attack the trade unions. This process began on a small scale in the 1945-51 Labour government, and developed into a full scale attack in Wilson's government. The wage freeze, the attack on the seamen, and 'In Place of Strife' anti-union

proposals all directly affected the trade union bureaucrats. Slowly but surely, from being the main pillars of support of the Labour leadership, the trade union bureaucrats have been driven, usually against their will, into being the main *enemy* of the Labour leaders.

**Secondly**, the constituency parties have completely collapsed as a political focus for the political activities of the working class. We have already dealt with the extent of this collapse in a previous article so we do not need to recap again. It is sufficient to note that even according to the official figures one sixth (17 per cent) of the already depleted ranks of individual members of the Labour party left between the years 1965 and 1969. The decline in membership of the largest parties in this period was a staggering 30 per cent. Furthermore, the drop in activities was even more marked, the fall was greatest in working class wards, and the wards in middle class areas increased in size ('The Decline in Working Class Politics' B. Hindess). This collapse is not accidental but is determined by the whole interaction of the decline in British capitalism since 1945 and the position of the labour left. As this point is extremely important we will deal with it separately.

## reasons for collapse

The possible range of politics of the Labour left has always been defined by its acceptance of the division of politics and trade unionism on the basis of where they occur, and therefore by the fact that it has no organised base inside the trade unions. These factors cut out any politics based on the intervention in the factory struggle and the political activity of the 'left' must therefore be concentrated on issues outside the economic struggle. The two most obvious are the welfare state and foreign affairs. The latter has however been excluded in the past period because of the Cold War. This prevented the 'left' taking up any real position, and when an issue did come along in the shape of Vietnam the skilful intervention of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign took it in far too revolutionary a direction for the Labour left to make any capital out of. In any case the constituencies cannot sustain themselves on moral protest. They need a 'bread and butter' welfare issue to sustain their base amongst the working class. Hence the fact that prescription charges, false teeth, glasses, etc., have always been the great crusading points and touch stones of the Labour left. *However, the way in which British ca-*

*pitalism has declined since 1945 has meant that although it has been able to make some concessions in the field of wages, it has been completely unable to make any in the field of social expenditure.* (For details see *The Red Mole*, Vol. 2, No. 4). In fact the whole situation with regard to the welfare state has deteriorated and got worse. In thirteen years of opposition and six years of government the Labour left was totally unable to prevent the systematic abandonment by Labour of its commitment to welfarism, let alone actually gain anything for the working class. (The measures of 1945-51 would probably have also been introduced by the Tories anyway so we may extend the period if we wish). In short all the struggles of last 20 years inside the constituency parties on this issue has been banging the head against a brick wall.

Finally, the position of British capitalism in this area is now so bad that not even the most unrealistic of the lefts can seriously put forward any suggestions in this area. As Lenin frequently remarked, the working class is an exceedingly realistic class, and after 20 years it has got tired of bashing its head when the trade unions seem to offer a perspective for struggle which the constituency left is completely incapable of giving. Therefore simultaneously with the great exodus of the working class from the constituency sections of the Labour Party, there has been a tremendous increase in the social weight and organisation of the rank and file of the trade unions. While the 1950s saw the slow crumbling of welfarism, they were also the golden days of wage drift when local agreements relentlessly leap-frogged the national agreements (which in any case were themselves definitely superior to the pathetic promises of the Labour left). As the constituencies emptied, so the shop stewards committees filled up. Thus, for example the number of A.E.U. stewards increased by 50% between 1947 and 1961 (Marsh and Coker in *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 2). This was three times the increase in the number of manual workers in these factories. Furthermore the process was accelerating during the 1950s and the growth in the number of stewards between 1957 and 1961 was twice that in the period 1947-56. In consequence of the increased power, work stoppages increased 23 per cent and days 'lost' by 82 per cent between 1947 and 1961. Even the since departed *News Chronicle* was forced to admit in 1959 that if Gallup Polls were to be believed then, "in 22 years of polling the British public have never found higher acclaim for trade unionism amongst union members than exist today". This development has carried over even into the present period, with the galloping increase in white collar unionisation. This must be the first time since the 1900s that an increase in unemployment has been accompanied *not* by a fall, but by an increase in unionisation.

## transformation

This whole process caused profound changes within the trade union movement. Those bureaucrats who wished to make gains in militant sections such as cars were forced to take up more radical and left positions. It may have been an act of God that caused the deaths in rapid succession of Deakin and Tiffin and therefore allowed Cousins to become leader of the TGWU, but there was a material pressure on the T & G to move it to the left even before that. The election of Scanlon in the AUEW was a real indication of the way the wind was blowing. A remarkable transformation was taking place. Faced with no perspective for struggle whatsoever inside the constituency labour parties, the industrial upsurge sucked the working class out of the individual membership organisations of the Labour Party. This tendency was increased by the heightening clashes between the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour leadership. Thus, was created a situation whereby the mass base was lost by the constituency left, so that they moved further and further to the right, while the trade union bureaucrats were under greater and greater pressure to move to the left. Under Wilson the underlying processes came to a head, and the quantitative change became a qualitative one. The constituencies, traditional stronghold of the left became the main supporters of the leadership, and the trade unions, traditional allies

of the Parliamentary leadership, became the main force of the left. This dramatic change can be illustrated most vividly by simply comparing the votes on key issues at Labour Party conferences at the beginning and end of this period. In 1953 and 1954 the Bevanites managed to pull roughly three quarters of the constituency votes on the key issue of German re-armament. The leadership only won the issue because of the block votes of the TGWU, NUGMWU, and NUM. Even by 1960 the situation had been remarkably changed. Then the left on the issue of unilateralism only received 33% of the constituency votes (Hindell and Williams, *Political Quarterly*, 1952). The 'victory' was won only because of the vote of the trade unions. By the time we come to 1969 and 1970 we find it is from the constituency parties that the support for incomes policy and 'In Place of Strife' comes almost exclusively, and even the most moderate of unions are in opposition to the Parliamentary leadership. The reversal of positions is now complete. With no mass constituency base behind it, and no credible issue on which it can counterpose itself to the trade union leadership as the champion of real struggle, the labour left has become a pathetic onlooker of a combat all of whose real actors it is helpless to influence.

## limitations

This article has confined itself to discussing one very small, but extremely important point. What it aims to show is that the decline of the constituency left cannot be interpreted as a purely temporary phenomena. This decline on the contrary represents an extremely profound interrelation of the nature of a Social Democratic organisation, and the process of the decline of the British capitalism since 1945. It must be noted however, what are the limitations of the way in which this must be understood.

Firstly, what has been argued in this article does not rule out temporary increases in the size and involvement inside the constituency labour parties in the future. What it does however argue is that without a profound change in the entire economic, social and political situation, the constituency left cannot regain its position as the political focus of the working class. Any increase in size and activity of the constituency left would occur in a situation in which the trade unions still had by far the greatest political weight within the working class. Any revolutionary activity would have to be based on this situation. Only a complete economic collapse which made trade union activity impossible, or an absolutely decisive defeat in struggle for the trade union movement would change this situation. Secondly, and this is the most important point of all, it must be realised that the situation we are now seeing in the Labour Party is not a unique one. It existed for twenty years in the period prior to the General Strike. Then too the trade unions were the dominant elements in the struggle of the working class, and the struggle within the constituency Labour parties was almost entirely a reflection of the struggle that was going on outside. However, this did not mean then as it does not mean now, that the working class had escaped from the ideological hold of Labourism, simply because it was not under the Labour Party's organisational hold. On the contrary, precisely because the trade union militancy is carried on *in isolation* from the Labour Party not in a way directed *against* it, this activity also accepts the fundamental division between politics and the factory struggle which is at the heart of the Labour Party. *In other words 'pure' industrial action is merely the other side of the coin of left Labourism.* A working class merely ignoring the Labour party is dominated by Social Democratic ideology just as much, although in a different way, to one which is actively involved in the organisations of the constituency Labour parties. All we have so far shown is that it is necessary to separate the ideas of the ideological hold of Labourism from the idea of the organisational hold of the Labour Party. Once this is done then the demise of the Labour left in a period of increased class struggle becomes perfectly explicable. It does not alter the aim of revolutionaries however. That remains to destroy the hold of Labourism in *all* its forms whether they be in the constituency parties, or in pure trade union action.

