

RED WEEKLY

15 MAY 1975

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DEMONSTRATE AGAINST THE EEC

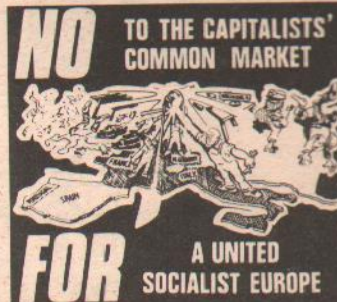
LONDON Sat. 31 May 2.00pm,

Hyde Park, Speakers Corner

Speakers include: Joan Lester and Eddie Loyden, with Peter Taaffe (Editor, *Militant*).

This demonstration has been called by the Labour Party Young Socialists.

The IMG will be giving the demonstration its full support.



BENN — THE PAPER TIGER



As the pound slumps and unemployment soars towards the million mark, the voices of the ruling class and their paid hacks in the bosses' press are rising to a hysterical crescendo around a single demand: sack Benn.

Who is this bogeyman Benn?—the man who has been likened to Dracula by that caveman of the Tory front bench, Sir Keith Joseph. Is the 'regenerator of British industry', the man who wants to launch a thousand rationalisations—and even more redundancies—really red in tooth and claw with the blood of massed private property?

Well, despite Mr Benn's tenancy at the Department of Industry, capitalism is still with us. Tottering it may be, but it's not Benn and the Labour left who are going to deliver the knock-out blow.

'Ah', says the ruling class, 'but Benn is responsible for the loss of confidence in government economic policy.' A surprising argument, since none of them thought the social contract would succeed in holding the working class in check in the first place.

It is the militancy of the working class that is scaring the capitalists. It

is the working class, not Tony Benn as the bosses' CBI chief Lord Watkinson claimed, who are 'harassing the businessmen who run free enterprises'. And it is this 'harassment' which threatens to destroy all the plans these gentlemen have in store once the British economy is firmly implanted in the Common Market after 5 June.

The bosses hate Benn not because of what he does but because of what he says. His ideas for propping up capitalism through a National Enterprise Board and 'worker participation' threaten none of capitalism's inter-

ests. But now virtually every worker faced with the sack is demanding that Benn and the Labour Government nationalise their company, open the books and give more power to the trade unions. And the bosses fear that even if Labour doesn't do it, the workers might start doing it themselves.

Wilson and the right wing of the Labour Party are equally scared by this prospect. Two days after Watkinson's diatribe, Labour ministers Roy Hattersley and Harold Lever joined in the fray. They both publicly attacked Benn, while Lever made reassuring noises to his wealthy friends in industry and told them that they would be consulted over every aspect of Benn's Industry Bill.

In the face of this attack Labour's fake lefts have been making pathetic pleas for 'unity'. Heffer, after being unceremoniously ditched by Wilson following his anti-Market speech in the House of Commons, then turned round and said that a large 'no' vote against staying in the Common Market was not a vote against the leader-

ship. What is more, he appealed to the Labour Party 'to unite around the Prime Minister'. The same Prime Minister leads the most nakedly pro-capitalist forces inside the Labour Government, and the only unity in which he is interested is that which is based on saving British capitalism.

The 'left' could only fight the right wing and the capitalist forces which are baying for the blood of Benn and the working class if they organised their forces—campaigning in the unions, the factories and on

the sites; holding meetings in the local areas and giving unstinting support to every working class struggle; opposing the social contract instead of using it as a fig-leaf to cover their own bankruptcy. This is the only way to defeat the employers and their friends in the Labour Government. But the 'lefts' won't do this. Benn's reformism provides no way forward. Instead the revolutionaries will have to do the job.

MICK GOSLING

FUND DRIVE

First the nice part - thanks to M Findlay (Leeds) for £5; Huddersfield IMG £10 AJ Scott £5; C Todd £1 and H Mee who sent us £2. Thanks also to other branches and individuals who are too numerous to mention.

Now the bad part. Last week's post showed a marked drop on the week before's excellent beginning. So we are struggling again. There are still some of April's bills lying in the tray and we have been getting those polite letters which end by saying 'no more supplies until you pay'.

We ask every reader who has not yet sent in a contribution to do so now. All those readers who gave up smoking after Healey's Budget can make sure that the money they saved is invested in the best cause. They can start with a donation to *Red Weekly*. The address is 182 Pentonville Road, London N1.

Car bosses offer 'new deal'—

WORKER PARTICIPATION IN

BANKRUPTCY



This is what Chrysler UK (who lost £22 million last year) are offering their 27,000 employees —if the 4,000 men at the company's key Stoke, Coventry, engine plant call off their strike action in pursuit of a 'substantial' pay offer. Faced with crumbling car markets—foreign cars took a record 38 per cent of the home car market in April—the car bosses have become suddenly concerned about involving their workers in the industry's problems.

The idea is simple. If workers help take decisions, it is hoped they will feel responsible for the effects of the capitalist crisis on their firm and accept short-time, sackings and speed-up, and wage increases which don't keep pace with inflation. What the bosses can't do themselves, they want 'worker participation' to do for them.

RYDER REPORT

The Chrysler decision comes hot on the heels of the Ryder Report on British Leyland. The Ryder Report bases Leyland's future on a 50 per cent increase in sales by 1982. But the most optimistic analysis of the world car market in this period shows an increase of only 25 per cent. So with firms savagely competing for shares of the market, Ryder projects British Leyland increasing its share of the European market 20 times to 30 per cent.



In order to get these results, Leyland needs a level of labour productivity at least equivalent to other plants. The proposed injection of £2.8 billion has to be combined with a doubling or trebling of the present productivity level, even on the basis of a 50 per cent increase in sales. And 25 per cent of the workforce, not including those affected in subsidiary industries, would have to go—at least 40,000 jobs.

No wonder Ryder said that the 'most crucial factor' in increasing productivity at BL was 'significant progress towards industrial democracy' and a 'new spirit of reasonable cooperation' from the trade unions.

THE ALTERNATIVE

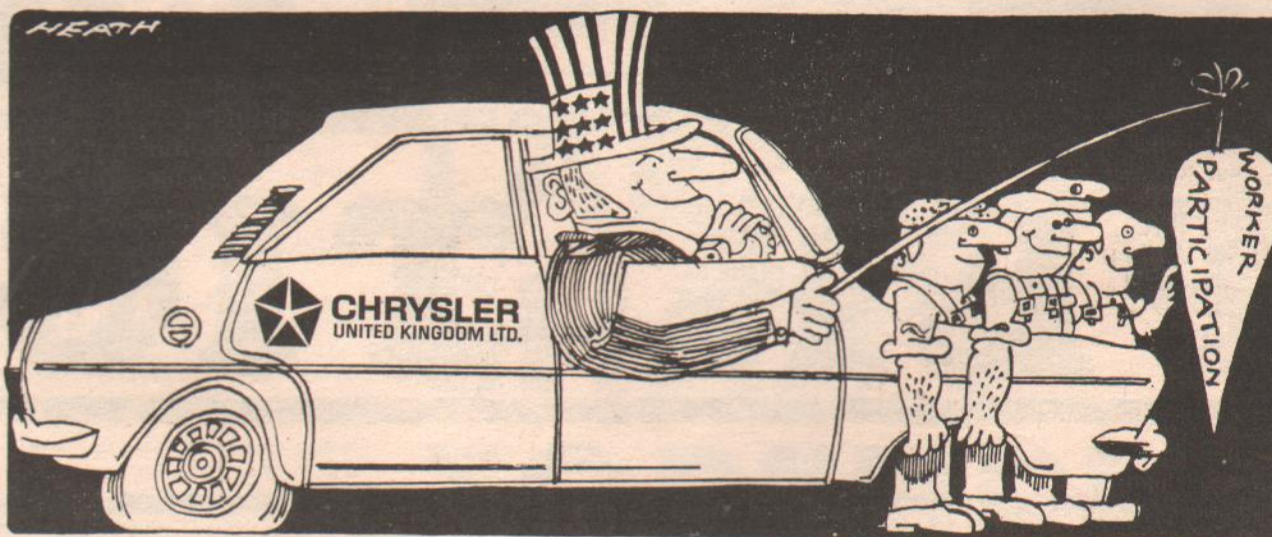
Behind the bluff of worker participation lies this savage reality. But instead of unifying and generalising around common demands the struggles that are continually breaking out over speed-up, union officials and leading stewards have accepted short-time and voluntary redundancies as an 'alternative' to sackings.



In fact this merely paves the way for mass sackings later on, when the car bosses think they have the measure of car workers. Meanwhile the unions leave the workers to get on with their struggles in isolation, meaning that tens of thousands of car workers are laid off without really knowing why. This can only lead to divisions and demoralisation among the workforce.

It is only fear of a wave of factory occupations that prevents the car bosses from carrying out mass sackings and plant closures now. The task facing militants in the motor industry

Q. How can you tell when a firm's going bankrupt?
A. It offers its workers a 'revolutionary deal' including (a) worker participation, (b) profit-sharing, and (c) possible Government involvement.



EQUAL PAY FOR ALL AT DUNLOP

For three weeks 600 clerical workers at Dunlop's Coventry factory have been on strike for more pay. The strikers, 400 of whom are women, belong to the white-collar unions APEX and ACTSS and are demanding a £10 rise across the board with no mention of equal pay. It is this strike which is bringing large sections of the car industry to a grinding halt due to shortages of wheel and suspension units.

Top grade clerical workers at Dunlop earn less than internal postmen who get £50 a week and sweepers-up who get £48. Even greater divisions exist in clerical grades between male and female rates. At present there are four grades for clerical staff. Male earnings rise from £33.43 a week, but women on the same grades are stuck between £30 and £35. Last week British Leyland announced that it intended to re-import components sent to its Innocenti factory in Milan. Approaches have been made from Dunlop shop stewards to BL stewards as well as the docks and the airports to stop this attempt to break the strike.

But after initial promises of blacking, the Longbridge stewards are now saying that they can't black the products because they are British goods being re-imported! Meanwhile, despite the strike being official the strikers have received no strike pay since they stopped work.

Dunlop is now offering up to £7.35 for men (an increase of 35p on their original offer) and £6.40 for women (20p on the original offer). This is conditional on a new grading structure which would scrap the existing system in favour of five tier structure with women on the lowest grade! Equal pay on this basis would be a sick joke.

Local union officials have colluded with management all down the line in allowing clerical workers' wages to slip in value over the past five years. For the last two years no claim was submitted because of promises made of equal pay in 1975. The women are now discovering what a fraud this is—but it might be too late to change the course of this strike.

Cowley IMG

Maureen Smith

COWLEY GRINDS TO A HALT

At Cowley, where 11,000 workers have been laid off and Maxi and Marina production stopped, British Leyland management are meeting with little resistance to their plan to cut the workforce. This plan is the result of the drastic fall in the sales of Cowley's main model, the Marina, combined with the drive for speed-up which has been in top gear for the last year.

In March an annual wage rise, well below the social contract guidelines, was accepted at Cowley. Moves towards a fight were sabotaged by the local and national trade union bureaucrats. The district officials used the company's threat of withholding back payment to get the Body Plant workers to accept the deal.

In the Assembly Plant, the 'moderate'



Reg Parsons—sabotaged overtime ban

senior steward Reg Parsons, who was elected in the wake of the victimisation of Alan Thornett, sabotaged an overtime ban decided on by a mass meeting. The ban was meant to use the launch date of Leyland's new model, the '18/22 series', as a bargaining lever.

STOCKPILES

As soon as it was clear that there would be no fight on the wage reviews, Leyland announced stockpiles of about six months' sales of the Marina. After a week's lay-off at Easter, Marina workers returned to a four-day week. This followed months of public denials by BL that they had any excess stocks. Stewards were spurred by this to elect a committee to investigate Leyland's statements, realising that the company's monopoly of information, protected by 'commercial secrecy', was an important weapon in the employer's hands. They demanded the opening of the company's books to trade union inspection, and resolved to use all possible trade union channels to collect the information required if the company failed to comply. This was potentially an important preparatory move towards fighting redundancy by the working out of a trade union plan, in light of the information disclosed, for work-sharing with no loss of pay.

But the only serious opposition to short-time has come from the 'indirect' (non-track) workers in the Body Plant. When indirect workers on the Marina were laid-off, the section operated a 'one out—all out' policy, which shut down production on all models for one day per week. But despite the unity shown within the section this fight did not provide a basis for uniting the workforce as a whole. The action has now been called off.

More than 25,000 car workers in the Midlands are idle today as a result of three Coventry disputes:

- a total of 18,000 British Leyland workers at Cowley and Longbridge are laid off as a result of the Dunlop dispute;
- all Massey-Ferguson tractor production has been halted by a strike of 4,500 workers demanding a 'substantial' wage increase;
- 2,000 Dunlop manual workers are laid off as a result of the clerical workers' strike;
- 4,000 Chrysler workers at the Coventry engine plant are also striking for a 'substantial' wage increase.

The offer of voluntary redundancies—Leyland are calling for 1600 in the Body and Assembly plants—has been taken both by older workers eager to escape a lifetime of slavery, and others glad of a chance to change to less soul-destroying work.

But unemployment in the Oxford area, while still below the national average, has hit a 30-year peak. The majority of workers at the factory now face indefinite short-time working even after the loss of over 2,000 jobs. Car sales are still declining and further cuts in Marina production are already planned. On the tracks producing the new '18/22 series' workers have noticed cars bearing the company's code for unallocated vehicles, built for stock rather than order—only six weeks after it was launched!

Many Leyland workers have been led to believe that Leyland's acceptance of the Ryder Report rules out compulsory redundancies. But no such guarantees exist—only the fears of both BL and Ryder of a militant response to sackings.



LOCKED OUT!

Eight thousand workers at Ford's Dagenham have been laid off indefinitely. This move by management is an attempt to smash the strike by doorhangers, setters and welders in the Body Plant who are refusing to operate new manning schedules involving increases of up to 50 per cent in workloads.

However, the capitulation of the Communist Party and left Labour leaders of the unions in the plant has allowed the initiative to pass back to the management. Senior stewards got the occupation of the Body Plant called off after two days as soon as the management agreed to talk about the new manning levels.

