

RED WEEKLY



FOUR PAGE DOSSIER ON THE GENERAL STRIKE

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In 1926 the TUC
betrayed the working
class.

50 years later,
Murray and Jones are
trying to do it again.

No deal with Healey!

ALL OUT ON 26 MAY



ERNIE ROBERTS, NCC chairperson, pointed out that it was the working class who built the NHS, it is the working class who keep the NHS going, and that the NHS 'should be the property of the working class'.



NHS cuts - the fight back begins

Around 2,500 people marched through London last Sunday in the demonstration called by the National Coordinating Committee Against Cuts in the NHS (NCC). Of the hundred or so banners on the demonstration, the vast majority were from trades councils, trade unions, and Labour Party branches. Others included NAC groups, organisations of the revolutionary left, and a delegation of old-age pensioners.

The representative character of the demonstration—there were many contingents from hospitals, as well as from other sections of the working class such as dockers, printworkers, building workers, carworkers and railworkers—shows the potential that exists for mounting a counter-offensive against the Labour Government's attacks on the NHS. The NCC must now take that campaign into the hospitals, putting its full support behind the fight against private practice.

Such a campaign can not only play a decisive role in smashing the consultants' strikes, but can lay the basis for a fight to abolish private practice completely, outside as well as inside the NHS.

The decision of the NCC to support the 26 May Day of Action helps to link up the fight between cuts and the struggle against unemployment. By taking up the specific struggle to oppose all attacks on the NHS, and at the same time involving its supporters on a wide range of other issues that confront the workers movement, the NCC can play an important role in developing united action against the plans of the ruling class to drive down living standards and break up the social services.

Photos: LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL), ANDREW WIARD (Report)



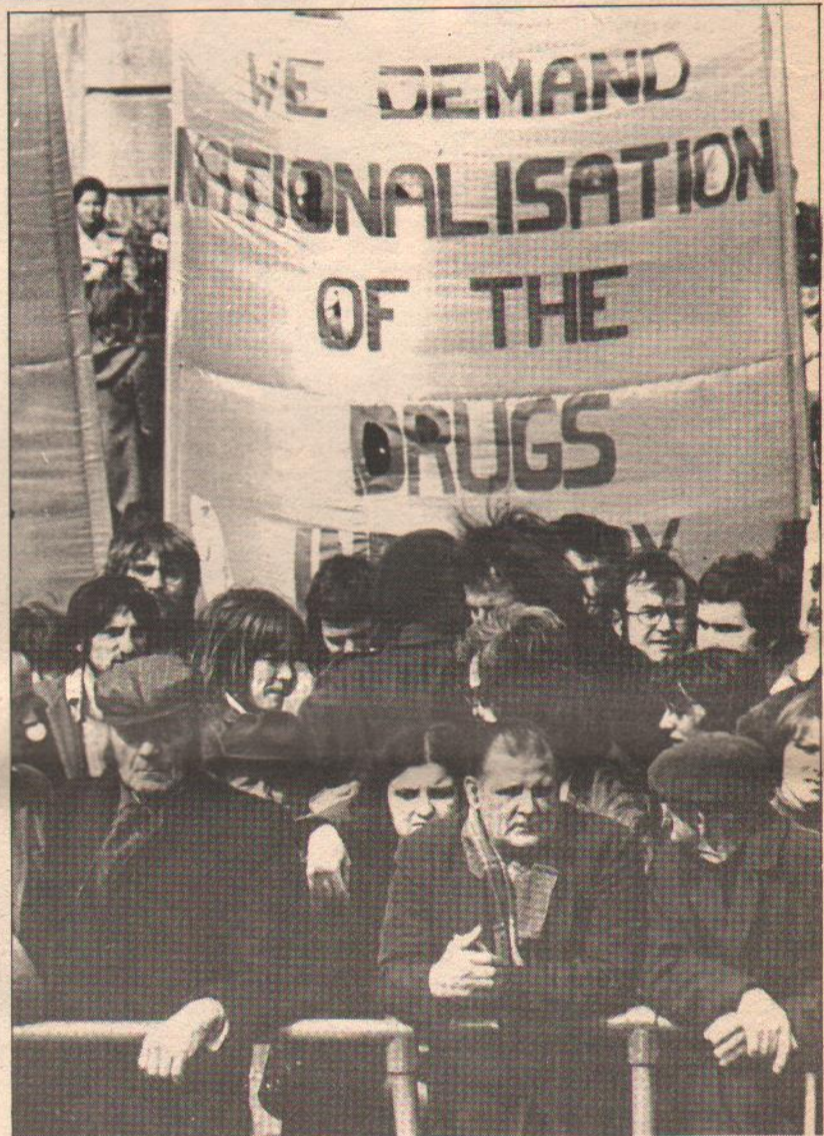
HAROLD KING, chairperson of the London Trade Union & Old Age Pensioners Joint Committee, pointed out that it would be the old people from the working class who would be the chief sufferers if the cuts were allowed to go through.



JOHN MITCHELL, full-time Secretary of NATSOPA London Joint Branches, took the collection. He set the ball rolling by pledging £50 from his own union.



KEVIN LING, a full-time officer representing NALGO, 'welcomed the demonstration' and 'urged a struggle against all cuts and all private practice inside and outside the NHS'.



JANET MAGUIRE, NCC national organiser, told the final rally in Trafalgar Square: 'They talk about freedom of choice, but the workers have no right to choose. Working women cannot afford to buy abortions. Crippled workers cannot afford to buy their way into the King Edward VII Hospital, like that pampered young woman who fell off her horse.'

JONES' FRENZY MEETS Fighting programme at Scots TUC

The leadership of the Scottish Trades Union Congress has long posed as one of the most militant and unyielding sections of the British labour movement. And by presenting themselves as the best champions of the STUC's long-standing opposition to incomes policy and wage restraint, the Communist Party have secured its Congress and General Council as key strongholds. However, the 79th Congress of the STUC in Perth last week saw this facade collapse in ruins.

Plans had of course been made beforehand to prop it up through a composite resolution from the National Union of Mineworkers and AUEW-TASS, which declared its opposition 'to any form of Government imposed incomes policy'. By passing this, Congress was to maintain for history its 'intransigence' on the question.

At the same time, however, it would be urged to pass Emergency Motion 5 on the Budget, drafted by the General Council and supported by the NUM. This simply reiterated that Congress 'has never favoured incomes policy', found the 3 per cent limit 'inadequate and unacceptable', and called on the General Council 'to seek an early meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer'. It was moved by leading Communist Party member Hugh D'Arcy of UCATT, who announced in his speech that a date for the tete a tete had already been agreed with Healey - 6 May!

Stirling

But the CP's strategy to keep faith with the interests of workers on paper, while fellow travelling with the betrayals of Jones, Scanlon and Murray in practice, met with a small snag. The decisive debate on incomes policy took place not within their carefully elaborated set-piece debate on Wednesday, but in Tuesday's debate on unemployment.

The programme which drew the combined fury of the 'Big Three' bureaucracies - TGWU, AUEW, and GMWU - was not the CP's class-collaborationist pleas for 'reflation', 'increased investment' and 'import controls'. It was the militant line for class action proposed by Stirling Trades Council, whose resolution called for: a 35-hour week and longer holidays with no loss of pay; no redundancies without adequate alternatives at equal status; open the books; nationalisation without compensation; stop the cuts, programme to restore cuts; sliding scale of wages and state benefits; and no incomes policy, or any other policies 'which are aimed at making working people pay for the crisis in the capitalist system'.

Leading

It was to this programme that both the right, led by Jack Jones, and the CP's leading figures in the NUM and AUEW-TASS had to address themselves. The wrangling among CP delegates as to whether to support, oppose or abstain on the Stirling resolution was soon resolved, however, after the proposing speech by Corrie McCord, a TGWU delegate from Stirling Trades Council.

MAY DAY GREETINGS

ISLINGTON TRADES COUNCIL

extends May Day greetings to all sections of the labour movement.

WESTMINSTER TRADES COUNCIL

sends fraternal May Day greetings to the labour movement.

In response to McCord's appeal for 'unity for a planned socialist economy, not for schemes which serve the profit motive', Jack Jones strode to the rostrum. The resolution, he informed Congress, was 'a clear attack on the TUC and the Labour Government, a clear attack on millions of workers - Tory Central Office would be proud of its approach'.

This part-time decoration of the Institute for Workers Control then proceeded to denounce the main demands of the resolution. 'Nationalisation

his delegation's rejection of the Emergency Resolution on the Budget the following day, several members of the delegation still voted in favour during the hand vote. But the danger that there might be a split on the Stirling resolution was avoided by a card vote in which the grand slam of the TGWU, AUEW and GMWU block votes 'settled the issue'.

However, Tom Coulter, of the NUM, put the debate in a more reliable perspective. The resolution from his trades council rejecting incomes policy was put to the test of pit-head mass meetings, branch meetings and trades council meetings. He threw down the gauntlet to Jones: 'I challenge Jack Jones to go to any T&G branch and get a unanimous vote for his policy - he's got no chance.'



'Left' talker McGahey may smile, but it's Jones supporter Alex Donnet of the GMWU (right) who has reason to laugh after hammering the left with the block vote

without compensation', he informed Congress, 'is not in-line with the common sense thinking of responsible delegates.' The demands were completely 'unrealistic'.

So much for Jones's great campaign for the 35-hour week. One day after Jones declares this crusade for Europe, his response to the only resolution which proposes its adoption is a witch-hunting speech and 252 votes delivered against!

Jones's right-wing demagoguery was entirely in line with his approach to the TGWU delegation itself. Chris Baur of the *Financial Times* accurately reported: 'In a three-hour session with his 25-man delegation they have been firmly instructed to vote down any resolutions which might jeopardise the TUC's quest for an agreement with the Government.'

It was common knowledge that Jones's approach was, as the *Daily Record* put it, 'dictatorial'. Most delegates were aware that roughly one-third of the TGWU delegation was in favour of rejecting the Budget proposals.

After Ray MacDonald, Scottish Secretary of the TGWU, had announced

Even a quick look at the vote on the Stirling resolution starts to give a true picture. It received almost a third of a million votes and easily achieved a majority of the conference outside the 'Big Three' bureaucrats' block vote. Major unions voting for it included NALGO, NUPE, NUM, AUEW/TASS, UCATT, ASLEF and the Boilermakers.

Jones's intervention at the conference sharply posed the question of fighting for the leadership of the movement. The need to oust the right-wing Labour leadership in order to defeat their policies also has to be understood in relation to the trade unions. While Benn spoke at the conference, the job of selling Labour's pay policy was left to Jones. In the fight to defeat such policies, it will be vital to defeat their backers.

Rejected

Jones was prepared to tolerate the motion moved by the General Council which rejected the 3 per cent limit as 'inadequate'. What really put the wind up him over the Stirling resolution was that the opposition to the policies he supports was directly linked to practical proposals for workers' action against the anarchy of capitalist production which he seeks to perpetuate.

Seen in that light the strong minority of Congress forged around the Stirling resolution has strengthened the assault on Labour's right-wing policies. By building cross-union action on the basis of the Stirling policies the fate of the block vote wheel-dealers can be sealed throughout the movement.

IN FOCUS

Labour Pounded

The 'new' social contract which was to have been decided last Monday by the TUC and Labour Government is too 'wordy'. It won't be issued until after next month's meeting. The real reason is that the trade union movement has not been sufficiently brow-beaten into accepting the new wage controls. Callaghan's speech at the shopworkers' conference promised real wage cuts for all, and the icing is fast crumbling off the uneatable cake. Campaigns against incomes policy like the one in Birmingham (see elsewhere on this page) are starting to gain ground.