# ONSLAUGHT IN WEST BENGAL

While the eyes of the world were on the Indian invasion and "liberation" of East Bengal, the Government of India made an onslaught against left wing forces in its own country. During the week November 21 to 28 (when the invasion in fact began) half of India's paramilitary Central Reserve Police arrived in West Bengal. About 10,000 leftists were reported arrested.<sup>1</sup> Under the Prevention of Violent Activities Act introduced some months ago, political detainees may be held without trial for up to a year. Many arrested earlier have in fact already been held more than a year because of the huge numbers awaiting trial. The Act is due to expire early in 1972 but news that preparations are underway to remove political prisoners to special centres is ominous.<sup>2</sup>

At Alipore jail on November 26th a massacre took place, the precise extent and circumstances of which are unclear and may remain so. Police and government have admitted six persons killed and 237 wounded, but according to some reports up to 50 were murdered outright, while many of the injured hovered between life and death.<sup>3</sup> The authorities claimed an attempted jail-break; brickbats and tiles thrown by prisoners; hapless warders reacting in self defence. This is hard to credit: armed police were on guard outside the jail, making escape unlikely; no damage to gates or walls was reported; all of the victims were beaten to death with clubs.

Alipore was the sixth major jail massacre during the past twelve months, and the *n*th in terms of isolated or inadequately reported jail killings. Jail murders have been an increasingly common response to the attacks of the "Naxalites" or Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), the Maoist party formed in April 1969 and officially recognized by China. Since early 1970 party policy has concentrated on "annihilating" individual landlords, businessmen, money-lenders, police, and political enemies, in the countryside of Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, and increasingly in Calcutta City. Undoubtedly, arrested CPI-ML cadre have rebelled and have attempted jail breaks several times: they glory in it and some of the jail battles have resulted from these efforts. On April 22nd, 1971, the Party's second anniversary, and on May 2nd, for example, Naxalite prisoners in Dum Dum jail rebelled and hoisted the red flag on the prison tower.<sup>4</sup> On May 14th, 50 prisoners managed to escape. Inside the jail a battle ensued between 150 Naxalite teen-agers and armed sentries and jail warders. Thirty-two prisoners were reported killed with clubs, and the rest severely wounded. Many of the dead were beaten to a pulp, their bodies unrecognizable by the relatives who came later to identify them.<sup>5</sup>

More commonly, jail-breaks have apparently been staged. Prisoners are told they are freed on bail, are escorted to the gates, then shot "while escaping". As far as can be judged this is what happened at Midnapore jail on December 15th, 1970, where nine peasant Communists were murdered, and at Berhampur in January 1971, where seven under-trial prisoners were killed. Similar incidents have been reported from Howrah, Birbhum, Cooch Behar, Siliguri, Kurseong, and three times from Allipore.

The CPI-ML has been the chief victim of these massacres. But the parliamentary Communist Party of India (Marxist), highly organized in Kerala and West Bengal, has also suffered increasing assaults. The Party claimed 30 members shot in jails in the eight months preceding June 1971, and a total of

48 young men killed at Bart, Beliaghat, Salt Lake and Diamond Harbour while supposedly "resisting arrest".<sup>6</sup>

Jail killings have, moreover, spread from West Bengal to the neighbouring state of Bihar. On July 7th prisoners in Patna jail rioted after one of them died under suspicious circumstances. In the riot, ten prisoners including five Naxalites escaped; two were killed and 42 wounded. In Hazaribag jail on July 25th there was no evidence of riot or escape attempt, yet somehow 17 prisoners were killed and 27 injured by bullets.<sup>7</sup> A regular feature of these killings is that fascist gangs of specially selected warders and im-

pore-Baranagar area on August 12-13. A worker of the ruling Congress Party was killed by an unknown murderer. An armed mob of 1,000 then rampaged over two square miles, dragging youth from their homes and burning the shops of those suspected of hiding extremists. Some bodies were thrown in the Ganges; others removed in push carts. The police did nothing for 17 hours, during which more than 150 teen-age boys were butchered and their names recorded on a list nailed up on an improvised scaffolding on the Kutighat Road. Very few of the boys were Naxalite activists; most were friends or neighbours or people who had spoken to known

the Left is proceeding apace in West Bengal. . . . Massive attacks on CPI-M bases jointly by armed police and armed Congress bands, point-blank shootings of boys and girls, inhuman atrocities on detained men and women, and cases of people burnt alive" are the order of the day in Free India.<sup>10</sup> But so far, the liberals have said little. A sad contrast with 1938, when the ailing Bengali poet Tagore, aged 90, led a mass rally on the Calcutta common to protest the British shooting of two detainees in the Hijli detention camp. Today the heirs of Gandhi indiscriminately recruit hoodlums and murderers into the ruling Congress Party, no doubt to get rid of their opponents in good time before the West Bengal elections, scheduled for February. Even the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India was constrained to issue a lengthy protest—while jointly organizing a huge celebration in Calcutta with the Congress Party to greet the "Liberation" of Bangla Desh.

On the day after the Pakistani forces surrendered, Indira Gandhi said of the governments of India and Pakistan, in a plea for negotiations: "There are more things in common between us than those which divide us."<sup>11</sup> There are: both are butchers, of Communists, youth, anyone who obstructs the preservation of their obsolescent social systems. And the "socialist world"? Most heart-rending! In April the government of China gives \$100 million interest-free loan to Yahya Khan's dictatorship at the height of its massacre of East Bengali intellectuals, revolutionaries, workers and peasants.<sup>12</sup> In December, the Soviet Union arms the Indian government and covers for it in the Security Council while India commits foreign aggression and nips off East Bengal for the Awami League: no doubt partly to defeat a leftward shift in the revolution that was underway there; partly to cover up its own slaughters in Eastern India; perhaps also to stake a claim to the Indian Ocean on behalf of a Soviet bid to encircle China.

The victims are the revolutionaries and the common people of India and Pakistan. The CPI-M surely knows this. Its slogan, "Yahya Khan-Indira Gandhi Ek Hai" (Yahya Khan and Indira Gandhi are the same) echoes Mrs. Gandhi herself. The party leadership's response to the onslaught was to form a united front with the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Block for the municipal elections in Burdwan, West Bengal. Soon, however, it will have to fight back or go under.

Devi Arad

## FOOTNOTES

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The French version of this article was published in

## Letter From Members of the CPI(ML)

Comrades and friends abroad,

In the light of what has happened in the South Asian region during the past twelve months, we wish to make some statements and ask some questions.

First, it should be made absolutely clear that the revolutionaries of this subcontinent regard it as one country and are resolved to erase, through struggle, the 'international boundaries' drawn up by Messrs. Patel, Nehru, Jinnah and Stafford Cripps.

Second, what took place in East Bengal in the first quarter of 1971 was nothing but the bloody and genocidal suppression of a people's mass and democratic movement by a gang of fascist, obscurantist and utterly foul madmen—and every adjective is carefully chosen.

Third, a certain Foreign Office abroad, the only one from which we expected a principled stand, chose to represent black as white, chose to hide from its people the true nature of its fascist friends, chose to depict a people's desperate struggle against bloody ogres as an 'anti-China war plot', chose to use the terms 'rebel' and 'secessionist' as abuse(!) and chose not to interfere in the 'internal affairs' of inhuman murderers—after having interfered in the 'internal affairs' of Ceylon and Sudan—on behalf of the inhuman murderers, of course.

