

SOCIALIST ACTION

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ABORTION: THE FIGHT IS ON!

On February 9th, by a massive majority of 313 to only 172, the Commons decided to re-convene the Select Committee which was originally established, in the last session, to 'investigate' James White's anti-abortion Bill. The decision to re-convene the Cttee (which has already led to a tightening up of the 1967 Act) is a clear victory for the mass anti-abortion campaign which SPUC has been waging over the past number of years.

The implications of this vote are, as Labour MP Renee Short indicated, far - reaching. The Select Cttee was set up, let us recall, to consider a Bill which aimed to reduce legal abortions by over two thirds. It has already recommended certain restrictions (such as clamping down on the number of foreign women allowed abortions in the country) which Barbara Castle has, quite happily, accepted.

Now that the committee has been recalled, it can only deal with the more 'contentious' clauses in the Bill. With a Cttee dominated by known anti-abortionists, the outcome can only be thousands of women being forced, once again, to risk their lives at the hands of back-street abortionists.

'Free Vote'

This major set-back must be placed at the door of the Labour government which, rather than fighting to implement the decision of conference which clearly came out for 'free abortion on request', decided to allow a 'free vote' on the issue. Even Barbara Castle, who was against the Select Cttee being recalled at this stage, was in favour of MPs voting as 'individuals' because abortion is an issue on which 'individual feelings of conscience run so deep'.

Allowing a 'free vote' clearly was a major concession to the anti-abortion lobby led by SPUC which has, over the years, made deep inroads into the Parliamentary Labour Party itself. Rather than challenge this lobby - intent on thrusting its reactionary view on the mass of women - the government has backed down before it all along the line.

'Backing down' means not only another slap in the face for conference decisions but also for millions of women who voted Labour in the last election and who will be most effected by any further attempt to curtail those limited abortion rights at present guaranteed under the 1967 Act.

SPUC

As the Select Cttee gets down

to work in the period ahead, we can be sure that SPUC will keep up its pressure to ensure that it comes out with the most far-reaching anti - abortion moves. The mass 60,000 strong demonstration it launched in October last year - which frightened the government into holding a 'free vote' on the recall of the Select Cttee - is an indication of the forces it can mobilise.

SPUC's moves are, of course, not just motivated by an attempt to restrict abortion rights but by a fear of what those rights symbolise in the radicalisation of growing numbers of women over the past decade or so. The anti-abortionists understand too well that the right to free abortion, cutting across woman's role as a mere 'wife' or 'mother' can undermine the stability of the family unit which is particularly dangerous at a time of social instability.

Having won major concessions from the government, they will carry on their campaign until all the limited gains of the 1967 Act have been reversed.

April 3rd

Confronted with a major attack on abortion rights, the responsibility resting on NAC is heavier than ever before. It is NAC alone - and the broad forces it can bring into action as it did last June - which stands between the majority of women and a return to the desperation of unwanted children & humiliation of back-street abortions.

Responding to this attack means, first and foremost, building a mass turn-out for the April 3rd demonstration call. It means mobilising not only those forces who supported June 21st last year but also those - particularly in the labour movement - who have come out since that time in support of 'free abortion on request'.

April 3rd should be merely the opening shot of an ongoing mass campaign directed against the government who must be called to account for openly flouting the decisions of the TUC and Labour Party conferences. The thrust of the campaign must clearly be to disband the Select Cttee which, composed as it is of known anti-abortionists, can only come out with further inroads into women's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion.

It is only by building a mass opposition in the streets - on the basis of a woman's right to choose - that the government will see, in no uncertain way, that women in this country will not tolerate any further restrictions to the limited rights they now possess.

All out on April 3rd!

