



SMASH THROUGH

TORY BLUFF

The new year has greeted almost every worker with a 40% cut in pay as the Tory-imposed 3 day week bites home.

The Heath Government is currently engaged in a furious defence of its action against Labour MP Wedgwood Benn. But even the Government's own figures prove that there is only one reason for the 3 day week—the Tories are hell-bent on smashing the miners.

The lockout is an attempt to make the whole working class pay for the miners' fight against Phase 3. At the same time it is the most effective means of conserving coal stocks so that the Government can weather a long, drawn out struggle should this strategy of immediate showdown fail.

The Government is acting as if it were master of the situation, a power which no mere trade unionist dare offend. But this is sheer bluff—this Government could not hold power for a single day were it not for the disunity of the working class movement, actively fomented by the treachery of the trade union leadership. A united working class counter-offensive could smash right through this bluff and reveal the Tory Government for the pathetic collection of capitalist political hacks that it is.

But this will not be done if the course mapped out so far by the trade union 'leaders' is followed. The TUC have denounced the 3-day week as a move designed to defeat the miners and the rest of the working class. Yet

these gentlemen hurry to announce that they share Heath's 'anxieties' about the economy as they hobnob with Tory Cabinet ministers at number 10. They can think of no form of response more effective than a one-day protest.

If these bureaucrats were serious about fighting the Tories, it is obvious what they would be doing: by the time this paper appears the National Committee of the AUEW will have met and could have called for a national engineering strike; on 10 January the NUM executive will meet and could decide on an immediate strike ballot which would throw the full force of the miners against the Government by the end of January.

An alliance of these two powerful groups with the railway drivers would create a formidable combination that no Government could withstand for long. The special meeting of union Presidents and Secretaries called for late January could seal the fate of the Tories and ensure a massive working class victory by calling a general strike to bring down the Government.

This is what every trade union militant must demand from the bureaucrats. Resolutions must pour forth from every trade union branch, shop stewards committee, AUEW District Committee, and NUM Area Council calling for decisive action of this order.

But we cannot simply wait for the bureaucrats to cock an ear in our direction—we must prepare to go ahead without them. The national engineering convenors' conference that met in Manchester last month must be recalled as soon as possible and begin immediate preparations for a national engineering strike. Local committees of miners, engineers and rail drivers should be set up to work out practical coordination of their struggles, and similar relations established on the regional level.

The Tory lockout has thrown the entire working class into the same boat. The Government hope that this will produce bitter in-fighting. But we can turn this Tory manoeuvre upside down by learning to row together instead.

Recent examples show how this can be done. In response to the fine imposed on it for refusing to operate the Housing Finance Act, the Clydebank Council has called a conference of the local labour movement to

back its stand. In several areas local meetings and conferences on the crisis have been called.

Such conferences can bring all sectors together to discuss their common problems, to work out a unified response to the crisis, and to lay the basis for going on the offensive against the Tories and the employers.

Working class unity can be given a permanent, practical form by the creation of representative Councils

of Action out of such meetings which can coordinate all the struggles of the local working class—against lockouts and layoffs, for wage rises, and on rents and prices. A network of such bodies across the country would strengthen the power of the workers movement immensely and make it impossible for the bureaucrats to stand any longer in the way of a united working class offensive against the Tory Government. The Tories' bluff would be called.

SHREWSBURY

With the resumption of work after the holidays, the campaign to reverse the verdicts which have sent three building trade militants into Shrewsbury jail, must be a top priority for every trade unionist.

This campaign is in no sense a 'diversion' from the struggles over wage claims and against the Tory lockout. The Shrewsbury case and the 3-day week are just two prongs of the offensive which the Tory Government

has unleashed against the trade union movement in an effort to prevent it breaking through Phase 3.

The fight to preserve working class living standards will require both the

broadest class unity and the most determined forms of struggle. The Shrewsbury trial is an attempt to deprive the working class of its most important weapon—militant picketing—and intimidate rank-and-file organisers.

The key to developing an effective campaign will be an all-out strike by building workers. Building trade militants in every area should be working towards this end, and the editorial board of the rank-and-file building workers paper *Charter* recalled to coordinate such moves on the national level. Maximum pressure must be put on the UCATT and T&G leaders to support such action.

Solidarity actions by other groups of workers is also very important. Last September a Conference sponsored by the Liverpool Trades Council on the Shrewsbury trials attracted 800 delegates. The Trades Council has already agreed in principle to the recall of this body, but the decision must be put into effect immediately, and massive representation ensured at the recall conference from all quarters of the labour movement.

The Communist Party, which occupies a central position in the rank-and-file movement in the building

industry, is playing a central role in the current campaign. But so far the positions it has taken do little to set the campaign on the right road.

The North Wales Shrewsbury Defence Committee, in which the CP exercises considerable influence, advised North Wales building workers to resume work after the New Year holiday 'pending calls for further action'. But at this point the important thing is to get a clear lead from some section of building workers, around which national action can be built. Otherwise there is the danger of everyone waiting for someone else to make the first move.

The CP has also laid great stress on winning bail for the three militants in jail. It is indeed important that bail be won for the three—but they can play their rightful role in the campaign—but we must beware of any attempt to make the winning of such a tiny gain the main task, or to put off an all-out mobilisation pending the outcome of the appeals. The appeal tribunal will yield nothing unless the ruling class are faced with the sort of movement of industrial and mass action that freed the 5 dockers' leaders in 1972.



Some of the 800 delegates who attended last September's conference in support of the Shrewsbury 24, called by the Liverpool Trades Council. A recall meeting of this body must be arranged immediately in order to mobilise the widest support for the Shrewsbury workers throughout the trade union movement.

STOP PRESS—Both the UCATT and the T&G Executives are meeting in London on Tuesday, 8 January to discuss the Shrewsbury case. The London Shrewsbury Defence Committee is calling a one-day strike in the building trade for that day, and is organising a mass lobby of both executives to call for national industrial action.

Photo: Chris Davies (Report)

'WAIT & SEE' ATTITUDE IN BELFAST



The McCurtains' home after the Army had finished with it

As a Christmas present to Andersonstown, British soldiers in Belfast wrecked the home of the McCurtain family in Ladybrook Drive.

Soldiers, some of them reported to be drunk, tore up floorboards, smashed furniture, broke open cupboards, tore out the entire fireplace,

smashed every door, tore the handrail off the staircase, hacked every step with an axe, and made holes through the roof and ceiling. While this was going on Cyril McCurtain was being tortured at Dunmurray RUC Barracks. The British Army later described this as a 'routine' arms search.

Typical of the more petty forms of Army harassment was an incident at the Suffolk Inn, on the fringes of Andersonstown. Just before closing time on 22 December, soldiers poured into the bar. One teenager refused to give his name, and was then dragged into a Saracen, from which emerged screams and thuds. He was then taken to Fort Monagh, and was only released in the early hours of the morning, after strenuous efforts by the People's Democracy.

INTERNEES

The stingy gesture of releasing a small number of internees has only drawn attention to the fact that around 600 are still behind the wire. The delight of families who have had someone restored is outweighed by the bitterness of those who have been disappointed. And everyone wonders how long some of the better known men will stay free, while some are worried that they may become targets for the UVF.

The big fear of the Catholics is the possibility of a new UVF murder campaign. This would pose the Executive and the British Army with

the choice of dealing effectively with the Protestant assassins, or exposing their inability to erode the sectarianism of the six-counties.

Whitelaw had a disinclination to act against the previous murder campaign—it diverted loyalist energies, and increased demoralisation in the Catholic areas. The same pressures will be on the security forces in the event of a renewed campaign. But this time the SDLP must bear partial responsibility for any failure to crush the Protestant murder squads.

DOWNTURN

In this period of uncertainty there is an evident downturn in the Catholic resistance movement. A meeting organised by the People's Democracy in Castle Street near the city centre, to protest at the force-feeding of the Winchester prisoners, received only a sparse attendance; and a Sinn Féin protest meeting in the St. James district the following day attracted an even smaller turnout.

It is on this negative feeling of war-weariness, rather than on positive support for the Sunningdale deal, that British imperialism must rely to achieve a stabilisation. It is not that people have been won over by the settlement—the most intense efforts by the SDLP to sell the deal have only met with a cynical conviction that they are in it for the money. But few can see an immediate alternative. And as 1973 fades out, the prevalent attitude in Belfast is 'Wait and see.'
Bob Purdie

Winchester prisoners continue hunger-strike

Urgent action is needed on behalf of the Winchester prisoners convicted of the London car bombings.

Three of them are still being force-fed in an attempt to break their hunger strike. The condition of Dolours Price in particular is causing grave concern.

Just after the force feeding began, Dolours wrote this description of it to her parents: 'It happened on the 19th day of my hunger strike. I was scared stiff when I saw the tube and the wooden clamp for my mouth. The worst bit was when I couldn't get my breath as the tube was going down... Then to crown it all I was sick afterwards and brought everything up again...'

Hugh Feeney described it thus: 'A wooden contraption is put in my mouth with a hole in it... Through the hole the tube is forced down my throat. A funnel is put into the tube and the liquid is poured down.'