Fourth, the clever reactionaries in India (who never turned a hair while brutally suppressing the revolutionary movement in West Bengal, Andhra and Punjab, and the national struggles of the Naga, Mizo, and Kashmir peoples) and their Soviet well wishers, cashed in on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and immeasurably strengthened their position in the sub-continent—partly, if not wholly due to the marvellous non-interference by the leaders of world revolution and the activities of their good friends, the Maoist mullahs of Islamabad.

The inner crisis of the revolutionary movement in South Asia is the subject matter for a different discussion. But what did the 'revolutionary' leadership of our party (now split in the tradition, no doubt, of 'one divides

prisoned criminals carry out the executions, often after sadistic torture. They are paid in perquisites from the prison food stores.<sup>8</sup>

To dwell on jail killings would, however, mislead, for individual and mass murders of alleged Naxalite supporters have gone on for months outside the jails as well. In addition to silent killings in the night, whole groups were killed publicly last summer at Beliaghat, Noapara and Howrah. In Howrah 12 Naxalites were murdered and their houses and shops destroyed, after which the civilian mob which did the killings dutifully turned in its arms at the local police station. The worst

into two') do with regard to the Indo-Pak crisis? Since their proclaimed first principle is 'loyalty to the CPC [Communist Party of China]'—not loyalty to the masses or to Marxism-Leninism, but to the CPC—they naturally proceeded with the holy task of rationalising the opportunism and chauvinism of the Chinese Foreign Office. A quantitative (or is it qualitative) development of Mao Tsetung Thought was made by a certain leader who proclaimed that Yahya Khan was a 'national bourgeois' (sic!!).

We have been *betrayed*, comrades and friends, and we know that this is strong language. The 'proletarian headquarters' has indulged in nothing but out and out opportunism and big power chauvinism and we, who were ardent 'Maoists' until recently, say this with the deepest sorrow and dismay. We ask the Maoist missionaries—do you expect us now to quote the Red Book at common people murdered by Chinese bullets? Do you expect us to preach armed struggle to people whose just armed struggle was faced with Chinese tanks? We shall not give up revolution gentlemen, as you have, but we have learned a very bitter and yet very basic lesson—the loyalty of a revolutionary party is to the people, to Marxism, and certainly not to this or that party. And we shall not accept the selling out of proletarian internationalism to the Yahyas, Nimeirys, Nixons and Bandaranaiques of the world. From Stalin onwards, the Soviet leaders have sacrificed world revolution at the altar of their chauvinist foreign policy. We cannot allow this to happen all over again.

Perhaps Allah will tell us why our great helmsman steered our ship onto the rocks and then abandoned us. But, as someone said once, great men need no reasons, they leave them to the creative hands of their apologists. 'Sham is sham, and the mask must be stripped off'—it is a damning irony that we have now to strip the mask off the Chinese leadership.

SOME INDIAN COMRADES OF CPI (ML)  
[Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)]

activists once or twice.<sup>9</sup>

As long as the murdered were announced as "Naxalites" the public did nothing. Many people thought the CPI-ML had invited fascist attacks by its own terrorism. The parliamentary CPI-M has itself been accused not only of not defending the CPI-ML but even of betraying its cadre to the police, and there have been internecine murders between the two parties. Now, however, the chauvinist hysteria of the war has provided the government with an ideal opportunity to "get" the well organized parliamentary CPI-M as well. As the liberal *Economic and Political Weekly* records: "Cold blooded and calculated liquidation of





## ZIMBABWE SAYS 'NO!'

The reception which the Pearce Commission has received in Zimbabwe has left little doubt about the reaction of the African people to the 'Settlement' arrived at behind their backs by Tory Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas Home and Ian Smith, Premier of so-called Rhodesia. The Africans want none of it. They are not taken in by the specious promises of eventual equality with the whites some time in the unforeseeable future.

They have good reason to be sceptical. When the British Parliament granted South Africa a constitution in 1910, it also contained "entrenched clauses", "guaranteeing" the existing rights of the black people in the new Dominion. Feeble as these rights were, they have been whittled away over the years till today none remain. Zimbabwe's Africans have no reason to think that the Rhodesian whites will honour their undertakings any more than did those in South Africa. They have seen for themselves the determination of the Smith regime to maintain and extend white domination as far as can be seen into the future.

The extension of the vote to Africans will depend on a complicated conjunction of educational and income factors. But control of educational opportunity and economic reward will remain in the hands of the white minority. There is not the slightest possibility of the white rulers voluntarily abrogating the notorious 'Land Apportionment Act'. This was first passed in 1930 and laid down what farmlands should be available for Africans and whites. Originally, the Act had 'liberal' pretensions. It ostensibly aimed to end the period of seizure of African lands by the white settlers. In time, however, it became a bastion of racial segregation and discrimination in urban as well as rural areas. Africans coming into the towns found that they had no right to live where they liked but were confined to specific areas or to townships outside the town proper. Since U.D.I. the Land Apportionment Act has been even more rigorously enforced, mainly to enforce the closure of schools for African children run by the Churches and voluntary organisations. Thus the Smith regime tries to make sure that the Africans remain illiterate and thus unfit for the franchise.

But these "illiterates" have shown that they have matured politically very rapidly during the past six years; despite the fact that their leaders are still locked up in Smith's concentration camps or in jail. In their thousands they have used the presence of the Pearce Commission as a rare opportunity to show that they do not want the white man's rule in any form, no matter how 'liberal' the language in which it is disguised. If the Smith-Home agreement achieves nothing else, it has provided a unifying focus for the pent-up revolutionary spirit of the Africans of Zimbabwe. All the imperialist chickens are coming home to roost simultaneously. The mi-

litant strikes in Gwelo and Salisbury raised not only the issue of the future status of Zimbabwe but also economic demands long suppressed under Smith's Emergency Regulations, which made strikes illegal for African workers. The Africans are fighting not simply on nationalistic demands but also for a greater share of the wealth which their labour produces.

There can be no doubt that the Tory government, acting as the executive committee of British capitalism, would dearly love to see a 'peaceful' settlement of the Rhodesian problem. Sanctions are not only damaging the Rhodesian white settler economy but also robbing important sectors of British capitalism of substantial profits. They are fearful that their more unscrupulous rivals in Japan and Germany, who have already breached the sanctions cordon, will increase these activities; a fear reinforced, no doubt, by the American decision last week to start importing Rhodesian chrome again. Large quantities of 'illegal' merchandise and capital investments have also been finding their way into Rhodesia from Portuguese colonial territory in neighbouring Mozambique and Angola and from the Republic of South Africa. It is these motives rather than concern for the future of Zimbabwe's Africans which inspired Home to send out Lord Goodman and later to make the journey to Salisbury himself.

What makes it all the more urgent to get a settlement in Zimbabwe which will secure the interests of British imperialism is that there are growing signs that the lull in the South African sub-continent is coming to an end, threatening the future of the vast British investments there. In the neighbouring Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, the guerillas have intensified their activities, tying down huge armies. Just across the border from Zimbabwe, in South West Africa, the almost complete withdrawal of the Ovambos from labour in the white-owned mines, industries and farms has paralysed the country's economy; thus demonstrating decisively the specious nature of the white man's claim that it is the European who has built up the wealth of South Africa.

Whatever illusions the Africans may have retained in British 'fair play' have now been shattered once and for all. The mass demonstrations against the Smith-Home settlement, both in the urban and rural areas, show that they are now relying only on their own strength and are determined to fight. They must not be allowed to fight in vain or alone. International solidarity is as important for the Zimbabwe people as for the Vietnamese and the Irish. It is one fight, against the common enemy—imperialism.

C. Van Gelderen

\* Zimbabwe is the name Africans have chosen in preference to the imperialist imposed "Rhodesia."