But nothing new was offered to the strikers at their meeting on 6 May. In fact management have used the lay-off to 'lose' all the production they wanted to

cut in May through short-time working. They have now informed all the men that the lay-off agreement has been lifted.

While the occupation was on, the 'Knock Down' section—in which parts are boxed up for assembly overseas—had been closed off. Drivers refused to take lorries through the barricades built by the occupying workers. Similarly no wheels could be moved out—something which would have rapidly brought Ford's to a halt nationally.

Under the control of a democratically elected occupation committee, the occupation could have become the focal point of national opposition to Ford's speed-up and lay-off plans, laying the basis for a unified fight around a common set of demands. As it is, the initiative now lies with the management who can decide when to recall the men.

END THIS ACT

Over 500 people have now been detained—many for seven days or more—under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act passed in the wake of the Birmingham bombings last November. Only a handful of those arrested have been charged with any offence, yet fifty have been served with exclusion orders for deportation to Ireland.

The Act was passed for an initial period of six months without a single Labour MP—'left' or otherwise—voting against. It is now due for renewal; but apparently Roy Jenkins can and will extend it for another six months without any vote, simply by laying an executive order before Parliament.

This means that the forces of the State will continue to have a field day in their attempts to intimidate the Irish community as a whole and weaken the working class movement by stirring up anti-Irish feeling in its ranks. The use of the Act in this way has already been well documented, particularly in the recent 'Report on the First Four Months' Operation of the Act' by the National Council for Civil Liberties.

THREE PARTS

The Act is divided into three parts. It consists of firstly the ban on the IRA (both Official and Provisional); secondly the power for the Home Secretary to deport from Britain (excluding the Six Counties) any person suspected of 'terrorism'; and thirdly the power of the police to hold a suspect for questioning for up to 48 hours, followed by a further five days on the Home Secretary's authority (automatically granted).

by **Niall Nolan**

The powers conferred on the police and courts by the Act are very vague and therefore wide ranging. Under the first section, for example, a maximum sentence of an unlimited fine and a five year jail sentence awaits anyone organising a meeting of more than two people 'in support of the IRA'.

In fact, says the Report, only James Fegan of Glasgow has been convicted under the Act—for allegedly selling Republican posters in a bar. He got six months.

The fifty exclusion orders so far signed by the Home Secretary have been directed against both Official and Provisional activists without apparent distinction, as well as against general Republican sympathisers and even those who have never—or only in the distant past—been involved in Republican politics.

BLACK FARCE

The 'representation' (not appeal) system is a black farce. A person subject to an exclusion order has no right to know the evidence on which the exclusion order was made; to have a

public or formal hearing of the representations; or to know why the representations were unsuccessful. Lord Alport, a Tory peer, is the Home Secretary's 'adviser' and makes a practice of not examining police evidence until after interviewing the excludee.

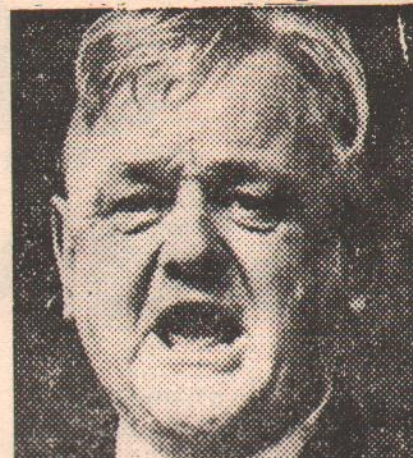
The evidence shows that the police use their powers of arrest and detention under the Act to gather information on the Irish community. Many questioned state that the police showed little interest in where they were on the day of the particular 'crime' but much more in friends, colleagues and drinking companions, etc. Furthermore the seven days' detention in often appalling conditions constitutes an effective punishment for 'suspects' against whom the police can produce no evidence.

NCCL WEAKNESS

The weakest part of the NCCL Report is its attempt to justify the repeal of the Act in terms of its ineffectiveness against terrorists.

We must not rely on the NCCL to defend us, valuable though its report is, but rather follow the actions of Hammersmith Trades Council—which launched a petition against the Act—and of the London building sites which threatened to strike if an exclusion order against T&G steward James O'Rourke was not lifted (which it immediately was). That is the way to defeat this vicious piece of anti-working class legislation.

Law Lord's Rape Ruling



The decision by the House of Lords that a man accused of rape has to do nothing more than establish he thought that his victim had given consent is a scandal.

Now it is the woman who will go on trial. She will have to disprove her attacker's allegation that 'she really wanted it'. Rape is painful and brutal. The House of Lords are insinuating that women really enjoy it.

The decision of the House of Lords shows the attitude towards women and sex that predominates in capitalist society. They see the function of women as to provide a service which—although they might not enjoy it—they must suffer to please the man.

The ruling class cannot imagine women as having any other roles than those of submissive housewives and satisfiers of men's 'needs'. The legal guardians of capitalist society have a vested interest in keeping women in 'their place' and will 'tolerate' any brutalities that perpetuate this.

OPPOSITION

Labour MP Jack Ashley has opposed the decision of the House of Lords and is demanding that the House of Commons overrule their decision. But Ashley's opposition is very limited and does not go to the root of the issue. The decision of the House of Lords merely rounds off logically the present laws on rape. Even before the decision any woman who complained of rape ran the danger of being pilloried.

Defence counsels have always had a favourite trick of trying to establish the victim's so-called promiscuity, using every available means to prove she had lots of previous sexual experiences. Evidence of an abortion was always hailed by the defence as 'proof' of the victim's licentious life.

As any social worker will tell you, it is quite unusual for women who have been raped to go to the police. In the United States—where rape cases are even more frequent—only 28 per cent of rape cases are followed up, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is quite likely that the British figures are no different.

'LIE BACK AND THINK OF HAILSHAM'

Jack Ashley, like all social democrats, is only interested in tampering about with the system. He does not take up the fight for women's sexuality and therefore cannot mount a real challenge to the House of Lords decision.

By their ruling they endorse the view that a rapist is only taking to its logical conclusion: the idea of the ruling class that the job of women is to lie still and get pregnant when needed. Of course most people do not take those ideas to the conclusion of violent rape. But most men travel part of that road in their treatment and attitude to women.

Ashley might protest at the abuse of the system, but unless you attack the system it is impossible to deal with the sexual values from which rape arises.

The ruling class will do everything in their power to preserve the family and thereby maintain the inferior position of women in society. The fight for the emancipation of women means challenging capitalism and all its laws, not simply discussing some amendments in the House of Commons.

...the last word

(from *The Guardian* 8/5/75).

Sir,—Following your report of the Lords' decision on rape, do you think that if I can persuade myself that in spite of all the evidence to the contrary I am Lord Sief, I shall be permitted to shoplift in Marks and Spencers with impunity?—Yours truly,
Nina Jennings,
London, NW 3.

OFFICIALS CHAT TO LOYALISTS, SHOOT SOCIALISTS



Bernadette McAliskey and Seamus Costello of the IRSP at a recent press conference, with the mask worn by the killers of IRSP member Hugh Ferguson.

In the past two weeks there have been assassination attempts on three leading members of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP)—Sean Flynn and Jim McCorry of the Belfast executive, and Seamus Costello of the national executive.

Meanwhile the Officials' key figure in Belfast, Billy McMillan, has been shot dead. The pessimistic conclusion which one is forced to draw is that both sides are locked in a vicious circle of attack/retaliation, a cycle which threatens to devour them both.

In a previous article in *Red Weekly* (13 March) we pointed to substantial evidence indicating that the Officials had initiated a series of bomb

feud goes completely against this need.

In fact, the whole politics of the Officials are completely at variance with the needs of the anti-Unionist population. When there were moves in the Catholic areas to build community defence forces under the favourable situation created by the Provo ceasefire, the Officials denounced these as moves to create a 'sectarian' police force.

An *Phoblacht* of 2 May revealed that a meeting had taken place between the Official leadership and the Belfast UVF (8 March 1975 at the Landsdown Court Hotel, involving Des O'Hagan, Harry McKeown and for the UVF Tommy West, a well-known bomb maker). This willingness to talk to the UVF—a self-confessed sectarian anti-communist group which has close links with the British NF and regularly acknowledges its part in sectarian murders—contrasts strongly with the Officials' refusal to discuss with their former comrades of the IRSP. This is justified because the IRSP is... sectarian!

'CONSISTENCY'

There is a crazy consistency to these 'politics'. In the Officials' view, avoiding actions which might alienate 'Protestant workers' has become the paramount principle of political activity. Class unity around economic demands has been counterposed to unity around democratic and anti-imperialist demands.

Coupled to this have been the regular wild predictions by the Officials that socialist currents were about to emerge from the Loyalist paramilitary groupings. Hence emerged the tendency of the Officials to demonstrate to the Loyalists that they were not like the rest of Republicans.

This led to a bizarre situation in early March, when the Officials began to release press statements claiming that the IRSP was involved in a series of bomb

Officials, Cathal Goulding and Mike Ryan. Then two incidents occurred which cast light on many of the aspects of the feud.

First a Protestant paramilitary group claimed responsibility for the bomb attack on Goulding and Ryan. Then when a Catholic bar in North Belfast, Conways—reported to be frequented by Official Republican supporters—was subject to a bomb attack, some of the perpetrators were caught in the act. Were they IRSP members trying to spark off a sectarian civil war? No—they were members of a Protestant paramilitary group!

CONFIRMATION

These incidents were a sober confirmation of the warnings that the feud was providing a cover for provocateurs.

We have indicated where we think most of the responsibility for this political tragedy lies. We have also stated previously, however, that—whatever the pressures upon them—any move by the IRSP to resort to retaliation would be disastrous.

Many will be sceptical that IRSP supporters have not been involved in any of the attacks on the Officials. Certainly one could fault the whole way in which the IRSP presented its relationship to the People's Liberation Army—something its opponents were able to seize upon to question its integrity in regard to its denials of involvement in attacks on Officials.

MISGIVINGS

We still feel, however, that the key to the solution of the feud lies through the establishment of broad support for the IRSP's right to organise. Within that framework—despite many political differences we have with the IRSP, and despite certain misgivings about their handling of the conflict with the Officials—the International Marxist Group, in conjunction with other socialist organisations, is sponsoring a tour of Britain next week for a prominent IRSP speaker.



Cathal Goulding, Officials leader.

TOM Conference

The National Labour Movement Delegate Conference on Ireland, organised by the Troops Out Movement, which takes place in London on Saturday 24 May, is continuing to gain support in the labour movement. The conference is open to delegates from trade union branches, trades councils, shop steward committees, Labour Party constituency parties or branches, LPYS branches, and branches of the National Union of Students only.

Credentials are available at 75p per delegate from TOM, 103 Hammersmith Road, London W.14. Further information can be obtained from 01-602 1899.

What is the Irish Republican Socialist Party? Why has it broken with the Officials?

Mike Plunkett, national secretary of the IRSP, is speaking at a number of meetings in Britain organised by the IMG and the IS.

SUN 18 MAY—2.30pm in the Polytechnic Union, Cavendish House, All Saints, Manchester.

MON 19 MAY—12.45pm in Meeting Room C at the University Union, Oxford Road, Manchester.

At both meetings IMG and IS speakers will be on the platform.

LAOS ON THE BRINK

Laos was the first country in Indochina to have a Government of 'National Union'. Now it is the only country of the three that has not yet been liberated.

The Vientiane Accords of 1973 arose out of the defeats suffered by the USA in the spring offensive of 1972 in Vietnam, the Pathet Lao's offensives in the period 1970-72 in Laos, and the rapid growth of the FUNK in Cambodia. This was the third set of agreements between the Laotian resistance and imperialism. The two previous coalition governments had given imperialism time to manoeuvre and had resulted in grave setbacks for the Pathet Lao.

However, it is clear that the framework of the 1973 Accords is quite different. Firstly, they represented a major victory in forcing the withdrawal of US forces and US bombing from Laos and the weakening and disarray of the 'Special Forces' and Thai mercenaries. The weakening of the puppet regime was continued by the 'neutralisation' of the twin capitals of Vientiane and Luang Prabang. There are now 3,000 armed Pathet Lao troops stationed in those cities.

Not only do these form a counterweight to the right-wing armed forces and guarantee the security of the Pathet Lao Ministers, they also perform an important political task.

They serve as a constant reminder to the urban population of the balance of forces and they also increase the points of contact between the resistance and the population. This has apparently led to a significant increase in the base of the Pathet Lao in the cities.

RIGHT DIVIDED

Secondly, the withdrawal of US backing, the military victories of the Pathet Lao, and the signing of the Accords has led to increasing divisions amongst the Laotian right.

Thirdly, the refusal of the Pathet Lao to disarm their forces (as they did in 1954), and their insistence on full representation in all governmental bodies (unlike 1962) makes it quite clear that the Government of National Union is a transition in the revolution, not its demobilisation.

At the level of the Government, the 10-point programme adopted in early 1973 and the 18-point programme adopted a little later were wholly based on the theses and speeches of Souphanouvong of the Pathet Lao. Nine months ago, the dissolution of the National Assembly

(the governing body of the puppet regime) was agreed in principle. Despite capitalist manoeuvres it was finally eliminated earlier this month.

Now the Government is run through the Political Council which, although it contains right-wingers, is dominated by the Pathet Lao and led by Souphanouvong.

Linked developments of an even greater significance have also taken place. On 24 December 1974, two companies of former right wing troops mutinied in Ban Houei Sai. This sparked off a mobilisation of the whole population demanding the strict application of the Pathet Lao programme, the entry of Pathet Lao troops into the area, the replacement of the governor, and the right to travel freely. These demands, which were in accordance with and even went beyond those of the Pathet Lao, were all won.

DEMONSTRATIONS

A similar mobilisation broke out on 6 January of this year in Thakhek. A mass demonstration was attacked

by reactionary troops. In Vientiane a solidarity demonstration was called by students and small-scale strikes broke out.