Dolours Price has continued to vomit violently each time—this has further weakened her condition, and makes each day a waking nightmare. Her life and the lives of the other hunger strikers are in danger, but the

they refuse to give in while their demands are refused.

The treatment the Winchester prisoners are receiving is vicious and vindictive. All they are asking is the right to serve their sentences in the North of Ireland where their relatives can visit them. Yet the response to their request, and to their hunger strike has been brutal. It contrasts vividly with the cases in which a UDA man and a British soldier, convicted of murder, had their requests granted to be transferred from the North of Ireland to serve their sentences in English prisons.

On New Year's Day a picket of fifty people rallied outside Brixton prison. They protested at the treatment of the prisoners, and the fact that by constantly switching them from prison to prison the authorities are preventing them from receiving visits and letters.

A flood of resolutions and letters from the Labour Movement must descend on the Home Office demanding the ending of the force-feeding, and the granting of the prisoners' demand to be returned to serve their sentences in jails in the North of Ireland.

Tuesday's picket outside Brixton prison protesting against treatment of Winchester prisoners



TRADES COUNCIL INQUIRY EXPOSES POLICE METHODS

An important precedent was set by Bristol Trades Council's public inquiry on 19 December into police raids on left-wing militants in the city.

The raids were carried out in April and September last year. The police were allegedly looking for explosives, but concentrated on obtaining information about the left groups in the area—address books, political documents, letters, literature, etc were all seized and examined. Those raided included members of the International Marxist Group, IS, Clann na hEireann, CPB (ML), and other militants. A legal advice centre, financed by the YWCA, was broken into and letters and files examined.

The Trades Council took up the question of the raids after a vigorous campaign by the Bristol Committee for the Defence of Socialists. But the Home Office rejected the Trades Council's plea for a public inquiry into the affair, and opted instead for an internal police inquiry headed by the Assistant Chief Constable of Liverpool, John Bailey. The old pals' act could not have been more blatant, since Bristol's Chief Constable spent 35 years in the Liverpool force.

So the Trades Council then decided to hold its own inquiry, and invited all interested parties to give evidence, although the police said that it would be 'improper' (?) and 'discourteous' (!) for them to participate. Amongst evidence heard at the inquiry were statements from Kirk Mann and Andrew McConnell, squatters who were detained for 25 hours under very unpleasant conditions without access to friends or legal assistance. Mike Fitzgerald of the IMG testified that the police had taken masses of papers, literature and address books from his house, and members of IS and the CPB (M-L) gave similar evidence. Angelika Ladd, who is German and has a poor command of English, told how she was held in prison from 4.00 pm until midnight with her 10-month old baby. She was not allowed to feed the child for five hours, or to change its nappies for six hours.

This action by Bristol Trades Council ought to have a much wider application. Police repression, which started against Irish groups and has been extended to the revolutionary left, is now a major problem for all militant trade unionists. By making it clear that it will defend and publicise the cases of all victims of repression, Bristol Trades Council has performed a valuable service to the whole labour and socialist movement.

Printers stop work over right-wing advert

The class war is moving towards decisive battles and Aims of Industry has smelled a whiff of grape-shot. This right-wing propaganda group, financed by big business to defend 'free' enterprise, has launched a major campaign which is budgeted to the tune of £500,000. They will publish leaflets, posters and newspaper advertisements clamouring about the threat of Labour 'wrecking the

economy' with its paltry nationalisation proposals.

The campaign was kicked off on 27 December with an ad in the *Daily Mirror* headlined: 'The End of Freedom in Britain?', an ad which has subsequently appeared in a number of other papers. It claims that the Communist Party and its allies are out to destroy the 'liberties' which are inseparable from a 'free' economy. We are soberly informed that the 10% of Rail-waysmen, led by Mr. Buckton, who reject the British Rail offer, are out to 'wreck' the economy. It goes on: 'The Miners too are being led by a militant left-wing leadership...'

The response of printing workers to this crass attack on workers in struggle has been good. Machine-room workers at the *Times* stopped work to protest to the management about the ad, and workers at the *Sunday Express* forced the management to publish a statement from the NATSOPA and SOGAT chapels protesting at the advertisement, and won a commitment to print a reply by Ray Buckton.

However, their response was too defensive. When, two years ago, print workers on the *Evening Standard* tried to stop publication

of a slanderous cartoon, directed against the power workers, they were accused of trying to 'censor' the 'free' press. This has made print workers cautious about using their industrial strength to stop such anti-working class propaganda.

The joint chapels statement in the *Express* rejects the accusation that Trade Unionists are 'anti-British,' and 'bent on destroying Britain's economy.' The weakness of this is self-evident. The struggle of the working class does indeed pose the 'wrecking' of the economy, but this is the result of the crisis of the capitalist system, and results from the attempts of workers to defend themselves from the effects of that crisis. By accepting the terms of debate set by the pro-capitalist slanderers the print workers tie their own shoe-laces together: although they have taken a step forward they can only get tangled up.

Day-by-day the ruling class wages the class war through the media. The thin trickle of working class propaganda is insignificant beside this torrent. By stopping the publication of the most slanderous material print workers would not be exercising 'censorship', but redressing the balance. The working class faces a ruthless enemy, and can never win unless it is prepared to attack that enemy at its weak points. Just as it is legitimate to stop producing commodities for the enemy, it is legitimate to stop the production of enemy propaganda. Print workers have that power in their hands and they ought to use it.



THE TORY ATTACK AND THE RULE OF LAW

Every capitalist politician, newspaper and broadcaster has been declaring that the present crisis is really about whether or not the present political structure of Britain can survive. Never before have the virtues of 'Parliamentary government' and 'the rule of law' been trumpeted so loud.

This chorus comes not just from the open agents of the ruling class, but also from the so-called leadership of the working class. Wilson goes on television to declare that he never has and never will support an illegal act. Len Murray wriggles and squirms, claiming that attempts to break the pay laws are not really a challenge to the government and that the trade unions are the most law-abiding of all people. Eric Heffer and the Communist Party make a nonsensical distinction between 'real' laws which must be obeyed and 'Tory laws' which needn't be, a distinction so subtle that even they don't appear to understand it.

Meanwhile the Tories go on blessing every anti-working class measure with the holy incense of 'law'. What is the reality behind all this rubbish?

THE CAVEMEN EMERGE

The Tories are preparing, in the present crisis, the main outlines of their policies for the coming period. At the beginning of the crisis, with the imposition of Phase Three, the Tories were slightly hesitant. Six million workers had claims in, while the victory of the Glasgow firemen and the proven fighting ability of the miners also advised caution. Figures like William Whitelaw, who is supposed to be the 'human face' of capitalism, were pushed to the forefront.

The aim of the ruling class was probably to sneak Phase Three through and wait for rising unemployment, inflation and demoralisation to sap the fighting strength of the working class. Meanwhile the Tories would be able to gain 'credibility' for winning on Phase Three. On this basis they would regain middle class support lost to the Liberals and win the next general election. With a new mandate and a weakened working class, a new phase of vicious open anti-working class measures could be introduced.

But the continual retreats and reformism of the trade union and political leadership of the working class have encouraged the ruling class and the Tory government to go increasingly onto the offensive. When the NIRC fine on the AUEW met with no real

response from that union's executive, the NIRC was encouraged to go on to fine the TGWU again. The treacherous role of the union bureaucracies in refusing to defend the Shrewsbury 24 throughout the summer has now allowed the imprisonment of three of the workers. And the refusal of the trade union leaderships to co-ordinate the struggle against Phase Three has allowed the Tories to go on to impose the three-day week.

HIGH STAKES

The ruling class has now committed itself to playing for very high stakes. If the lock-out goes on for any length of time many small firms will be pushed into bankruptcy. But the gains of a victory here will be enormous. If the miners and the other groups of workers can be defeated, the Heath leadership will once more be established as the 'strong government' which the ruling class so desperately needs, and which it appeared to be until its nose was bloodied by the miners in 1972. On this basis it would be able to win back the middle class forces which have deserted it. On the basis of soaring inflation, rocketing unemployment, and the fomenting of racism it could then hope to impose a decisive defeat on the working class.

On a small scale, we can already see their plans for stepping up the exploitation of the working class in Courtaulds, where a group of workers have been sacked so as to be rehired at hourly rates of pay with no guaranteed wage.

The real face of the capitalist class, after a long period of obscurity, is once more showing itself. Chancellor of the Exchequer Barber

writing in the *Financial Times* on 31 December, openly admits that the present capitalist economic crisis and the Tory measures will mean that 'many families are bound to suffer a reduction in earnings'. Enoch Powell and his rabble rant on about the need for two million unemployed. The *Economist* magazine in its last issue of 1973 called for it to be 'the normal procedure to sack workers who break a binding contract (which is legal jargon for going on strike)'. Tory MP Peter Fry, going even further, talks in the *Guardian* of the need to bring in the army. Even though the main core of the ruling class does not yet think in terms of an army solution, we can now begin to glimpse the barbarism behind the curtain of bourgeois 'democracy'.