Healey's setback is not for want of powerful allies. Jack Jones, thoroughly alarmed by the appearance of a fighting programme at the STUC, waded in to sort out the troublemakers. But apparently the job was not done thoroughly enough. Len Murray expressed painful surprise that the sight of trade union leaders grovelling at the service of capital had not halted the run on the pound.

Lieutenants of Capital

But these men are only the labour lieutenants of capital. The generals are following their usual strategy - the run on the pound - for goading Labour Governments into speedy action against the class which puts them into power. A look into the history books confirms the fact that the run on the pound over the last months is not an accident, but part and parcel of gaining acceptance for incomes policy, the cuts in social expenditure, and mass unemployment.

1931 - A wave of huge sterling selling ordered by the Bank of England sets the scene for a meeting between the bankers and Ramsay MacDonald. The bankers demand cuts in dole money and teachers' pay. Failing to force the cuts through the Labour Cabinet and the TUC, MacDonald deserts to form the National Government with the Liberals and Tories. The cuts are forced through. Unemployment rises to three million.

1964 - The election manifesto has promised low interest charges, increases in public spending, and control of profits and dividends. But on 16 July 1965 the pound falls to its lowest level since the previous April. Not satisfied with the promise of HP limits and public spending cuts, sterling streams out. On 1 September George Brown introduces the Prices and Incomes Board, which mainly aims to control wage increases.

1966 - A deep wave of selling, let loose by the failure of the Bank of England to take decisive measures, rises to record proportions on 19 July. On 20 July, Wilson announces a legally binding wage freeze, for six months, to be followed by a further six months of severe restraint, plus cuts in public spending of £500 million. The same pattern continues into 1967, finally forcing a devaluation which boosts the price of life for every working person.

1975 - Healey's spring Budget continues the Tories' cuts into a new range of public services. Tax changes produce big price rises. But the Government still holds back from introducing a statutory incomes policy. June sees hectic selling of the pound without intervention by the Bank of England. On 30 June Wilson announces there will be no panic measures, but that day the pound drops a full percentage point. The next day Healey proposes a 10 per cent wage limit to be enforced unless the trade unions decide to police their own membership within a week. The £6 limit is born.

1976 - It's the same old story. The Labour Government will not resist the pressure on the pound. The international speculators and their ruling class masters will not be satisfied even by acceptance of the 3 per cent limit. They want promises of further cuts in social expenditure, and obedience to future wage controls.

Norman Atkinson pointed the finger at the conspirators in the City this week in Parliament. A labour movement enquiry into the cause of the pound's decline should provide a definite answer. Appeasement is no way out for the British working class. The best way to put a stop to these attacks is resistance. A start can be made with the campaign for strike action on the national day of action against unemployment on 26 May.

Brum fight on pay laws

The fight against the pay laws is being increasingly taken up by trade unionists in Birmingham.

The Lucas BW3 Joint Shop Stewards Committee's call for a co-ordinated campaign against 'official support for policies which have only made trade union members worse off' has been favourably received by a number of shop stewards committees. Meanwhile Stirling Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers No. 2 branch is forwarding a motion to the June meeting of Birmingham Trades Council calling for 'total opposition to all forms of incomes policy and wage restraint'. The resolution continues:

'Instead of negotiating various forms of cuts in living standards, the Trades Council urges the TUC General Council to demand:

1. A return to free collective bargaining;
2. A national minimum wage agreement for all workers;
3. Restoration of nationally agreed

threshold agreements which can effectively compensate for the rise in the cost of living.

In order to pursue these aims, the Trades Council further resolves to organise a lobby of the special TUC Conference and to approach other labour movement organisations like the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, the District Labour Party, and District Committees for support for this action.'

The Lucas BW3 shop stewards campaign will be launched on 3 May at a meeting in the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham 5. All shop stewards committees are urged to send delegates.

OUR PHONES

....will be back to normal this week, we hope. That means: Editorial, 01-837 6954; Distribution, 01-837 9987. Don't forget we've moved to 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1.

'Militant's' lip-service to socialism

The annual conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists last week came at a time when there is a burning need to build a clear opposition to the policies of the Callaghan Government inside the workers movement.

The LPYS conference could have played a major role in that fight. But the opportunity was missed, and the res-

possibility must lie at the door of the LPYS National Committee dominated by supporters of the *Militant*.

Whilst they espoused many policies (some fine, some not so fine!), the NC consistently opposed any action to fight for them. This was notably the case on Spain, where a resolution calling for the organisation of a mass campaign to force the Labour Government to break all links with the heirs of Franco was opposed and thereby defeated by the NC.

On the issue of unemployment, not one resolution from supporters of *Militant* even mentioned the National Assembly on 27 March, let alone called for any action on 26 May. Even resolutions which the NC felt unable to oppose, such as one calling for support for the actions of the 'National Co-ordinating Committee Against Cuts in the NHS' have to date meant nothing in practice - only two LPYS banners were on the demonstration last Sunday, and the banner of the NC was nowhere to be seen.

Instead of linking the LPYS to the activity of broader sections of the working class movement taking action against the Government's policies, the NC has consistently conducted sectarian campaigns (such as the LPYS campaign in solidarity with the Spanish Young Socialists, and the unemployment demonstration which the LPYS held three days after the 25,000 strong 26 November demonstration), rather than mobilising alongside other sections of the labour movement.

All the rhetoric of the National Committee about the need for 'a socialist programme' is in fact nothing more than an attempt to avoid a fight for a socialist programme. As was pointed out in an emergency resolution on 26 May put by supporters of *Red Weekly*, *Workers Action* and Socialist Charter, it is through being the best fighters for action on 26 May that the LPYS could most effectively campaign for its policies of nationalisation and public works to fight unemployment.

many members of the LPYS as a real alternative to the soap-box politics of the NC.

The bankruptcy of the *Militant* leadership was most clearly shown by their open capitulation to anti-Irish chauvinism in the debate on Ireland. They opposed the resolutions calling for the immediate withdrawal of British troops, arguing against the right of the Irish people to self-determination by proposing British solutions.

Alternative

The alternative for the LPYS were shown most clearly in elections for the representative of the LPYS on the NEC of the Labour Party. The *Militant* candidate, who stood for trying to persuade the 'lefts' on the NEC of the need for socialist policies won with 130 votes; the 'Clause Four' candidate, who stood for 'a better working relationship between the Labour Party and the LPYS' got 44 votes; and the opposition candidate from the left, Graham Durham, who stood for fighting on the NEC to make the 'lefts' turn their words into action and organise a fight against the policies of the Labour Government, got 22 votes.

If the LPYS is to play its part in building a class struggle opposition inside the workers movement, fighting the class collaborationist policies of the Labour Government, then revolutionary socialists in the LPYS will have to forge a united left opposition in the LPYS which can challenge *Militant* for leadership from the left. If this task is set about seriously, then by next year perhaps the LPYS conference will not go by without the workers movement even noticing the difference.

BLACKS MARCH AGAINST FASCISTS



Photo: DAVE EVANS (IFL)

The anger and frustration of the black community in Britain against Labour's racist immigration policies and TUC compliance in them - as in the recent call for even tighter restrictions on work permits - erupted in Bradford on Saturday.

For the first time the immigrant community came out onto the streets in large numbers to oppose a national

demonstration by the fascist National Front.

The NF are standing a candidate in every Bradford ward in the local elections. But in the week leading up to their demo an ad hoc committee against fascism successfully plastered the entire city with thousands of posters in Urdu, English, Gujarati and Punjabi calling for a counter-mobilisation.

Meanwhile in London, the National Party - which split from the NF earlier this year - was only able to cobble together 200 people for its 'March for Britain'. As in Bradford, however, it was accompanied by hundreds of policemen who defended free speech in their normal way - by kicking, punching and arresting every anti-fascist they could lay their hands on.

Propaganda

The willingness of the NC to sit back and make propaganda for socialism rather than involve the LPYS in mounting campaigns alongside the rest of the working class movement has also led to the growth of a new current inside the LPYS - the 'Clause Four' supporters of *Tribune*.

The policies of 'Clause Four' are in general well to the right of *Militant* - for example they argue for class collaborationist policies such as import controls and more money for the NEB to fight unemployment. Nevertheless their willingness to involve themselves in campaign activity makes them appear to

Who rules Cowley?

Day shift workers at British Leyland's Cowley plant voted on Monday to end a total stoppage over the instant sacking of two men following alleged clocking offences. A compromise had been decided in negotiations that management would change their penalty from dismissal to 'indefinite suspension' of the two men pending further negotiations.

CLIMB - DOWN

Senior Steward Reg Parsons admitted to the mass meeting that this outcome represented 'a climb-down on both sides'. The position of the two suspended men is in no way guaranteed. Their eventual fate has been taken from the hands of the power represented by a complete stoppage by the mass of workers.

Frustration and anger has recently been building up amongst Cowley workers following another wave of substantial speed-up under the Ryder plan, and signs that management intend to introduce a tough disciplinary regime in the plant. In dismissing the two men, neither of them leading militants, management was 'testing the water'.

Parson's treatment of the case as one of 'making the punishment fit the crime' disarms workers against management's attacks on living standards and jobs in their drive to implement Ryder. Only by explaining that even on apparently minor issues such as this, what's really at stake is 'Who Rules' in the factory - management or the workers - can militants prepare car workers to throw back the employers' offensive.

Sam Boyd.

Teachers' leaders learn no lessons

'Things are going to get worse!' - that was the message of Fred Mulley, Labour Minister for Education, at the National Union of Teachers conference in Scarborough last week. The teachers' leaders responded to this crisis situation in the schools by clamping down on local militancy with harsh disciplinary measures, and appealing for unity with the Labour Government - all, of course, served up with fake cries of anger at the cuts.

Mulley bluntly declared: 'Education appears to have been the hardest hit, but after social security and health it is the biggest spender. Obviously it is in line for the biggest cuts.' Despite this declaration of war, Fred Jarvis and Alf Wiltshire, General Secretary and President of the NUT respectively, both made pleas for Government-NUT cooperation to 'defend education'. As one delegate put it, this amounted to pleas to the axeman to save the tree by putting the axe in his hand.

Compulsory

But not content with stopping any resolutions which put forward a programme for fighting the cuts, the Executive also came to the Government's aid by introducing what amounts to compulsory retirement for teachers at 50, with no provision for an adequate pension. This, they say, is inevitable when school rolls are falling.

The NUT Executive are very anxious about threats to their alliance with Mul-

ley. The main threat comes not from any likelihood that they will be disillusioned about the Labour Government's intentions, but from militant teachers who no longer accept the promises of 'jam tomorrow' which Jarvis and Co so liberally smear onto the crusts of educational provision today. They have decided to clap on the leg-irons.

Militants

Following the attack on trades councils through the TUC's Rule 14, the Executive will now play the role of cop in their own union. The new disciplinary measures will empower NUT officers to charge any militant who disobeys their instructions. Anyone charged will be automatically suspended from all union activity even before the charge has been heard.

The 'accused' will not be allowed legal representation at the hearing. Any appeals will be to the Executive itself, with the accusing officer stepping out of the room.

Star Chamber

Communist Party and NUT Executive member Max Morris turned in a red-baiting performance that even the right wing found it difficult to equal. Ever anxious to prove his 'respectability',

he praised the new 'Star Chamber' as the sole guarantor of 'unity and discipline'. Morris dropped this theme when it came to building unity against the Government's austerity measures or imposing working class discipline on the TUC and Labour leaders.