This test of strength beginning from urban mobilisations is a new feature of the Laotian revolution and a continuing phenomenon. On 7 May, in Pakse on the Mekong, 2,000 students and workers took the provincial governor and other officials hostage and demanded an end to price rises, the expropriation of hoarded rice and the replacement of the provincial administration. This was followed two days later by a similar mobilisation in Vientiane when 3,000 demonstrators attacked the US Embassy demanding the expulsion of all American 'aid personnel' and the resignation of three rightwing ministers and two reactionary generals from the Government. Hours later they went.

Nor has there been any stability on the military front. Since 14 April fierce fighting has been taking place in the north of the country between right-wing and revolutionary forces. At Sala Phoukhoun many soldiers of the rightist forces defected to the

insurgents, enabling them to take the town.

In continuing fighting the Pathet Lao have systematically swept away the positions of right-wing troops around Vientiane. On the same day as the mass mobilisation in Pakse, the town of Kasy, just north of Vientiane, was taken by the Pathet Lao. Significantly, the Political Committee has ordered a ceasefire; equally significantly, the Pathet Lao leadership has not enforced it.

MILITARY FRONT

Under the impact of the victories in Vietnam and Cambodia the revolutionary offensive is gaining new momentum. The inability of the United States to finally intervene in Cambodia and Vietnam signals the end of the aspirations of the right wing in Laos. Behind the facade of 'concord' the struggle is erupting anew—a struggle that must end in the victory of the Laotian revolution and the birth of an Indochinese federation of workers' states.

David Johnson



Laotian demonstrators march on US Embassy in Vientiane



WHAT'S ON

HACKNEY IMG public meeting: 'Vote No to the Common Market, Fight for a Socialist Europe'. Speaker: Bob Pennington (IMG Nat Cttee). Friday 23 May, 7.30pm, Community Centre, Kate Greenaway Library, Weymouth Terrace, E.2.

BUILD ANTI-EEC DEMO, 31 MAY: Public meeting Thursday 29 May, 7.30pm in Barking Town Hall with speakers John Fisher (LP, in personal capacity), John Ross (Red Weekly Editorial Board), Terry Barret (Barking & Dagenham Shrewsbury Defence Cttee, in personal capacity).

AFTER THE REFERENDUM—Which Way Forward? Public meeting Thurs 12 June, 7.30pm in Barking Town Hall. Speakers: John Hartnell (IMG Nat Cttee) and Steve Harper (Shrewsbury Defence Cttee, in personal capacity).

CALLING ALL MANCHESTER ANTI-FASCISTS! Urgent meeting Thurs 22 May, 7.30pm, in Manchester Town Hall Basement Theatre. Speaker: Maurice Ludmer. Chair: Phil Widdall. Essential all activists attend. Organised by Manchester AFC.

ALL BIRMINGHAM SQUATTERS meeting: Tues 20 May, 8pm, Wellington pub (corner of Bromsgrove St/Bristol St).

MIDLANDS AGAINST THE MARKET demo and rally on Sat 31 May. Starts 11.30am, Birmingham.

SOUTH BIRMINGHAM Committee Against the EEC—demonstration 1pm, Saturday 17 May. Assemble at Cotteridge Roundabout, Pershore Rd, Cotteridge, Birmingham. For details of campaign phone 472 5552 or write to Flat 1, 14 Woodstock Road, Moseley, Birmingham.

'INDOCHINA—VICTORY AND BEYOND': IMG public meeting in Digbeth Hall, Birmingham with speaker Robin Blackburn, Sunday 18 May, 7.30pm.

RED DISCO with sounds, food and booze to raise funds for Red Weekly. Sat 17 May, 8pm till very late at 'The Bank' (corner Tolmers Sq and Hampstead Rd, NW1—Warren St and Euston Sq tubes). Entrance 40p.

SOUTH EAST ASIA WEEKEND: Exhibitions, films, discussions at the Collegiate Theatre, 25 Gordon St, WC1, starting 6pm Fri 16 May and all day Saturday from 11am.

FREE DESMOND TROTTER CAMPAIGN: Picket every Friday 4.30-6pm outside East Caribbean High Commission, Haymarket, London SW1.

WANTED—permanent accommodation in London for Chilean political refugees. Contact Box RW/8/5.

READ 'YOUNG SOCIALIST' Labour's independent Marxist youth paper, obtainable from 98 Gifford Street, N.1. 10p p&p.



PRG representative Ms Minh speaking in London last week—but Labour Government still delays recognition. Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)

Events in Vietnam and Cambodia since liberation once again demonstrate the unity of the Indochinese revolution but also the different processes and developments at work in the individual countries.

From Vietnam a reporter for the French daily *Le Monde* described the calm in Da Nang. Cinemas and shops are re-opening and schools are once more functioning. The main difference, apparently, was that the cinemas showed revolutionary films—to packed audiences. There is plenty of food in the shops at cheaper prices, North Vietnamese currency is accepted everywhere, the schools are teaching new lessons and classes in reading and history have been started for adults.

*** DISLOCATION ***

The urgent problems facing the revolutionary forces are a direct result of the barbaric imperialist intervention and the social dislocation of the last few months. High on the list is the restoration of some degree of functioning administration, especially for production and food distribution. The millions of refugees and displaced persons, of war wounded and the political prisoners released from the camps, are also a desperate problem.

Measures were immediately taken to combat what one reporter called 'the true face of Vietnamisation—the transformation of Vietnamese into Americans.' The PRG's directives stress the equality of race, sex and religion, promising full employment, education and welfare. They also promised to protect private property and industry—but only so long as these

Behind this ambiguous stance, the PRG has nationalised all banks, transportation, factories, farms and US-owned firms as well as the property of 'absent' (i.e. fled) owners and enemies—in other words the national bourgeoisie. This is a clear indication of the PRG's firm intention to create a workers' state in Vietnam.

What is not so clear is the make up of the administration. At present, it is still controlled by a temporary Military Committee.

Statements by the PRG have indicated the desire for 'class reconciliation' and 'just rewards' to all those from the former regime who 'sincerely want to contribute constructively'. Such statements can only confuse and miseducate the revolutionary masses and disarm their vigilance.

A united front between the PRG and many of the former opposition groups is both permissible and necessary, but this can only be done on a clear class basis. The PRG's actions themselves deny the possibility of 'national reconciliation' between the classes—and it is, after all, why the Vietnamese have fought a revolutionary war for the last 30 years.

*** CAMBODIA ***

In Cambodia the picture is much less clear—its a reflection of the lower level of social development of the Cambodian revolution.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN INDOCHINA?

forces has always been smeared with the 'bloodbath' tag by the paid hacks of imperialism and the capitalist press. Most of these allegations have been proved false. In this case, the 'evidence' comes entirely from a radio station in South East Asia which claims to be the voice of the Free Khmers. In fact—surprise, surprise—it is the voice of Uncle Sam's CIA broadcasting into the liberated areas.

The entry of the liberation army, the FUNK, into Phnom Penh was greeted with popular enthusiasm and fraternisation. This atmosphere was rather spoilt as the Red Khmers evacuated the city, but they did so for three reasons.

Firstly because of the still present fears that the USA would bomb it (as they did in 1968) rather than leave it—a fear reinforced by the presence of US aircraft carriers off the coast. Secondly to root out the remnants of the puppet regime and their mercenary troops. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, to plant the rice crop before the monsoon season begins in a few weeks' time, and to start the task of returning the refugees to the villages.

Nevertheless the popularity of the GRUNK has not been upset to the extent that the capitalist press would like us to believe.

Since liberation the capitalist press has been filled with tales of a 'bloodbath'—the

vary) officials of the old regime. Although grossly exaggerated for the purposes of propaganda, it would indeed be surprising if certain war criminals had not been executed in the wake of a five-year civil war in which one seventh of the whole population was killed or maimed, and 50 per cent suffered starvation and disease.

The final refutation comes from journalists who were actually in Phnom Penh. They 'could not substantiate' the horror stories, despite spending most of their time in the French Embassy listening to local and outside news bulletins.

*** DECISIVE TASK ***

The completion of the socialist revolution is the decisive task now. But in this context the statements of Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan promising a policy of 'neutrality' and 'non-alignment' are a step backwards. It was precisely the pursuit of this utopian policy which prepared the way for the Lon Nol coup in 1970:

A rigorous struggle against all exploiters, nationally and internationally, is necessary for the consolidation of the Cambodian revolution. This road is already being mapped out in the rural areas. It would aid the revolutionary vanguard if the Red Khmer broke their present isolation and stated exactly what their aims and objectives are. Secret diplomacy and secret strategies can only aid counter-revolution-

THE SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMON MARKET



The capitalist class portrays the EEC as a friendly club established so that all may prosper. The Labour right declares that there is no economic alternative to Britain remaining in the Common Market. The reality is very different. The EEC was established as an organisation for the defence of the imperialist system. The EEC is a system based on the waste of the productive forces through the anarchy of capitalist production and the nation state. The EEC systematically presents itself as the only legitimate representative of 'Europe' and prevents co-operation with the planned economies of Eastern Europe. In this dossier we look at the origins of the Common Market and the real economic alternatives which exist to it.

THE COMMON MARKET - IMPERIALISM'S BABY

After the war Europe lay in ruins. In Western Germany more than three quarters of the river bridges were impassable. Nine out of ten of the trucks in France were out of action. Vast stretches of railway lines were unusable, and less than half of Europe's locomotives were in working order.

Holland, Norway and Britain had all lost half of their merchant fleets whilst France and Italy had lost 70 and 90 per cent respectively. Coal production in Europe was running at under 40 per cent of pre-war levels. The German Ruhr, which had previously produced 400,000 tons of coal a day, was only turning out 24,000 tons a day.

In Southern Germany production was only 5 per cent of pre-war levels. In Belgium, France, Greece, Holland and Italy it was less than a quarter of pre-war levels. Britain, which had entered the war as the world's creditor nation, finished up as the world's largest debtor.

At Potsdam in 1945 the Allied powers agreed literally to dismember German industry. The most reactionary and nationalistic forces in the capitalist class had led the Allied war effort. Enraged by fascist Germany's plans to establish the supremacy of German capitalism, the Churchills and the de Gaulles bayed for the reduction of Germany to a 'pastoral economy'. The USSR and France in particular joined in the plunder like rapacious bandits.

Real enemy

The Americans, however, were quick to learn. They soon realised that the threat to their world supremacy did not arise from a new resurgence of German fascism, but saw that the real enemy was a strengthened USSR and the new workers' states of East Europe.

The US also looked with alarm at the big growth of the workers' parties in Western Europe. In Italy an electoral alliance of the Communist Party and the Italian Socialists—led by Nenni—actually threatened to win a parliamentary majority in 1948. An economically sick, disunited Europe teetered on the brink of collapse. The US correctly feared that this could be a fertile ground for social change.

The demands of the US economy also made it imperative to find new outlets for investment and exports, and the political instability of the 'third world' made Europe and Japan a much

more secure and attractive proposition for this purpose. The JS therefore made a quick about-turn. It saw its task was to unite and prop up European capitalism, and understood that this meant creating a strong Germany and some type of European economic integration.

In June 1947 the Marshall aid plan was launched. Its aim was simple: firstly, to give an economic transfer to the ailing capitalist economies of Western Europe; secondly, to use this as a means of re-arming the capitalist states and forming a military bloc against the USSR and the East European states.

Linchpin

The project of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) logically flowed out of the 'aid' dispersed by American imperialism to Western Europe. The economic integration of the European states provided the basis for the military alliance against communism.

The US could not hope to 'contain' the Soviet Union unless it could create the strong bulwark of a 'united' capitalism in Europe. But the linchpin of that 'united' capitalism was a viable Germany, and that is why the US forced through the formation of the West German Federal Republic in 1949.

This established the conditions for getting West Germany into NATO. The French and the British—worried about German competition and haunted by the threat of German militarism—dragged their feet. The French proposed through the Pleven Plan a European Defence Community which was their alternative to a German army. Dependent on German coal, they also suggested via the Schuman Plan a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

The ECSC offered the prospect of a capitalist steel industry in Germany which was not dominated by the Krupps and Von Thyssens. The federal European army—because that is what the EDC meant—fell by the wayside. The ECSC, which eventually came into existence in 1952, was the first tentative step towards a common economic policy for European capitalism.

As the post-war boom swept Europe the ECSC received a great boost—a boost further accelerated by the spending spree on steel engendered by the Korean war and the demands of the re-armament drive.

Furthermore the wave of radicalisation that had swept the

European working class in 1945 had ebbed. The social democrats and the Stalinists had channelled that into the by-ways of reformism and class collaboration. By the 1950s a mood of passivity had settled on the working class, and no big working class opposition threatened the plans of the European ruling classes.

The political recovery of the European capitalists enabled them to take advantage of the exceptional economic situation. By 1954, when the Americans decided to go full steam ahead with their plans for re-arming German capitalism, opposition had been isolated to the most nationalistic wings of the bourgeoisie and the left social democrats and the CP.

These two disparate wings joined in an unholy alliance to oppose the US plans. The attitude of the CP and its left allies had nothing in common with working class internationalism. The capitalist opponents of German re-armament could find no note of response in their own circles because their policies were so sadly out of touch with the needs of post-war capitalism.

The temporary upward turn of world capitalism and the decline of working class struggle papered over the cracks and fissures between the capitalist states. The ECSC appeared in practice to work. The basis was laid for the signing of the Treaty of Rome in early 1957.

Foundations

Capitalism could only survive with the growth of the multinationals and the expansion of its markets. However, the foundations for the capitalist Common Market were not laid simply because the ruling classes of Europe had understood and acted according to their best interests.

In 1945-46 the mass workers' parties of Western Europe had failed to make an effective challenge to capitalism's rule—in fact they had propped up the decrepit and shaken capitalist regimes in Italy, France and Greece. This gave the ruling class time to re-group and by the use of the Marshall Plan they were able to restore their battered economies.

The signatories of Rome ought to have muttered a grateful thanks to the social democrats and reformists when they put their pens to the document in Rome in 1957.