CALCULATED BLUFF

The Tories are engaged in a calculated and extra-ordinarily vicious piece of bluff. They know perfectly well that if the organised forces of the trade union movement launched a united attack against Phase Three and the rest of the government's policies the Heath government would be destroyed. The government does not at present have any acceptable repressive apparatus which could be set against the working class movement. What the Tories are banking on is that the leadership of the working class, the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party, will undermine what cannot be destroyed by a frontal assault. By putting forward the 'sovereignty' of Parliament and the 'right of governments to govern', 'the rule of law,' etc., the Tories calculate that they can

intimidate the existing working class leadership into surrender.

Unfortunately if it was left to the TUC and the Labour Party the government could not lose. The leadership of the labour movement will never grasp that every single major working class advance from the Tolpuddle Martyrs to the freeing of the Pentonville Five was gained in a struggle against the capitalist 'rule of law'.

The choice between the reformist and the revolutionary attitudes to the 'rule of law', and the 'sovereignty of Parliament' is not a choice between 'peaceful' or 'violent' roads to socialism, as the Labour lefts and the Communist Party claim. The choice is between the maintenance of capitalist society—which means the grinding down of the working class, in the name of the 'defence' of capitalist 'democracy'; or the defence of the conditions of the working class—which means the smashing of capitalist society, and the establishment of the democracy of workers' councils. Already in the present crisis the historical choice between socialism or barbarism, even if only in microcosm, is clearly posed.

JOHN MARSHALL



Tory crisis: International Socialists on defensive

'THE TORIES CRISIS—OUR CHANCE' boldly proclaimed the International Socialists after the announcement of the Tory emergency measures. But the report of the IS National Committee discussion which followed this headline showed that the IS, if not actually in crisis itself, was in total confusion as to how to deal with the present situation.

The views on the National Committee spanned the whole spectrum from those calling for some unrelated 'political programme' as IS's answer to the crisis ('We should demand sweeping nationalisation under workers, control as the key solution') through to those who insisted on the irrelevance of 'grandiose programmes' and the need to be 'narrow and practical'.

What has happened is that the developing needs of the workers' struggle has shown up the threadbare formulae that the IS has been operating on with a certain success over the past period. Without doubt, the line of grouping the rank and file against the bureaucracy on a non-militant-than-thou programme corresponded to the sentiments of much of the vanguard during the initial elemental upsurge of the workers' struggle. Phase 2 was the watershed. The defeat suffered here was seen to have been suffered not so much by lack of militancy, but through the absence of any clear alternative strategy to that of the bureaucracy. It was for that reason that the bureaucracy were able to give the death kiss to the struggles against the Tory government. This crisis of perspective now impels the best elements of the rank and file to look for serious political answers.

But the whole of the IS experience in the past period leads them to a response which, in the present crisis,

is nothing short of disastrous. In the last analysis, the 'more military' programme is essentially defensive. It consists in responding to the initiatives made by the Tories and the employers, rather than charting the elements of an independent course. The whole burden of the recent Tory plays—the emergency measures, the 3 day week etc.—is precisely to turn the

present offensive struggle of the working class against the central strategic planks of the Tory policy into a defensive struggle.

Most of the left (even the Labour left) are agreed that the crisis measures introduced by the Tories are not based on a crisis of energy supply, but are

a manoeuvre to bring all resources to bear against any possible breach of Phase 3. If this fails, the credibility of the whole employing class will be seriously dented. On the other hand if they manage to hold the line against unions and force them to back down, the working class will suffer a grave defeat and the balance of forces will be decisively altered. Consequently, although it is true that the present confrontation is not Armageddon, the stakes are rather high. The Tories are very determined to win, even to the extent of allowing some sections of small capital to go to the wall.

Despite this the present measures rest on a gigantic bluff, for the actual relation of forces is totally against the Tories and the employers. The lock out is not designed to starve or batter the working class into submission. The whole elaborate scheme is designed to intimidate the bureaucracy into playing its essential role of fragmenting and confusing the struggle and simultaneously changing the terrain of the struggle to one best suited for the disorganising role of the bureaucracy—local, fragmented struggles around layoffs, pay, redundancies and so on.

To make the central reply to this manoeuvre defensive slogans and issues—'Work or full pay' 'Not a penny off our pay' or what have you—is to walk neatly into the Tory trap. By contrast, the task of revolutionaries is to situate all such defensive struggles within an offensive strategy of winning wage claims in full, smashing the pay laws, forging alliances between decisive sectors, and pushing towards a general strike which can unite both the offensive and defensive struggles.

Jim Clynes

THE TORIES' CRISIS — OUR CHANCE

THE MAJOR CRISIS facing Britain today is not the three-day week or the 30p per hour wage freeze. It is the crisis of the IS National Committee's leadership. The IS National Committee has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government. It has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government. It has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government.

The IS National Committee has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government. It has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government. It has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government.

The IS National Committee has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government. It has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government. It has failed to lead the workers' struggle against the Tory government.

Countrywide campaign called for—no paper solutions

Countrywide campaign called for—no paper solutions

Countrywide campaign called for—no paper solutions

WORKERS VS.

The Death of The Triple



Volunteers signing on for the London Regiment Defence Unit after a Government appeal, during the 1921 Miners strike

The last article in this series traced the rise of the Triple Industrial Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers after the First World War. This powerful body—despite the lack of assistance from the Labour Party and TUC bureaucrats—was able to use its industrial might to win its economic demands and influence Government policy on matters like military intervention in Russia and conscription.

Towards the end of 1919 the British labour movement was faced with a new problem—the refusal of the Lloyd George Government to accept the recommendation for the nationalisation of the mines made by the Commission it had set up earlier that year in order to avoid a showdown with the miners and the Triple Alliance.

When the September TUC voted massively in favour of a motion (seconded by NUR leader and veteran right-wing bureaucrat J.H. Thomas) to 'compel the Government' to accept the Commission's report, an even bigger confrontation between the Government and the unions seemed on the cards. But Thomas' support of this move did not represent a dramatic political conversion. It was a typical bureaucratic manoeuvre: going along, temporarily, with mass sentiment in order to better sabotage the struggle when the opportunity came.

THOMAS' TRUE INTENTIONS

It didn't take long for Thomas' true intentions to become clear. The railway unions had been involved in wage negotiations with the Government (who still retained control over the railways) since February. Suddenly, in August, a generous settlement was reached with the engine drivers, and expectations were raised in the NUR for a similar offer. But when the Government finally made its offer on 19 September it involved massive wage cuts—the settlement with the drivers had been aimed at splitting the rail unions before the showdown with

the NUR.

Much against his will Thomas was forced to call a national rail strike. But, like most right-wing bureaucrats he was more afraid of mass struggle than he was of losing the strike. He did everything in his power to limit the struggle; the strike was called suddenly, without consultation with the other rail unions, and throughout the dispute Thomas refused to call on the Triple Alliance for support.

Despite this open sabotaging operation by Thomas, united action saved the NUR from disaster. In a fine display of class solidarity, the rail drivers thwarted the Government's manoeuvre and struck in support of the NUR. There was considerable pressure from rank-and-file transport workers—especially London busmen and dockers—for solidarity action. Finally Ernest Bevin, leader of the Dockers' Union, decided that action must be taken even without an invitation from the NUR. A conference was called on 1 October of Labour Party and trade union delegates to discuss support for the railmen, and a committee was set up to mediate between the Government and the NUR.

By this point even a left-wing bureaucrat like Bevin was getting cold feet about the prospect of a showdown with the Government. On 4 October he reported to the Dockers' Union executive: 'I think it must be civil war, for I cannot see how it is possible, once all the trade unions are brought in, for the Government to avoid fighting for supremacy and power and I do not believe our people, if they knew what it meant, would be prepared to plunge into it.'

The Government had originally refused to continue negotiations while the strike was in progress. However, under threat of united action by the labour movement, it agreed to lift this condition. Thomas was now terrified of the prospect of a continuing dispute, and so a settlement was rapidly reached along the lines of an offer the Government had actually suggested

before the strike began: wages were to be frozen for a year while negotiations for a long-term settlement proceeded.

'WE DID NOT WANT TO DEFEAT THE GOVERNMENT'

The national rail strike ended on 5 October. That night Thomas addressed a mass meeting of railmen in Albert Hall and summed up his view of the settlement: 'We did not want to defeat the Government. What we have got is a settlement which justifies your actions, a settlement that is honourable, and one that vindicates your executive.'

In the negotiations that ensued for a permanent settlement, the Government made certain concessions, but insisted upon wage reductions for the highest paid and the 'sliding scale' (the tying of wages to the cost of living, producing automatic wage cuts when prices fell). There was great resistance from the rank-and-file to this offer. The first delegate conference held to discuss the offer rejected it. But Thomas fought hard for acceptance and, armed with some further minor concessions from the Government convinced a second delegate conference held on 14 January to settle on this basis by a majority of 28 to 25.

Compared with the struggles of previous years, the railway settlement was a serious defeat for the unions. Moreover, the Triple Alliance had been totally eclipsed. Thomas made sure that the dispute was confined to the NUR throughout, and when other sections of the movement did intervene it was not through the Triple Alliance and was limited to the reopening of negotiations.