But opposition is growing against the bureaucrats. This was reflected in the speech made by Dick North, IS member recently re-elected to the NUT

and we get caned!

Following the NUT Conference in Scarborough last week, JOHN PERRY, a delegate and member of the Leicestershire NUT Divisional Executive, reports on how the struggle of teachers against the cuts in Leicestershire will be affected by these decisions.

Leicestershire LEA has initiated perhaps the worst package of cuts in the country. In September 1975 every secondary school in the country found its staff cut by two, while a further 50 places went from the primary sector - a conservative minimum of at least 210 teacher vacancies frozen. Currently there are over 100 unemployed teachers registered on the dole in Leicester itself, a figure which will be further swollen in July with those leaving training colleges.

In May the Leicestershire Division of the NUT drew up a campaign and elected an Action Committee to fight the

Executive, in favour of a resolution from Lambeth NUT which not only opposed incomes policy, but proposed a fighting alternative through the sliding scale of wages. It was also seen in the growing support for such resolutions as that on the Working Women's Charter (although this was still defeated).

Supporters of the Socialist Teachers Conference, formed last year to fight for a socialist perspective in the NUT,

cuts. Two lines for action were proposed - part time schooling in schools where vacancies had not been filled and pupil-teacher ratios had worsened. -- no cover for staff absences after three days.

But the NUT National Action Committee did not sanction any official action until the end of February 1976, and then only in the 39 secondary schools and not in the junior schools.

Acceptance by the NUT conference of the Executive's resolution on cuts means that other areas who wish to take action will face the same delays and dilution of local proposals that Leicestershire has faced, leading to frustration

were in the forefront of all the major debates challenging the Executive. Supporters of the STC decided that they would hold an open meeting of their co-ordinating committee on 15 May in London to discuss the tasks facing militants after the conference and the clampdown on militants.

BERNARD REGAN (East London NUT).

and no effective action against the cuts. The biggest lesson from Leicestershire was not even mentioned in the Executive memorandum - that the fight on staffing alone is totally inadequate if education is to be defended.

Despite the conference's failure to broaden the anti-cuts campaign, the Division is forced to turn to the broad labour movement for support. A broad sheet is being printed, describing the scope and effects of the cuts, for distribution to all union branches affiliated to the Trades Council, public sector unions, student unions and councillors.

So far the County has been forced for the first time to provide supply teachers in secondary schools, and hints have been dropped that there may be a partial restoration of staffing levels. However the lessons of Leicestershire are that the Executive's proposals are inadequate to defeat the total attack on education. The sanctions need to be tougher, applied against all cuts, and backed by the wider union movement.

1926

THE

GREAT TEST



'Man, John, there's never been anything like it. If the blighters o'leaders dinna let us down we'll hae the capitalists crawling on their bellies in a week. Oh, boy, it's the revolution at last!'

But it wasn't, despite the brave words of this Independent Labour Party supporter. Fifty years ago the leaders of the TUC, the true fathers of the cowardly bureaucrats of 'left' and right that lead the unions today, inflicted upon the working class the worst defeat it has suffered this century. In the wake of the betrayal of the General Strike the miners struggled on for six months before being starved back to work.

UNCONDITIONAL

Countless thousands of other workers were victimised. As a result of the unconditional surrender of the General Council on 12 May, the very existence of effective trade unionism was threatened as the bosses went on a vicious rampage to victimise militants and impose worse conditions. Had the railwaymen, transport workers or dockers gone back on the terms originally offered — and accepted by their leaders — few others could have resisted the wave of sackings and wage cuts.

The General Strike was the culmination of a decade of working class struggle that had flowered in the wartime shop stewards movement and burst out under the impact of the Russian Revolution. At the famous Leeds Convention in 1917 even Ramsay MacDonald, later the leader of the 1931 National Government, was forced to support the call for soviets of workers, soldiers and sailors deputies!

Aided by the post-war boom of 1918-20 and the amalgamations forced by the militants, the unions underwent an unprecedented growth, reaching 6½ million members in 1919-20. Seventy thousand troops were involved in mutinies in South-East England, while in the great Clyde strike of 1919 pickets had consisted not of tens and hundreds but of thousands. In Yorkshire it was reported to the Government that 'a minority of very advanced workers' had inflamed 'practically the whole body of skilled men, affecting hundreds of thousands of workers'.

REPRESSION

In 1919 a working class revolution was within reach. Prime Minister Lloyd George knew it. Despite fierce repression, which saw tanks in the streets and machine guns on the rooftops in Glasgow, Lloyd George confided to the leaders of the trade unions that the Government could no longer control the working class. But with J.H. Thomas playing the role he was to repeat in the General Strike, the movement was defused.

Even so, the militancy of the working class was unbroken. August 1920 saw the

DOSSIER COMPILED BY MICK GOSLING

formation of a National Council of Action embracing all the main organisations of the labour movement, forcing the Government to withdraw from intervention in the war against the Soviet Union.

But the working class was to pay heavily for the missed opportunities of 1919-20. In 1921, with unemployment rising to over two million (15 per cent of the working class), the Government once again turned to the trade union bureaucrats to inflict savage wage cuts of up to 40 per cent on the miners. The Triple Alliance of miners, rail and transport workers which had been built to fight such a possibility following the handing back of the mines to the private owners collapsed at the moment it was needed.

MEMBERSHIP

Black Friday, 15 April 1921, set the pattern for other industries. A round of wage-cutting ensued as the recession deepened. Trade union membership had slumped to just over four million by the start of 1924 and the beginnings of a new upturn in the economy.

But things were far from settled between capital and labour. The coal owners might have their pits back, but the miners — followed by other sections of the working class — were fighting back. In the spring of 1924 the miners recouped the losses of 1921, followed that winter by new claims from the engineers, shipbuilders, postal workers and dockers. At the same time a Labour Government was brought to office, concluding a trading agreement with Soviet Russia which aroused new enthusiasm in the working class.

The ruling class quickly succeeded in removing MacDonald from office, but with the political outlet of a Labour Government blocked, the workers turned to direct action. On Red Friday, 31 July 1925, the Baldwin Government was forced to grant a subsidy to the pits to maintain miners' wages in the face of a united front of miners, rail workers, transport workers and engineers.

Such a situation could not last. Britain's economic position was deteriorating rapidly against that of the United States and other capitalist powers. The return to the Gold Standard had simply increased the price of British exports by 10 per cent. The hard pressed British export industries desperately sought ways to reduce costs — and wages were top of the list.

The confrontation had to come. On Red Friday the workers won a victory — and the

Government set a time-bomb. As Thomas Jones, the deputy secretary to the Cabinet in these years, wrote shortly afterwards: 'In July 1925 the Government were threatened with a concerted attack by the big unions. The country was ill-informed as to the merits of the coal dispute and the Government was uncertain as to how far it could rely on its emergency preparations. A breathing space was obtained by means of a subsidy and the appointment of a Royal Commission.'

But while the Government politically prepared, seeking to draw every section of society around it and against the workers by raising the question of 'the constitution', the leadership of the workers movement did nothing. While MacDonald wailed that the Government on Red Friday had handed seeming victory 'to the very forces that sane, well considered, thoroughly well-examined socialism feels to be probably its greatest enemy', the TUC sat on its hands hotly denying any threat to the constitution, or that they were using industrial action for 'political' ends.

The situation tested every leader and would-be leader of the labour movement — and found them all wanting. The 'lefts', who had been pushed into action by the rapidly rising anger of the rank-and-file on Red Friday, were at one with the right in denying any political challenge to the State, although the ruling class had chosen this issue as the field of battle. In the strike itself they made no attempt to differentiate themselves from the right. Their role is clearly described by Julian Symons in *The General Strike*:

IMPORTANT

'They were outnumbered, but they occupied important positions. One of them, Purcell, was chairman of the Strike Organisation Committee; George Hicks, John Bromley, Ben Tillet and A.B. Swales were leading figures on various committees. After the strike was over some of them spoke brave words to the effect that it had been a class struggle, yet during the nine days there is no suggestion that opinion in the General Council was seriously divided at any time.'

Indeed, Hicks was one of the quietest in the small group that negotiated the betrayal formula with Baldwin and his cronies.

Only one force could have rallied the workers movement against the capitalist offensive: the tiny forces of the Communist Party — and the far greater sections of the workers movement that they influenced through the Minority Movement in the trade

unions and the National Left Wing Movement in the Labour Party. At the time of the strike, representatives of nearly a million workers — there were only four million in the unions — supported the Minority Movement, while over 50 Constituency Labour Parties and many more individual Labour Party members supported the National Left Wing Movement.

TASK

Yet the Communist Party — following the Comintern line of subordinating the struggle of the working class to gaining 'an alliance' with the lefts — never advanced a policy that clearly spelt out what was at stake and challenged for the leadership of the labour movement. Their central slogan, 'All Power to the General Council', did nothing to prepare the workers movement for the inevitable betrayal. Decades later the CP's official historian James Klugmann admits that the slogan 'was essentially incorrect'.

Reversing earlier positions, the CP itself lent support to the idea that the strike was simply a struggle for the miners' demands. A correct policy of a united front towards the lefts, based on specific tasks and actions to take the struggle forward, became a blanket endorsement of the lefts' words, serving to act as a brake on the struggle. Even in the moment of defeat no clean break was made with the traitors, diplomatic relations being maintained for the sake of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee on which these same lefts sat.

SUPPLEMENT

In this special Red Weekly supplement on the General Strike we are not going to concentrate on the tremendous combativity and creativity demonstrated by the rank-and-file in the course of the strike, the flourishing of the Councils of Action, the consternation and bitterness expressed at the moment of betrayal. No one can doubt the tremendous spontaneous upsurge of the working class. But spontaneity of the class is useless without the politics to give it direction and organise its vanguard.

Here we concentrate on the one force that could have given that upsurge political direction, attempting to look in depth at the development of the Communist Party's relations with the lefts, the growth and potential of the Minority Movement, and the influence of the early bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union and the Third International on the CP's policies.

Obviously such an account is necessarily one-sided. But by studying these questions in a historical perspective, militants can better come to grips with the problems of constructing both the united front and the revolutionary party today and confronting the bureaucratic misleaders of the labour movement.

Red Friday, 31 July 1925, was a glorious day in working class history. The threat of a national embargo on coal movement by miners, railway workers and other transport workers forced the Government to grant a nine month subsidy to the mines. The lock-out notices were withdrawn, and the miners' wages maintained.

The defeat of Black Friday four years earlier on 15 April 1921 — when miners were forced to accept wage cuts of up to 40 per cent — seemed to be wiped clean. The leaders of the railway workers and transport workers who had deserted the Triple Alliance in 1921 — the Cripple Alliance, the miners called — had been forced to take a stand under the mushrooming pressure of the rank and file, not least the Minority Movement. Yet nine months later this same working class was to suffer the greatest defeat in its history.

KEY-NOTE

The seeds of that defeat were planted by the ruling class barely forty-eight hours after Red Friday. They knew their trade union leaders well. On 2 August the Tory Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson Hicks, sounded the new key-note: 'I say to you, coming straight from the Cabinet councils, the thing is not finished. The danger is not over. Sooner or later this question has got to be fought out by the people of the land. Is England to be governed by Parliament and the Cabinet or by a handful of trade union leaders?'

The miners' fight was no longer an industrial struggle but a struggle for 'the constitution'. Everyone in the land had to line up on this fundamental issue. The Tories cemented their position by building up the Organisation for Maintenance of Supplies, an organisation which recruited terrified sections of the middle classes along with the fascist rabble, and preparing contingency plans for a series of Regional Commissioners with wide-ranging powers in the event of a national breakdown.