The Labour right and the capitalist class carry on their campaign in favour of the EEC with typically dual standards. On the one hand, they go around declaring that there is absolutely no economic alternative to staying in the EEC. On the other hand, when anyone does come up with a socialist alternative calling for a sliding scale of wages as protection against inflation, work-sharing with no loss of pay, etc., then the Labour right declares that it can't possibly be afforded. And just to ensure that no one calls their bluff, they insist on a religious defence of the 'principles of commercial secrecy'—no opening of the books, so that no one can get the figures which would make it very easy to work out a concrete alternative strategy.

Disposing of this rubbish is actually very simple. Even the most broad figures which are available show, as we point out below, how easy it is in economic terms to finance a socialist alternative to capitalism and the EEC. The resources of the trade union and labour movement, not to mention what Benn has available at the Ministry of Industry, would show a thousand times more clearly what is possible. The opening of the capitalist books would reveal hundreds of thousands of sources of wealth which capitalism cannot or will not develop. Unfortunately the labour leaders don't even allocate one thousandth of their resources to this.

There is of course a reason why the trade unions and Benn do not allocate even a tiny part of their resources to exposing the utter irrationality and anarchy of capitalism and producing concrete alternatives. That reason is because they have no intention whatever of really fighting to end capitalism in Britain. Instead of fighting for socialism they put forward reactionary and absurd ideas, such as that Britain should leave the EEC and remain a capitalist economy protected by import controls—with perhaps just a little bit of tinkering around with private industry through a National Enterprise Board.

The Labour right has no trouble whatever in showing that this would bring on a collapse of investment, soaring unemployment, inflation going through the roof and an economic crisis rivalling that of the 1930s. All that the Labour left can say is that the working class should accept a massive cut in its standard of living in order to defend the idea of 'national sovereignty'. Not unnaturally, the working class is not attracted by this prospect. It is for this reason, because only a socialist alternative can actually win on 5 June, that the Labour left has so far been knocked from pillar to post in the referendum campaign.

But in fact it is relatively easy to show a socialist alternative. The International Marxist Group has already argued many times for the chief immediate measures which must be taken—automatic compensation of wages for increases in inflation, automatic increases in public expenditure to compensate for rising prices, work-sharing with no loss of pay, and a campaign of public works to eliminate unemployment. We have collected together here just the simplest and most striking figures on how this can be financed. Naturally these figures cannot be taken as exactly what could be achieved; in most cases they are under-estimates, but many other factors—such as sabotage of a large section of the economy by the capitalists, or foreign blockades—could intervene. Nevertheless they do show clearly how there exists even an economic alternative to capitalism and the EEC—and of course the case for socialism is not just economic—which, if campaigned for, would send the Labour right and the capitalist class reeling.

BRITAIN AND THE WORLD ECONOMY

A British withdrawal from the EEC of course could not mean withdrawing from the international economy. Britain is deeply linked to the world economy in a thousand ways and senses.



In the immediate term, the danger for a socialist Britain is that a capitalist boycott could drive the economy down to far lower levels of output than at present. But there are several reasons to think that this is not at all inevitable as a capitalist response. Firstly, Britain is a major economic power and the ending of trade would hurt the boycotters far more than a boycott of a country such as Chile or Cuba.

Secondly, while a capitalist boycott could do damage, it could not wreck the economy when the alternative is a total collapse of output.

Britain would meet gigantic political resistance from the working class of all countries.

Apart from the political impact, which would be gigantic, even Britain's imperial heritage could be used here. The simple act of giving up all foreign capital investments and total military withdrawal from abroad would generate huge enthusiasm in the working class of the world.

How would the trade which is necessary for a planned economy in Britain be financed? Despite all the protestations of Roy Jenkins, this poses no insuperable problem at all. Very interesting calculations have been done by the Cambridge economist Bob Rowthorne showing how abandonment of the international role of the City of London and loss of all the revenues from foreign investment would amount to about £880 million a year. This is not a small sum. But it is only just a little larger than exports of goods in a fortnight and only equivalent to about 1¼% of the economy. It could be entirely financed, in a way to everybody's benefit, by reducing unemployment by about 400,000 and selling the additional output abroad.

In fact the loss would be much less, since offset against this loss of revenue must be put the savings of a Britain which had broken from capitalism. Abandoning all military bases abroad would by itself save £200 million. Pulling out of the EEC would also lead to a considerable saving—the official Treasury estimate, which is almost certainly an underestimate, is that by 1980 the annual contribution of Britain to the EEC budget will be £400 million. If you subtract these two savings from the other losses, it means only a cost of about £280 million—only 1½% of total exports, and equivalent to the output of only 100,000 workers out of a workforce of over 20 million.

Of course it is hard to be exact on all these calculations. If, for example, the capitalist powers were to destroy large sections of the merchant navy, which accounts for four times as much export income as the City, then things would be much worse. If, as is more likely, a socialist Britain emerged as part of a tremendous international revolutionary wave in which other workers' states developed in Europe, then the entire problem of international economy would be solved at one stroke. But in any case even the figures here show that there is no real international economic problem about a socialist alternative for Britain.

And it is in the international economy that the real obstacles arise. The problems here would be amply compensated for by what could be achieved even in economic terms through the elimination of the anarchic and irrational economic system of capitalism.

NO TO CAPITALIST WASTE

The inequalities and waste of capitalism are well known. Some of them are absurd and others positively obscene. For example the investiture of the Prince of Wales cost £1 million with £30,000 going on temporary toilets alone. Yet in Wales nearly a third of the houses are over 80 years old and there are 37,000 houses with no inside toilets.

Other absurdities of capitalism are less well known, but no less striking. For example

load of hogwash—there is no shortage of oil whatever, and the high prices are almost entirely due to the vast increases in profits gained by the oil companies in the last year.

Yet at the same time as it carries on this hullabaloo, capitalism utilises the supposedly scarce and expensive oil in projects which from any rational point of view are virtually complete waste. For example, well over 10 per cent of all oil consumption in the United States is calculated to be on military projects and another 15½ per cent on advertising, finance, insurance, real estate, rental and business services whose sole reason for existing is to service a specifically private ownership based economy. In short, if the real problem was lack or cost of oil then consumption could be cut by anything up to a quarter by the simple expedient of getting rid of these capitalist needs.

The elimination of these absurdities and inequalities of capitalism is justifiable on any moral system whatever. However, in itself the mere elimination of these inequalities would not be a sufficient reason for overthrowing capitalism. It is not worth going through all the upheaval of a socialist revolution just to stop capitalists having cigars or Rolls-Royces. It is the real effects of capitalism in unemployment, fascism, war and its other forms of barbarism which is the justification for ending the rule of the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, having decided to remove capitalism, there is no doubt that vast economic resources can be released by ending the parasitic role of the ruling class and its hangers on.

WASTE

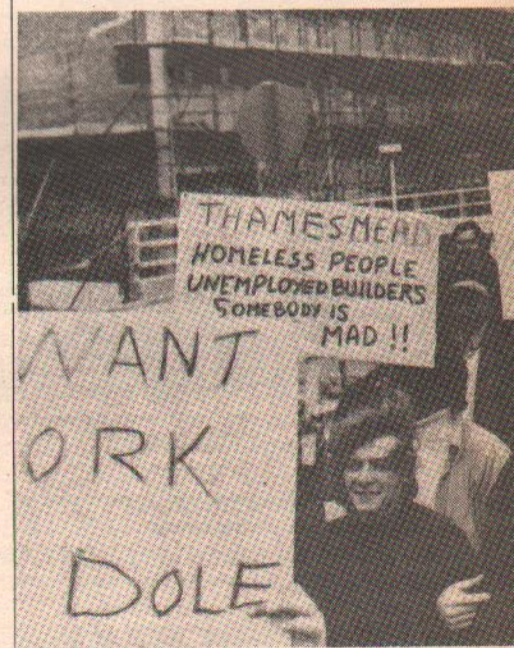
The waste represented by luxury spending by the ruling class is colossal in every capitalist country. For example, the famous American economist Kuznets calculated even for the year 1948 that the 5 per cent of Americans who declared the highest incomes received 18 per cent of the entire revenue of the United States. This sum came to 40,000 million dollars. Their average income was five times that of the average income of ordinary American taxpayers. If that five times had been reduced to only three times as much as the average then that would have released 22,000 million dollars for productive consumption in the United States.

In Britain the situation is, if anything, even more unequal. If really tough measures were taken—for example, the elimination of all incomes of over £75 a week—this would save £2,400 million a year for use in other ways. It would be more than sufficient to double house building or would allow pensions to be increased by three quarters. Even if much less drastic measures were adopted, and higher pay was allowed for highly trained specialists and for workers such as miners who did dangerous jobs, then this would still allow £1,400 million to be saved. Even if only the absolutely very richest are considered we still find that in 1970 there were 8,926 people with incomes exceeding £20,000 a year and getting between them a grand total of £275 million. This was considerably more than the total expenditure of all the local authorities in the country on

The second colossal cost imposed by capitalism is military expenditure. Of course a workers state in Britain would need to spend money on defence against imperialist attacks. But absolutely gigantic savings are possible compared with capitalism and its imperialist requirements—and above all from an army which can't defend anybody except the capitalists.

MILITARY EXPENDITURE

The defence budget at present is £4,000 million a year. This goes to keep armed forces of 370,000 people whose sole real role is to repress the Irish, bolster up the imperialist military alliance of NATO in West Germany, garrison foreign bases in Cyprus, Singapore, Malta, Hong Kong etc. and supply weapons and men to the utterly reactionary Sheiks of the Arab Gulf. The cost of all this is gigantic. Since the Second World War Britain has spent over £80,000 million on arms—well over £5,600 for every family of four.



Reduction of current arms expenditure by only a half—and much more than this could be achieved by a workers state—would release £2,000 million a year. It would also leave the world a decidedly safer and freer place by closing down all the British bases abroad.

In addition to these vast personal incomes and military expenditure, there is of course a vast misuse and misdirection of resources under capitalism. For example, in the boom of 1973 no less than £4,000 million was used on speculation and office building in London alone. In the United States—and Britain is not far behind—it is calculated that 50 per cent of the cost of many goods in the shops is accounted for by advertising and packaging. Elimination of this waste would release vast resources.

MISUSE OF RESOURCES

The Cambridge Political Economy Group has calculated that around 1,300,000 people in Britain are employed in advertising, financial and legal networks, generated by property



PAYING SOCIALISTS



FOR A T BRITAIN

Of course the elimination of this crazy system of capitalism will hurt some people. In Britain the top 100 firms account for more than half of industrial production and a take-over of the top 250 firms would bring virtually all production under control. These firms undoubtedly wouldn't be too pleased by the outcome. However as the top 80% of all personally held shares are owned by 1% of wealth holders with 96% held by 5% of wealth holders, we really don't think too many people will be troubled by that.

● THE ALTERNATIVE ●

As for what will occur if the rule of the bourgeoisie is not destroyed, there should be no illusions as to what that will mean. Capitalism at the moment is only getting warmed up for what a real economic crash means. In the great crash of 1929—and it is bourgeois economists as well as Marxists who predict that the slump which is going to come in 1977-78 may be even worse than 1929—production fell by a third in the United States. In a country such as Germany the real income of the working class fell by 10% in four years for employed workers, and by 1933 two workers out of five were unemployed. In Britain 22% of the working population was unemployed by 1932.

The political outcome of this type of economic collapse is very obvious. To capitalism's usual complement of inflation, unemployment, waste, racism and the oppression of women is added fascism and war. There is no doubt that when the crash comes again capitalism will be lining up the same answers—only this time it will be an Adolf Hitler with nuclear weapons and scientific methods of torture and extermination, making the Gestapo and the SS look like rank amateurs. Horrors such as the Chilean and Brazilian military regimes, whose specialties include tossing children onto bayonets in front of their parents and chopping people up to send to their wives through the post—with American subsidies of course—are what the 'democratic' ruling classes of the world are accomplices in at present. Don't believe that their tactics for us will be any different.

by ALAN JONES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The figures and other material in this article have been drawn from the work of many socialists. Particularly valuable—although we disagree with their practical conclusions—are the articles by Bob Rowthorne and the Cambridge Political Economy Group in *Marxism Today* (August 1974) and the Spokesman pamphlet, *Britain's Economic Crisis*. For a theoretical analysis, Ernest Mandel's *Marxist Economic Theory* provides the main framework. Also very useful are: Mandel—*Europe versus America*; Eaton, Coates and Barratt-Brown—*An Alternative Economic Strategy for the Labour Movement*; Barratt-Brown—*After Imperialism*; Tony Cliff—*Social Contract or Socialism?*; UCS: *The Social Audit*, by the Institute for Workers' Control; *Two Nations*, by the Labour Research Department; *The Red Paper*, by Ernie Roberts and others.

If we take just these immediate and obvious cases of the absurd misuse and non-use of resources by capitalism, then the total savings are immense. The Cambridge Political Economy Group, on whose calculations we have drawn heavily, find the following as the immediate savings.

● Ending upper class consumption	£1,400 million
● Cutting military expenditure	£2,000 million
● Eliminating waste and redundant services	£4,900 million
● Creating full employment	£3,500 million
Total	£11,800 million

To get some idea of what that means, we need only note that it is roughly £16 a week for every family of four; six times the annual expenditure on house-building; three times that on pensions; and twice total investment. Such a saving would mean that wages could be increased by a quarter; or that six times as many houses could be built; or that pensions could be tripled or investment doubled; or some mix of all these could be decided upon.

Of course nothing is more useless than utopian schemes for socialism. No plan and no statistics are a substitute for the struggles which must be waged now—for the sliding scale of wages and public expenditure, for work-sharing with no loss of pay, for nationalisation of all firms creating redundancy, for workers control—but there is no doubt that drawing up a plan for expropriating capitalist industry and re-organising it on a socialist basis can be a real spur to these struggles.