These events were very reassuring in the more astute quarters of the Government. The day after the settlement Thomas Jones, Deputy Secretary to the Lloyd Jones Cabinet wrote:

'There has been a big meeting this afternoon of the Supply and Transport Committee [special strikebreaking committee set up by the Government in 1919] . . . to discuss the question of protection during a big strike. Churchill made it perfectly plain

that he could not furnish troops and the general feeling was in favour of reviving the project of a Civic Guard. However, I think, in view of the railway settlement, that the power of the Triple Alliance has been greatly weakened and that we are not in immediate danger of anything on a big scale.' (emphasis added)

Thus 'vindicated', Thomas felt free to go on the offensive against the advocates of 'direct industrial action' in the trade union movement. The TUC's demand that the Government nationalise the mines had been pending throughout the rail crisis. Lloyd George had astutely refrained from giving a definite reply on this matter until after the rail settlement. He then simply repeated the refusal of the Government to take such a step.

GENERAL STRIKE OR 'POLITICAL ACTION'?

In accordance with the resolution of the September TUC a special Congress was summoned to discuss what 'forms of action' to take to back up their demand. This conference launched a mass propaganda campaign on the theme 'Mines for the Nation'. The executive of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) supported this step, seeing it as necessary preparation for future industrial action.

However, the 'Mines for the Nation' campaign—unconnected as it was to any clear proposals for action and coming at a time when the trade union movement was backing away from united industrial action—was a flop. Recognising this fact the miners urged the calling of a further special Congress to prepare a general strike.

This Congress finally took place in mid-March. It was preceded by an intense debate throughout the trade union movement on the best course of action to be adopted. Thomas—now the Chairman of the TUC Parliamentary Committee (forerunner of today's General Council)—emerged once again as a staunch opponent of industrial action. Addressing a mass meeting of trade unionists held at Central Hall, Westminster to discuss this question he said:

'What right, then, I ask, have we to call upon men and

THE STATE

Alliance ---- Bloody Friday

women to attempt to force the hands of the Government by action which could not fail to inflict upon the nation an industrial upheaval which would inevitably involve bloodshed, whilst not necessarily achieving our object, when a more simple, less costly, and certainly not so dangerous remedy is within our reach? The great rank-and-file by whose confidence we hold our position are expecting, and, indeed, are entitled to, a lead. They must be shown that the one sane road is to use independently and intelligently the power afforded by the Constitution—the most democratic in the world—which can gain for them all they desire... a general strike must lead to serious consequences such as none can foretell, which would shake the country to its foundations...

Seductive arguments such as this carried the day, and the special TUC voted 3 to 1 against a general strike and for 'political action'—more leaflets, in preparation for a General Election. In practice this meant abandoning any hope of winning nationalisation for the miners. By this action the union bureaucracy dealt the policy of united industrial action a blow from which it would never recover, and set the entire British labour movement on a course for defeat and disaster.

A 'PAPER ALLIANCE'

Convinced that nationalisation was now a hopeless cause, the miners now turned their attention to economic issues. The post-war boom and the disruption of German coal production by military defeat had pushed world coal prices up to record levels. The Government, still exercising war-time controls over mining, just as it was over the railways, was making considerable profits out of coal exports. Accordingly, the miners put in a demand for a wage rise and a reduction in the price of household coal. The Government rejected these demands. The results of a strike ballot, announced on 31 August, showed more than 70% of the miners for strike action.

The miners immediately called on the Triple Alliance for support. As negotiations dragged on throughout September, both the individual unions in the Triple Alliance and the Alliance as a whole held special Delegate Conferences. Each of these meetings affirmed the justice of the miners' case, but revealed a marked reluctance to take definite action.

The Triple Alliance Conference limited itself to sending a delegation to the Prime Minister. This obtained nothing except an offer from the Government for the matter to go to arbitration. Such a proposal, unacceptable to the miners, had previously been accepted by both the railmen and the dockers in their disputes. Over the next few days Lloyd George skilfully played on this fact to open up serious divisions between the miners and their Triple Alliance

allies.

At a further session of the Conference Thomas made it clear that the NUR would not strike in support of the miners (this position had been adopted by the NUR Conference—at his urging—by a majority of one), and the Transport Workers showed no readiness to take action. The outright collapse of the Triple Alliance was only prevented by a decision of the MFGB Conference (meeting simultaneously) to postpone the strike for a week. Ernest Bevin aptly summed up the situation revealed by the Triple Alliance Conference:

'... my charge is that the six men who are at the head of affairs have not constructed an organisation that is capable of working when the test comes... I have said over and over: "When the test comes, if you do not make it a real organisation it will be found to be a paper alliance." By God, it has revealed itself to be a paper alliance this week.'

STALEMATE

Negotiations with the owners produced an offer of a wage rise if productivity were increased. The strike was again postponed in order for a ballot to be held on the owners' offer—the ballot revealed almost 78% of miners against the offer, and so a national miners strike was set for 16 October. The miners went into struggle alone, and for the first five days they faced the Government alone.

The Government was well prepared for the strike, and had built up massive coal stocks. But the tradition of trade union unity had not yet been stifled by bureaucratic manoeuvres. A Special Delegate Conference of the NUR, meeting on 21 October, voted, despite Thomas' opposition, to strike if negotiations were not resumed by the 23rd.

Lloyd George responded in a characteristic way: on the one hand he immediately reopened negotiations; on the other, he rushed through Parliament the Emergency Powers Act (which is today being used against the miners by the Heath Government) in preparation for a showdown.

Again the Government offered a temporary settlement—an immediate rise of 2s a shift guaranteed until 31 December and then tied to increased production. This arrangement was to last until 31 March 1921, by which time a permanent settlement was to be reached. A ballot vote of the membership revealed a small majority against the offer but, in line with the rules of the MFGB (which required a 2/3 majority to continue a strike) the strike was ended.

END OF THE BOOM

The negotiations for a permanent settlement that followed were clouded by the dramatic

end of the post-war boom. The resumption of German coal production and the payment of Germany's war reparations in coal produced a sharp drop in coal export prices. It was clear that no satisfactory wage settlement would be possible under these circumstances.

War-time Government controls over the railways and mines were due to end on 31 August 1921. This date had two unfortunate implications: the Government would be party to the wage dispute which was bound to break out in the coalfields on 31 March, and would be faced with a simultaneous confrontation with the miners and railmen (both of whom favoured national settlements) when de-control was imposed in August. As a result they took a sudden decision—giving only five weeks notice to the MFGB—to end control of the mines on 31 March.

The miners knew what this would mean—a loss of all their post-war gains, and a return to the pre-war situation of big local variations in wages and conditions. From the beginning of March onwards the coalowners across the country posted notices announcing the termination of all contracts at the end of the month. Subsequently each District Association of coalowners announced its individual terms for the resumption of employment: in some cases, wage cuts of as much as 50% were to be imposed.

The miners had no choice but to strike. 'All occupations' were instructed to allow their contracts to expire: this meant that the safety men were to be withdrawn and the physical condition of the pits put into jeopardy. The Government replied swiftly by invoking the Emergency Powers Act and moving troops into the coalfields.

It was recognised throughout the trade union movement that this was the opening round of a determined fight by the Government and the capitalist class to force wage reductions on every section of the working class. The involvement of the Triple Alliance was thus unavoidable.

On 8 April the Alliance informed the Government that it would strike on the 12th unless negotiations were reopened. The Government agreed to convene a meeting between the miners and the owners if the MFGB would allow the safety men to return to work. Under extreme pressure from the other members of the Triple Alliance, the MFGB agreed to this condition.

The meeting took place on the 11th. The MFGB announced that they were prepared to accept a wage cut of 2s. a shift, but insisted

that there must be a national settlement, and urged that a national pool of profits be established for the mining industry to make this possible. The Government would hear nothing of this.

DEATH OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

The Triple Alliance met again on the 13th and agreed to call a strike for the 15th. Trade union support began to mount—ASLEF entered the Triple Alliance and the electrical workers pledged their support in stopping the London underground. But things were not so promising behind the scenes. J.H. Thomas was in personal contact with the Government, informing them of every move on the trade union side, and was doing his utmost to sabotage the struggle. The problem was that the Government was standing firm and no opportunity for a sell-out seemed to exist.

Then, on the night of the 14th, an opening appeared in the storm clouds for both the Government and the right-wing bureaucrats. MFGB President Frank Hodges, during a meeting with some MPs at the House of Commons, suggested that the miners might accept temporary district settlements as a basis for returning to work while negotiations for a permanent settlement went ahead.

Lloyd George—an astute capitalist politician who was never slow to recognise an opportunity for manoeuvre—immediately wrote to Hodges to propose a meeting to discuss this suggestion. The miners' leaders were as wary as anyone of a showdown with the Government, but they had experienced this trick of 'temporary' settlements once too often: by a majority of one they voted to reject the Government's invitation and go ahead with the strike.

This decision was made without consulting the Triple Alliance, and the MFGB executive refused to discuss the matter further with the other Alliance members. The miners simply informed their allies that they expected them to strike as promised.

This rather tactless attitude strengthened the hand of Thomas and the right-wing in the Triple Alliance. A resolution moved by Bevin and the Transport Workers, calling on the miners to return to the Alliance meeting for further discussions and for the issuing of a public statement that the strike was going ahead, was defeated 28 to 12. An NUR resolution calling off the strike was then carried with only three opposing votes. The Transport Workers' delegates (including left-winger Bob Williams, who was to be expelled by the Communist Party for this action), afraid of the consequences of a partial strike, all voted for this resolution.