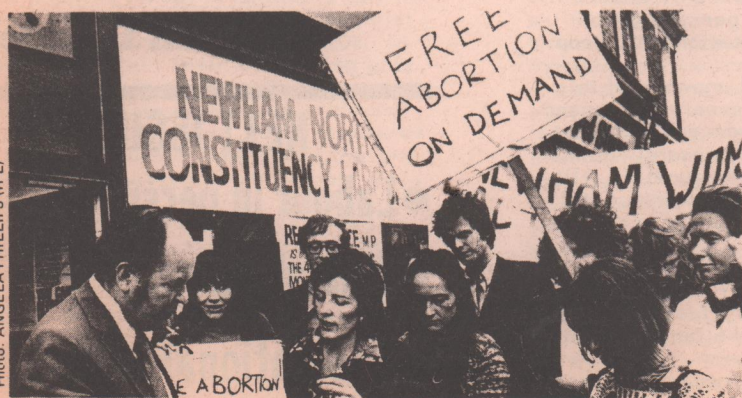


Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)
Prentice being lobbied by supporters of the National Abortion Campaign

TROOPS OUT NOW



Last month, the Labour government ordered the 'crack' SAS into South Armagh to deal with what Wilson called an 'exceptional area requiring exceptional measures'. The SAS has, of course, been working undercover in the Six Counties for many years now. The fact that the government should have 'played up' this move clearly means it is planning an escalation of violence against the nationalist minority throughout the Six Counties.

Such a decision represents a major concession to hard-line Unionist opinion which violently opposed Rees' previous policy of trying to 'woo' the minority to a sham power-sharing formula by granting certain minor 'reforms' such as the phasing out of internment.

The outcry that these 'reforms' met with from hard-liners like Paisley - who threatened to take action themselves through their own para-military groups - has swiftly pulled Rees into line. The decision to send in the SAS now is only one example of submitting to the Unionists' call for 'tougher measures'. As all talk of 'power-sharing' disappears, it is being accompanied by a build-up of the hated RUC and the denial to republicans of political prisoner status.

Neutral

This escalation in violence by the government is not, of course, new. Rees is merely treading the same well-worn track of his predecessors from Whitelaw back to Callaghan who introduced the troops onto the streets of Derry and Belfast in 1969.

Rees might, like them, maintain that the role of the army is, above all, to restore 'law and order' in a war-torn province that could 'explode' at any time. The order which the army is there to uphold, however, is an order based on the bigotry and privileges of the Loyalist state which has systematically discriminated against the nationalist minority for the past 50 years.

This has inevitably turned the army into the main repressive force in the Six Counties against the minority who are forced (by the very nature of their struggle for democratic rights) to openly challenge the 'status quo'. The constant arrests, harassment, torture and, more recently, open collaboration of the army with Loyalist para-military groups, has only served to burn this on the mind of the beleaguered nationalist community.

Blood-bath?

Unionist hard-liners such as Paisley are, of course, only too aware of this fact. Confident that the government dare not challenge them head-on without, at the same time, challenging the status quo it is there to uphold, they are encouraged ever more firmly to press for defence of their caste privileges. The back-

down of the Wilson government before the Ulster Workers strike in 1974 was a concrete example of their growing confidence.

In this sense, the army not only serves to repress the nationalist minority but - by encouraging the Unionist block to defend their privileges - constantly threatens the possibility of a right - wing back-lash. The escalation in sectarian murders recently by the Loyalist para-military groups is a clear warning signal.

Far from preserving the 'peace', the army remains the main threat to it in the Six Counties. Without its 'protection', the Unionists would be forced to come to terms with the nationalist minority in a situation where any threat of violence could spark off mass support from the South.

Responsible

The fact that the army is the key force in suppressing the rights of the nationalist minority places a clear responsibility on the shoulders of the British labour movement. Calling for the immediate withdrawal of these troops - who have no right to be in Ireland and who never had such a right - would be an elementary act of international labour solidarity.

Far from championing such a right, however, the labour leaders were themselves directly instrumental in sending in the troops in the first place. The latest decision to order in the SAS - cheered on by the Tories - is only the latest example of their trampling underfoot of a right which the labour movement has always supported: the right to self-determination.