● SOCIALIST PLAN ●

To show concretely how to finance these measures on inflation and unemployment—through 100% tax on all incomes over £10,000, through the ending of capitalist military expenditure, through the elimination of unemployment, through the re-allocation of jobs from waste industries, through the nationalisation of the 250 leading monopolies—shows the working class the concrete way it can find an outcome for its struggles. It is for this reason that the IMG has put forward the slogan for 'A Trade Union Plan for the Nationalisation of the Economy under Workers' Control', with the first step to this being the fight for the opening of all the books of the capitalist firms and institutions. With the resources that are available to the working class movement a plan could soon be drawn up which would silence once and for all the blabberings of the Labour reformists about there being 'no alternative' to capitalism and the EEC.

● UNITED SOCIALIST EUROPE ●

In fact even the sums we have considered in this article are piffling compared to what is possible with a planned economy. Consider even an increase in the annual rate of growth of the British economy to 6%—a very minor figure and exceeded even by capitalist countries such as Japan. If such an economic expansion had been achieved between 1951 and 1973 then

To see what this means in practical terms we need only look at housing. If the target of 500,000 houses a year had been achieved in that period—and this again is not a very ambitious target, as in proportion to the population it has already been exceeded by West Germany, Holland, France and Denmark—then there would be 4 million more houses in Britain today than existed at the end of 1973. And all this is without taking into account considerations such as the enormous release of the ingenuity and inventiveness of the working class that would be achieved by a socialist revolution.

What could be achieved on an international scale and with a world economy defies description. But if we take 1962 as a base year, then we find that an increase in the growth rate of the West European economies from 5% to 10% would make it possible to surpass the standard of living in the United States within less than ten years. By raising the growth rate of the American economy from 3% to 7% the standard of living in that country could be doubled in 10 years.

It is within this perspective, also, that the real international alternative to the EEC—the United Socialist States of Europe—can be seen.

For decades the productive forces of Europe have suffocated in narrow national boundaries. Two world wars have been the result.

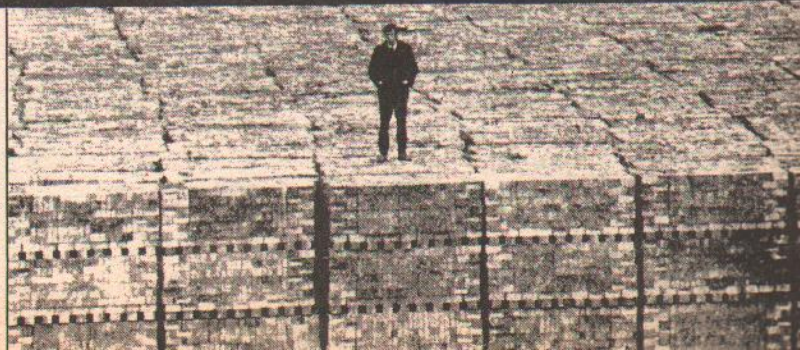
On the basis of modern science and modern means of production what could be achieved is virtually limitless. It would allow a rapid reduction of the working week, a complete reorganisation of the cities, abolition of the stinking slums of capitalism, and vast economic support for the countries of the 'Third World'. A planned and integrated European economy would be the greatest productive force in the history of the world.

What capitalism has to offer as an alternative to this is also mind-boggling. A country such as the United States, with the greatest productive power ever known in history and with scientific and technical resources which are virtually unlimited, finds itself in a situation where nearly 10% of its workers are unemployed and where output actually fell by around 5% in the last part of 1974 and the early part of 1975. In these countries unemployment stood at a total of 15 million at the beginning of 1975.

LYING IDLE-ENOUGH BRICKS TO BUILD 1,000 NEW HOMES

Twelve Million bricks — enough for about 1,000 houses — stockpiled on the London Brick Co's yard at Stowthly, Beds.

Because of a 50 per cent cut this year in private building, brick stocks now exceed 325 million. The company is making production cuts affecting the jobs of 950 men "a result" says LBC spokesman "of our failure as a nation to achieve reasonable stability



the elimination of other jobs unnecessary in a workers' state—for example, social security investigators, private detectives and the like—a cutting back of jobs in this area of only 50 per cent would generate £2,100 million for productive employment. This would, for example, allow the house building programme to be more than doubled. Multi-coloured Omo packets and free plastic daffodils before houses—that is a current slogan of capitalism.

Providing work for those released from unproductive industries would provide no problem in a planned economy. Only in the anarchic economic system of capitalism can the scourge of unemployment exist. Even in a bureaucratically planned economy such as the Soviet Union, unemployment simply does not exist. Under capitalism, however, astronomical resources are wasted in this way—even leaving aside the enormous human misery involved.

The American economist Leon Henderson has estimated that the losses of earnings of United States workers during the depression of



the 1930s totalled around 300,000 million dollars. The 1949 recession in the United States alone led to a fall in output of 16,500 million dollars together with another 7,000 million dollars that would have come from 'normal' growth. The losses of the American recession of 1957-58 were in the order of 50,000 million dollars.

The same irrationalities and waste exist in Britain today. There is a tremendous shortage of houses, schools, hospitals and so on, yet 150,000 building workers are unemployed. Unemployment in Britain today stands officially at just under a million, but if account is taken of those who do not register as unemployed, those who would look for work if they thought jobs were available and so on, then the real figures are far higher—probably anywhere between 1½-3 million. If only 1% million of these—a very low figure—were employed and produced the output of an average worker, this would increase production a year by £3,500 million. This does not even take into account the massive under-utilisation of

The other half of Europe



Whatever the future of the Common Market, no one today imagines that it will allow the uninterrupted expansion of production predicted by bourgeois economists in the 1950s and 1960s. Even in the United States of America, which does not carry the burden of the absurd divisions of Western Europe, one in every eight industrial workers and nearly one in every two black teenagers is unemployed.

But while the international capitalist economy staggers deeper and deeper into crisis the ruling classes of the Western states maintain ever more strongly that theirs is the only 'real' Europe. In fact Europe as a continent stretches from the Atlantic to the Urals in the Soviet Union. But you would never guess that to judge by the names which the nine bourgeoisies of the 'European' Economic Community give to their institutions. Excluded in particular from the club of 'true Europeans' are the countries of Eastern Europe that lack the basic qualifications for the EEC—a capitalist economy and a state power to defend it against the working class.

This attempt to eliminate the idea that Poland, Hungary and so on are part of 'Europe' is not at all accidental. In that capitalist wish to appropriate the name of the continent is expressed the basic class antagonism between the capitalist and the planned economies. Far from getting weaker this conflict grows all the more intense with the internationalisation of economic activity.

It will get still more bitter as capitalism staggers from inflation to mass unemployment to falling living standards, and while the planned economies of Eastern Europe—despite all the deformations imposed by their bureaucratic governments—are free from unemployment, continue to expand production while capitalism sinks deeper into slump, and finally carry out a political revolution to remove the Brezhnev and Husaks of this world. The EEC cannot afford to take note of the countries of Eastern Europe because they are a permanent reminder that an alternative and superior economic system to capitalism is not just a pipe dream but actually exists in the world. This fact is going to weigh more heavily in the scales as capitalism's crisis intensifies.

CAPITALIST CRISIS

These basic facts about the economies of the East European countries do not mean of course that they remain unaffected by world inflation and the recession of the capitalist economies. Any workers' state, bureaucratized or not, would remain, in Lenin's words, 'subordinated to the world capitalist market' in the period before the final overthrow of the decisive centres of capitalist power. This subordination springs from the fact that if the workers' states are to hold their own in the global struggle between the two class systems, then they must attempt to utilise the gigantic cooperative productivity of the workers of the capitalist world for the benefit of their own economy.

In other words, they must engage in international trade on the world market or fall behind in utopian attempts to build socialism in an isolated economy—a fantasy of the Stalin period that cost the workers of Eastern Europe dear. And participation in the international division of labour brings with it the inevitable impact of capitalist crisis within the East European countries.

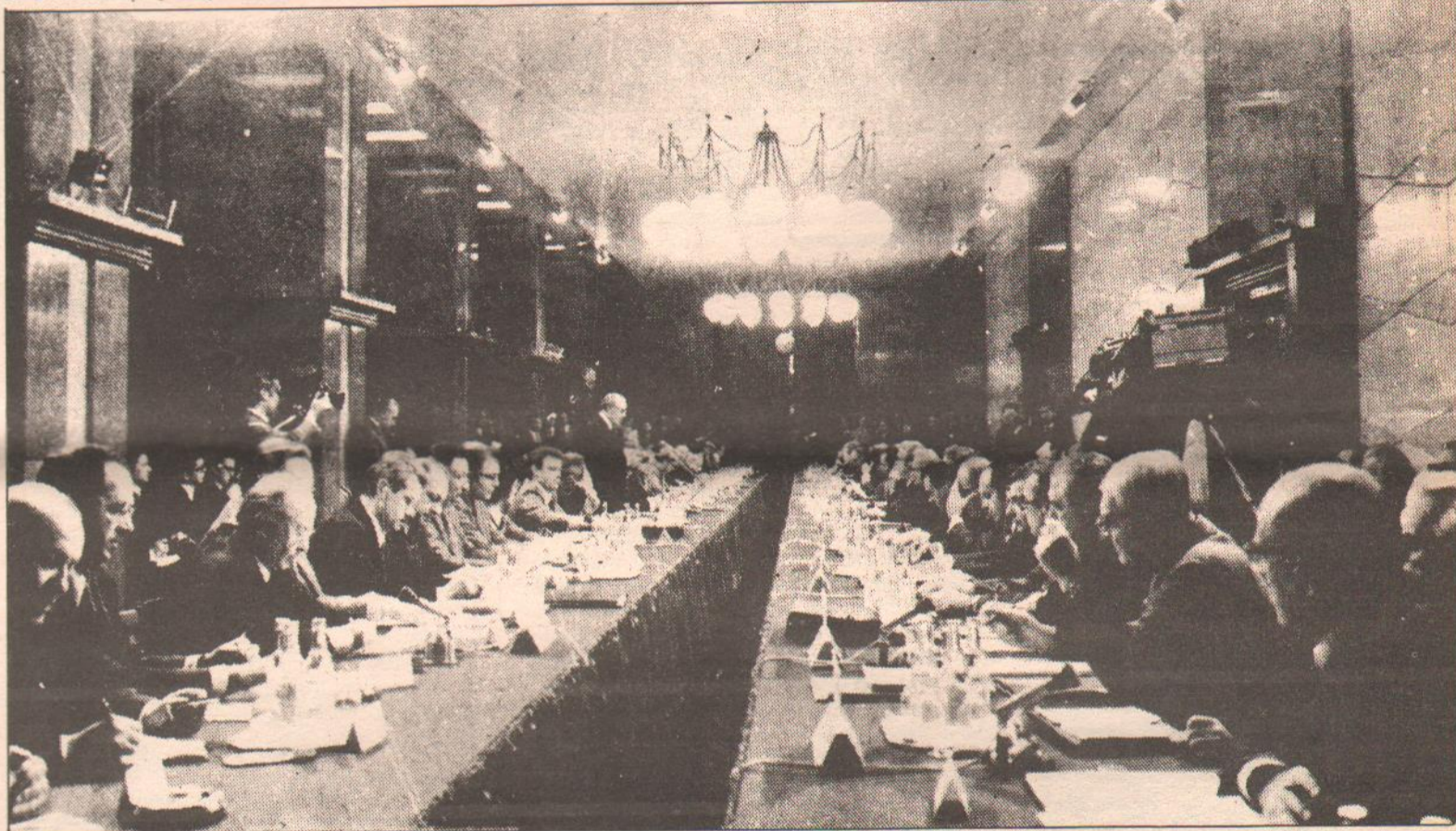
At the same time, the struggle between the two world systems calls for the greatest possible development of the international division of labour within the camp of post-capitalist societies. The obstacle posed by capitalist property relations to sweeping away nation-state boundaries should disappear with the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the ending of national oppression when the working class seizes power.

INTEGRATION

Before the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International, it was regarded as a matter of course that the victorious working classes of the world would freely unite in an international socialist republic. To the revolutionary delegates at the first Congresses of the Comintern, a prolonged period of existence of 'national workers' states' would have seemed an incomprehensible abandonment of proletarian internationalism.

But the East European organisation of Comecon is a far cry from what was in the minds of these delegates. The founder-members of Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Aid) were the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. Yugoslavia's application was turned down, presumably because it had recently been re-baptised a 'fascist' country after the political break between Moscow and Belgrade. Cuba, East Germany and

The first striking feature of this list is the gigantic omission of China. Something is rotten in an international regime which cannot find room for some 'mutual economic aid' between the workers of Eastern Europe and China. And more evidence of this gulf between Lenin's Comintern and Brezhnev's Comecon can be found at every gathering of this wretched caricature of proletarian internationalism, the proceedings of which are suffused with the sacredness of the nation, now hailed as a cornerstone of 'communist' policy.



The bureaucrats of Eastern Europe in session

Of course, events of the past thirty years show clearly enough that behind the facade of the family of nations lies the reality of the power of the Kremlin as the decisive force in Eastern Europe. At the very moment that Comecon was ceremonially launched in 1949 large resources were being extracted from the Hungarian and Rumanian workers' states in the guise of 'war compensation'. In Poland, a long-term agreement was imposed that assured Moscow of the delivery of coal at a tenth of world market prices. Of perhaps graver consequence was the rigid application of Stalin's law of prioritising heavy industry within each national economy—a policy that rapidly led to the rebellion of the productive forces (most importantly of the working class itself) against bureaucratic recklessness.

INTERNATIONALISATION

Today economic relations between the Comecon countries have changed considerably. Workers' revolts in East Germany, Poland and Hungary convinced the Kremlin that in order to preserve the basis of its own power it was necessary to assist the bureaucracies of Eastern Europe to stabilise their regimes by extending credits and encouraging a certain division of labour within Comecon. The Rumanian bureaucracy responded to this turn by setting out to build its own independent economic and political base, characterised by an extreme nationalism; but in every East European capital the national bureaucracy gained a certain freedom to assert its own 'national' interests within

During the 1960s the East European economies were marked by an almost universal decline in growth rates. The remedy required was an intensified division of labour and trade both within Comecon and in relation to the world economy. Far from providing the framework for a solution, however, the principles of Comecon enshrined the bureaucratic vision of a loose association of national economies extending 'mutual aid' to one another. It had been explicitly stated time and again that the aim of Comecon was not to encroach on the national planning prerogatives of each bureaucracy.