These plans had been drawn up by the previous Tory Government — and were kept hidden from the labour movement by the first Labour Government in the form of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Josiah Wedgwood. When he handed back his office to his Tory successor, J.C.C. Davidson, he told him: 'I haven't destroyed any of your plans. In fact, I haven't done a bloody thing about them.'

PREPARATIONS

But it wasn't these organisational preparations that guaranteed the capitalist victory. By transforming the struggle to an overtly political one, raising the constitutional issue, they had hit the Achilles heel of the trade union leaders — left and right alike. After the strike J.H. Thomas, the railway workers' leader who played the most wretched role in the betrayal, said: 'I have never disguised that in a challenge

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE 'LEFTS'



The Government prepared for the General Strike by imprisoning twelve leading members of the Communist Party in October 1925, (left to right): T.A. Jackson, J.T. Murphy, Harry Pollitt, William Rust, Tom Wintringham, J.R. Campbell, Arthur MacManus, Wal Hannington, Tom Bell, Willie Gallacher

Communist Party cartoon—note 'All Power to the General Council'

to the constitution God help us unless the Government won.'

In a bitter postscript to the TUC's betrayal a *Daily Herald* correspondent wrote: 'We shall never have another revolution, for Mr Baldwin has announced that the strike is unconstitutional, and so the TUC packed up and went home.'

Only the Communist Party attempted to explain to the working class what a general strike would mean. Analysing the lessons of Red Friday in *Communist Review* in September 1925, J.T. Murphy wrote:

'Let us be clear what a general strike means. It can only mean the throwing down of the gauntlet to the capitalist state, and all the powers at its disposal. Either that challenge is only a gesture, in which

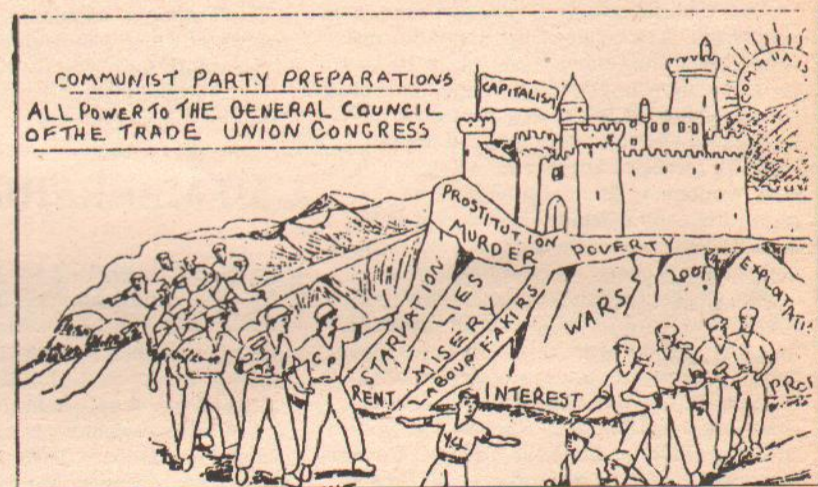
case the capitalist class will not worry about it, or it must develop its challenge into an actual fight for power, in which case we land in civil war. Any leaders who talk about a general strike without facing this obvious fact are bluffing both themselves and the workers.'

The crying tragedy is that having said this the Communist Party took no independent initiatives to prepare the working class. In the whole period up to the General Strike the CP's central slogan was 'All Power to the General Council'. This was increasingly advanced with only token reference to the need to develop workshop committees and Councils of Action and democratise the TUC.

So in reality it could only mean giving complete confidence to the existing General Council to conduct the strike. Just as much was admitted by CP leader Harry Pollitt in the wake of the 1925 Scarborough TUC, which had been high on left rhetoric but decidedly low in terms of actual preparation for the coming confrontation:

COMPLETE

'In view of the overwhelming decision for complete solidarity registered at Scarborough, the new General Council will simply have to prosecute more vigorously the fight on behalf of the workers. True the right-wing of the Council is strengthened by the return of one or two people who do not give support to the idea that we are engaged in a class struggle, but I think that



mass pressure from behind will force even them to toe the line.'

Such a line was absolutely clear. What the CP envisaged was a re-run of Red Friday and the key task was to keep up the pressure on the TUC leaders. So although the CP issued 22 circulars in the coming winter, and was gaining hundreds of sympathisers where previously it had a few — particularly after the arrest and imprisonment of twelve of its leading members in October 1925 — no attempt was made to prepare the working class for struggle independently of the TUC leadership.

The CP subordinated the workers' struggle to the Comintern's policy of building a strategic alliance with the 'lefts'.

The same Murphy who had warned that a general strike brought to the fore the question of political power could write a few months later: 'The initiative should come from the General Council of the TUC and its sub-committee of trades councils...' and 'there should be no

rival body to the Trades Council... We should avoid rivalry and recognise the General Council as the General Staff of the unions directing the unions in the struggle.'

When the TUC turned down the suggestion of a recall conference in March 1926 to prepare the strike, the CP criticised the decision without pointing out that 'left' Hicks had supported it. And after the Minority Movement's conference on preparedness in March 1926, its acting general secretary George Hardy talked in *Workers Weekly* of a summer campaign of outdoor meetings as if the General Strike was not around the corner!

With a major slogan of 'All Power to the General Council', the Communist Party leaders could do only one thing — revise their own estimate as to what was at stake. Murphy wrote in *Workers Weekly* just three days before the strike began 'that good trade union leaders who have sufficient character to stand firm on the demands of the



Out on the streets at the Elephant & Castle in London

miners' would suffice to carry through the General Strike to victory.

Of course, if the General Strike is 'not political' you don't raise political slogans. So the CP had no real answer when Churchill stormed up and down the country talking about the imminent threat to the State. *The slogan of a Labour Government - which could have disrupted the strategy of the bourgeoisie, which required a head-on confrontation with the working class - was not raised until the third day of the strike, and then only as a secondary demand.*

MANIFESTO

In a manifesto on 'The Political Meaning of the General Strike' published on 5 May the party attached overriding importance to the demands of the miners. Additional demands included amongst others nationalisation without compensation and under workers control and...the resignation of the Tory Government and the election of a Labour Government 'if victory is to be clinched'. At no time did the CP campaign for power to the Councils of Action and for these to break from the half-hearted and treacherous leadership of the TUC. Not even Ernest Bevin's strategy of calling out the workers sector by sector was challenged. In his book on the General Strike, Christopher Farman has well summed up the consequences of this:

'The practical effect of Bevin's strategy was to create a sense of isolation among many of the 'first-line' strikers, particularly in the big engineering centres like Coventry and the Clyde; to frustrate the hundreds of thousands of trade unionists who, in spite of their own inclinations, were forced to continue working; and to give the Government another week's grace in which to improve its organisation and recruit more volunteers' (*The General Strike*, p155).

It is impossible to say whether a different outcome to the General Strike was possible in 1926.

REVOLUTIONARY

But a clear and decisive political lead would have allowed the Communist Party to emerge as a mass revolutionary party, strengthening the rank and file against the bureaucracy inside the workers movement in preparation for future struggles.

True, the CP recruited another 4,000 or so members before the year was out, but the new recruits were mainly miners impressed with the financial support given to their struggle by Russian workers. And after the miners were starved back these gains were rapidly lost.

Not only had the General Strike been lost. The Communist Party had missed the most favourable opportunity to date in British history to create a mass revolutionary party.



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Miners' leaders in 1926 (left to right): Herbert Smith, A.J. Cook and W.P. Richardson

The failure of the Minority Movement

It was the launching of the National Minority Movement in 1924 and the beginning of the Left Wing Movement in the Labour Party which laid the pre-conditions for the emergence of the Communist Party as a significant force in the labour movement. At its height the Minority Movement attracted representatives of 957,000 workers; while the *Sunday Worker*, the voice of the Left Wing Movement, achieved a stable circulation of 85,000 copies a week in the early months of 1926.

This turn to the mass organisations required a conscious political break from the syndicalist and sectarian conceptions of the young Communist Party. When its first application for affiliation to the Labour Party was turned down, *The Communist* of 16 September 1920 snapped back: 'So be it. It is their funeral, not ours.' A swift rebuff from the Comintern produced a meeker tone a week later.

Similarly, it was not until the slump of 1921-22 destroyed the remnants of the Shop Stewards and Workers Committee Movement - with its syndicalist conceptions of factory by factory, industry by industry struggles - that the CP began to look seriously at how to organise the fight against the labour traitors. By the end of 1921 six million workers had suffered wage cuts of 8 shillings a week, while the powerful AEU was locked out in 1922 in a battle over overtime and managerial functions.

In this process the intervention of the Third International and its Red International of Labour Unions was crucial. At its Fourth Congress in 1922, the Third International or Comintern adopted a series of theses on the united front. These argued that in the absence of a direct onslaught for power, the major task of the Communist Parties was to develop the united class front of the workers organisations - to defend and advance the positions of the working class and through this process lead the workers towards the struggle for power.

Breakaway

Important changes in tactics were involved, including a new approach to the 'yellow' Amsterdam International, the body to which the trade unions still supporting social democracy adhered. Confusion and not a little anger existed in the ranks of the CP. 'Sneering descriptions of the NMM were given in the party as an "attempt to dress a red man in a pink cloak"', William Allan, secretary of the revolutionary breakaway United Mineworkers of Scotland, later wrote.

The Sixth Congress of the Communist Party in May 1924 correctly identified the class forces giving rise to the Minority Movement. What was involved was not the simple reinforcement of sectional struggles in this or that union - a souped-up rank-and-file - but the development

of a general movement of class opposition to the labour traitors. This fundamental political understanding was spelled out in the party's perspectives:

'The growing opposition movements now springing up in the leading trade unions, industries and the Labour Party are the first expressions of the concrete raising of the demands of the workers and of a definite challenge to the existing leadership. The CP welcomes these minority movements as the sign of the awakening of the workers.....'

(But) the various minority movements cannot realise their power so long as they remain sectional, separate and limited in their scope and character. The many streams of the rising forces of the workers must be gathered into one powerful mass movement which will sweep away the old leadership and drive forward relentlessly to the struggle for power.'

Significant

Already the Minority Movements amongst miners and engineers had registered significant success. The 'Back to the Unions' campaign launched by the CP in the wake of Black Friday had been particularly successful amongst the miners. This culminated in January 1924 with the victory of Arthur Cook in the elections for Miners Secretary, when arch right-winger Frank Hodges resigned to join the Labour Cabinet.

In August 1924, 270 delegates representing 200,000 workers gathered in London to launch the National Minority Movement. Along with basic demands for a £4 a week minimum and a 44-hour week, the National Programme of Action called for workshop and factory committees, industrial unionism, and workers control over industry. Also included was the demand for a stronger TUC General Council with control over the Labour Party.

This had been part of the CP's policy since 1922, but it was always coupled with demands for the formation of pit and factory committees and the struggle to turn trades councils into Councils of Action with direct representation from the factories and delegates to the TUC.

The key to the Minority Movement's growth and initial success was the application of a united front tactic towards the 'lefts' based on the specific demands of the MM's programme.

But while drawing the line against an

ultra-leftist attempt to by-pass the lefts, the CP was well aware - at the beginning, at least - of the danger of an opportunist adaptation to these forces. Thomas Bell wrote in *Communist Review*, November 1924:

'...we find the left wing in the main representative of the smaller unions, e.g. Purcell, Bromley, Hicks. In previous years such unions played a very small part. But the increased activity of the masses has made it possible for them to gain prominence and ultimately position (in the General Council) by expressing 'Left' sentiments on a number of popular subjects...'