## ZIONIST 'PROTESTS'

An interesting procession to Downing Street occurred on December 12th. A knot of Labour MPs and several younger followers carried a banner reading 'Action Committee for Arab Jewry' and protested against the treatment of the Jewish minorities in Syria and Iraq by their Arab governments. This small demonstration came just less than two months after Israeli Foreign Minister Eban devoted a major speech to the Council of Europe on the same theme. These—and other—indications point to the commencement of a new propaganda campaign by the various Zionist authorities and federations in the West. Identifying with protests against repression and discrimination, socialists and humanitarians may welcome this new campaign. A duty therefore falls on revolutionaries to clarify the nature and aims of this movement and its predecessors.

### MISLAID HISTORY

Any serious attempt to expose and combat anti-Jewish discrimination within a given nation, would evidently first thoroughly examine the root cause of the problem. Why is it that the remaining 4,000 Jewish people in Syria are subjected to official restrictions on their activities and geographical movements? The reason is directly linked to the impact of Zionist expansion on the Arab world.

The natural pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist sentiments of the Arab masses demand satisfaction, but the Arab governments know that to seriously challenge Zionism is to confront its master, American imperialism, which they cannot do by virtue of their own relationship to the world capitalist market and their military-bureaucratic nature, which necessarily excludes the arming and mobilisation of the worker-peasant masses.

A section of Arab leaders have instead resorted, over many years, to crude anti-Jewish racism and demagoguery, as a substitute for anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist struggle and as a weapon of internal stabilisation. Thus the harassment and repression of the small Jewish communities in Syria and Iraq, typified by the periodic 'unmasking' of Zionist agents'. This activity is quite compatible with an abysmal showing on the Palestinian question. In these circumstances, it is vital for socialists to defend unreservedly the rights of Jews in the Arab states, against all forms of oppression. But this cannot be done in the company of the Zionist organisations, which 'forget' the role and responsibilities of Zionism in opening the way for anti-Jewish racism in the Arab world.

### NATIONALIST AIMS

Forgetfulness also often prevails among Zionists as to the fate of other victims of the Arab regimes. The communists and left militants in Baathist jails are mentioned, now and again, in the Zionist press, to embarrass the Arab governments, but can expect no public campaign to be mounted for their rights by the 'humanitarian' Zionists of London and elsewhere. The Zionist campaigns stress Jewish civil rights and, further, emphasise ultimately one right above all—the right of emigration to Israel. The demonstrations in recent years for the Jewish minority in the USSR at first demanded civil liberty and religious tolerance, but turned, before long, to the central slogan 'Let my people go'. Socialists seek the overthrow of repressive regimes and anti-semitic bureaucrats. They seek to achieve this by uniting the different oppressed and exploited layers of the population into a force to establish a better society. They must appreciate that Zionism does not share this aim. The Zionists seek to detach the Jewish minorities from their potential allies in other minorities and progressive movements, and recruit them for their Middle Eastern conflicts. The nationalist aims of their protests are indicated by the nature of the marches for Jews in Russia that have been held in London. The efforts to mobilise demonstrators were confined to the Jewish community and the resultant protests were community occasions, marked by religious ceremonies, designed to reinforce Jewish nationalism here, too.

### SOCIALIST TASKS

The angry protests against official discrimination by the Israeli authorities, made in recent months by Jewish immigrants to Israel from Arab countries—the Black Panther movement in Jerusalem and elsewhere—who claim that European-born Israelis receive better treatment, place the whole issue into focus. No socialist with an awareness of recent history can support the propaganda drives of the Zionists in the West. It is painfully clear that the long-term interests of the Jewish inhabitants of the Arab world are best served by thorough and active opposition to Zionist colonialism in the Middle East. And, in the short term, the defence of the rights of Jewish minorities must be firmly linked to the defence of all victims of the existing regimes in the Arab states—and not subordinated to the aims and dictates of a narrow nationalism.

—Peter Landau

## STATEMENT BY GREEK STUDENTS

For some time, the military junta in Greece has started a campaign against the opponents of the dictatorship, the students abroad—an extension of its home policies. Assisted by the reactionary governments of W. Europe, it is trying to set up counter-unions in order to silence its Greek student opponents. It has succeeded in Italy and now is attempting the same in England.

Taking advantage of the favourable situation that the Tory attack on the English student and labour movement is creating, and after the activities of the Greek Student Union in London, it has started an operation to create pro-junta unions and proceed to a federation.

So, the so-called Hellenic Societies have been constructed in certain colleges and universities, after the initiative of the Greek Consulate in London. Circumventing the constitution of the Societies, they have gathered around them, under the pretext of being non-political only Greek and Greek Cypriot students. Their purpose is to put them under the direct control of the Greek Embassy. Lately, after having appointed an Organisational Committee, and set up the constitution in the Consulate itself—according to students who took part in the meeting without knowing its actual purpose—they called a 'conference' to create the federation.

In order to gain official recognition (always under the pretext of being non-political) they asked for recognition and support from the NUS. The NUS refused to give them any support whatever after the intervention of the Greek Student Union in London which revealed their real nature. Thus, isolated even from some students who took part in the Hellenic Societies and who, in the process, had realised their actual purpose, they gathered for a meeting at Imperial College on 23 January 1972. There, the united and determined action of the student opponents of the dictatorship and the revelations of those who broke from the Hellenic Societies isolated the handful of the junta's followers and exposed them completely to the vast majority of the students who participated in the meeting. Thus, the pro-juntaites were forced to dissolve.

The Greek Student Union in London denounces the reactionary stand of the bourgeois press which, in order to slander the student movement, publicised a minor incident in which an apparently irresponsible person—if not a conscious provocator—was involved.

The Greek Student Union in London, being fully conscious of the fact that the junta will not abandon its efforts at the first failure, undertakes the obligation to fight for the construction of a strong anti-dictatorial student movement.

The Greek Student Union in London:

- denounces the joint financing of the creation of pro-junta unions by the junta's Embassy and the Cyprus High Commission in London;
- salutes the refusal of the NUS to grant any support whatsoever.

DOWN WITH THE JUNTA!

—The Greek Student Union Executive  
London, 25.1.1972.

## socialist woman conference

The first national conference of the Socialist Woman Groups, held at Imperial College, London on 29/30 January, marked a major step forward for the women's liberation movement in this country. It represented the first substantial measure of agreement between a number of women's groups on an overall political position, aims and priorities for women's liberation, and laid the basis for a national campaign round one of these priorities at the present time—for Equal Pay and Equal Work, and an end to low pay.

Over 100 delegates and members from the 20 Socialist Woman Groups and supporters of the paper attended the conference, which was called by the editorial board of *Socialist Woman* to discuss the experience of the groups so far and plan for closer coordination of ideas and activities in the future. Representatives had been sent by groups in Birmingham, Bristol, Canterbury, Cardiff, Colchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Keele, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Norwich, Nottingham, Preston, Reading, Rickmansworth, Sheffield and York, as well as many sympathisers from areas where Socialist Woman Groups have not yet been set up.

The conference had been planned around papers commissioned at a meeting of Socialist Woman supporters at the Skegness women's conference to tackle the various problems confronting the women's movement at the present time and its need for an adequate Marxist analysis. Different comrades dealt with 'The women's liberation movement in its historical context', 'Women's liberation and revolutionary socialism', 'The economic background to the women's movement', and 'Women and capitalism—and our priorities now'.

Although full agreement was reached on none of these, and there is clearly still a lot of work to be done in defining the place of women's liberation in the fight for a socialist society, this is hardly surprising, given the historical inertia, not to say resistance, of the left in Britain and internationally on the subject, and the confusion in the women's liberation movement resulting from the newness of women's radicalisation and the peculiar nature of their oppression. But even without this qualification, a good start was made at the Conference in sketching the outlines of the continuing and future discussion.