But the productive forces have 'laws' of their own that assert themselves relatively independently even of the wishes of 'socialist patriots'. Thus in 1962, when Krushchev suddenly pulled out of a hat the scheme for a supranational plan, he was merely giving voice in the stumbling manner characteristic of the bureau-

cracy makes its own decisions on the structure and volume of Western imports, often as an empirical response to shortages that have developed in the past period. Fluctuations on the world market have an extremely uneven impact on the different economies—for example, the 1973/74 boom in raw material prices greatly strengthened the position of the Soviet Union, whilst exerting a considerable inflationary pressure on the Hungarian and Polish economies.

BUREAUCRACY

At every step the further development of Comecon runs up against the barriers of bureaucratic power. The western capitalist crisis makes more necessary than ever the overcoming of the national obstacles to a federated socialist republic embracing all the post-capitalist societies.

cracy to the objective necessities of development that had been growing in urgency since the Second World War. Although the scheme was quietly dropped, the following years have seen a growing trend towards coordination of national plans—principally through the mechanism of agreements between individual member countries. At the same time, faltering steps have been taken in the direction of international specialisation in research and production.

AGREEMENT

Perhaps the most striking example of this is the widely publicised agreement between all the European members of Comecon on specialisation in machine tools with numerical control. If the optimistic official forecasts are realised, this will reduce research time by three to five years and save seven million man-hours! Even taking the optimism with a pinch of salt, this still shows the endless possibilities for a real international planned economy. Nevertheless such an agreement is still striking in its rareness and the international flow of technology has recently been considerably hindered by the national commercialisation of 'know-how'.

For more than a decade now, East-West trade has been expanding at a considerably faster rate than intra-Comecon trade. The shares of the two types of trade are now almost even in the Polish, Hungarian and Rumanian economies. In relation to their size Western imports and joint production agreements have played an enormous role in industrial development.

At the same time, it is precisely in this crucial sphere of relations with the capitalist countries that the least coordination has been

However the repressive role of the Soviet bureaucracy means that any measure of political integration is viewed by the masses of Hungary, Rumania or the other East European countries with understandable suspicion. It is seen as a reinforcement of the power of the Kremlin bureaucrats who want 'internationalism' of the type already demonstrated by the crushing of the developing political revolution in Hungary and Czechoslovakia with the tanks of the Soviet army.

The hatred of the East European workers is perfectly understood in Moscow, and it is highly unlikely that Brezhnev or his successor will every try to overcome the contradictions by a forcible integration. For their part, the bureaucratic leaders of Eastern Europe know that their own power rests on their ability to balance, between Moscow and the masses they rule. The nation state, with its petty-bourgeois mystique of the 'national leader', is as important to the stability of the East European bureaucratic regimes as is the 'friendship' with the Soviet Union.

UNIFICATION

The unification of the workers' states of Europe and Asia would be a gigantic step forward in the struggle for world socialism. However, that unification will never be brought about by bureaucratic combinations or annexations. On the contrary, it is the Kremlin bureaucracy that represents the greatest single obstacle to international working class unity, and it will only be with the revolutionary overthrow of that bureaucracy that the path will be opened towards political integration.

WORKERS' CONTROL IN PORTUGAL

The Portuguese election results, while clearly a defeat for the open right wing parties, were by no means a victory for the working class. But they represent only one factor in the political situation developing in Portugal today. Equally important are the series of nationalisations which have taken place, often forced through—as in the case of the banks and insurance companies—by workers' action from below, and frequently accompanied also by measures of workers' control.

DANIEL BENSALD, a correspondent of the French Trotskyist paper *Rouge* who has recently returned from Portugal, explains below the significance of these developments in taking the struggle forwards towards the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' state.

Following the example of the bank and insurance employees, who brought about nationalisation by occupying their offices on the day after the attempted coup on 11 March, mass meetings of workers in transport, the postal service and the oil companies have all raised the demand for nationalisation of their companies. To them must be added several tens or even hundreds of small and medium-sized enterprises where the workers see nationalisation as the natural response to threats of closure or unemployment, whether they result from the economic crisis or from sabotage.

We have always explained that nationalisation isn't in itself a revolutionary measure. What it poses, however, are two key questions concerning how it is carried through: that of compensation, and that of workers' control.

• NO COMPENSATION •

In the context of the workers' mobilisations in Portugal, the question of compensation calls for a simple answer. *Pay with what?* The workers know that the country is poor, they are always being told that; and they know, too, that to pay off the capitalists would mean new sacrifices—intolerable sacrifices when the standard of living is already so low.

Why pay? The compensated capitalists will waste no time in transferring their capital abroad—notably to Brazil, where Spínola and the Cham-



palimau family are already sounding out prospects. That is, of course, if they don't decide to use this windfall to finance new attempts at a coup!

Already on 12 April, 20,000 agricultural workers attending a meeting at Beja called by the Union of Agricultural Workers voted by acclamation for a resolution demanding 'the expropriation without any compensation of the big estates', and 'State support, both technical and financial, to the workers' management commissions'.

• PROPERTY OF WORKERS •

Before the nationalisation of their firms, decided on 15 April, meetings of the workers at SONAP (oil company) and SOPONATA (petrol transporters) passed several resolutions. The workers at SONAP underlined

from any return on their capital, which must be the exclusive property of the workers'.

Those at SOPONATA considered that nationalisation is a process with its own dynamic, requiring both administrators who are efficient and politically committed to the working class and to the revolutionary process underway, and also a vigilance and permanent role by the workers... The workers at SOPONATA consider that the present holders of capital should benefit from no return on their capital, which belongs to the workers.' These are just a couple of examples at random.



On the question of workers' control, it is also the bank employees who have shown the way. After the nationalisation, the unions made a thoroughgoing enquiry into the role of big banking capital in preparing the coup attempts on 28 September and 11 March. They gave details of the results of their enquiry at a press conference on 1 April.

• WORKERS' CONTROL •

The checking through of credit transfers, of cheque counter-foils, and of assignments of funds produced some dramatic results. It was revealed, for instance, that the Espírito Santo bank financed the fascist Progress Party in preparation for the 'silent majority' demonstration on 28 September; 750,000 escudos (about £13,000) were transferred to the account of Carlos Bettencourt, the leader of this party in Porto. Furthermore, an account was opened and rapidly credited with 5 million escudos in the name of two leaders of the right-wing CDS party.

At the Pinto and Sotto Mayer bank, the employees found a list of 20 fake companies which had been used solely as a means of channelling money abroad—a substantial amount of it designed to lubricate the alarmist campaign of the foreign press. The employees of the Burgos bank found nearly 30 such 'phantom' enterprises. And that's not to mention the way in which credit has been manipulated in order to worsen the economic situation.

In firms which haven't yet been nationalised, the suspicious removal

have in many cases stimulated the workers to organise round-the-clock pickets and to institute a preventive control on the stocks, the accounts and other documents. This has been the case in the electricity, paper-making and printing industries.

• ECONOMIC SABOTAGE •

At the Clube Radio a revolutionary committee has been set up to weed out those who refused to alert the workers on 11 March and to make broadcasting time available to the workers' organisations. Most frequently, experiences of workers' control have proceeded from the expulsion of right wingers or the threat of sackings.

Certain examples are particularly instructive. The workers at the Cardoso & Costa factory managed to get their control officially recognised: every cheque issued by the boss must be approved first by the workers' commission, and all movements in and out of the factory are similarly controlled by pickets.

At the Firestone tyre factory the workers were up against the manoeuvres of a multi-national company. They discovered that the management was going to move out the machines and transfer them to its factories in Switzerland. So they set up pickets on guard duty to prevent the removal of either tyres or machinery, to prevent the unloading of any imported tyres, and to deny access to a Canadian manager who had arrived to sort out the accounts.

The 160 employees of EPUL (public enterprise for the urbanisation of Lisbon) occupied their offices in protest against their role, demanding a budget and a plan for the urbanisation which would deal with the problems of the shanty-towns. The employees of the Sugarloaf chain of supermar-



'People's Bank' at Leiria—nationalised after workers' occupation

kets expelled four directors linked to the previous regime, and then published a summary of the accounts, the real profit margins, etc. for the shoppers to read.

• RESPONSIBLE TO WORKERS •

Still more forthright was the communique given to the press on 19 March by the workers' commission of the Ourique insurance companies, explaining why they refused to elect delegates to a provisional administra-



tive commission, and how they were not thereby 'sabotaging nationalisation'.

On the evening of 15 March the workers on the picket were asked to contact the union leadership in order to send two delegates as quickly as possible to the aforesaid commission. But at the first meeting these delegates discovered that a third worker had been appointed, not elected; that the administrators nominated did not merit the confidence of the workers; and that the provisional commission would be dependent exclusively on the Government.

So, challenging the way in which their election had been rushed through under the pretext of urgency, they refused 'once elected to be completely independent of the workers and responsible only to the directives of the Finance Minister'. To the predictable slanders accusing them of being saboteurs they replied 'that on the contrary, the saboteurs are those who would prevent the development of the nationalisations to their ultimate revolutionary conclusion'.

The workers' commission finally refused to elect delegates to a provisional administrative commission

because that would help 'to conceal the real location of economic and political power and create illusions that the socialist revolution can be brought about by nibbling away at the capitalist State apparatus and infiltrating the centres of decision-making, when it needs in fact to be destroyed and replaced by a Socialist State'.

Another example of what can come out of such a situation was the exposure by the brewery workers of Dr. Alves Conde, currently Secretary of State for Tourism and also a member of the two previous Provisional Governments. In going through the files at their factory, they found a letter from Alves Conde to their boss, the reactionary Manuel Vinhas (involved in the 28 September right-wing mobilisation) advising him in 1972 to invest in Brazil because of the lack of political risks there. Similarly, they found a telegram from Manuel Vinhas to Alves Conde congratulating him on his appointment to the Government.

As one can see from these examples, one of the most worrying aspects for the capitalists about the situation in Portugal today is the continuing role of the mass meetings of workers and of the workers' commissions. These latter are often recog-



nised by the Government as *de facto* representatives in spite of the June 1974 anti-strike laws and the trade union unity law of January 1975, which was intended to 'normalise' working class representation and crush in the egg the embryos of workers' self-organisation. ●

Daniel Bensaid



FARCE OF ROYAL VISIT TO HONG KONG

Hong Kong's British officials greeted the Queen's arrival in this giant sweat-shop city last week with much ballyhoo. But the vast majority of the local Chinese population looked on with indifference, untouched even by the anti-colonial protest of the students' union at Hong Kong University.

Most workers were much too absorbed trying to secure their £1-a-day income to pay the visit any heed. Actually, strong anti-British feelings are common. But raising any protest would diverge from China's current foreign policy line of detente. Since China succeeded in 1972 in having the UN erase Hong Kong from its list of colonies, any protest against the visit of the British sovereign to her colony would, moreover, have looked inconsistent.

The man-in-the-street cares only that his economic situation is bad, and that the hubbub of the royal visit will do nothing to alleviate it. The unemployment and under-employment figure has reached 225,000—roughly 15 per cent of the working population.

Workload

'The standard of living is now back to where it was when I was a child,' observes a 20-year-old textile factory girl who has been working since she was 13. Some months ago her workload was reduced from seven to three erratic days a week. Daily, she and the other employees sat in the factory hoping to be given more work. If none were available, as increasingly became the case, she received nothing—not even her bus fare, less still a minimum wage. She now no longer bothers to turn up at the factory gates.

In the past year, employers have begun openly to reduce the pay of even those impoverished workers who still hold full-time jobs. Blue-collar work in Hong Kong is usually paid at piece-rates, and some textile factories and sweatshops have moved to lower the pay per piece. With unemployment increasing, workers find they have no choice but to accept anything offered.

Hefty profits

The Government's own statistics show that the standard of living of working people fell by more than 15 per cent in 1974, engineered in part through inflation. The colonial regime blames the world-wide recession for their worsening economic circumstances, yet the big corporations have been reporting hefty profits. Since these profits have come in good part from the 15 per cent slash in the workers' real wages, it is not altogether surprising that the Government, which is very strongly influenced by the British-managed conglomerates, has made few efforts to combat the inflation.

The colonial administration is itself directly to blame for part of the inflation, especially in facilities such as public transport and electricity. The insistence by the British administrators that these sectors should make their 'fair' share of profits seems to be the only 'reason' offered for repeated steep price increases. Even the rents in the public housing sector went up by some 30 per cent at the end of last year, affecting 1.8 million people, the poorest of the Hong Kong



A mass anti-unemployment rally in a working class district of Hong Kong organised by a group independent of Peking, the Revolutionary Marxist League.

Hong Kong's regime is one of the few in the world that usually runs at a profit. The Government sends 'surplus' taxes back to Britain almost every year to form an ever-growing 'reserve' that is invested in the City of London, helping to prop up the pound. Hundreds of millions of pounds of Hong Kong's money has been lost to the colony in this way.

Who is standing up for the increasingly exploited sections of the population? The pro-Peking trade unions have carefully been keeping a rather low and dignified profile since the 1967-8 disturbances that rocked the colony. And in accord with the general foreign policy of the People's Republic, the leftist press in Hong Kong has since 1971 considerably toned down its criticism of the colonial authorities. The newspapers have advised their pro-Chinese readers to 'cool it' during the present hard times.

Discontent & frustrations

Superficially, therefore, the atmosphere is one of resignation. But the discontent and frustrations are growing, as seen in sporadic disturbances in the poorer neighbourhoods. These could flare up into angry mass action if the economic situation worsens. Certainly while this situation remains, the radical independent Left will continue to extend its sup-

From U. CHEN
in Hong Kong

The contradictions of the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement as it seeks to manoeuvre between the capitalists and the working class have recently found dramatic expression in the small colony of Sao Tome and Principe off the West African coast.

Last December the Portuguese authorities set up a 'transitional government' to 'guide' Sao Tome to independence in July. But now they have expelled from it two of the five representatives of the Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe (MLSTP). One of them, former Minister of Information PEDRO UMBELINA, spoke to Tony Hodges about this move during a recent visit to London.