With this treacherous blow the Triple Alliance was finally destroyed: Friday 15 April entered the annals of the working class history as 'Black Friday'. The miners struggled on heroically. As late as 17 June a ballot showed 70% of miners opposed to settlement on the Government's terms. The MFGB appealed in vain to the many other unions then facing wage cuts for joint action. Finally, on 1 July they conceded defeat.

The way was now open for the ruling class to heap the costs of the capitalist crisis on the working class: drastic wage cuts and soaring unemployment was to be the future of British workers. But, despite this massive defeat and the demoralisation it showed, the fighting spirit of the working class was still very much alive. The final battle in this campaign was yet to be fought—the General Strike of 1926.

BRIAN SLOCOCK

NEXT WEEK:

The Lessons of the Triple Alliance

Inside Lloyd George's Cabinet

Valuable insight into the machinations of the Lloyd George Government during the 1921 coal crisis can be gained from the Diaries and Minutes kept by the Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, Thomas Jones. The following are some excerpts from the records he kept of Cabinet discussions.

4 April Cabinet Meeting:

'The Prime Minister: I don't think J.H. Thomas knows where he is or he would have been along to see me. He wants no resolution. He wants to be Prime Minister...'

'The discussion then moved to the question of troops. We had 18 battalions of which 7 were Irish and we were not sure of their temper.'

'Sir L. Worthington-Evans [Secretary of State for War]: We need 18 battalions to hold London. Our reinforcements would thus be 2 from Malta, 4 from Silesia, and one or 2 from Egypt.'

'Lord Curzon [Foreign Secretary] urged that to withdraw battalions from Silesia would produce a possibly serious disaster.'

'Mr Chamberlain [Leader of Opposition]: We are in front of a situation here which may require all our forces. I am for holding the British coal fields rather than Silesia...'

'Sir R. Horne [Home Secretary]: You cannot run

any risk. There might be trouble by the end of this week... They will urge extreme policies because they have no funds.'

'The P.M.: Then we must take troops from Silesia. Later in the same discussion:

'The P.M.: I am impressed by the Lord Chancellor's suggestion that we should consider the forces around which loyal citizens should rally in the case of first class trouble.'

'CIGS [Commander in Chief of the Army] referred to the defence of London again.'

'The P.M. agreed that the centre is the important thing in a revolutionary movement.'

5 April Cabinet Meeting:

'Asked what his J.H. Thomas was likely to take in this struggle the P.M. who had seen him yesterday replied that Thomas was all for peace. "He does not want a few 10 pence Hodges. I have complete confidence in Thomas's selfishness."

'The P.M. remarked that the miners in the Scottish villages were a strange folk... police aid from quiet areas could not be spared... the Chief Constable of Fife reported that only naval or military assistance would be effective.'

7 April Conference of Ministers:

'Discussion moved on to the publicity arrangements and Lloyd George [Head of Publicity Department] got authority to spend money (£1000) on sending

men to Scotland to work up Government case in local papers from inside'

'Mr Chamberlain urged that argument should be put, in other than the mining districts... that the miners were pulling up all other industries.'

'... Lloyd George... pointed out that the act of propaganda was to conceal it. Last strike the Government was sending out matter to 900 newspapers via the Coalition and Unionist organisations, etc, and the local political organisations were paid, and the public suspected little or nothing.'

8 April Conference of Ministers:

'PM: "I saw the Transport Workers last night, Bevin and Robert Williams... They are very anxious not to come out."

13 April:

3.0 pm. J.H. Thomas rang up again to ask if the P.M. were approaching the Triple Alliance. I said no, not at the stage. Thomas said tomorrow would be too late. "We shan't be able to cancel the notices. The Associated [Bromley] Union [ASLEF] and the Clerks are coming out."

'Informal Conference of Ministers...'

Sir Eric Geddes (Minister of Transport): "Are you now of the opinion that the best tactic is to play for delay?"

The P.M.: "Yes. I want delay without obviously playing for it. I do not mind their coming out. I believe you are prick the bubble..."

'We have to start working at politics instead of just talking' Seamus Loughran, Provisional, just released from Long Kesh

Seamus Loughran was one of the men released from Long Kesh just before Christmas, after nearly two-and-a-half years behind the wire. Arrested during the first swoop of 9 August 1971, he was released by Whitelaw on 6 June 1972 only to be re-arrested and detained on 18 August 1972 after being involved in the truce negotiations at Lenadoon. He spoke to *Red Weekly* reporter Bob Purdie about his experiences and the way in which his ideas have developed during this period.

'I was picked up about five-past-four on the morning of 9 August, the sergeant who arrested me was very civil, but after a neighbour started to give him bloody hell his attitude changed.' Seamus was marched down the road, tied up securely, and with an SLR resting on his shoulder, its muzzle just below his ear. He told the sergeant that the road they were on only led to a river; 'the actual words he said to me were "that's good enough for you you Irish bastard." I started to sweat, I thought: "this is it they're going to take me down here, put one in my head, and that's it." We had gone about 35 yards when some lieutenant came over and chewed the bollocks off the sergeant.'

Seamus was taken in a Saracen to Girdwood Barracks. On the way they met opposition from the people of the area; 'bins were rattling and stones were flying.' The corporal in charge opened the back door, and put him, on his knees in the entrance: 'Just at that moment a half brick hit the Saracen door, I thought: "Oh my god, my own people are going to get me."'

At Girdwood he was given the 'helicopter' treatment, i.e. taken up blindfolded in a helicopter, and thrown out about three feet off the ground. After interrogation he was taken to Crumlin Road Jail, accompanied by Military Police who constantly battered him on the joints with their batons. He was forced to run in stockinged feet over a path made up of broken glass, stones, nails, tin cans, etc., both feet were badly cut and later a fellow prisoner took a piece of glass about 1/4 inch square out of his left foot. Later he was transferred to Long Kesh.

LONG KESH

'The first thing that strikes anybody about Long Kesh is the sheer dullness of the place. I would love to know just how many miles of wire there are in Long Kesh, it must run into millions. Conditions are anything but good. I was first of all put into Cage Two—there were about 120 men in each large Nissen hut (now there are about 40 in a hut). There was only a chemical toilet, and the ends of the hut were of wood, which shrank because of the weather and allowed wind and rain to come through. Later when we were transferred to Cage Five the ends were made of brick, but the bricks soaked

through whenever it rained.

'On the 25 October 1971 we had a riot in Cage Two. This taught us a very hard lesson; we were no match against CS Gas, Rubber Bullets, and brutality. About 300 soldiers came into the Cage and they really gave us a bad time of it. It was only by the luck of the devil that no-one was killed. Cage Two was wrecked, and a month later we were transferred to Cage Five.

'Long Kesh is a disgusting, degrading, despairing place to be in. The whole thing about internment is that you don't know when you are getting out. When you go into jail, for one year, five years, fifteen years, at least each day you can say: "well that's one day I'll never have to do again."

'Why did Pym let me out? Why does he hold on to men like Liam Hannaway, who's in his fifties and has been in a long time? Why does he hold on to the "hooded men," like my cell-mate Liam Shannon? They can't even end internment fairly. You have to ask, can they do anything fairly? Why can't they just open the gates, let the men out, burn the place to the ground and never let such an abomination be seen on the face of this earth again?'

SINN FEIN

Politically Seamus Loughran is a fairly typical Provisional Republican. He joined the Republican Movement at the age of eighteen, and was involved in the (in his words) 'rather futile' 1956-62 Border Campaign, during which he was imprisoned. He had settled down to married life in Belfast (he has five children), when the pogroms in 1969 made him realise that, despite superficial changes, Northern Ireland had not really changed. He is convinced that military action by the Republican Movement was the only answer to the situation, and that any changes which have been made in the last five years have been won by the Republican Movement.

For the first time in Long Kesh, he had a chance to read. He got *Red Weekly* and other periodicals regularly, and was able to send out for books which interested him. He also started to write for *Republican News*. 'Politically it changes you. Before that Republican politics basically meant a united Ireland, a democratic society. Socialism was something you heard about, but didn't want to talk about, because probably your mother would have found out and said you were a communist.'

'The political and economic programme of the Republican Movement *Eire Nua* lays out certain steps, the nationalisation of the major industries, for instance, which to the Republican Movement are revolutionary steps. But these are political things which we never talked about much in the Movement before. I joined the Sinn Fein cumann inside, and we had a very high level of political discussion. I had never had time to bother much about Sinn Fein before, but I'm an



ardent Sinn Feiner now. It did this for a lot of other lads too, lads who were just politically naive: "there's the gin and there's the bomb; get out England." It never dawned on them to ask: "But what happens if England does get out?"

POLITICS

'I'm an Irish citizen, this is my country and these are my people. Every thing then develops around people, not just my people, the Irish people. Why does there have to be famine in Ethiopia while other countries are dumping wheat in the ocean? Why does there have to be war in Vietnam? Why can't these people be left alone to get on with their own country? There's two types in the world, there are those who want to get on about making a living, and there are those who want to make money out of those people. Something has to be done about it, and if we can't get it by the bullet and the bomb, we're going to have to get it politically.'