'Although they are in a minority on the General Council, the Right-wing have had to give way to them because of the popular character of their watchwords. At the same time the 'Leftists' are released from the necessity of carrying out all their promises in practice by the very fact that, in the main, they are representatives of the smaller unions.'

Two months before, Campbell had written: 'It would be a suicidal policy, however, for the Communist Party and Minority Movement to place too much reliance on what we have called the official left wing.' Yet it was precisely this warning that the CP leaders were to 'forget' in the months leading to the General Strike. Swales, Purcell and Hicks were allowed to declaim in the abstract about the class struggle and make a demagogic show of support for the Russian trade unions while failing to make any preparations for the coming strike.

After the strike was over, Robin Page Arnot and J.T. Murphy made all the correct points about the 1925 TUC: 'The Scarborough Trades Union Congress showed a ready disposition to pass resolutions of a militant nature, but showed a great disinclination to pass resolutions, or even deal with questions, that necessitated immediate action. The more urgent and practical the question, the less was it discussed at the Scarborough Congress.' (*Communist International*, October 1926).

Accommodation

The Communist Party's accommodation to the lefts could only have a debilitating effect on the Minority Movement. True enough, it organised its biggest conference, attracting representatives of nearly a million workers, in March 1926 around the slogan of 'preparedness', and Councils of Action had been functioning under Communist leadership in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Doncaster, Barrow, Sheffield, Liverpool and Birmingham for almost a year.

But the whole line of the Minority Movement leadership up to and during the General Strike was not towards developing the independent activity of Councils

of Action. It failed to call for a national delegate conference of Council representatives to map out a strategy for winning the General Strike and taking the leadership from the TUC. Nor did it seek to encourage the Councils of Action to take on systematically the tasks of self-defence and distribution of supplies in opposition to the forces of the state and the OMS.

The leadership of the Minority Movement quite consciously called for the subordination of the activities of the Councils of Action to the General Council. George Hardy, acting general secretary of the MM, recalls in *Those Stormy Years* that on the eve of the strike:

'...we sent out from Minority Movement headquarters instructions to our members to work for the establishment of Councils of Action in every area. We warned, however, that the Councils of Action were under no circumstances to take over the work of the trade unions... The Councils of Action were to see that all the decisions of the General Council and the union executives were carried out....'

Collapsed

The national centre of the Minority Movement collapsed in the strike itself. The role of its supporters was reduced in the run-up to the strike to that of a ginger group on the trade union bureaucracy. During the strike they reverted to methods of militant trade unionism, heroic, but unable to provide a political perspective and an alternative line of struggle at the moment of betrayal.

In the aftermath of the General Strike, with the right-wing bureaucracy firmly in the saddle, the TUC opened up an offensive against the Minority Movement. At the 1927 Congress a motion seeking to reverse the General Council's ban on trades councils associating with the Minority Movement received only 148,000 votes. The following year a special inquiry was launched into 'the proceedings and methods of disruptive elements within the trade union movement'.

But it was the decision not to resist the TUC's ultimatum to trades councils to disaffiliate from the Minority Movement which sealed its fate. Between 1924 and 1926 over 50 trades councils had sent delegates to Minority Movement conferences. But to avoid a fight with the TUC, the Minority Movement cut off one of its most important life-lines - the logical result of its capitulation to the lefts in the General Strike. Twenty years later J.T. Murphy wrote a fitting epitaph:

'So died the Minority Movement, much as the General Strike had died. Ernest Bevin and his colleagues had called off the General Strike to avoid open warfare with the Government; Harry Pollitt called off the Minority Movement to avoid open warfare with the TUC and many executives of trade unions.'



STALIN

The fiasco of the British Communist Party's intervention in the General Strike was intimately connected to the process of the Stalinisation of the USSR and the related degeneration of the Comintern — the Communist Third International.

The defeat of the German workers' uprising, the crushing of the Hamburg Soviet in March 1923, threw the working class vanguard throughout the world into confusion. In the Soviet Union, Stalin was able to use the demoralisation this caused amongst the working class to begin to develop his theory of 'Socialism in One Country'. At the same time the incipient Soviet bureaucracy began to look abroad for new allies and diplomatic means whereby to defend the first workers state, increasingly sceptical of the possibility of revolution in Western Europe coming to its aid.

DEVELOPING

The British Communist Party was to prove a particularly pliant instrument in the hands of the developing bureaucracy, not least because the Comintern and the Red International of Labour Unions had played a central role both in the formation of the British party and in correcting its syndicalist and sectarian errors. Lenin's intervention was decisive in pushing the CP towards a correct position on affiliation to the Labour Party, while the RILU badgered the party to establish the Minority Movement from 1922 onwards. Both moves brought the party its biggest successes. The zig-zags of the Comintern's policies was to have a fatal impact on the British CP.

The first hint of what such a policy would mean for the British CP was let out of the bag by Zinoviev at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in 1924:

'In Britain we are now going through the beginnings of a new chapter in the labour movement. We do not know exactly whence the communist mass party of Britain will come, whether only through the Stewart-Macmanus door [prominent CP members] or through some other door. And it is entirely possible that the communist mass party may appear through still another door — and we cannot lose sight of that fact.'

Concretely, Zinoviev's ambiguous statement could mean only one thing: that there was no qualitative political difference between the emerging left trade union bureaucrats and the young revolutionary Communist Party — that it was not actually necessary to challenge these lefts for the leadership of the labour movement. Such became apparent in the development of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee and the euphoria born of 'Red Friday'.

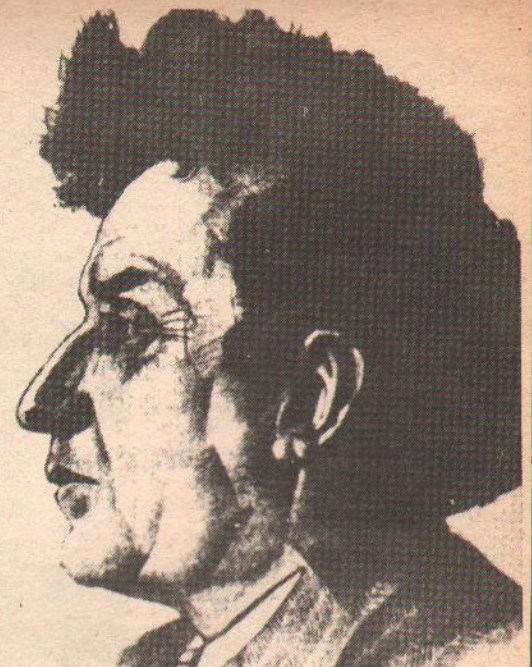
GLOWING

The Anglo-Russian Committee was a joint committee of the British and Soviet TUC General Councils, formed in the wake of a visit to Russia by TUC lefts Bromley, Purcell, Hicks and Swales in November-December 1924. Its aim was to secure world trade union unity, and particularly to develop closer links between the unions of the two countries.

But even at this time it is worth noting that the TUC lefts didn't issue their glowing report on Russia — complete with the obligatory denunciation of Trotsky as representing 'liberal nonconformity as against die-hard communism' — until February 1925. As CP leader Harry Pollitt pointed out at the time, this was one month after a highly successful National Minority Movement conference on international trade union unity had attracted 630 delegates.

ANGLO-RUSSIAN COMMITTEE

OPENING THE DOOR TO DEFEAT



ZINOVIEV

The TUC delegation 'had kept completely silent on the whole question of unity' until after this conference. Even on international questions, what Trotsky described as 'the line of least resistance for these "leaders"', mass pressure had to be brought to bear to force any action.

OBLIGATORY

Was it wrong to form any such united front with the 'lefts' — a problem which is just as real for revolutionary socialists today? On the contrary, argued Trotsky, it was absolutely obligatory for communists to do so the moment the reformists were 'compelled by circumstances to make a step forward'.

Analysing the lessons of the Anglo-Russian Committee, Trotsky wrote:

'The mistake was not in making an episodic agreement with the General Council which was actually moving to the 'left' in that period under the pressure of the masses. The first mistake was that the bloc was concluded, not on concrete practical goals clear to the working class, but on general pacifist phrases and false diplomatic formulas' (*The Third Period of the Comintern's Errors*).

That this was the case was clearly revealed at the famous Scarborough TUC of September 1925. On paper the left swept all before them. The Russian delegation was received with acclamation. Left-wing motions on trade union unity, anti-imperialism, workshop committees and a strengthening of the powers of the General Council were passed.

But the official lefts let the CP and Minority Movement delegates do the fighting for them. Just where they stood was revealed a few weeks later, when the only left official at the annual Labour Party conference to oppose the ban on individual Communists being members of the Labour Party was Bromley of the drivers' union ASLEF. The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

Similarly, in December 1925 the TUC Industrial Committee — on which Swales and Hicks sat — decided that the

General Council did not want the additional powers that the Scarborough conference had voted for it to adopt. Yet in the whole period up to the General Strike the CP took no independent action to prepare the working class — even at the special Minority Movement conference in March — but simply called on the *General Council* to implement the Scarborough decisions.

Meanwhile a collection of speeches by the leader of the Russian trade unions, Tomsky, was hawked around the labour movement. Ironically titled *Getting Together* it uncritically acclaimed Purcell and his fellow lefts. At the same time the over-riding concern of the CP-dominated *Labour Monthly* from May 1925 onwards became Anglo-Russian trade union unity.

The only conclusion that any CP member or militant could draw from such a *practice* — regardless of this or that faint-voiced criticism — was that if these left leaders were all right by the Anglo-Russian Committee then they must be all right by us.

But all right for what? Clearly the lefts were in no sense fully-fledged revolutionary leaders. So to assert their leading role meant altering the CP's entire characterisation of the struggle that was unfolding. J.T. Murphy summed up the implications in *Workers' Weekly* on 30 April 1926, on the very eve of the General Strike:

'Our party does not hold the leading positions in the trade unions. It is not conducting the negotiations with the employers and the Government. It can only advise and place its forces at the service of the workers — led by others...



TROTSKY

The Anglo-Russian Committee did not exist during the General Strike when the General Council refused to accept the 'damned gold' of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions: the Anglo-Russian Committee did not exist during the miners' strike; the Anglo-Russian Committee did not exist during the bombardment of Nanking; and the Anglo-Russian Committee will not exist in the event of the breaking of diplomatic relations between England and the USSR. These harsh truths must be told the workers. They must be honestly warned. *That will strengthen the USSR!*

Leon Trotsky, 16 May 1927, on the struggle for peace and the Anglo-Russian Committee.



'Those who do not look for a path along which to retreat are good trade union leaders who have sufficient character to stand firm on the demands of the the miners, but they are totally incapable of moving forward to face all the implications of a united working class challenge to the State.

'To entertain any exaggerated views as to the revolutionary possibilities of this crisis and visions of new leadership "arising spontaneously in the struggle", etc. is fantastic' (our emphases).

But the confrontation involved much more than simply 'standing firm on the demands of the miners'. The capitalist class itself had raised the question of 'the constitution'. The miners' demands were no longer an industrial struggle — to win them meant confronting this State.

In this situation the 'lefts' would simply play the role of preparing the victory of the Thomases and Clyneses inside the workers movement, thereby ensuring the victory of the Baldwin Government and the capitalist class.