The treacherous role played by the Labour leaders has met with hardly any opposition within the ranks of the movement as a whole. The TUC and Labour 'lefts' may throw up their hands in horror at the atrocities in the Six Counties and call for a Bill of Rights to defend the nationalist minority. They share with the Labour leaders, however, a common belief that the solution to Ireland's 'problem' does not lie in the hands of the Irish themselves but in those of British MPs in a British Parliament who will continue to determine the affairs of Ireland.

The Left

The fact, however, that six years after the entry of British troops onto the streets of Derry

and Belfast there still exists no mass campaign fighting for their immediate withdrawal cannot be laid solely at the door of the Labour leaders. It can also be laid firmly at the door of the socialist left which, true to its traditions, has virtually ignored the issue.

The failure of the left to unite in building such a campaign is, clearly, an example of their failure to give concrete aid to an oppressed nation fighting for its rights. Such a campaign, calling on the government to get the troops out immediately, could help undermine the morale of the British army and give renewed courage to the oppressed minority. It could concretely contribute to the outcome of the struggle in the Six Counties.

More than this, however, the left's 'abstention' is a failure to grasp the impact of this struggle on the situation within Britain. Only last year, the government whipped up a mass anti-Irish feeling around the bombings in Birmingham. They used these bombings to violently split the workers' movement and to push through the Anti-Terrorism Act which violates the democratic rights of the entire labour movement. The demonstrations that took place against the Irish in the Midlands were the most reactionary since the Powell ones organised by the dockers in the middle sixties.

A real campaign to withdraw the troops would not only, in this sense, directly contribute to the national struggle in Ireland but would also be an integral part of defending and extending democratic rights in Britain. It is true that such a campaign will have to confront the decades of anti-Irish propaganda which is deeply rooted in the labour movement. This struggle cannot be avoided or skirted around. If the British labour movement is prepared to passively tolerate its own government's brutal oppression of the Irish people now, it will just as passively tolerate tomorrow the victimisation of blacks or discrimination against women.

It is for this reason that building the Troops Out Movement (TOM) into a mass campaign is a central task before British socialists. Groups such as the IS or IMG, whose internationalism is more verbal than practical, could play a key role here. The socialist movement has, over the years, a scandalous record in defending the Irish freedom struggle. It is time to put that record straight.

D.Macleod

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Discussion Article:

SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY

Last month, at an inaugural meeting of over 400 in Glasgow, the Scottish Labour Party was born. There can be little doubt that the decision by MPs such as Jim Sillars and John Robertson to found the SLP, eliciting threats of expulsion from the national Labour Party, was not motivated by the need to mount a clear, socialist opposition to government policies.

Under the catch-phrase of opposing 'dose after dose of pragmatism', the SLP's programme seems to consist of little more than an attempt to 'hold' Labour to its Manifesto pledges, in particular those relating to unemployment and social expenditure which have hit Scotland harder than other areas.

The real motives behind Robertson and Sillars' move is a recognition that, unless Labour can quickly attach itself to the growing nationalist sentiment sweeping through the Scottish working class, as disillusion with government policies mount, Labour's returns at the next election could be reduced to a pitiful rump.

SLP leaders have taken to heart the confidential report made to Labour's National Executive that there is now a real danger that the party's 36% of the Scottish vote could dwindle to a mere 24%, giving the SNP a clear majority of over 50 seats.

The aims of the SLP, launched at a time when Labour's 'devolution' plans have received such a cool reception, is obviously designed to 'contain' this growing trend towards the SNP which could lead to a real disaster at the next election. Sillars himself views with alarm the fact that 'Labour has been almost the last party to acknowledge the growing feeling of Scottish national identity'.

Opportunist ?