'Our political wing has failed rather miserably over the last two or three years. Probably because everything centred on the military wing. But we have to get our priorities right. We have to start working at politics, instead of just talking about politics. We have to get it clear what it is we want to achieve and then explain it to the people in detail.'

'And there is a lot of common ground between ourselves and other movements, particularly the socialist movements of the world. There's an awful lot they can teach us, and probably a lot we can teach them, it's very rarely the Irish can't teach somebody some damn thing.'

Blanco blast throws Franco off course

The spectacular assassination of Spanish premier Carrero Blanco a fortnight ago by militants of ETA (V), the nationalist wing of the Basque liberation movement, struck a heavy blow at the carefully constructed apparatus of the Franco regime.

The appointment of Carrero Blanco as head of government in June last year marked his emergence as the key figure in the laborious operation to ensure the succession after Franco. His abrupt removal from the scene has now put this scheme—which includes the restoration of the monarchy under the puppet Juan Carlos—once more in jeopardy. But the problem is now much more pressing as Franco's health becomes noticeably worse. Hence the sharpening of tensions within the ruling class, with some sections backing the fascist Falange, others discussing the possibility of an open military take-over, and a third group, which looks towards European capital, pushing for the return of the 'liberal' Opus Dei group to the government.

For the moment, none of these alternatives have been adopted. The urgent need to restore some semblance of normality to the situation resulted last weekend in the appointment of a comparative outsider, Carlos Arias Navarro, who was Minister of the Interior in the Carrero Blanco government. A former chief of the secret police between 1957 and 1965, he can be relied upon to continue and even step up the policy of repression pursued by his predecessor.

The meaning of this policy has been highlighted by the trial of the Carabanchel 10, ten leaders of the Workers Commissions movement which sprang up in the 1960s in opposition to the official 'yellow' unions. This case has been the focus of the struggle against the repression in the last few months, with several thousand workers and students massing in a protest demonstration outside the court on the opening day of the trial, before being dispersed by the police. Last weekend these militants were sentenced to jail terms of between 12 and 20 years each on charges of 'unlawful assembly', i.e. pursuit of trade union activity.

The question now is whether or not the working class movement and its vanguard can capitalise on the crisis which has opened up in the ruling class to push forward its own counter-offensive against the repression and towards the organisation of the revolutionary general strike which alone can overthrow the dictatorship. In this developing situation the need for militants in the rest of Europe to be ready to come to the aid of their Spanish comrades in struggle becomes all the more urgent.

JOHN MARSTON

NEXT WEEK: Report on the recent fusion between the LCR (Liga Comunista Revolucionaria—Revolutionary Communist League) and ETA (VI), the Marxist wing of the Basque liberation movement, and the perspectives outlined by the new organisation, which supports the Fourth International.

Reviews

The True and Barbaric History of the Benighted States of America, by Jim Hughes (Quartet £1.25)

This book is the funniest anti-imperialist history-book you are ever likely to come across. It's a devastating cartoon-history of the real history of America and its oppressive and exploitative past, and the drawings are delightfully expressive. Everyone will learn something from it, with its simple, factual and pictorial puncturing of the myths about 'America, the free', 'defender of the free world'.

A few quotes: 'Andrew Carnegie was a millionaire and a pacifist. He believed the army should be used exclusively against strikers.' 'In 1919 President Wilson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize... while US troops were still in Russia trying to crush the Bolshevik revolution and restore the Czar.' 'The Greeks invented democracy 400 years BC but in 1946 Truman decided they weren't fit for it... by 1967 the Greeks had backslid so far that they were no longer fit even for monarchy, so Papadopoulos became the first CIA agent to head a European state.'

A lovely witty debunker of the bourgeois history books. The kind of history we and our children need.

Big Red Diary (Pluto Press, 75p)

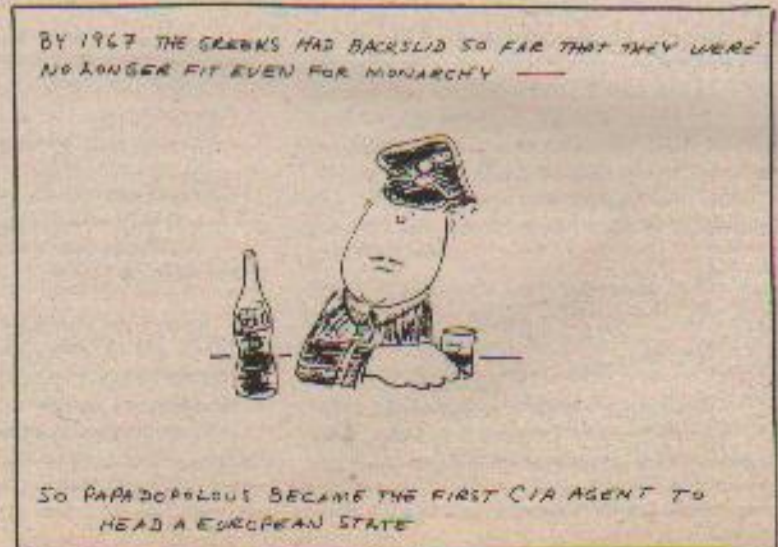
One of James Cannon's axioms in the 1940's was the need to instill into a new generation of young workers and militants an awareness of the traditions of which they were a part. He was of course talking of the long, bloodstained and heroic tradition of the world working-class struggle against the oppression and exploitation of capitalism. He correctly saw a developing consciousness of this tradition as a major weapon in politically arming newly-radicalised workers moving towards revolutionary socialism.

Today, when the potential for winning significant sections of workers from Stalinism and social democracy is greater than it has been for many years, this axiom is doubly true. The publication of this excellent little diary, which includes a compilation of most of the important dates of revolutionary history, is therefore a timely blow in the process of re-educating the working-class and its vanguard in this half-forgotten tradition of struggle. Beautifully designed and illustrated, with two-tone sepia and red photos, cartoons and silhouettes, it counters the ruling class's view of history with dates, quotations and brief details of those events which go together to make up this tradition. We should carry it in struggle in the New Year, in which perhaps we will carve new dates on its pages.

Not By Politics Alone: The Other Lenin, ed. Tamara Deutscher (George Allen & Unwin, £1.95 paperback)

Dozens of books are now pouring from the bourgeois publishing houses in an attempt to 'explain' Leninism by examining the 'enigmatic', 'world-shattering' personality of Lenin himself. Most of these tedious studies naturally ignore or distort what is the essence of Lenin's whole being, his *literally* world-shattering development of revolutionary Marxist theory and its practical application by the Russian proletariat in the October revolution.

This latest offering, however well-intentioned, tends to fall into the same category; though it does have the merit of consisting of anecdotes by revolutionaries who knew him, as well as quotations by Lenin himself. The project is a misguided attempt to show how 'human', likeable and moral he was, seemingly as an apology to the liberal intelligentsia who find his politics a bit hard and uncompromising to swallow... after all, he was such a nice, civilized chap! And so we are treated mainly to a series of disconnected fragments telling us how Lenin paid for his library books or played chess or what he thought of Mayakovsky's poetry (though there are one or two good passages, mostly from Lenin's *Collected Works*). A silly, expensive collection which should be avoided.



Two cartoons featuring the 'democratic' intervention of the US in Greek politics, from *The True and Barbaric History of the Benighted States of America*

WHAT'S ON

BENGALI FRIENDS in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and Larai (Trotskyist paper) contact: Bengali, Mullvadens, Box 3274, 10365 Stockholm, Sweden.

WOMEN IN THE MINERS' STRUGGLE: Socialist Women Forum, Wednesday 9 January at 8 pm in Room 3A, University of London Union, Malet St, WC1 (Warren St, Goudge St or Euston Square tube). Speakers: women involved in the 1972 strike from Keresley and Kent.

'THE IRISH TRAGEDY: Scotland's Disgrace.' Pamphlet by John MacLean reprinted by Central London AIL in conjunction with Troops Out Movement. Available price 12p plus p&p from RED BOOKS, 24 Boundary Road, London NW8.

NOTTINGHAM RED CIRCLES: Wide ranging series of discussions based on the politics of the Fourth International. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday in the month at 8 pm in the Lion Hotel, Clumber St.

HARD TIMES (Harrowden/Brent community paper) readers' meeting, Wednesday 9 January, 7.30 pm in Willesden Junction Hotel.

WORKERS FIGHT public meeting, 'The Left Opposition and Trotskyism Today,' speaker Søren Mattema, Sunday 6 January at 8 pm in Golden Lion pub, Kings Cross Rd.

'SANITY, MADNESS and the Family'—Northwood, Harrow and Ruising Socialist Women Group forum, Monday 14 January at 8 pm at Baptist Church, College Road, Harrow. For further information, phone Sue at 01 863 2294.

The new debate in Israel

Interview with Michael Warchavsky, a leading member of Matzpen-Marxist (Israeli sympathising group of the Fourth International).

What is the situation in Israel now, nearly two months after the fourth Arab-Israeli war?