'...When the movement surpasses the limits of reform and demands from the leaders a clean break with the bourgeoisie, the majority of the reformists change their tune. From cowardly fellow travellers of the masses, they turn into strike-breakers, enemies, open betrayers' (Trotsky — *The Third Period of the Comintern's Errors*).

In the face of defeat a ruthless break from the Anglo-Russian Committee and denunciation of the lefts by the Russian trade unions could have done something to rally British workers and at least allow a massively strengthened Communist Party to emerge. And harsh words about no less a left than Purcell — 'hidden capitulating opportunism which thanks to its petty-bourgeois lack of character and cowardice was with the right flank of opportunism' — were contained in the Comintern's *Theses on the Lessons of the British General Strike*, adopted on 8 June 1926.

But people are judged not by what they say but what they do. For two more years the leaders of the Russian trade unions desperately tried to maintain the Anglo-Russian Committee, attributing to it a glowing role in the fight against imperialist war. In August 1926 it failed to agree on aid for the miners — even during the General Strike, 'left' Hicks is reported to have called the money raised by Russian workers 'this damned Russian Gold'.

RESTRAINED

The Minority Movement took its cue and submitted suitably restrained resolutions to the TUC Congress. At the Berlin meeting in April 1927, while tailing even to raise the question of imperialist intervention in China, the Russians meekly agreed to an amendment in the Committee's constitution which forbade them to make any criticism of the TUC's actions. Finally, when the apparent moral support of the Russians had helped them over the period following the strike, the British bureaucrats contemptuously kicked the Russians out — the Tory Government-inspired raid on the Russian trading offices in London being used as an excuse.

The Anglo-Russian Committee, far from aiding British or Soviet workers — or even, for that matter, helping some diplomatic *realpolitik* of the Soviet State — had served to confuse and disorient both. No honest balance sheet was ever drawn by the Comintern on the Anglo-Russian Committee and the British Communist Party's intervention in the General Strike. To do so would have been to admit that Trotsky was right — and after all, his so-called 'liberal' nonconformity was a far greater threat to the workers' interests than the 'lefts'!

ABORTION:

TWO VIEWS ON

NAC

AND

PARLIAMENT

ANTONIA GORTON (member of NAC Steering Committee) writes:

The 3 April demonstration organised by the National Abortion Campaign was successful in mobilising the committed. However NAC failed to realise the potential shown last 21 June. The major problem is our attitude towards Parliament. In my opinion, the IMG and all the left organisations who participate in the NAC Steering Committee have failed to come to grips with this question.

The fall of the White Bill led to confusion among our forces. The MPs on the Select Committee (SC) were able to confuse things even further by their unanimous recommendation that the SC be reconvened. This blocked a clear understanding of the next stage of the fight, which would take place within the SC without an actual Bill. This confusion led to a downturn of the campaign at all levels.

The six MPs who later resigned led no fight in or out of Parliament to expose and block the continuance of the SC. They made opportunist concessions all the way along the line and the biggest one of all was their resignation, which left the abortion issue in Parliament in the hands of the anti-abortionists.

Parliament is the executive of the State. It defends its authority in the eyes of the masses by being sensitive to the ebb and flow of the class struggle, of which the abortion movement is part. Democratic reforms are won from Parliament through mass action (or fear of it) on the streets.

Those MPs who identify with the abortion issue or whose political future can be furthered through it must be structured into the mass movement in order to use their support in building it. Our job, then, is to demand that the

MPs work in the interests of the movement and with their help build such a powerful movement that it transcends the limits that they may wish to put on it. This process is also part of the way to block the danger of the mass struggle being demobilised in favour of a solely parliamentarist orientation with a reliance on lobbies and letter writing.

NAC should have made it impossible for the MPs to leave the SC; demanded that they make minority reports; that they tell the country what the SC was planning. Failing to convince them to stay, we should have immediately demanded — 'now that you've walked out, what are you going to do?'

We have let the MPs walk away from the fight within Parliament. They retain a 'pro-abortion' reputation without having any plans for holding back the flood of reactionary legislation that is projected by Abse and co. How would the IMG go about correcting this situation?

The IMG initiative in calling for a Tribunal is correct. A Tribunal based on the organisations of the labour movement, women and students will be a vital ingredient in building the mass movement. But when Dodie Wepler writes in the *Red Weekly* centre-spread on 1 April that 'we should organise for an "alternative" Tribunal to the Select Committee', this is to drop into that brand of libertarian politics which refuses to take on the fight where it is.

This outlook combines in the same article with: 'This isn't just a question of facilities — it's also a question of an ideological fight we have to wage against the reactionary gynaecologists' (my em-

phasis). What has happened to the ideological fight we have with Parliament?

Is the IMG for the political dissolution of NAC into the campaign against NHS cuts and for facilities? The fight for 'Abortion on Demand' is firstly and overwhelmingly an ideological/political fight against the State. As a necessary part of that fight we work for the provision of facilities. To separate the two or to change the priority is to dangerously mislead the movement.

If abortion is illegal, the most humanitarian of hospital administrators will not be able to provide any kind of facilities. And of course there is no point in having an 'abstract right' to abortion if the facilities to make the right a reality are not available.

Allowing for the impossibility of a political paper to put forward its total programme in each issue, I believe that the logic of the centre-spread of the 1 April issue is this: that Parliament is no longer a factor that has to be considered, that a Tribunal is our 'substitute'; that the campaign for facilities, against the cuts, supersedes the need to defend the '67 Abortion Act.

The abortion rights movement is a thousand per cent bigger than before the White Bill, and in that sense we have reasons for optimism. However we have some very serious political problems which need solving.

Has the call for a boycott succeeded? Do people understand it? Have we given up the possibility of a parliamentary pro-abortion wing? If not, how do we revive it and what do we want them to do?

How are we going to react to the probable restrictive recommendations of the Select Committee? Can the fight for abortion rights be solved at the level of the NHS? How do we develop the fight within the Labour Party to make this a Party issue?

These are just a few of the questions which need discussion. I hope that the IMG's commitment to NAC will enable us to gain clarity and restore a better sense of direction. — ANTONIA GORTON (member of NAC Steering Committee).

DODIE WEPLER (IMG member of Steering Committee) replies:

Toni Gorton is correct to point out the need for a firm orientation both to Labour MPs and to Parliament. Other groups on the Steering Committee of the National Abortion Campaign — such as the International Socialists — try to sidestep this question. They fail to understand that the majority of the working class still have great illusions in Parliament, and in the Labour Government in particular.

We agree absolutely with her on the need to demand that those MPs who claim to defend abortion rights should work in the interests of the mass movement. We agree also that this means not just demanding that they support initiatives outside Parliament.

We also insist that they speak and vote in Parliament against every manoeuvre by the anti-abortionists, every attempt to cut back on facilities. We demand that they use Parliament as a tribune from which to fight before the masses for the implementation of TUC and Labour Party policy against the idea that abortion is a matter of conscience for the individual.

On all this we can agree with Toni Gorton. Where her letter is ambiguous is on an overall strategy which can integrate and combine these elements, clarifying the nature of the tactical choices which confront us at each stage.

Our conception is very clear. We say that NAC's demand for 'free abortion on demand — a woman's right to choose' can only be guaranteed through working class action and control, in which women will naturally play a leading role. We fight to defend and extend parliamentary legislation enshrining this right — demanding the removal of all Labour MPs who refuse to implement working class policy on this question — but we have no illusions that this is where the struggle will be settled.

The IMG saw the resignation of the MPs as resulting from the mass pressure which NAC had played a leading part in generating. Our proposal for an 'alternative' Tribunal to the Select Committee does not at all mean that we are walking away from the fight in Parliament. On the contrary, it can represent an intensification of that fight — if it is linked to the task of developing a coherent extra-parliamentary movement.

It is not at all clear that Toni Gorton shares this conception. On the contrary, at several points in her letter she implies that NAC should adopt a much more central orientation towards Parliament: building mass action, but essentially orienting it solely towards a parliamentary objective.

This is suggested particularly by her statement: 'Democratic reforms are won from Parliament through mass action (or

fear of it) on the streets.' It is also implicit when she says that to organise an 'alternative' Tribunal to the Select Committee 'refuses to take on the fight where it is'; or when she appears to see a campaign for facilities and against the cuts as counterposed to the need to defend the '67 Act.

Let's just look at what we mean by defending the '67 Act as an example of our conception of the campaign, which aims to put the decision of abortion in the hands of women.

Is this Act under attack? Undoubtedly. In Parliament? Yes. But if the hard-line anti-abortion rump led by James White and Leo Abse succeed in pushing through their parliamentary offensive, this will only put the seal on the widespread sabotage of the Act which has been taking place ever since 1967. And they will only succeed if that sabotage goes unchallenged.

What does this present sabotage consist of? As we pointed out in the 1 April centre-spread, it is taking place on two fronts: a refusal by reactionary gynaecologists to carry out abortions under the Act; and further cutbacks in already inadequate facilities.

How can this sabotage be combated? The Tribunal we propose will be able to draw together all sorts of experiences pinpointing the need not merely to defend but to extend the right to abortion embodied in the '67 Act. It will also have to pose the need for working class action to this end: a fight to oust gynaecologists who refuse to carry out abortions, campaigns to halt cutbacks in facilities and extend them instead, and of course central mobilisations around the theme of a woman's right to choose.

Such moves will directly challenge the right of Parliament and the medical hierarchy to determine who gets an abortion. They will demonstrate the need for the working class to take control in order to guarantee women this right. In other words, the organisation of the working class independent from the State is for us the central concern.

And by putting Labour MPs on the spot before those who elected them, such action will do more to throw back the flood of reactionary legislation projected by Abse and co. than any amount of effort directed exclusively towards Parliament.

The point about the MPs' resignation from the Select Committee is that it offers a tremendous opportunity to challenge Parliament and the Labour Government as the arbiter of women's fate and take the issue to the millions who have a direct interest in defending a woman's right to choose. If we are clear that this is what determines our tactics towards Parliament, then we can avoid further confusion among our forces and build a really effective campaign.



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

The Sex Discrimination Act



and the Struggle for Women's Rights

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CRITIQUE SEMINAR series: Lisa Croll, author of 'Women's Role in China', on 'Woman and social change in China'. Tues 4 May, 7.30pm, in Room S-418, St Clements Building, London School of Economics, Houghton St.

SEXUAL OPPRESSION under capitalism—Workers League public meeting introduced by Gill Simms. 'The Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Rd, on 30 April at 8pm (Warren St tube).

'Any people would revolt against'



Dr Israel Shahak is the Chairman of the League for Human and Civil Rights in Israel. He is well known both in Israel and internationally for his lifelong battle against the racism inherent in Zionist ideology, and for his defence of the rights of the nationally oppressed Palestinian Arab population in Israel.

Over the last year or so a vicious Zionist witch-hunt has been conducted against Dr. Shahak, with the object of getting him dismissed from his university post and put on trial for being a 'national traitor' and a so-called 'self-hating Jew' (an expression Zionists use against all anti-Zionist Israelis and Jews - it rests on the Zionist myth that the Jews of the world constitute a nation and that all Jews are Zionists).

Here he explains the background to the recent events which have shaken Israel.

● What lies at the root of the general unrest which has arisen in the West Bank?

Certain events acted as a catalyst, but what really brought the situation to boiling point was a growing perception of the nature of the permanent Jewish colonisation, of the fact that Israel intends to keep the West Bank forever.

The continuing occupation has destroyed more than the nature of Palestinian society in the occupied territory. It has proletarianised the Palestinian people - it is changing them more and more into a society that is akin to slave society, without national character and without even a human character, bound in permanent oppression. Well,

any people would revolt against this.