In Umbelina's opinion, the expulsion of two out of five of the MLSTP representatives in the government was the climax of an escalating series of attacks by the Portuguese authorities against the more radical elements of the MLSTP. 'The Portuguese colonialists', Umbelina explained, 'are determined to prevent the Sao Tome people from winning real liberation after independence. They are working to see that after independence the interests of the big plantation owners who own nearly all the land in our country are defended.'

Ravaged

Umbelina told me how the Portuguese colonialists had ravaged the islands and repressed the Sao Tome people for 500 years. I asked him what changes had occurred in the islands after the coup in Portugal. 'The old structure of the dictatorship remained intact in the weeks after the coup. The MLSTP remained illegal. But a huge popular movement sprung up and a series of strikes broke out.

'The climax came in September. On the fifth of that month we held a massive demonstration in Sao Tome and the police opened fire, killing one demonstrator. In the first week of September also, a unit of African troops in the Portuguese army mutinied and captured an arsenal.

'The colonialists were very shaken by these developments and realised that they would have to negotiate with us. Talks were held for the first time between the MLSTP and the Portuguese government and on 26 November, at the end of four days of talks in Algiers, we signed an agreement with the Portuguese by which we would get our independence on 12 July.

Agrarian reform

Umbelina emphasised that this agreement did not mean that the Portuguese government had relinquished all interest in the future of the islands. 'Almost from the day that the transitional government was installed in December, conflicts broke out. We have thousands of unemployed workers in Sao Tome. It was necessary to create employment possibilities. The reactionaries in the Ministry of Economic Coordination refused to take the necessary measures.

'We began to push for agrarian reform, the only way to provide jobs. We said: "Take the land left uncultivated or abandoned by the plantation owners, nationalise it without compensation to the settlers, and put the unemployed workers on this land. Let them grow beans and maize, which we have always had to import in Sao Tome because the colonialists have only found it profitable to produce cocoa and coffee for export." It caused an uproar.'

In February, the MLSTP ministers in the government wrote to the Portuguese High Commissioner demanding the disbandment of the native Sao Tome troops in the Portuguese army units in the islands. His immediate reply was to mount a barrage of propaganda for 'law and order' and to stage a series of much-publicised army exercises in the islands to intimidate the government and the African population. Then a deal was made with a majority of the leadership of the MLSTP. Umbelina and Gastao Torres, Minister of Labour, were dismissed from the government and 40 members of the MLSTP were expelled from the movement.

***** PORTUGAL'S COLONIALS TRY TO HANG ON *****

'A week later,' Umbelina told me, 'we flew to Portugal, thinking that the actions of the High Commissioner were not sanc-

tioned by the Government in Portugal itself. We were very mistaken. The Ministry of Social Communication in Lisbon immediately issued an order to the press banning information about us in the Portuguese press. Then Gastao Torres was arrested. I avoided a similar fate by immediately catching a plane out of the country.'

The incidents in Sao Tome reveal quite a lot about Portuguese intentions in the African colonies. While having no choice but to accept the liberation movements' demands for independence, the colonial authorities are acting fast to preserve colonial and imperialist interests in these countries after the formal hand-over of power takes place.

Military value

As regards Sao Tome, that means that the Portuguese Government aims to protect the interests of the 28 agricultural companies which own 90 per cent of the cultivable land. The interests of firms like the British oil company Ball and Collins—which has prospecting rights off Sao Tome—are also to be defended. Most important of all, perhaps, is the strategic military value that the islands could have for the imperialists.

Chilean Trotskyists hold second underground congress

The Liga Comunista de Chile, sympathising organisation of the Fourth International, recently held its second conference underground in Chile. Below we reprint sections of the communique published by the LC's Exterior Committee to mark this event.

The elaboration of a political line capable of effectively advancing the revolutionary struggle means that it is necessary from time to time to go through an intensive process of democratic discussion, assuring the possibility of an exchange of experiences accumulated in the course of day-to-day intervention. Only in this way can the political line be clarified, filling out those aspects of it that are not very developed, and changing and correcting those orientations that have been shown in practice to be wrong.

It was for this reason that the Liga Comunista de Chile organised its second national congress only a year after holding its first congress. The dangers were great. Nevertheless, the results are extremely positive, and the Liga Comunista emerges from its second congress in a stronger position to confront the difficult task of the resistance.

Among the points which were noted at the congress were a growth of the organisation to incorporate a number of militants from the traditional parties of the working class (CP, SP); the active participation of our militants in certain embryonic forms of working class reorganisation; and the regular appearance each month from June 1974 of our paper, *Popular and Working Class Resistance*.

The congress of the Liga Comunista was held in a situation of intense social and economic crisis. The failure of the project pursued by the counter-revolutionary dictatorship in the interests of national and international big business is evident. This affects not only the working class and the masses but also

base of the bourgeoisie: petty-bourgeois businessmen, industrialists and farmers who have been driven to bankruptcy by the accelerated process of concentration of capital; together with sectors of the state apparatus affected by the junta's policy of cuts.

Because of this the dictatorship is having to rely more and more on tactics of open repression, which is a confession of its strategic weakness. The key to resolving this situation is held by the working class and popular movement.

The first steps forward in reconstructing the workers' organisations have now been made, which testifies clearly to the possibilities of advance by the working class even under the extremely difficult conditions imposed by mass terror. But fundamental changes in the political situation can only be expected once this reorganisation develops further to incorporate wider sectors of the class who are still dispersed and disorganised.

For the Liga Comunista this means advancing the development and centralisation of the defensive struggles which are already being undertaken by the workers, peasants and students; and of the clandestine organisations led by the vanguard sectors, such as the resistance committees.

However, we do not limit ourselves simply to agitating and working for struggles which are possible today; we are also working to prepare the way for a Revolutionary General Strike. This too will help in the process of centralising forces against the dictatorship, allowing militancy to develop around a central political objective whose need is clearly seen from the

ELDON SQUARE

NEED FOR CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND PICKETS

The Conciliation and Arbitration Service (CAS) has finally brought out its report on the Eldon Square site dispute in Newcastle and—surprise, surprise—found in favour of the employers, McAlpine's. The CAS, the T&GWU and the employers then issued a statement hoping 'that the way is now clear for normal working on the site'.

What 'normal working' meant soon became clear. McAlpine's not only refused to take back the 14 sacked men but also said they could only take back six of the other strikers. The other 30 or so scaffolders would be 'phased in as other work became available', as Gordon McLean, Regional Organiser of the T&G, put it.

Naturally the scaffolders have rejected the findings of the CAS and

McAlpine's attempt to split them, and have decided to continue the strike.

The T & G bureaucrats ratted on their promise to support the strikers. Bro. McLean commented: 'We are very disappointed that the scaffolders will not accept the situation and return to work. I am afraid they are on their own now.'

McAlpine's are now set to take on scab labour. In this they are being aided by the T&G. Regional Secretary Dave Shenton has promised them: 'The Union will do nothing to interfere with people who want to get jobs there.' That is one promise we are sure he will keep.

However the 8/214 T&G branch (Scaffolders) will almost certainly refuse to give cards to any scabs. Will Bro. Shenton then still 'do nothing

to interfere' if McAlpine's use this as an excuse to break the closed shop on the site?

DEFEND PICKETS

The 10 pickets arrested at Eldon Square have still not been told the date or place of their trial. All the pickets are charged under the Public Order Act of 1936 (an Act supposed to stop Mosley and his fascists) and some of them face possible jail sentences.

Since Jenkins has refused to parole the Shrewsbury 2 it is now even more urgent that a massive campaign is built to defend the Newcastle pickets and to make sure that the charges are dropped.

Already many trade union branches have given support to this struggle. Other workers must make sure that their union branch or shop stewards committee sends a delegation to the demonstration that will be organised the day the trial starts. A victory in Newcastle will be a tremendous boost to the campaign to free the Shrewsbury 2.

Geoff Ryan

Messages of support, donations, etc. should be sent to Bro. Eddie Brady, 86 Benwell Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne (0632 32365).



Flash-points

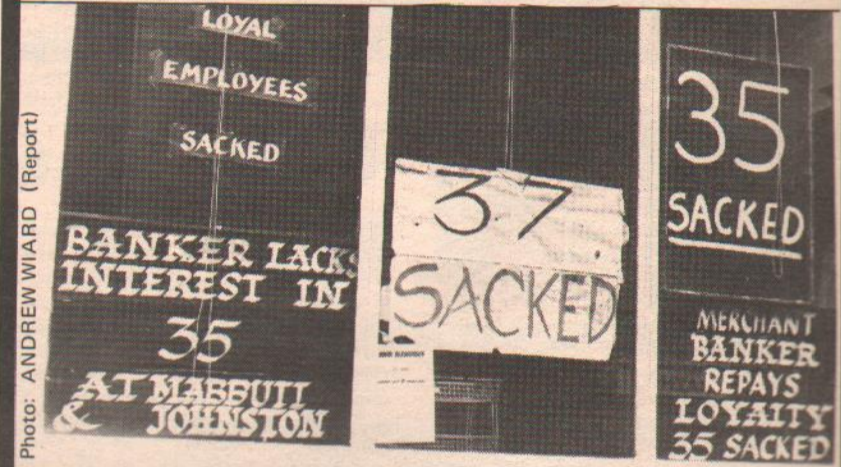
CROSFIELD'S: CARROT AND STICK

Not content with using security firms and scab vans protected by police, Crosfield's management have now issued writs against the workers occupying their North London factory in a fight against redundancies.

The announcement of the Mabbutt & Johnston occupation just down the road shows how urgent it is for the trade unions and labour movement to organise a fight against redundancies throughout the area. Despite supporting the call for a mass picket on Tuesday 13 May, and making the strike official, AUEW officials have failed to campaign on the issue. This has been left to the Crosfield's workers themselves.

It is a combination of this and the threat of solidarity action posed by the calling of the mass picket which has led management to re-open negotiations with the shop stewards. They have agreed that convenor Frank Gore—whom they have refused to talk to since mid-March on the basis that he had been sacked—will be present.

The job now is to turn the solidarity demonstrated by the mass picket into an ongoing campaign against any redundancies in the area and for the saving of all the jobs at Crosfield's. Messages of support and donations to: Crosfield's Joint Shop Stewards Fund, c/o Bill Hayward, 34 Dresden Road, London N10 3BD.



PRINTWORKERS OCCUPY

Hard on the heels of the Crosfields occupation comes news of a new occupation in the same area. After several months of wrangling with management over redundancy plans and wage rises, the 39 workers at the litho plate-making firm of Mabbutt & Johnston in Islington suddenly received a polite little note by post telling them that their company was being closed down overnight. That was on Saturday 3 May.

Although John Alexander—the main shareholder and a director of Hill Samuel, the merchant bank—had brought in a security firm, the workers gained admittance on Tuesday via the roof and are now firmly in occupation. They found however that over the weekend management had removed the financial records, cut off the phones, and even taken away the lenses from the litho-cameras!

On Wednesday 7 May the workers organised flying pickets round other local printing firms, and pulled out over 100 people on a demonstration down to Alexander's den in the City. Their unions—SLADE, NGA and SOGAT—have made the dispute official and actions are going ahead slowly to get the transferred work boycotted wherever it appears. Solidarity telegrams and donations to the dispute-fund would be very gratefully received—the Crosfields workers, who have been occupying their factory for seven weeks, have already sent £10! (Write c/o Chairman of the Joint Action Committee, Mabbutt & Johnston, Ironmonger Row, London EC1).

The Mabbutt and Johnston dispute is just one more example of the need for the Conference against Redundancies in the Printing, Publishing and Broadcasting Industries, which is taking place on Saturday 17 May at the London College of Printing, starting at 10.00 a.m. There will be speakers from Mabbutt & Johnston, Crosfields, and other redundancy-hit firms such as Penguin Books. Help fight the sack now! Support this conference. For further details: phone Carl Gardner (01-837 9987, day).

PICKET OF PRIVATE HOSPITAL

The British United Provident Association, Britain's private medical outfit, has bought the Florence Nightingale Hospital in Lisson Grove, London. BUPA has paid a cool one and a half million pounds for the Florence Nightingale, which it intends to rebuild and modernise.

The Borough of Westminster now has 14 private hospitals within its boundaries, providing 1,040 beds, and planning permission has already been given for two more 100-bed hospitals.

In contrast, the NHS hospitals in the Borough are under-staffed and under-financed. Two experienced nursing sisters have just left Moorfields Hospital for jobs at the luxury Wellington private hospital in St John's Wood. At St Mary's Hospital in Paddington the rebuilding programme has been postponed indefinitely because of cash shortages.

A picket of the Florence Nightingale has been organised by the Medical Committee Against Private Practice in conjunction with the Marylebone branch of the AUEW NALGO health services officer Steve Johnson, and NUPE branch secretary Alan Ellis. Trade union and Labour Party members are urged to attend—speakers will include a local MP, Labour councillor Jean Mereton, and Jamie Morris of NUPE.

The picket and meeting is on Saturday 17 May, beginning at 11am, at the Florence Nightingale Hospital, Lisson Grove, N.W.1.

Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson's vice-president, as a 'friend of labour' was met with boos and catcalls from large sections of the rally. Hundreds of young workers swarmed out of the stadium and advanced towards the speakers' platform in the centre of the playing field, heckling the invited dignitaries. The rally soon dissolved in confusion.

The Socialist Workers Party, the American Trotskyists, expressed full solidarity with the objectives of the march—'Jobs for All Now'—and proposed a programme to advance this goal through anti-capitalist struggle. This includes demands for a massive emergency public works programme at union wage rates; an end to US military spending; a shorter working

clauses for all union contracts; and an escalator clause on all social welfare benefits, including pensions and unemployment benefits.

The capitalist class took the 26 April action very seriously. The editors of the *New York Times* wrote: 'There was no mistaking the message that putting the jobless back to work is the country's primary task.' The capitalists cannot 'put the jobless back to work', however. And that is why there will be more mass labour demonstrations in Washington, bigger and more militant.