Immediate practical questions raised by the activities of the Socialist Woman Groups were also discussed—the Preston group talked about the rent campaign they had organised locally and its effects in extending the consciousness of the women involved in it; groups working in solidarity with the miners discussed the possibility of coordinating their activity across the country; and the subject of the Women's Industrial Union organised by Mrs. Pat Sturdy, who attended the conference, particularly provoked discussion on several counts: what a 'women-only' union implied, whether it was really more of an attempt to bypass the union bureaucracies and craft divisions by setting up a breakaway, all-embracing, democratic union in the tradition of the Wobblies, and what were the possibilities of directing these energies against the bureaucracy inside the union structure. The trade union panel, which included May Hobbs of the Cleaners Action Group,

Vicky Robinson of the UPW and Joan Gilbert of the National Union of Gold & Silver Smiths & Allied Trades contributed to this discussion with practical insights from their own experience.

Other guest speakers from outside the Socialist Woman Groups also introduced important points into the discussion—Althea Jones of the Black Panthers spoke on the need for oppressed groups to organise separately and sketched the historical oppression of Black women; Rosemary Sales of the Irish Solidarity Campaign discussed the role of women in national liberation struggles; and Lone Sørensen from the Danish section of the Fourth International talked about the problems of the women's liberation movement, which was extremely feminist, in Denmark and the need to build Socialist Woman Groups which had met with a favourable response from women trade unionists.

The last session of the Conference was taken up with discussing the political basis and co-ordination of the Socialist Woman Groups. After some discussion, delegates voted overwhelmingly to accept a statement of common political position and aims, which stressed the interrelationship of the process of socialist revolution and women's liberation, showed the need for women's self-organisation as part of this process, gave priority to the struggles of working class women and put forward the demands of the Socialist Woman Groups towards women's liberation and socialism. It was agreed that this would become the national manifesto of the Socialist Woman Groups, and that the discussion would be continued in the local groups. The groups undertook to put into practice the agreement reached in theory by launching a national campaign coordinated between them and directed against the most crucial contradiction in women's position at the present time: for Equal Pay and Equal Work, against low pay. The conference finally elected an editorial board, voted on arrangements for closer co-ordination between the paper *Socialist Woman* and the groups, and concluded by passing a resolution in support of Angela Davis and calling on the local groups to organise demonstrations in solidarity.

The fact that this was the first Conference of the Socialist Woman Groups ever called and the size of the response meant that lack of time inevitably prevented some of the most important questions raised from being fully thrashed out. But the main achievement of the conference was to establish a political and organisational framework within which a discussion has been opened and will be continued between the Socialist Woman Groups and through the paper *Socialist Woman*.

—Marilyn Scotcher

Comrades who would like more information about Socialist Woman, or who would like a subscription to the paper (48p per year—6 issues) should write to SOCIALIST WOMAN, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

## n.u.s. conference

The special conference of the National Union of Students held in London over the weekend 29/30 January, witnessed the first fruits of the campaign led by the LCDSU to change the policies of the NUS leadership. On both of the major issues of conference, the Liaison Committee, rarely mentioned but on everyone's lips, was the determining influence. This was reflected in the NUS executive's own motions as much as those directly inspired by the LCDSU.

The proposals on the fight back against the government's attack on Students Unions provided the clearest setback to the CP leadership of the NUS. The fundamental basis of the executive campaign was completely rejected—not, however, before the debate had revealed that the executive itself was split on the question. A motion backed by all the militant colleges supporting the LCDSU (and some others) was passed against the executive motion. This demanded full political, constitutional and financial autonomy for Student Unions and tied up the loopholes which the executive had used over the Christmas period as an excuse for negotiating with the government—this last was completely rejected. As executive member Roger Haworth put it, "To negotiate about the autonomy of Student Unions is equivalent to a man about to be hanged negotiating about the quality of the rope". A motion put later, censuring the executive for taking part in negotiations, was narrowly defeated. A test vote showed only seven votes difference and a card vote narrowed this majority to 4000 votes, that is, to one college strength. Several other amendments from the LCDSU spelling out and strengthening this policy were however defeated, but always only narrowly. Part of this is to be explained by the realisation by many of the moderate colleges that this was not just a debate about policy but more fundamentally about the very basis of the NUS as a Students Union. At the same time the machinations of the CP behind the scenes played a not unimportant role. This went on

up to the very end of the conference when an attempt was made to re-vote on the LCDSU amendment—a completely unconstitutional procedure, which therefore backfired on them. Having raised the moderates on constitutionalism, the CP just couldn't turn on them in this way without upsetting many people.

## IRELAND AND THE NUS

The conference was far from confined, of course, to student issues. As the LCDSU has always argued, student issues, and in particular that of the attack on their autonomy, cannot be confined to, and certainly cannot be won by focussing on the 'immediate' issue. Only a broader perspective, and broader action, can have any hope of success. So not only was the conference suffused by the attitude of students to the miners strike, but the question of Ireland reproduced the political differences over the question of autonomy. Not only were the executive split on this one, however, but so was the CP itself.

The executive motion was a 180° turn from last conference. The motion passed there was so right wing that the Anti-Internment League kicked them out. The call this time for support to the IRA, even though limited to the taking of defensive actions, indicated the sort of pressure which was being felt. Given this situation, the two amendments put by supporters of the LCDSU giving unconditional support to the IRA were defeated, but not before an emergency motion condemning the Lynch government for its arrest of seven alleged IRA men was overwhelmingly passed.

## THE FUTURE

Given all this, however, what was important was not so much the motions passed but the psychological situation which was established by the depth of the opposition to the politics of the NUS executive. The LCDSU can now use this conference as a spring board to hammer home the political lessons for next conference. It is quite certain that the NUS will, from now on, be very different than the CP architects would have had it. It is slowly becoming clear that the LCDSU policy is the only alternative to the government proposals. The middle ground is gradually being eroded. Out of this battle either we will see emerge the scab 'company' Union of the DES, whatever the specific proposals adopted, or the NUS will have to transform itself into the vanguard of the politicised students. Easter conference will be the next vital piece of litmus which will indicate the sort of future we can expect. If the militants in the colleges continue to put some of their energies into this campaign, the victory can be ours.

—J.R. Clynes

## lessons of l.s.e.

The occupation of the London School of Economics on the weekend of 22/23 January was called by the students' union for two basic reasons: to provide a base for contingents from outside London for the NUS demo on the Sunday; and as a blow against Adams' rejection of the new constitution designed by the union to give it autonomy from the establishment of the School. The libertarians in Soc-Soc, however, intended to use the occasion for an experience in 'alternative education'.

The motion for the occupation (to last from Friday to Monday) was carried in the Union by 270 votes to 40. When Adams went on the offensive by cutting off the union phones and money, it was decided to start the occupation with a token force on the Thursday. By Friday some 300 people were occupying LSE: by Saturday 600. Most of these, however, were from outside the School. A series of activities was announced by the union council; on the Saturday these consisted mostly of 'alternative education' classes—'radical' psychology etc.—No political meetings were organised by the Soc-Soc (whose leadership is also largely the Union leadership), and only two mass meetings of the occupants held. At the first of these, attempts to raise political discussion about the perspectives of the occupation were resisted: at the second,

partly no doubt because of the presence of militant outside contingents, there was at least discussion resulting in a decision to join the Liaison Committee march on the Sunday. The main part of the Saturday evening had been devoted by the union leadership to a freak-out that bored more than it freaked. The Spartacus League, like other tendencies, found itself obliged to hold its own political meetings.

After the Sunday NUS demo, when the official LSE contingent finally decided not to join the LCDSU march to the Coal Board, the occupation virtually collapsed. Only some 50 students were left on Sunday night, but these did decide to go on and occupy the Senior Common Room. The next day, Monday, though the School was allowed to return to 'normal activity', the SCR was opened to everyone and an Irish teach-in held there in the afternoon. The decision to end the occupation was taken that afternoon in a union assembly—which naturally included even the opponents of the occupation.