I'll answer that in two parts. Firstly, the whole population is in a profound state of shock. The feeling of 'security' which existed before has disappeared completely. This is expressing itself politically in a certain polarisation. In the election campaign, this has been shown by the growth of the right on one hand, and the growing number of 'doves' in the Labour Party on the other.

I don't think that the Labour Party will be forced from office, but it will lose a large number of votes. The position of the Meir-Dayan 'hawks' inside the Labour Party is increasingly weak. The plan for the election campaign put forward before the war by Gallili (Minister without Portfolio) has been abandoned. A new text, very unclear in its perspectives, has been adopted. The Labour Party is gambling on presenting itself as the party of peace against the right wing. One thing, however, is very clear: the present majority has no plan, it deals with developments as they arise.

The second important point concerns the effects of the war on the economy. Even today, because of the mobilisation, the wheels are turning very slowly. The economy is on the brink of a major crisis; in spite of the American aid which has just been voted by the Senate.

What about the negotiations?

Israel is quite prepared to drag the whole thing out. The Government has no plan, it is going to Geneva to see and hear what goes on—a very passive approach. There is no doubt that the U.S. will put pressure on Israel to bring about a positive conclusion to the Geneva talks. But I don't think this is likely to happen very quickly. It certainly won't be a question of two months of negotiations and then a peace settlement with the return of the occupied territories.

What exactly is happening today among the Palestinians in the occupied territories?

There has been quite an important upsurge in the activities of the Resistance. In particular, we should note that the Palestinians recently deported formed the elements of an alternative leadership to that of the old, decaying team. This was obviously a preventive measure on the part of the Israeli Government, threatened with the emergence of a left-wing leadership which could sweep the old leadership aside. But we should not overestimate the possibility of a development of the Resistance in the heart of the occupied territories, given the intensity of the Israeli repression.

What are the perspectives for Matzpen-Marxist?

There is a tremendous amount to do. There is a new mood of questioning about the dependent relation of Israel to the United States, about the permanent war situation, security, the policy of force pursued by Israel, and so on. We are meeting today with a response and an audience which we haven't seen for many, many years. To judge from the development of our groups of sympathisers, our influence has never been so great. Our comrades who are still in the army inform us that there, too, there is a considerable degree of intense political questioning.

We are responding to this on a fundamentally anti-Zionist basis, by unravelling the real nature of this society, by exposing its repressive role, and by continuing from the inside the struggle to undermine the State of Israel, which we share in common with all revolutionaries in the Arab East.

Fight the repression in Israel!

The Zionist authorities in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank recently deported a number of Palestinian militants who had emerged in opposition to the line of the old leaders. The latter are faithfully pursuing the policy of the Arab regimes and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation for talks with the Zionist State leading up to a peace and the possible creation of a client Palestinian state.

The deportation of this alternative Palestinian leadership from the very heart of the occupied territories has provoked a movement of solidarity in several schools and colleges in Israel, notably in Ramallah, Jerusalem and Jenin.

On 18 December, a petition was taken to the Red Cross in Jerusalem in protest at this deportation. A joint leaflet denouncing the repression was produced for this demonstration by Matzpen-Marxist, the Revolutionary Communist Alliance, and Matzpen-Tel Aviv. As a result, eight comrades giving out this leaflet were arrested, including four members of Matzpen-Marxist.



Dayan with Kissinger during the latter's tour to drum up support for the Geneva talks

This means that there will be a frontal attack on the standard of living of the working class. It seems likely that, in contrast to what happened after 1967, there will be no kind of 'social truce', but rather a confrontation of some sort. It is difficult to estimate on what scale this will happen. But one thing is certain: the phenomenon of 'national unity' has vanished without trace. On the contrary, there is a feeling of uncertainty about the future; a kind of 'unconscious panic' reigns. There is even talk of a cut in living standards of 50%!



Work in progress on Thieu's pathetic tank-trap trench outside Saigon

Thieu regime crumbling as NLF push forward

Eleven months ago, the cease-fire agreements on Vietnam were signed in Paris. Millions of militants all over the world who had mobilised against the war put down their banners and went home. Vietnam was wiped off the front pages of the newspapers. But the war is not over. On the contrary the Indochinese revolution is progressing and continuing.

One of the most important developments has been the change in the tactics of the NLF. For a period after the ceasefire they undertook no military actions at all, hardly resisting even the take-over of liberated villages by the troops of the South Vietnamese regime. But as the scale of Thieu's land-grabbing, mass bombing, torture and slaughter has increased, the NLF has stiffened its defences and returned to the offensive.

In the Central Highlands, Quang Ngai province and around Hue, the Mekong Delta, and around Saigon itself, invasions by South Vietnamese troops into liberated areas have been humiliatingly smashed, over and over again. But the NLF have gone a step beyond passive defence with the deliberate capture of the bases from which these attacks were launched, as well as the audacious raids on Bien Hoa airbase and the destruction of nearly 20% of South Vietnam's oil (mainly aviation fuel)—both on the outskirts of Saigon.

Of course, these are not the 'North Vietnamese offensives' that Thieu and the USA have been screaming about—and which are really a cover for their offensives. Rather, they are the NLF's reply to the Thieu-US murder campaign, demonstrating just how impotent the puppet army is.

PARIS ACCORDS

The Provisional Revolutionary Government is not satisfied with the outcome of the Paris accords. Not one of the vital points has been carried out. They know that Thieu can't carry them out and still retain power—and they don't expect him to. At the moment it is sufficient to increase the demoralisation of his regime.

An all-out military offensive by the NLF is not on the cards at the moment. There still exists the danger of direct US re-intervention. (In September, Nixon threatened to bomb the North again because SAM-2 missile sites had been built in the South. He was saved from carrying out his threat by the Kremlin bureaucrats, who put pressure on the DRV to move them north of the 17th parallel). As always, therefore, the Vietnamese leadership are carefully watching the international situation—and as always they are combining their military activity with political and diplomatic activity.

The USA is still the main prop of Thieu's power. American oil is being diverted from domestic use to fuel his airforce; his bombers are being replaced with more modern ones from the USA; 20,000 American 'advisers' keep the planes, tanks and police force functioning; US spy-planes fly over liberated areas. Even the Green Berets from Thailand are still active, being heli-dropped into liberated territory—ostensibly to search for US dead, but in reality to gather information.

It is very important that this 'aid' stops. This was one of the reasons for the recent discussions between Le Duc Tho and Kissinger. In these talks the constant exposures of US activity in the Asian press (to which China refuses to contribute) and the military strength of the NLF were big bargaining counters in Le Duc Tho's hands.

Of almost equal importance to the PRG, and therefore to the Paris discussions, is the fate of the thousands

of political prisoners in Thieu's prisons. If their release can be forced it will represent a massive increase in the popular opposition.

POLITICAL LEVEL

On the political level, the work of NLF cadre amongst the peasants and the rapid reconstruction in the liberated areas is widening the base of the PRG's support. Big efforts are also being made to win over the thoroughly demoralised South Vietnamese army (ARVN). Troops of the ARVN are taken prisoner by the NLF rather than being killed, and desertion is encouraged. In some areas, the NLF are on such good terms with the regime troops that they arrange mock battles—so that the ARVN troops can send glowing reports back to Saigon without interfering with the work of the NLF units.

Before they can launch a final offensive to completely destroy the puppet regime, the PRG have to be sure of support in the cities. It is unclear whether or not they have learnt the lessons of past defeats and are now themselves organising in the cities, but certainly Thieu is facing increasing opposition both in Saigon and in the other major centres. The airforce only functions at 20% of capacity. Soldiers and police desert every day, while more and more strikes are taking place. The drastic rice shortage has led to mass starvation and riots in the refugee camps; and as US capital aid begins to dry up, the economic crisis worsens and the bureaucracy starts to crumble. In his desperation, Thieu has even tried to turn Saigon into a gigantic strategic hamlet, by ordering the digging of a huge tank-trap trench 22 miles from the city. This is a futile attempt to halt the movement of the peasants into liberated areas, to keep the army occupied, and to persuade his 'supporters' that he is doing something.

CAMBODIA

The balance of forces in Indochina is tipped even more in favour of the revolutionary forces by the struggle in Cambodia. There the United Front continues to increase their stranglehold on the capital, Phnom Penh. All the roads are held by the guerrillas, and almost all the countryside and towns. Although they have neither the arms (thanks to China and the USSR) nor the experience to deal a decisive defeat to the puppet regime, they are slowly squeezing the life out of it.

This military activity can be expected to progress as the dry season continues. Convoys on the Mekong river (Phnom Penh's main lifeline) will become even more vulnerable when the water level drops in January. The dry season will also bring the threat of drought to the city, to add to the famine and disease which are now endemic in the city for the first time since 1861.

Changes in ministers and faith in astrology cannot help Lon Nol. The army of conscripted invalids, children, and non-existent battalions is useless. The main burden of the fighting is being borne by the Khmer Krom mercenaries—bandits recruited by the CIA who are notorious for their love of decapitation rape and Vietnamese liver. Two months ago, Lon Nol's palace was bombed by his own airforce for the second time (the airforce commander was said to be quite pleased that at least they had actually hit their target this time!)