On 26 April the sleeping giant of American labour began to stir. Every political current, from the capitalists to the revolutionary socialists, is

MASS SACKINGS THREAT IN STEEL

Sir Monty Finniston's announcement of 22,000 redundancies in the steel industry over the next few months has met with howls of protest from steel union leaders and the Labour left—but no concrete plan to fight them. In fact, Finniston's reply to Benn's 'open letter' shows that the British Steel Corporation has not budged an inch from its original plans.

General steels and strip mills would bear the brunt of this policy. Up to 10,000 jobs will go in general steels, and another 9,000 to 10,000 in the strip mills. A further 2,000 jobs in the special steels and tubes divisions will be axed. Scotland and Wales, which already have very high unemployment rates, will face the loss of another 7,000–10,000 and 6,000–9,000 jobs respectively. Places like Ebbw Vale will be reduced to ghost towns if BSC's plans are implemented.

But Benn's answer is simply to plead with the steel unions not to go ahead with their present pay claim; and the union leaders have no alternative to these plans. Capitalism is only interested in producing steel in the cheapest and most efficient way possible. Instead of using investment programmes and technological innovation to lighten workloads and shorten the working week, BSC plans massive redundancies and plant closures in order to survive in the anarchy of a capitalist economy.

Any plans (including Benn's) for making BSC viable in capitalist terms will mean redundancies and massive speed-up. What confronts steel workers throughout Britain is who shall pay for the capitalist crisis. The Labour Government is committed to saving British capitalism—not jobs. The steel unions are riddled with craft divisions and have one of the most reactionary leaderships going.

The threatened plants will only be kept open and jobs saved by a national policy of 'no closures—no redun-

60,000 tell US government 'We want jobs'

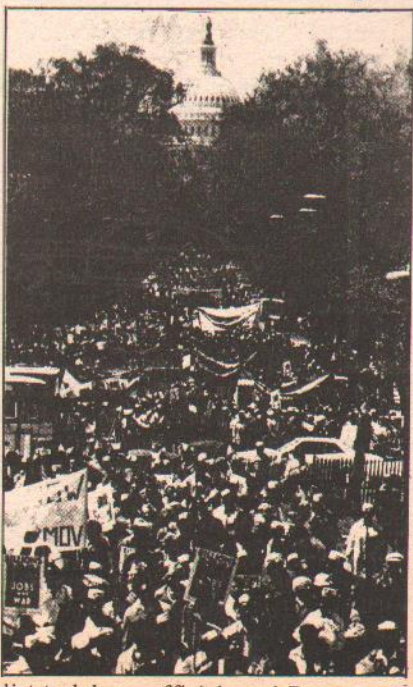
Up to 60,000 American workers participated in a 'Rally for Jobs Now' in Washington, D.C., on 26 April. It was the first such demonstration since the 1932 'bonus army' march of unemployed war veterans—in fact, it was the first major political demonstration by US trade unions directed against the Government in decades. And it signalled a mood of rebellion, spurred by the current depression, that is beginning to develop in the ranks of American labour—potentially the most powerful force for social change in the capitalist world.

The composition of the demonstration reflected the sectors hardest hit by the depression. A large proportion—more than a third—were black people. Unemployment amongst blacks has been estimated at 21 per cent, more than twice the official rate for whites.

At least half the participants were women, reflecting their increased role in the labour force, particularly in the public sector.

The rally was called by the AFL-CIO, the central American labour organisation—an indication of the mounting pressure on the trade union leadership to do something against soaring unemployment. Nearly ten million people are officially out of work—over 8 per cent of the total workforce.

The trade union bureaucrats, of course, put forward no programme that poses any solution to the prob-



RED WEEKLY

Iran butchery sparks widespread protest

The news released by the Iranian press on 19 April that nine political prisoners had been shot and killed by prison guards 'whilst attempting to escape' has sparked off an international movement of protest.

Inside Iran, despite the climate of ruthless repression, the murder of the nine has led to the first signs of a mass protest. Around 5,000 prisoners in the Qasr Prison in Tehran are on hunger strike. In Tehran and Isfahan clashes have taken place between the police and demonstrators, leading to at least 100 arrests. The Minister of Education, following the advice of SAVAK (the infamous Iranian political police) has ordered the closing of all the major Iranian universities and colleges to avert student demonstrations.

MURDERED

The nine murdered prisoners, seven of whom had been in jail since late 1967, belonged to one of the most prominent groups of political prisoners. They were tried secretly in a military court early in 1968 and sentenced to death for what the prosecutor called 'outlawed and communistic activities and subversion against the state endangering law and order'. Their lives were only spared after a world-wide movement of protest organised by the Confederation of Iranian Students.

They were then re-tried in January 1969 and re-sentenced to prison terms ranging from nine to 15 years. In 1971, in order to terrorise the movement of

opposition to the Shah's lavish masquerade 'celebrating the 2500th anniversary of monarchy in Iran', they were moved to Tehran along with a score of other prominent political prisoners, and threatened with execution. Once again, due to international pressure, the Shah's henchmen were prevented from carrying out these executions.

BRUTAL TORTURE

They did not, however, give up the brutal torture of these political prisoners, whose severity has been noted even by the bourgeois press in Britain. From the fact that the Iranian regime has not agreed to turn the bodies of the nine over to their relatives, and has refused to allow an independent coroner to examine them, it is clear that they were murdered under torture.

These latest killings are not the only examples of the butchery of Iranian political prisoners by the military dictatorship of the Shah. In the last four years alone over 300 have been murdered in his jails. Furthermore, killing political prisoners is not the only example of the brutal repression meted out by the capitalist regime.

Last September a strike in a mosaic factory was brutally suppressed by killing 14 workers. One month later, a strike in the Land Rover assembly plant was ended when the workers' representatives were arrested by SAVAK and subsequently murdered. Iran is also probably the only country in which there are police stations inside the universities.



Execution of political prisoners is just one example of brutality of regime

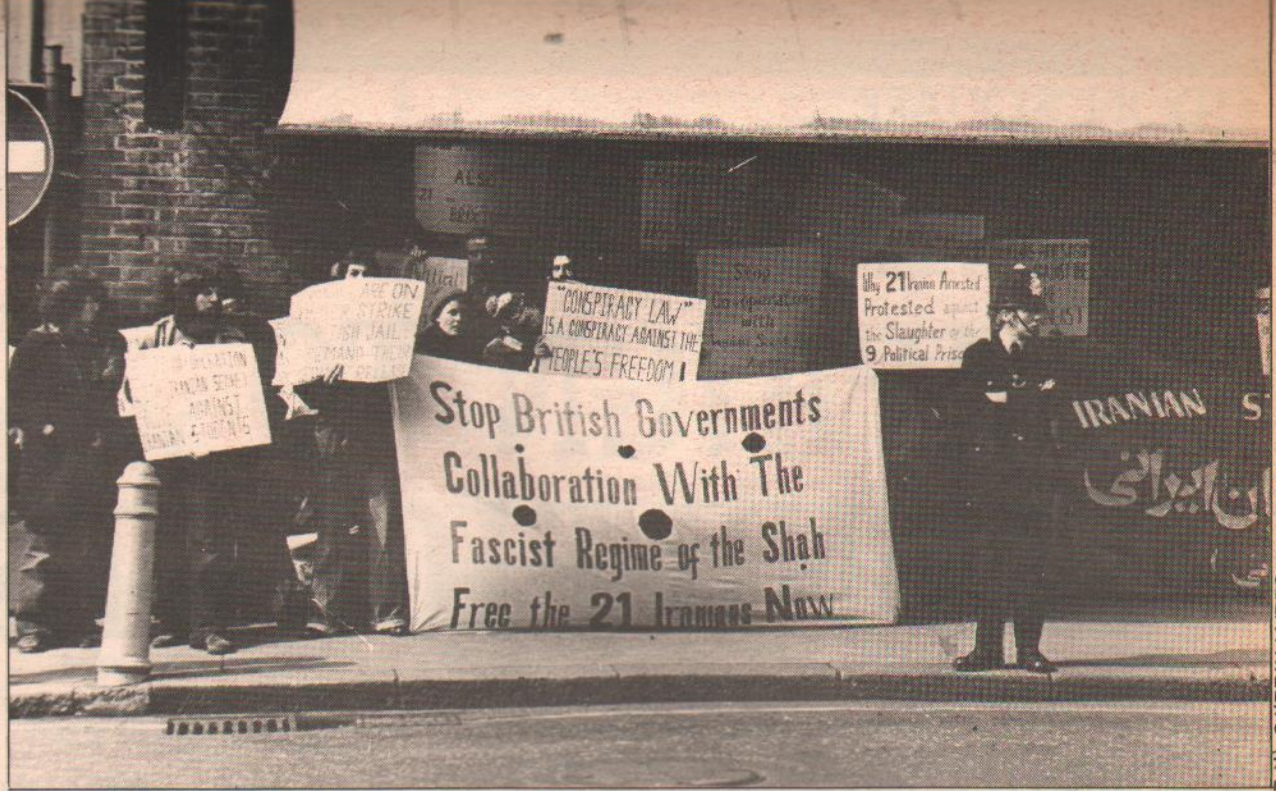
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Supporters of the Iranian 21 picket the court last Thursday

LABOUR AIDS SHAH'S TORTURERS

LAST THURSDAY 21 Iranian students were finally freed on £500 bail each after having been held in Brixton prison for nine days. The 21 had been arrested by a squad of armed police after a brief and completely peaceful sit-in at the Iranian Embassy on 29 April, in protest at the recent brutal murder of nine oppositionists by the Iranian dictatorship. For this 'crime' the 21 are being charged with 'conspiracy to trespass'.

This move represents the latest in a long string of attacks on democratic rights in this country. For a long time now the ruling class and their state have been whipping up a big scare campaign over 'terrorism' to justify beefing up the power of the police. The joint army-police manoeuvres at Heathrow and the creation of armed police squads (such as that responsible for the killing of two unarmed protesters at the Indian Embassy last year) have been the more obvious aspects of this campaign.

The use of armed police to carry out the arrests in this case, where the demonstrators were clearly peaceful, shows that the police no longer feel they need any sort of pretext before using these squads. It is just a first step towards a more widespread use of armed police to intimidate left-wing demonstrators.

The labour movement has learnt the hard way through the Shrewsbury case what a powerful political weapon the conspiracy laws are in the hands of the ruling class. The outcry over the Shrewsbury case may make the state think twice about using these laws against trade unionists in the immediate future; but the Iranian case shows that they are as eager as ever to lash out with this legal weapon whenever they think they can get away with it.

The failure of the labour movement to respond to the attack on democratic rights involved in the Prevention of Terrorism Act has given the state forces the impression that they can get away with selective crackdowns on minority groups like Irish Republicans and the far left. The attack on the 21 is clearly in this mould. But the labour movement should be under no illusion—whether it is Irish Republicans or Iranian students whose heads are on the chopping block today, it will be trade unionists whom the state is after tomorrow.

The 'conspiracy to trespass' charge shows up one of the most dangerous sides of the conspiracy laws. In Britain it is not a crime to trespass—just an 'unlawful act' for which one could be sued or for which a court could issue a prevention order.

Ever since the late 1960s reactionaries have been calling for a law that would make trespass illegal so that it could be used against student occupations, squatters, etc. However to pass such a law would require an open debate in Parliament, making it an issue of political debate in the workers' movement and allowing those

Chris Balfour

who opposed it to organise to prevent it being passed. So to avoid this, the House of Lords waved the magic wand of the conspiracy laws two years ago and created the crime of 'conspiracy to trespass' out of thin air (despite the fact that British courts had ruled for over a century and a half that no such offence existed!)

This law could easily be used to crack down on the student and squatting movements. At the moment its use against the labour movement is prevented by another law which rules out the use of this particular sort of conspiracy charge against an 'industrial dispute'. But all it would need is a reactionary judge to rule that a

... but on the other hand

Another group of Embassy-occupiers has recently been convicted of 'conspiracy to trespass'. They had barricaded themselves in an Embassy and done extensive damage.

But no armed police were deemed necessary to secure their arrest. They were only held overnight, and then promptly released on £25 bail. After conviction they received a polite warning from the judge (who complimented them on their idealism) and allowed to go free with six months suspended sentences. The reason is simple—they were reactionary Ukrainians who had occupied the Soviet Embassy.

Of course the courts will try to deny that the trial of the 21 Iranians is a 'political case', but the contrast between their treatment and that of the Ukrainians has already exposed this hypocrisy. There is no doubt that the courts will continue to mete out this sort of class justice to the Iranian 21 if the labour movement does not take up their cause.

given workers' occupation was not an 'industrial dispute' but 'politically motivated' (and how many times a week do we hear that in the capitalist press?) and the armed police squads would be swinging into action against trade unionists.

Another serious erosion of democratic rights highlighted by the present case is the shaky legal position in which most immigrants are put under the Immigration Act. If they are convicted, the 21 will all be liable to deportation under the Immigration Act—to face certain imprisonment and brutalisation and possible death at the hands of the Iranian dictatorship. All because they staged a peaceful protest demonstration!

It is no accident that the Iranian dictatorship should have found such a concerned champion in the British state at the present time. The increase in world oil prices has given Iran a more important role in the world imperialist system. Iranian loans are important to prop up the tottering pound, and Iranian orders help keep the crumbling British car industry (e.g. Chrysler) afloat.

Meanwhile Iran is negotiating to buy a slice in BP and other capitalist firms in this country, and the Iranian army is taking over from Britain the job of crushing any new uprising by the impoverished masses in the area of the Persian Gulf. The Labour Government, committed as it is to this imperialist system, is cutting its cloth to fit the new situation, and quite happily doing the Shah's dirty work for him by attacking his political opponents in this country.

Both the defence of democratic rights in this country and the fight against imperialism and reaction internationally require the most intransigent defence of the 21. The student and labour movement must immediately take up this case and demand that the Labour Government promptly gets all charges against the 21 dropped and stops its policy of collaborating with the rotten Iranian dictatorship. We must further insist that Labour stops cooperating in the strengthening of the repressive capitalist state machine; it must disband all armed police units and promptly abolish the conspiracy laws.

Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)