The lessons for the LSE comrades are quite clear. It was not by accident that the occupation failed to attract sufficient support within the LSE itself: it was never posed as a struggle by the union leadership. Adams' attack, even if he is now forced to make a partial withdrawal, is symptomatic of the politics of college authorities which may take their distance from the Tory government over the proposed Thatcher legislation, and may make the usual noises about academic freedom and autonomy: but they will use Thatcher's temporary withdrawal to bring in equally reactionary forms of control over student activity. Instead of fighting on a clear understanding of this, the libertarians in the LSE leadership viewed the weekend's experience as an abstract exercise in 'consciousness raising'—as if consciousness was raised by the mere fact of 'being together' and as if raised consciousness was something to be taken away and stored up for some remote future struggle. The failure to understand the real nature of Adams' attack on the LSE, and the individualistic-chauvinist unwillingness to co-operate fully with LCDSU also meant that the many students visiting LSE from elsewhere were not informed of the situation in LSE, and no effective solidarity action could even be contemplated. A valuable occasion for extending the struggle against the college administrations was lost. More than one student arriving on the steps of LSE and asking 'where is it all happening' had to conclude that it wasn't.

The alternative to a miserable occupation of this sort isn't to avoid having occupations, or to take students out of the student struggle. As argued elsewhere in *The Red Mole* it is to understand how struggle in the colleges can inflict blows on the bourgeoisie and how students as a body can act in wider political struggles. This requires not libertarianism but a marxist analysis, and serious organisation. A further demonstration of the great potential but actual weakness of the LSE students, came on the Monday following the Derry massacre. The union leadership took the excellent initiative of calling for a demonstration against parliament. But by refusing to organise or to co-ordinate with other forces, they led the demonstration into considerable confusion after meeting heavy police resistance in the Strand—a confusion reflected in the fact that on arrival at Westminster the demonstration disintegrated without a meeting, and several students were seen wandering off in the direction of the lobbies. Three students were arrested at this demonstration when police barred the Strand.

In all the activity of the coming days in LSE, LSE students must organise the defence of these comrades, and in their political meetings discuss how to organise to avoid this kind of blow. The picketing of the power stations, above all participating in the demonstrations in solidarity with the Irish struggle, must go on; but to draw more students into this activity, to defend their own comrades, and to be able at the same time to carry on the struggle within the college, we need open political discussion and a clearer political perspective for militant students.

—LSE Spartacus L

# FIGHT BACK

## IF YOU'RE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION THEN YOU'RE PART OF THE PROBLEM!

There are two things one *could* say about the recently republished *Post Prison Writings* of Eldridge Cleaver—and the bourgeoisie have said both of them. Firstly, you could say it is "the most seductive prose as any being written anywhere in the world" (*New Society*), i.e. you could blur and conceal the fact that Cleaver is a black revolutionary artist by praising him as much as possible as an Artist. Secondly, you could say, well yes he's a great revolutionary but he's writing about America, nothing to do with us here.

## REPRESSION OF BLACKS IN BRITAIN

However for British revolutionaries the most relevant point about Cleaver, just as the most relevant point about Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, George Jackson, is that the racism they are writing about and fighting against is just the same sort of racism (yes, in its intensity as well) as exists here in Britain. It is a racism which a decaying capitalism uses systematically to terrorise and brutalise one section of the working class in order to divide and weaken the class as a whole. If you can't understand the way blacks are being harassed by the police on the streets; if you can't understand the way racism works in schools; if you can't understand the way half the police force in the Southern coastal towns seem to be involved in nothing else but capturing 'illegal' immigrants—then you can't understand the importance of racism here. It's no coincidence that Cleaver's writings have just been republished at a time when the Mangrove Nine have been dragged through the courts with one of the brothers being immediately re-arrested on his release; at a time when the black youth from the Metro Club are about to come on trial after the police broke into their club; at a time when figures just produced show that 30 per cent of all students in Educational Sub Normal schools in London are black; and at a time when the Immigration Act has gone through with virtually no opposition from the white working class.

## FIGHT BACK!

What most frightens the bourgeoisie about Cleaver and other black militants is that they are fighting back—both in the States and (to a lesser extent) here. Blacks just aren't taking it any more. The main message from Cleaver's writings and actions is that *all* oppressed people, black or white, are doomed to their oppression unless they organise to fight back against the system. Moreover, there is no middle way. You are either on the side of the oppressed or of the oppressors—and by not doing anything and remaining passive you are

bound to be on the side of the oppressors. As Cleaver says, "if you're not part of the solution then you're part of the problem". This is precisely why the International Marxist Group calls for support for the IRA. We support the IRA, and call for its victory, notwithstanding the fact that we recognise that the IRA is not a 'perfect' Bolshevik organisation—far from it. Unfortunately there are not many of these around anywhere. We support the IRA because it happens to be leading a struggle against the British bourgeoisie in trying to kick them out of Ireland. This again is why we give unconditional support to all black militants who are fighting back—even though we have many and considerable disagreements with their precise ideas and tactics. Thus it is certainly possible to disagree with many of the ideas of Cleaver—for instance, that blacks can get 'justice' in a bourgeois court of law even with an all-black jury, or that blacks can have 'control' of black communities within a capitalist State. However, you either support blacks fighting back—support their demonstrations, picket the courts where they are on trial, take to the streets to defend them—or else you support the bourgeoisie. As Lenin said, "Communists support every revolutionary movement".

## EVER INCREASING OPPRESSION OF EVERYONE

Of course blacks are not the only group of workers who are oppressed under capitalism. Every worker is oppressed—precisely because capitalism by its very nature is oppressive. The difference is that blacks are doubly oppressed, both as workers and as blacks. However, in a period of capitalist decay the repression of all workers increases in all its aspects. The role of the army in Ireland is an obvious example of this. The smashing of the 'welfare state' here in Britain by the last Labour government and the present Tory government is another. Now it is precisely because the capitalist ruling class needs to divide the working class by setting one group of workers against another (e.g. whites against blacks, men against women, British against Irish) that a defeat for one of these groups is a defeat for all. This is why the deliberate failure of the TUC even to attempt to rally the mass of white trade unionists against the Immigration Act was a defeat for the entire working class, white as well as black; for in a very concrete way the aim of the Act is to create a terrorised group of potential black scabs too frightened to go on strike with their white brothers. Obviously the TUC leadership is not part of the solution—it's part of the problem. You're either for the bourgeoisie or for the

working class revolution, there is no third way.

## REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE

The other positive feature of Cleaver is the way he unambiguously declares his belief in the need for violence to overthrow the forces of capitalism, i.e. to overthrow bourgeois violence. Moreover the reality of proletarian violence does not only frighten the bourgeoisie—it also frightens many so-called revolutionaries; and this is one of the reasons why the majority of the Left has failed to come out in clear support of the IRA. Certainly Lenin was correct in arguing that violence in itself won't make the revolution—what is required is violence plus political ideas, precisely in order to explain the need for a violent revolution. Certainly it is true that many of the Black Panthers in the States saw violence as an answer in itself, and that they overestimated their support precisely because they underestimated the importance of political ideas. Certainly it is true that the black uprisings in American cities three years ago were tactically premature and provoked a tremendous backlash on the Panthers from the State which they were unable to resist and from which they have not recovered. However, here again in such a situation the job of revolutionaries is not to sit back passively, try to be 'neutral', do nothing but constantly moan that the uprisings were premature, and dissociate themselves from the struggle. The job of white revolutionaries in such a situation should have been to come out and defend the blacks against the backlash. By failing to do so in any significant numbers in the States they showed themselves to be effectively on the side of the bourgeoisie. One can't be neutral; and this is particularly true with regard to racism since it is precisely the failure of the white left in the past to fight racism that has left militant blacks exposed whenever they fight back.