● What about the events in the Galilee (Northern Israel)? This is the first time that the Arabs in the pre-1967 borders of the Zionist state have revolted in such a daring manner.

Yes, this is a different thing. This really indicates a change, not just an opportunity as in the case of the West Bank. It indicates the rise in Israel of a young generation which is not feudalised, which is better educated, and which has lost its fear both of the Israeli authorities and of the notables, elders and family heads who were almost all

The struggle against unemployment and closure in Britain is still in its infancy. But in France the factory occupation at Lip in mid-1973 sparked off a wave of struggles which has shown no sign of letting up. At one stage, last September, there was a new occupation almost every day!

One occupation which has lasted for almost seven months is at the IMRO printworks at Rouen. Two of the workers taking part, YVON-MARIE and STEPHANE, were in London last week to share their experiences with British printworkers and journalists. We asked them how they viewed their struggle.

Q. Do you see your fight as part of a general struggle by the working class against unemployment? On what basis have you tried to win support from other workers, and how is this organised?

YVON-MARIE: The IMRO workers think it is really important to popularise our struggle. We are producing a regular magazine, *Special Licenciements* (Redundancy Special) - there have been five editions so far, and we printed 11,000 copies of the last one.

We distribute it through various channels. First of all, ourselves - we sell it in the streets, at the factory gates, in the markets. Some are taken by the unions, the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) and the CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labour). All the revolutionary organisations distribute it. Finally, we send copies to every big daily newspaper in France and abroad, especially those in the countries of the Common Market.

We also produce lots of posters to draw attention to our struggle. We are out fly-posting at least three nights every week.

Most important, however, we are present in every struggle - not only in Rouen, but in the whole region - especially where there are occupations taking place. We also take part in the local committee of unemployed workers set up by the CGT.

Q. One important decision you took was to use the presses and other equipment to produce material popularising your struggle. How was this decision arrived at? Does it extend to producing material for other labour movement struggles and organisations?

Y-M: We began using the machines for our own purposes a long, long time ago - the first time was in May '68, I think. It was something absolutely natural and normal for us. We didn't need to discuss it, we just went ahead and used them.

We've produced material not just for ourselves, but for the Chilean MIR, for the building workers of Rouen, for *Rouge, Revolution* and

the PSU (Unified Socialist Party). When the soldiers were imprisoned for belonging to soldiers committees and trade unions, we printed a leaflet for them. We also produced a leaflet for a big anti-fascist meeting in Rouen. We are part of the movement on all of these questions.

STEPHANE: About the use of the machines - we don't produce just for the sake of producing, because it takes up a lot of time which can be put to better use. There would be a danger of forgetting our essential aims. We are not just printers - we are militants.

Q. Has keeping the workforce united during these long months of struggle been a problem?

Y-M: This has been a basic problem. Some workers left at the beginning - they weren't prepared to fight the boss - while others have dropped out along the way.

The problem is to keep morale high, to involve the workforce in organising the occupation shifts, in the distribution of tasks, as well as in assessing the situation. At the beginning we had a mass meeting every morning where the workers discussed how to take the struggle forward. We also had commissions to deal with particular aspects. **S:** But very quickly we saw that with a small workforce like ours (120 workers) everybody was dealing with all of the commissions, so there was no need to keep them separate. Increasingly, too, the discussion was going on 24 hours a day, and the formal mass meetings gradually disappeared - the occupation became a sort of permanent forum.

I should add that there has been a real growth of political understanding during the course of the struggle. For instance, it's quite natural now to discuss problems like Palestine, which we could never have done before.

Q. Are there any women workers at IMRO? If so, what part are they playing in the struggle?

S: There are a few women at IMRO, but this is one of our most regrettable failures. Mind you, a few women

have come to occupy - at one time the night occupation shift was composed entirely of women, some IMRO workers and some wives of IMRO workers.

Q. Didn't you try to set up a creche inside the factory?

Y-M: Well, we did at Christmas when we had a huge festival inside the factory. It was a big success. Many women came.

Another thing is that a woman comrade, unemployed but not from IMRO, has settled at the factory. She occupies every night now. I think it gives her a real feeling of comradeship. This is very encouraging for us, and in fact quite a few members of the local unemployed workers committee are coming to settle at the factory.

Q. Could you say something about your efforts to co-ordinate your struggle with those of other workers - particularly in the printing industry?

Y-M: IMRO is only one of 15 printworks in France that are occupied at the moment. One of our central aims is to co-ordinate these struggles. We have particularly tried to build links with the two occupied print-

works in our region: Caron-Ozanne, who have also been publishing a paper called *Ouest Licenciements* (West Redundancies), and Michel Freres at Evreux.

Unfortunately our union, the CGT, has refused to co-ordinate these struggles. They support us verbally, but all they're really interested in is negotiations.

S: Yes, we have to fight to link together the whole working class against this international offensive of the bosses. Trying to shift our problems onto the backs of other workers abroad is no solution at all.

S: The CGT doesn't popularise the struggles, so we go around ourselves to visit workers in struggle - it's the best solution.

Y-M: To such an extent that we've produced something like 100,000 leaflets so far. After seven months we're now beginning to be quite well-known.

We've also begun to develop contacts abroad. We've done two meetings in Germany, now we're in Britain, and we hope to go on to Belgium, Italy and perhaps Portugal.

It is very important that we develop these contacts. There are general moves to restructure the printing industry throughout Europe which have already destroyed many jobs - 12,000 in France, 9,000 in Britain, I think, and 30,000 in West Germany. Another thing we have to guard against is a campaign to bring back to France all printing which is done abroad.

Q. The latest group to move into action against the French Government are the students. Have you established any links with them?

S: There has always been a certain hostility to students inside the working class, but the IMRO workers are not like that. Last week we were invited by the students to speak at their general meeting, and we had very good discussions with them.

We also took part in their demonstration with our banners and slogans; and for the first time since May '68 we heard and shouted back the slogan 'Students - Workers - Solidarity!'

Through Struggle

PRINTERS FOR THE CLASS

this'

— DR ISRAEL SHAHAK,
anti-Zionist militant

nominated by and friends of the Israeli Government.

Here again the land confiscations served as a catalyst in a process which had been going on for some time.

● **What was the role played by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in both these events?**

The PLO did not play an important role at the organisational level. Of course people say that they support the PLO, but this is a national declaration.

What really happened is that it was leaderships at a local level which called for people to demonstrate. The PLO itself played only a small and rather vague role in the recent upsurge.

● **So how are the Arab cadres who were most active in the events organised, then?**

They are all organised in the left coalition known as the National Front. I think it is fair to say that it is headed by the Palestinian Communist Party (Rakah), but I think that practically all the left groups are participating.

The rank and file cadres are the young and educated Palestinians, who are economically in the situation of being without a job or even the prospect of a job. Because of Israeli

economic and social oppression, all the jobs offered to Palestinians consist of the lowest kind of work.

For example, in a recent article in *Ha'aretz* (17 December 1975) on the situation of Arabs in the Israeli construction industry, the writer seriously talks about how it is necessary to supervise Arabs with Jewish workers because Arab workers cannot read plans or lay a straight line in carpentry and plastering! From this we can see how Zionist ideology in practice relegates the Arab to the lowest and most menial kind of work. Racism is becoming more and more overt.

● **Can you give some examples of this from your own experience?**

You must understand that all aspects of life in Israel are permeated by racism. To give you one example: if in ordinary Hebrew speech, one wants to say that some work is bad, then the normally used expression is to say 'that is work done by Arabs', or the work is simply referred to as 'Arabic'.

On the other hand, if one wants to praise somebody colloquially — especially a strong man, a male — then the expression of praise is 'racist'! In case you don't believe me, I will spell out the Hebrew word. It is *Giz'i*.

Furthermore, in literally every social situation, in every position, an Arab will have no rights. This occurs every day and in every aspect of life.

● **There have recently been tremendous cuts in the average standard of living due to the deteriorating economic situation. Has there been any response by the Israeli population?**

The tragedy of the Israeli situation is that apparently the population is prepared to accept enormous cuts in its living standards before it will rebel. People are grumbling, and they are losing their patriotism (this is a most important improvement in the situation). But the majority of Israelis are apathetic. They follow the Government, but they do so with apathy.

Any protests there are — against a factory closing, for instance — can be isolated and defeated.

On the whole the situation can be summarised as follows. Ten or 15 per cent of the population has it better than ever before. You can see this in the number of imported cars, in the luxurious restaurants, etc. Meanwhile around 85 per cent of the population have their situation getting worse and worse.

But still — and on this point I agree with you — without a party or an organisation which can mobilise the people, this is not a situation which by itself is going to improve. And nationalism is the way in which the Government stops all opposition by the workers, and splits up their efforts.

SPAIN: NO PACT WITH REFORMERS!

On 26 March a new opposition grouping, the Coordinacion Democratica (Democratic Coordination), was founded in Spain. Its main significance is that it brings together for the first time the two main class collaborationist opposition fronts, the Democratic Council (dominated by the Communist Party) and the Democratic Convergence (initiated by the social democrats of the PSOE).

Below we publish the communique issued in response to this development by our comrades of the LCR/ETA-VI, sympathising organisation of the Fourth International in Spain. It is taken from the 15 April edition of *Inprecor*, in which can also be found the text of the founding declaration of the Democratic Coordination.

1 In the first place, in view of the arrest of several members of Coordinacion Democratica (CD) and the prosecution of four of them, including three leaders of workers organisations, we express our solidarity against Francoist repression and we commit ourselves to the struggle for their release, together with all political prisoners, thus strengthening and extending the battle for amnesty.

2 On the CD declaration of 26 March 1976, our position is as follows:

(a) The fundamental meaning of the constitution of the CD consists of offering a political pact to the so-called reformist sectors of the Government and of Francoism in general. This has been explained in various versions by leaders of the bourgeois and workers groups that have signed the declaration.

(b) The political logic of this pact in reality is not a response to 'the crisis of the Government and the regime and the absence of just and effective solutions to the grave problems of the country'. It is essentially a response to the relationship of forces that exists in the country between the two fundamental classes of society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

This relationship of forces has been expressed in an offensive of mass action of unprecedented combativity, scope, and organisation, especially since last January. This offensive has not only 'burned out' the first Government of the Francoist monarchy in three months and revealed the unviability of any project of 'reform' of the dictatorship, but has also begun to place a question mark over any possibility of establishing a bourgeois regime in Spain.

Thus the desire of the workers to win their demands, their right to work, their own organisation based on the sovereignty of their assemblies and on the election in these assemblies of various types of direct representatives (delegates, representative commissions, etc.); the deep consciousness of solidarity between the working class and the other popular layers exploited and oppressed nationally and socially; the extension of the struggle for amnesty and the inclusion of 'labour amnesty' [rehiring of workers sacked for political reasons] within that struggle; the extension of the struggle for the dissolution of the repressive bodies and for extraction of responsibility for the crimes of Francoism; in all, the struggle for the complete liquidation of the dictatorship — all these things already indicate that the objective dynamic of the mobilisation of the masses after the conquest of liberty will clash with any attempt to restrain it within the limits of a 'truncated democracy' concocted according to the recipes of the Spanish bourgeoisie.

The pact that is offered by the CD to the 'reformers' of Francoism has Spanish big capital, the military hierarchy, and imperialism as its real target and has the essential objective of holding back this mass dynamic, reducing it to limits compatible with the establishment of a bourgeois 'democratic' state in Spain.