In both Cambodia and Vietnam the puppet regimes are decaying still further, while the liberation forces grow stronger day by day. But we must realise that their ultimate success is tied up with the weakening of imperialism internationally. That is why it is important that militants in the imperialist countries continue their active support of the Indochinese revolution, denying their ruling class the room it needs to manoeuvre.

David Johnson

International Marxist Group (British Section of the Fourth International)



I would like more information about the IMG and its activities

Name

Address.....

182 Pentonville road London N1

FOR A WORKERS ENQUIRY!

This week Tony Benn demanded Heath make public the full facts concerning the state of coal stocks and the effects of industrial action upon them. The Government have been saying that without the 3-day week, plague, famine and death would be stalking the country by the end of January. Yet it has released precious little information to back this up.

Since Benn's attack, Tom Boardman, Minister for Industry, has released figures which provide the following picture. When the miners' overtime ban began on 12 November, stocks at power stations stood at 19 million tons. Average weekly consumption of electricity results in the use of 1.5 million tons of coal a week by the power stations. Normally, weekly deliveries of coal from the pitheads cover this consumption, so that coal stocks remain constant.

'RED ALERT'

At this time of year, extra demand for electricity raises coal consumption to 1.7 million tons a week. The miners' full overtime ban has succeeded in cutting deliveries to the power stations to an estimated 1 million tons a week. This means that stocks would be depleted at the rate of 700,000 tons a week, allowing 17 weeks before they fall to 7 million tons, the danger level below which massive indiscriminate power cuts become necessary. 'Red alert' would therefore fall in the first week of March.

However, Boardman claims that the actual decline in stocks between the start of the overtime ban and the announcement of the 3-day week on 13 December, was 900,000 rather than 700,000 tons a week. This puts 'red alert' at the first week in February. But Boardman doesn't say what caused this unexpectedly large decline in stocks. Was it owing to an increased demand for electricity, or owing to industrial action on the railways? The chief of British Rail has declared that the ASLEF dispute has had no effect on shipments of coal to the power stations.

It was also widely assumed that the NCB held at least a further 11 million tons of coal at the pitheads, most of which, if shipped to the power stations, would put 'red alert' back to late March or beyond. But now Boardman claims that only 4 million tons of this is useable in power stations, nearly half of that only in South Wales.

UNNECESSARY

Benn's demand for information to clarify these matters is therefore very welcome. But Benn's aim is to 'prove' the Government's three-day week is 'unnecessary'. Its real aim is rather to 'organise a massive deflation' by cutting wages by up to 40%. It is an alternative to a massive

deflationary budget, having the advantage that it averts odium from Mr Barber and lays the blame for the coming recession on the miners.

However, Tony Benn misses the point. The 3-day week is very necessary indeed for the Government, because its overriding aim is to smash the miners. Its aim is to conserve the existing coal stocks, so that should a miners' strike break out, Heath will have several weeks in which to break it. By forcing the working class to pay the cost for this breathing space he hopes to either bring the NUM to a settlement or turn the working class against the miners, isolating them in a strike.

Benn's interpretation, however, allows him to bash Heath without having to take a clear position on whether he favours industrial action by the miners and others to smash Phase 3. The Labour Party has been paralysed over whether or not to support illegal strikes against the Pay Laws. Benn's move allows the Labour Party to condemn the Tories in the name of finding a less messy way to deal with the crisis — couldn't the Government have avoided the 3-day week by settling earlier with the electricity engineers thus making rota cuts to consumers possible, etc? But Benn's researches show not that the Government are bad economists, but rather that their determination to smash the miners

strike makes industrial action all the more necessary.

We believe there is a need for an investigation into the facts behind the Government's decision, so that the nature of its tactics can become widely known. Benn has talked of 'independent and reliable sources' such as the Central Statistical Office releasing information. There is no such independent source. The labour movement must carry out its own investigation.

This could best be done by organising a workers' enquiry open to the public. Trade unions could prepare written evidence, collected locally, in order that specific questions relating to the coal situation could be answered. Members of the civil service and the Government could also be invited to give evidence (paying a certain political price if they failed to show up). The enquiry would then publish its findings. This is exactly what is being done by Bristol Trades Council on a local scale over recent police harassment.

The Labour Party is already gathering information from trade unionists to monitor the crisis. A workers' enquiry would allow a more informed discussion on the way forward to take place in the working class movement. Tony Benn is in an excellent position to sponsor it.

Dave Bailey

Lack of mass involvement threatens Maclaren's

The occupation of the Maclaren Controls factory (a subsidiary of IIT), is now in its fifth week.

The workers occupied this Glasgow factory after a six week strike, when they discovered that the management had begun to move plant, drawings and staff to Germany in order to continue production.

During the strike, believing (wrongly!) that the stewards committee was weak and the women workers in particular would have no stomach for a long fight, IIT tried to split the workers by threatening a lock-out and redundancies. Now they are determined to smash the AUEW and the shop stewards committee in the factory. They have sacked all the workers, and say that the basis for any settlement must be a guarantee of two strike-free years. They want to scrap all previous Union agreements and draw up new ones, and they want selective redundancies. The struggle at Maclaren's is therefore not simply for money, but to defend the livelihood of the workers and the Union organisation which defends and fights for them.

But the struggle is running into problems. After ten gruelling weeks on strike pay, which has included the Christmas and New Year period, there is a danger of the initial mass support dwindling away. Already the number actually occupying the factory has dropped drastically. Those left realise

however that the price of defeat is massive redundancies, the loss of the carefully built Union organisation in the factory, and a demoralising setback for the struggle of the whole working class against Phase Three. The claim at Maclaren's is for increases within Phase Three. If it cannot be won at a time when the Engineering Union nationally is preparing a struggle for a claim which would smash the pay laws, the support and confidence of engineering workers in the West of Scotland as a whole for the AUEW claim would be dented.

The struggle now hangs in the balance. The only way to resist the pressure to backtrack on the position of no redundancies, and no retreat on the full claim, is to recover the occupation's original position of strength.

The only way to counter IIT's advantages, and to apply real pressure, is to campaign throughout IIT's 47 subsidiaries in Britain to black all work being done under the same contract as at Maclaren's. The AUEW has been making enquiries about other firms, and has sent out the usual letters asking for support. But so far they have achieved nothing tangible. It is vital that the AUEW centralise all information on IIT activities in Britain, and that they send a team of speakers to the most important factories concerned to talk to other workers about this struggle. The union should compile a dossier on the struggle against IIT in Glasgow to send to

committees and AUEW branches in other IIT firms. They should approach the T&GWU to try to get the movement of components and stock out of IIT factories blocked.

The second crucial question is the lack of mass involvement of the workers in the running of the struggle. The drop in the numbers actually turning up for the occupation shifts is due to the lack of information provided. Frustration has built up over the refusal to answer questions, and to take votes on each move at each stage of the struggle. The mass of workers must be involved in the blacking campaign, in going out to explain what is happening at Maclaren's, in producing the strike bulletin inside the factory, and in organising security and defence of the factory against a possible police attack. If the rank-and-file continue to be isolated from discussions and decisions there will inevitably be demoralisation and isolation from the day-to-day activities of the struggle.

The present crisis in the struggle is due to the lack of any positive action from the AUEW along these

lines. Apart from putting more resources and energy into the blacking campaign, and ensuring maximum involvement in the work-force, the AUEW should have mobilised all the resources of the District Committee to broaden and extend the struggle in the West of Scotland. The recent AUEW Shop Stewards Quarterly in Glasgow discussed the occupation in a militant fashion, and raised £21 for the funds. But fine words and money are no longer enough.

The AUEW should ballot the membership for a District Levy, and should organise through the Trades Council for a massive public demonstration of trade unionists in Glasgow in support of the Maclaren's workers.

Actions like these would make the Maclaren's occupation the focus in Glasgow for the coming struggle against Phase Three, and for the engineering claim. They would also pinpoint the importance of the occupation tactic with the fight against the 3-day week at the present time.

Solidarity demonstration in Glasgow last month



Support Red Weekly -
SUBSCRIBE!

Rates: £4 per year, £2 for 6 months

Foreign £6 per year, £9 airmail

Special offer! 12 issues for 50p

Name

Address

Please send cash with order to:
Red Weekly, 182 Pentonville rd, London N1

Defend the Birmingham 5

IMG pamphlet on the case of the 5 Birmingham building workers acquitted of conspiracy charges for the occupation of a lump labour bureau in Birmingham. Publicise this important working class victory.

Orders to John Kendall, 281 Tiverton Rd., Selly Oak, Birmingham 29.

Price 3p per copy plus postage

HELP US REACH FUND DRIVE TARGET

In our last issue we pointed out some of the tasks which confront revolutionaries in the present crisis. The IMG has plunged into this work. With this issue we are publishing a special supplement on Shrewsbury, which will receive mass distribution. Already London IMG has been launching a blitz on Social Security Offices, selling the supplement to workers claiming lay-off benefit.

As we pointed out in our last issue, this kind of revolutionary agitation requires financial support. The only source of money at our disposal is our readership. The special £2,000 crisis Fund Drive which we launched now stands at £243.72. A big effort is needed to reach the target by 31 January. Face up to the crisis, give us the means to equal the challenge. Send in a donation NOW!
Red Weekly 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.