## CLEAVER AND THE ROLE OF WHITE REVOLUTIONARIES

It is part of the rotten politics of many so-called revolutionaries to describe as 'black racists' militants like Cleaver who try to form black organisations. However the logic of this argument is that any oppressed group which fights back is an oppressor in reverse—i.e., the logic of scabs. This sort of reasoning also conveniently avoids the Marxist analysis of racism, i.e., that it is the result of imperialism and imperialist exploitation of the colonies. In what part of the world are blacks oppressing in a colonial, imperialist relationship? Moreover, it is a gross slander on Cleaver and other leaders of the Black Panthers that they reject outright any working relationship with white revolutionaries. Indeed a very close relationship did exist for a time in the States

in the Peace and Freedom Party, which was a coalition of black and white militants, including the Panthers. Moreover, Cleaver perhaps more than anyone else in the Panther leadership saw the impossibility of overthrowing American capitalism by black revolutionaries alone. As he says: "We recognise that the Black Panther Party can't do it by itself, black people can't do it by themselves. It's going to take white people to stand up as well

However, the sort of unity Cleaver sought and seeks has nothing to do with the slogan of 'Black and white unite and fight' so long peddled by liberals and Stalinists. *The Red Mole* has previously argued that this slogan is an attempt to take away the independence of black organisations by telling them, at best, to quit the struggle until the white left has caught up with them (and continue to be victimised in the meantime) or else, at worst, it is telling them to unite with white workers many of whom are actively racist.

In place of all this rubbish the position of Cleaver and the rest of the Panthers was and is very clear—namely, that although unity in the abstract is desirable yet it will remain an abstraction until white revolutionaries and white workers are prepared to take up actively the struggle against racism. Until that time blacks will be forced to go it alone—come what may. As Cleaver says: "The niggers have been waiting for you for 400 years. And they're in a position where they can't really wait for you to come. They've got to move on." As Trotsky said about the defeated Spartacus uprising in Germany, "better to have died a Spartacist than not to have fought at all". Let those who have never made any conscious active attack on racism remain silent in their criticisms of militants such as Cleaver as 'adventurists' and 'terrorists'. If the white left in America and Britain is really serious about these charges of adventurism then there is only one thing they can do—that is to win the confidence of black militants and the black population as a whole by coming out consistently and actively against racism. Thus, as Cleaver makes clear, whites cannot simply come and ask for unity as a matter of some principle. Instead such unity can come only in struggle with whites showing themselves to be serious in their attitude towards racism. As Cleaver says of white workers, "by what they do, we will get to know who they are".

Immediately there are two things we can do in Britain as part of this process: (a) Be out on the picket on February 10th at 10.30 a.m. at Marylebone Magistrates Court in support of Rhodan Gordon of the Mangrove Nine; (b) All out in solidarity with the Metro youth when their frame-up comes to court.

S. C.

## LETTERS

Dear Comrades,

At last one revolutionary at least has made a serious attempt to analyse racist education—and in particular the way bourgeois ideology operates in the schools to divide the future working class. The article by Dick Mole in *The Red Mole* 35 was a breakthrough. However, I'd like to raise some criticisms which I hope will be taken up at a future date.

1. To refer, as this article did, to blacks as 'immigrants' is in any context a reflection of that bourgeois ideology which the article is attacking. Not only is it empirically incorrect to refer to all blacks as 'immigrants' (a large number were born here); more importantly,

it is also politically incorrect in that it is the bourgeoisie which deliberately uses 'immigrant' terminology to spread the mystification that blacks are 'outsiders' who have no 'right' to be here.

2. In dealing with the question of dispersal, the article accepts at their face value the arguments going on between bourgeois educationalists. Thus some bourgeois educationalists are in favour of taking black students out of the ghettos in order to prevent ghettoisation in the schools. Conversely, other educationalists are in favour of blacks being left together as much as possible because they 'hold back' the education of white students and because they themselves can progress better at 'their own pace'. However, what all this shows is that the whole dispersal, non-dispersal debate is itself nothing other than a mystification that the 'problems' of racism can somehow be reformed away. The main task for revolutionaries is precisely to show that under capitalism, under a system which is ideologically committed

to perpetuating racism, there can be no solution to racism or any of its manifestations.

Indeed, for revolutionaries the whole dispersal, non-dispersal debate is only relevant inasmuch as it is necessary for us to exploit the way the bourgeoisie squirms within the contradiction it has created for itself—i.e., the contradiction between its need to perpetuate racism and its fear of the consequences of racism in terms of wastage of black labour and potential black militancy. Thus it is only by analysing this contradiction (as opposed to taking one side within it) and exposing it in concrete ways that revolutionaries can agitate in the schools.

3. The article seems to be based on a utopian conception of what education is all about. Thus it criticises the present system for not 'educating' blacks according to their 'needs'. However, what is meant by 'needs'? What are the criteria? The point is that there are only two sorts of needs, for students and everyone else, in this society. One is the

need for the bourgeoisie to carry on its exploitation of the working class. The other is the need for that class to smash its exploitation through revolution. Thus there can be no politically neutral education catering for students' abstract 'needs', 'self-development', etc.

The problem again, of course, is how revolutionaries pose this concretely in the schools situation. This requires an examination not only of racism but of education generally. One way *not* to pose the question, though, is that attempted by the National Union of Students in its proposal to set up a National Union of School Students—namely on the basis of a fight for 'democratic' rights, consultative councils, long hair, etc. There is no possibility of achieving such 'rights' under this system. Instead schools—like every other institution—have to be won openly for the revolutionary struggle or else they remain a weapon of the bourgeoisie.

John Stephens

# MINERS AND STUDENTS VERSUS THE STATE

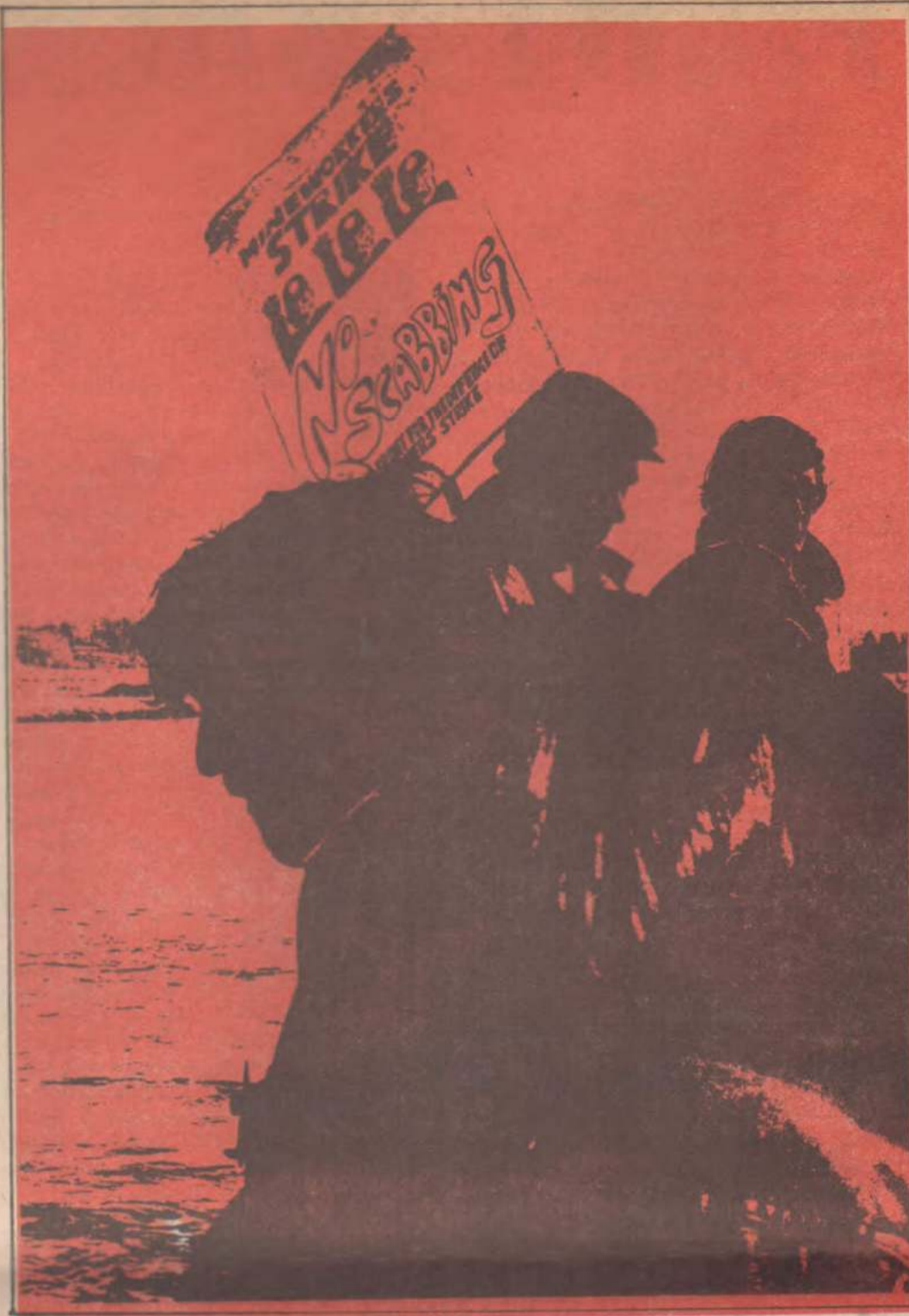
The tremendous solidarity between students and miners in the occupation of Essex University, and at the Cliff Quay picket lines in Ipswich, has shown beyond any doubt that students as a mass will never again play the role of scabs as they did in the 1926 General Strike, and that all the segregation and brainwashing that this society uses to divide students and workers cannot forever prevent them from coming together in struggle. Nor has Essex been just one local incident: stu-