While the SLP represents an attempt by a sector of the labour bureaucracy in Scotland to 'contain' growing nationalist feeling (as increasing layers of workers, disillusioned with Wilson's policies, turn to the SNP), it would be quite wrong to dismiss it merely as an 'opportunist' manoeuvre. Groups such as the IMG, who appear worried that the SLP could adopt a programme of 'generalities or nationalism', make a grave mistake here.

While the SLP represents an attempt, on the part of its leaders, to profit from the growth in nationalist feeling, it also reflects the growing impact of this new consciousness within the labour movement itself. The reason why Robertson and Sillars have been ready to accept even expulsion from the official Labour Party is simply because they are aware that not to identify with nationalist feelings is to court political suicide. Sillars' comment on the 'melting' Labour vote was not an afterthought.

The creation of the SLP marks, in this sense, a major step forward since it signifies that the labour movement, or at least sectors of it, are being forced to come to grips with the national aspirations of the Scottish working class which have, so far, been pioneered by the SNP alone. While the SLP is, as yet, still dominated by reformists such as Robertson or Sillars who have, on numerous occasions, adopted clear anti-working class positions, this need not always be the case.

The SLP could begin to attract layers of radical Scottish workers, hostile to Wilson's pro-capitalist policies, who could begin to demand a clear class expression of their national aspirations. This will not be an automatic process and will depend very much upon the positive attitude of Scottish revolutionaries towards the SLP and how they intervene to provide a programme which can satisfy national feelings through a



Jim Sillars: formed Scottish Labour Party to 'undercut' growing support for the SNP.

class-struggle perspective.

Reaction

Judging from the attitude of the British left, the potential for such a positive development does not seem favourably posed at present. Hostility to the SLP has not been confined only to Labour bureaucrats in Westminster who have called for the expulsion of the splitters but has found a similar reaction in the marxist left.

The WRP, in line with its attitude to Irish nationalism, actually went so far as to criticise the Labour leaders for not taking stronger disciplinary action against the Scottish rebel MPs. Other groups, while not adopting the 'shrill' tones of the WRP, have not politically differentiated themselves from such a hostile reaction towards 'nationalism'.

The ICL have seen the creation of the SLP as a 'blind alley' and the IMG, in Red Weekly, have sharply pointed out that 'nationalism' cannot 'provide any solution to the working class in Scotland'.

Behind these criticisms of the SLP for 'accommodating' to the nationalist feelings of growing layers of Scottish workers lurks the belief that, in some way, nationalism represents a 'threat' or a 'diversion' from carrying forward the class struggle. Red Weekly, for example, speaks disparagingly in the same article of Scottish workers being under the illusion that they suffer from some 'form of national discrimination'.

Such an attitude from the left, which ignores the nationalist traditions that run through Scottish labour history, is radically false. It is such an attitude, fostered by the labour bureaucrats in Scotland itself, which has helped push growing numbers of workers behind the petty-bourgeois banners of the SNP by suggesting that socialism is hostile to the nationalist aspirations of the Scottish people.

Nationalism

Writing off the national aspirations of growing numbers of Scottish workers can be short-sighted in the extreme. The development of such feelings in Scotland is not an 'exception' but part of an international resurgence of nationalism in the advanced capitalist countries. The rise of the black movement in the USA was merely the forerunner of similar upsurges among the Quebecois in Canada, the Basques in Spain or the Bretons in France.

The roots of this nationalist revival lie in the inter-action, among oppressed minorities, of growing economic deprivation with long-standing feelings of social and cultural discrimination. It is this inter-action which helps explain not only the recent developments in Scotland but also, of course, the much more explosive outburst in Northern Ireland in 1969.

It is, of course, possible that such a resurgence of 'national identity' can become trapped behind petty-bourgeois parties such as the SNP in Scotland which offers the mirage of an 'oil rich' independent state. Such a development is possible, however, only if the labour movement is unable to put forward a concrete class-struggle perspective for the national aspirations of large layers of working people.