(c) On this basis, it is possible to explain why the CD declaration does not pose opposition to the Francoist monarchy in a clear and explicit fashion; it does not clearly and explicitly pose the free exercise of the

right of self-determination of all the peoples oppressed under the Spanish state; it does not even allude to the necessity of dissolving the Francoist repressive apparatus; it does not even allude to the economic and social demands of the workers.

The constituent elections are posed for an indefinite future; in the meantime some 'broad coalition organs of executive power' (in which the Francoist 'reformers' would be included and at whose head would stand Juan Carlos) will 'guarantee' the defence of political liberties and rights.

3 Consequently, the LCR/ETA-VI totally opposes the political alternatives of the CD. We deny that the 'negotiated break' (*ruptura pactada*) is the road to the overthrow of the dictatorship; that road passes only through the development of the independent action of the working class and the people for their demands and slogans, without any 'short cuts', through their own methods of struggle, their own forms of organisation. It is only this mass action that will guarantee the liquidation of the dictatorship and the exercise of fundamental democratic liberties and rights.

Now is the time to organise the final assault of the working class and the people against Francoism, to prepare the general strike that will bring down the dictatorship.

No 'provisional coalition government' has the slightest right to exercise power after the overthrow of the dictatorship. The convocation of elections to a constituent assembly by universal suffrage with the right to vote at sixteen years of age must be immediate.

4 In the face of the desperate manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie in its various political factions in the attempt to resolve its crisis of power, the working class must maintain complete independence. Our people have paid and are still paying much too high a price for their liberty (Vitoria!) to receive in exchange a 'negotiated caricature' of their rights and demands.

The unity of the workers and people's movement is certainly more necessary than ever. This unity is being built in struggle, in the assemblies, by the delegates, the strike committees. This unity requires the common efforts of all workers political parties and groups to extend, strengthen and centralise the united organisations of the mass movement and its vanguard, in the factories, the workshops, the neighbourhoods, the educational institutions and so on. This unity requires the unconditional defence of the objectives of the workers against the dictatorship and the employers. It is for this unity that we are fighting.

That the workers commissions, MCE [Communist Movement of Spain], the Communist Party, the PSOE [Spanish Socialist Workers Party — social democrats], the PTE [Spanish Labour Party, split from CP], and the UGT [PSOE union organisation] appear as signers of the declaration of the CD is an obstacle and not at all a stimulus to the unity of the working class and the people.

We call on all these workers organisations as well as other workers organisations and parties and the revolutionary nationalist organisations to construct a united front against the dictatorship. Down with the Francoist monarchy!



Bringing the IMRO message to Britain: YVON-MARIE BOST (centre with microphone) and STEPHANE GROEPLER (inset). The occupied works are situated at 25 Rue du Pres de la Bataille in Rouen, but as mail is not delivered please write for information to: Yvon-Marie Bost, 65 Avenue Gustave Flaubert, 76000 Rouen. It is hoped to arrange a visit by a coachload of British printworkers and journalists in a few weeks time: for details phone Carl Gardner, 01-278 2377 (working hours). Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

GEISEL OUT!

The supporters of the Fourth International in Brazil, the Workers League and the Communist Workers Party, have issued a joint statement calling for mass action against the visit of President Geisel to Britain next week. In it they say:

The recent withdrawal of the mandates of three deputies of the 'legitimate' group of the Democratic Movement in Brazil (MDB), the permitted opposition party, is an integral part of the evident movement to the right by Geisel's bonapartist Government, initiated in the first quarter of 1975 with the repression of workers, students, union leaders, and militants and leaders of the Communist Party of Brazil.

The withdrawal of these parliamentary mandates attacks the whole of the mass movement, principally the sectors representing the petty bourgeoisie, which saw the MDB in the elections of 15 November 1974 as the only alternative opposing itself to the military dictatorship, and the only channel of expression for their discontent.

JOURNALIST

These actions also represent a counter-offensive of the most right-wing sections of the Government, momentarily neutralised after the mobilisations which followed the assassination of the journalist Vladimir Herzog and the death of the worker Manuel Fiel Filho in the prisons of the dictatorship.

These sections of the Government see repression of all forms of organised opposition and mobilisation of the mass movement as the only means of ensuring the continuation of the present regime. Thus for this military and civil far-right any 'opening' whatsoever, even if under strict control as projected in the 'expansion' plans of Geisel and his team, is synonymous with social chaos, disorder, and a threat to their domination

Hence, understanding the withdrawal of parliamentary mandates as part of a process of a broad rightward movement of the regime deepening the exploitation and repression of the working

masses, and understanding the necessity of uniting the struggle for the defence of living standards with the more general political struggles in society, the Workers League and the Communist Workers Party call on the other organisations who claim allegiance to the working classes, and on the combative sectors of the MDB, to organise a national campaign in defence of the popular vote — for the revoking of A15 ['Institutional Act No 5' — the repressive law which serves as the 'legal' foundation for the present dictatorship], the legalisation of all workers and popular parties, and for immediate free elections.

FRATERNAL

Finally, the Workers League and the Communist Workers Party call on their fraternal organisations in the Fourth International, particularly the Revolutionary Communist League of France and the International Marxist Group of Britain, and other political parties, trade unions and workers organisations, to speak out together to show their active solidarity with the workers and people of Brazil during the forthcoming visit of General Geisel to these countries.

To denounce the super-exploitation of the workers, the lack of the most elementary democratic liberties for the broad masses, the torture and assassination of hundreds of revolutionaries and democrats in the prisons of the dictatorship, rendering it impossible for the dictator to stay in France and Britain, would contribute decisively to the erosion and isolation of the Brazilian dictatorship, as well as giving a display of true proletarian internationalism.

Down with the withdrawal of parliamentary mandates, Institutional Act No 5, and all repressive legislation!

For the independent organisation and freedom to demonstrate of workers, students, peasants, and intellectuals!

For the destruction of the military dictatorship, for the legalisation of workers and popular parties, and for immediate genuinely free elections!

For the convening of a Revolutionary Constituent Assembly!

For international solidarity with the Brazilian workers and masses!



20,000 defy Dublin demo ban

'You have sent your orders to Dublin to ban this parade. Our message is clear. We tell you: get stuffed.'

This was the message to the British Government that David O'Connell, former chief of staff of the Provisional IRA, sent out from the Provisional Sinn Fein's 20,000 strong demonstration to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in Dublin on Sunday.

The attempt to ban the march by the Irish coalition government, made up of Fine Gael and the Labour Party, fell flat. Despite a black-out on Government

controlled radio and television, despite a threat to arrest and imprison any speakers, organisers and stewards, despite a warning that any state employees participating would be sacked, Dublin witnessed its largest demonstration since the Bloody Sunday protests in February 1972.

Indeed, one Labour member of the Dail (Parliament), David Thornley, joined the demonstration as an act of protest against the Government's increasing attacks on basic civil liberties.

The attempt to ban the march was not just an attack on the Provisionals, but was part of the Dublin puppet re-

PLATFORM PARTY: Labour member of the Dail, David Thornley (right), on the platform outside the Dublin GPO with David O'Connell, joint vice-president of Sinn Fein (centre) and Rory O'Brady, president of Sinn Fein, after marchers had defied the Government ban

gime's ongoing campaign against Irish Republicanism. Its failure to stop the march represents its first major setback in this campaign.

This opportunity must be used to mount a vigorous campaign against any attempts to victimise those who participated in the demo. As the Movement for a Socialist Republic (Irish section of the Fourth International) pointed out in a leaflet distributed on the march, the Government's attacks threaten the civil rights of all Irish people. A broad-based campaign will be needed to prevent any further erosion of civil liberties at the dictates of British imperialism.

PORTUGUESE ELECTIONS Workers' parties win majority

The workers' parties in Portugal have won an overall majority in the elections for a Legislative Assembly. This is a real slap in the face for the Portuguese capitalist class and their imperialist backers, who had been hoping that the elections would give the capitalist Popular Democrats (PPD) and Centre Democrats (CDS) a mandate to drive home the advantage over the working class won after 25 November.

With most of the votes counted at the time of writing (10am Monday), the Socialist Party had won 35.04 per cent and the Communist Party 14.71 per cent. On top of this, groups on the far left accounted for another 3.5 per cent, with the Popular Democratic Union (UDP) getting 1.66 per cent, the Popular Socialist Front (FSP) 0.81 per cent, the Left Socialist Movement (MES) 0.58 per cent, the International Communist League (LCI) 0.3 per cent, and the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) 0.09 per cent.

Campaign

Another 1.22 per cent was won by three Maoist parties: the MRPP, PCP(ml), and AOC. But their campaign was aimed almost exclusively against the 'social fascist', 'nazi-Cunhalist' Communist Party — stressing the 'threat of Russian invasion', and welcoming the violent attacks against CP offices in the North.

With such a vote it might seem natural that the Communist and Socialist Parties, who claim to defend the interests of the working class, would now form a government to do just that. But not a bit of it. Continuing on their path of class collaboration with the military hierarchy and the bourgeois PPD, they say that they can't do anything until after the presidential elections in late June or early July.



SP leader Mario Soares—refuses to form government with the CP

The campaign of the Trotskyists of the LCI and PRT took up this question in a big way. It was aimed not so much at winning votes (although the Trotskyists have doubled their vote since the Constituent Assembly elections) as at using the platform provided by the elections to reach out to the CP and SP voters, urging them to demand that their leaders break with the bourgeoisie.

The impact of this campaign was seen in the military's attempt to suspend the LCI's broadcasting rights for eight days during the election run-up. But they were forced to rescind the ban after four days in which the LCI had brought

out a special issue of its paper, produced thousands of leaflets, won dozens of resolutions of support, and collected thousands of signatures against the military's action.

The CP and SP leaders' hopes for class peace are already being shattered. In the midst of the election campaign, thousands of miners from all over the country descended on Lisbon to call for the immediate satisfaction of the demands contained in their collective bargaining agreement. In the face of their leaders' attempts to play for time, rank-and-file miners are threatening to organise a national strike.

The miners are just the latest section of the working class to move into action over the last three months. The victory for the workers' parties in the elections — and the refusal of the reformist leaders to act on it — can only accelerate these mobilisations and give them a more openly political direction.

PUBLIC MEETING

PORTUGAL AFTER THE ELECTIONS

Speakers: Audrey Wise, MP; Derek Shepherd, UCATT District Organiser, Southampton (who has just returned from a trip to Portugal); Ernie Roberts, Assistant Secretary AUEW; Alvaro Miranda, PWCC. Thursday 29 April, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class.

Keep it rolling in!

Four weeks into the quarter and we've got £413.31 towards our quarterly Fighting Fund target of £1,500. That's due to a big effort this week by a number of individual supporters, including an anonymous donation of £32.50, £20 from a North London doctor on last Sunday's demo against cuts and private practice in the NHS, and £20 from an East London supporter. More money came in from Manchester IMG £10.45, Edinburgh IMG £1, Portsmouth IMG £3, York £3, P.A. Minks £2, Anon £2.50. That makes £94.45 for the week.

We'd like to thank all our supporters for the tremendous effort they've made so far. But particularly this week we've been lucky with a few very generous donations from individuals. What we really need to guarantee our Fund is regular well-planned activities by IMG branches in every area. If your branch hasn't sent in anything to the £1,500 Fighting Fund yet, put something in the post now and make sure fund-raising is discussed at your next branch meeting.

If we want more doctors to hand us £20 at demos, we've got to have Red Weekly to build for such activities. No cuts here — for a rising scale of income for Red Weekly! Rush your contribution to Red Weekly (Fighting Fund), 97 Caledonian Rd., London N1.



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