dents at Kent University in Canterbury have picketed the docks along with miners at Dover, and students have engaged in various kinds of solidarity action in Oxford, Norwich, Hull and many other places (see *The Red Mole* special broadsheets). These were all linked up when a large contingent on the NUS demonstration showed their support for the miners by marching to the Coal Board Offices. But the recent activity at Essex University has surpassed these others in all respects. In terms of the university struggle, it has meant the extension of the limited 'mass-confrontation politics' to the development of the con-



cept of the Red Base in practice: Essex University has been turned into the political and organisational centre for activity in the area—it is being used for proletarian ends in a major working class struggle. And this has had important implications for the nature of the struggle itself. Not only have students been able to answer *politically* the government attacks on their autonomy, but the character of the response has changed. For what has characterised the traditional mass-mobilisations of students against university administrations has been their spontaneity, and thus their tendency to peter out as the 'issue' became stale. With the presence of the miners, the 120 or so members of the Colchester



United Front have worked consistently for two weeks, and with no visible sign of any downturn in commitment even after the ending of the occupation

But the unity in struggle has had important implications for the miners as well. The unique position of students has pushed politics to the fore, and not in any abstract sense. With daily rank-and-file meetings (about 150 strong) of miners and students to discuss strategy and tactics, questions of trade union democracy are immediately posed; all the more

so in view of the positions of the NUM bureaucracy. And this extended further still to the development of rank-and-file defence organisations, so that the security committee established by the United Front to run the occupation—and responsible to it—was composed of eight miners and eight students.

Finally what has become important is the projection of the strike into the town. Already, Colchester Claimants and Unemployed Workers Union has raised the question of the miners' strike amongst the ranks of claimants and un-

employed, and the United Front has successfully held factory gate meetings at which miners have spoken about the strike to local trade unionists.



In effect we have witnessed a transformation. Students and miners have come to know and understand one another's struggles and develop bonds of comradeship through active participation in a common fight. They have become aware, as never before, of the extent to which they confront a common enemy, the capitalist state, as represented by its lackeys in the National Coal Board, the University Administration, the Press and TV, and the police. There has been a common front of all these forces to break the solidarity of the students and workers and to defeat each of their struggles separately. In the face of our unity, such attempts have met with continual failure. And it is this above all which encapsulates the political significance of what has been taking place at Colchester.

Report by Colchester IMG

## events in brief

**Friday, 14 January:** The first major attempt to break the strike in the Essex area: a Dutch collier, the *Ismanie*, unloads 700 tons of anthracite from stocks of U.S. and Australian coal at Rotterdam. They use the quayside at Rowhedge, a small non-unionised dock on the Colne, just down-river from Colchester.

**Saturday, 15 January:** Socialists in the area respond by coming together to form the Colchester United Front for the Defence of the Miners' Strike, involving members of IMG, the Spartacus League, Colchester Women's Liberation Group, I.S., Colchester Claimants and Unemployed Workers Union, LPYS; they contact the NUM, and report the coal movements.

**Sunday, 16 January:** Four NUM representatives and one member of the United Front scout the area for signs of coal movements. Most important 'find' is a reported 80,000 tons at Cliff Quay power station at Ipswich, which serves Ipswich itself and Little Barford, just outside Cambridge.

**Monday, 17 January:** First United Front meeting at the University in attempt to mobilise students.

**Tuesday, 18 January:** 50 miners arrive and are put up outside the University by members of CUFDMs.

**Wednesday, 19 January:** Picketing begins at Cliff Quay, but few lorries are stopped. Dockers give assurances not to handle coal. Large picket at Rowhedge, where 300 miners and students achieve first major success in turning away collier loaded with 550 tons of anthracite after scuffles with police. One miner arrested. Occupation of university begins.

**Thursday, 20 January:** Pickets at Ipswich manage to stop much of the coal after many scuffles with police. Two miners and one student arrested but released with no charge. University issues first threat of legal action against miners and students in occupation. Mass meeting of miners overwhelmingly reject instructions by NUM bureaucracy.

**Friday, 21 January:** Pickets manage to stop all coal at Cliff Quay with the cooperation of TGWU and EPTU members. Arthur Scargill speaks at University, and £500 donated by Students Union to miners' strike fund.

**Monday, 24 January:** Occupation ends as miners leave University under blankets instructions from the NUM bureaucracy.

Pickets at Ipswich turn onto questions of oil lorries for power station. University maintains red base function as political and organisational centre of local activity. Meetings of United Front and Miners around strategy and tactics continue to be held everyday, with miners coming on to campus from the town.

**Wednesday, 26 January:** First picket of Little Barford power station—uneventful. Discussion begins to centre on how to shut Ipswich power station.

**Friday, 28 January:** Miners return to Barnsley under instructions from the Strike Committee, but with no concrete perspectives on the future of picketing. Labour Party, Trades Council and local trade union officials follow Tories in making public attacks on students and the United Front.

**Saturday, 29 January:** 800 students, workers and only miners remaining in East Anglia demonstrate in Gt. Yarmouth. Afterwards, remaining miners return to Barnsley.

**Sunday, 30 January:** Three coach-loads of miners return to East Anglia to mount token, round-the-clock picket of Cliff Quay power station, but the NUM leadership show their true interests in the student/miner solidarity by directing the

miners to Yarmouth, some 1½ hours away from Ipswich!

**Monday, 31 January:** Picketing of Cliff Quay recommences but with only 50 miners present, oil lorries pass through the gate unimpeded.

**Tuesday, 1 February:** Essex University provides benefit concert for the miners' strike which is expected to raise £1000 plus for the strike fund and £300 for local political activity. T&GWU members of CUFDMs stage protest against remarks of district official.

**Wednesday, 2 February:** CUFDMs continues its policy of projecting the miners' strike in the town by staging meetings at the gates of the four largest factories in the area with talks by rank-and-file miners and members of the United Front.

**Thursday, 3 February:** Colchester Trades Council, after public attacks on the activities of the United Front (publicly criticising the NUM for not having contacted them before!) demonstrate what real support of the miners' strike is by holding a meeting in the Labour Party Hall (seating capacity—100). CUFDMs begins to mobilise for Sunday's national demonstration in London; to date, the Trades Council and Labour Party have done precisely nothing.