To term nationalism in Scotland a 'diversion' which the labour movement (or, in particular, the SNP) should not bother with is to convince the mass of working people that socialism has no answer to their sense of national discrimination and to push them behind the banners of the SNP which can therefore pose as the sole force struggling for their rights.

by
Richard Munro

On the contrary, Socialists in Scotland should be seeking ways of encouraging Scottish workers to grasp that their national aspirations will not be solved by supporting the SNP (whose program is anti-working class) but by fighting in the labour movement for it to take them up in a clear class-struggle way. The formation of the SLP, despite its recent attempt to 'ban' left groups, offers a potentially fruitful way of posing this alternative perspective.

Method

The sectarian positions taken by large sections of the marxist left towards the SLP stem from a methodological error

which has also been observed in their attitude towards the women's liberation movement or towards black power. They criticise the 'nationalist' tendencies of the SLP as 'splitting' a united working-class struggle against the policies of the Wilson government.

The point, quite simply, is that it is impossible to get such a united struggle when large layers of Scottish workers feel - as they increasingly do - that they suffer national discrimination. Instead of criticising this growth in 'national identity', the first step by socialists should be to defend the right of the Scottish people to determine whether or not they want self-determination.

It is only by socialists showing, in practice, that they respect the wishes of the Scottish people to decide their own future that the ground will be laid for a united struggle against the labour traitors. Such a united struggle will not be forged by socialists in London 'telling' Scottish workers that their national aspirations are a 'diversion'.

At the same time, Scottish socialists should be boldly fighting inside the SLP and broader labour movement for a clear class-struggle perspective which can pose an alternative to the SNP for growing nationalist feelings.

The LSA is opening a debate in the columns of SOCIALIST ACTION on Scottish Nationalism. Contributions are welcome.

NURSERY SCANDAL

In April of last year, Dennis Healey cut education grants by over £86m. This cut, which was in line with the policies of the previous Tory government, is merely a foretaste of what is to come. A government White Paper recently recommended further cuts of between £500 and £600 millions during the period 1976-80.

The impact of these cuts will, of course, be felt in all areas of education as local authorities are forced to 'prune' school building, facilities and staffing ratios. Already, 5000 teachers are unemployed and it has been estimated that this will escalate to over 15,000 by this time next year.

Such cuts will be particularly felt, however, in already inadequate nursery facilities as local authorities seek cut-backs in what are considered 'low priority' areas.

INADEQUATE

At present, government grants to the local authorities for nursery facilities provides places for only 7% of children under five. It is already recognised, by the DHSS, that these are badly run and cannot provide places for the further 12,000 children who are regarded as 'priority' cases for nursery care.

As a result of government cut-backs, however, even these limited facilities are in danger of being stripped away. It is not just a question of postponing plans for 'expansion' but of actually cutting back existing places.

In Islington, only recently, the local authority has cut back on staff, has cut 10 places in each of two nurseries and has completely closed another. What is happening in Islington is, of course, part of a growing trend that is taking place throughout the country as local authorities console themselves with the thought that at least women can 'stay home' to look after them

COLLEGES

Cut-backs in nursery facilities can also be found, despite the resolution passed by NUS last year which noted that lack of child-care facilities put women students at a great 'disadvantage', in the colleges.

Faced with smaller allowances, many colleges which intended introducing nursery facilities will postpone them indefinitely, others will cut back on their 'staffing' ratios such as South Bank Polytechnic and yet others will hoist up nursery fees exorbitantly, as has Middlesex Polytechnic. Needless to say, all of these 'solutions' will effectively hinder women getting an adequate education and will ensure that the already low percentage of women in higher education will drop still lower.

That the NUS is not unaware of this can be shown in the resolution passed at last year's conference which pointed out that 'The cuts presently being implemented in higher education will cause opportunities for women... to degenerate still more'.

DISCRIMINATION

Cut-backs in nursery facilities will obviously effect the welfare of children since many mothers - forced to go out to work - will necessarily have

to leave them with 'untrained' baby minders.

It will even more obviously effect, however, thousands of women who will be forced to stay home and sacrifice their own lives as they leave work or drop out of colleges. No doubt this may satisfy the government, who will therefore find it easier to get away with its mass unemployment strategy, but it will not satisfy women. Not only will they be forced to abandon their own independence but will be forced back into the home to live upon a single wage at a time of rapidly rising inflation. Single mothers will, of



course, be hit harder than all others.

The NUS, confronted with the cut-backs, has called for action against the government's policies. This is an important step forward and women in the NUS should fight inside the union to ensure that this issue features in a central way in the NUS platform. It should also, however, be raised more generally within the labour movement which should also be forced to take up a struggle against the government's attacks on women's rights.

Marion Delaney

NEXT ISSUE

- Labour in perspective
- Zimbabwe
- The National Front

17.1m unemployed

Unemployment in the major capitalist countries has soared to 17.1m workers, the highest level in 40 years, according to figures released by the International Labour Organisation, last November.

This represented a massive increase of six million to a level of 5.2% of the overall labour force, compared with September 1974, the ILO said.

The regional breakdown of the total numbers of workers officially without jobs was, in the United States and Canada, 8.1m; in Western Europe 2.9m; in Southern Europe 2.7m; in Northern Europe 2.1m and, in Japan, Australia & New Zealand 1.3m.

PORTUGAL:

AZEVEDO REGIME TAKES OFFENSIVE

by T.Roberts

The repercussions of the abortive coup last November are only now assuming full impact in Portugal. The coup itself - encouraged by the Stalinists despite their last minute 'pull out' - has allowed the Azevedo regime to resume the initiative after it had been reduced to near impotence, last year, under the rise in workers' struggles.



All smiles: Soares this week with, left, new premier Azevedo and Guerreiro, leader of the Popular Democrats.

Resuming the 'initiative' does not just mean clamping down in the armed forces which has already seen the arrest of over 70 officers & the re-establishment of what the Supreme Revolutionary Council calls 'military authority'. It also means using this change in the balance of forces to begin to roll back the economic and political gains won by the mass movement since the 1974 coup.

Undoubtedly, this attack on the workers movement has been cautious, reflecting the government's fear of a new 'upsurge'. The recent mass demonstrations that have shaken Lisbon - particularly the 40,000 strong one organised on January 17 by Intersindical - prove how cautiously the government still has to tread with a working class that has still not been defeated. Nevertheless, its objective is clear. It is, as Azevedo spelt out last December, to create the climate for the 'voluntary and conscious acceptance of sacrifices'.

Economic Front

The true meaning of this policy, on the economic front, was made perfectly clear by Azevedo in a televised speech later the same month when he pointed out that the state of the economy depended on the 'discipline of the labour unions and workers'. According to New York Times correspondent Marvin Howe, 'he warned that unrealistic wage claims and over-employment had caused many enterprises to close'.

Azevedo's call for discipline is, of course, highly reminiscent of the AFM's earlier call for the need to win 'the battle for production'. The fact that Azevedo feels confident enough to call openly for sacrifices - without the left smokescreen that surrounded the AFM's earlier appeals - is only indicative of the shift in the balance of forces created by the abortive November coup.

The impact of the government 'austerity programme' can be measured by the fact that it speaks of 'over-employment' at a time when 13% of the workforce is on the dole. It can further be measured by the fact that it calls for tax rises and wage cuts at a time when government subsidies on essentials have been ended and inflation is raging. Transport costs in the capital have, for example, risen by 100% recently.

The government not only feels confident enough to open an offensive against the labour movement but has also announced that its land-reform programme is being put 'on ice' in the northern two thirds of Portugal and in certain parts of the south as well.

Democratic Rights

Immediately after the November coup, the Azevedo regime began making direct inroads into the extension of democratic rights won after the downfall of Caetano in 1974. These initial curbs - imposing a temporary curfew in Lisbon & censoring the press by removing pro-CP editorial staff - can now be seen as part of a growing trend. Direct attacks have, more recently, been made on the right of protest and assembly.

The government chose the January 1st demonstration in Oporto (called to demand the release of 140 people arrested in the wake of the November coup) to further test out its repressive line. The Republican National Guard opened fire on a crowd of 3000, killing three and seriously wounding many more. The government defended the attack, charging the demonstrators with being part of a plot to help the prisoners 'escape'.

The government's use of the Republican National Guard, a 'para-military' police force known for its right-wing character, was not accidental. In the January 3rd Washington Post, a report from Oporto states that '... a massive recruitment campaign for 10,000 extra men is being launched by television adverts'.

Examples such as the demonstration in Oporto - or that in Lisbon a few days later broken up by commandos - are part of a growing anti-democratic trend

which could most clearly be seen in the plan proposed, on January 9th, by the Supreme Revolutionary Council that would ensure continued military rule. In a dispatch from Lisbon, the Washington Post stated that 'the military plan would enable the Council to dissolve the elected legislature and veto many of its decrees on everything from nationalisation through foreign affairs to defence'.

While the political parties may insist on obtaining a reduced military role in the period to come, it is clear that the military intend to remain the real power in Portugal as they have been ever since the coup in 1974 that overthrew Caetano.

Workers Parties

Unfortunately, neither the Communist nor Socialist parties have openly come out against the offensive (launched by the military-backed Azevedo government) against the workers' movement. Both parties continue to remain in the government and, by being implicated in its decisions, have seriously disoriented their own mass base.

There is, of course, little new in this. Instead of breaking with the AFM, the leaders of both reformist parties have participated in successive capitalist governments since Caetano's downfall in 1974, competing among themselves to win the position of the AFM's most 'privileged' ally. Instead of attempting to unite the masses in defence of their basic interests against the military, they have acted as agents of the AFM in the labour movement helping to sell the need for 'belt-tightening' and for 'sacrifices'.

There can be no doubt that this service rendered to the AFM - allowing it to masquerade behind a civilian front - has been crucial in allowing the AFM to continue with their anti-working class offensive. Covering up, in this way, for the military is however full of dangers. By taking responsibility for their policies, and even passing them off as 'progressive' if not 'revolutionary', the reformists like Soares or Cunhal have not only confused the workers' movement but have opened the door increasingly to the 'right' who have begun to trade off popular discontent.

The mass demonstration of over ten thousand small farmers in Brago, on January 10th, calling for 'fair prices and credit', is a case in point. It is by refusing to champion the demands of the labour movement and its allies, such as the small farmers, that pushes the lat-



ter into the arms of the 'right'.

Left Forces

The forces to the left of the reformist parties, still disoriented by the November coup, have no alternative. Despite the fact that the coup was the logic of the Stalinists' ultra-left stance, many of the groups have yet to break away from tail-ending the CP's demagogic line which helped split the labour movement and create illusions in the 'lefts' among the military.

More important today than ever is the need to openly call for the two workers' parties to cease their bickering and to unite in opposition to the anti-working class offensive of the Azevedo government. Such a policy of united action, at all levels, could be spearheaded by the call for the CP and SP to form a workers' government based on the majority of the popular vote they won in last April's elections.

Campaigning for such a perspective could begin to unite the labour movement and give it a clear direction. It could also begin to show it, concretely, that its present leaders are bankrupt and pose the possibility of a real socialist solution. Certainly, this is the only way forward for the movement in Portugal where, despite set-backs, the mass of workers have as yet suffered no decisive defeats.

Abortion threat

Action Life, a church-sponsored pressure group in Austria, claims to have collected 800,000 signatures on a petition calling on the government to make abortion, once again, a crime. Abortions during the first three months of pregnancy became legal in Austria last year with the change in a fifty-year-old law.

According to the Austrian Justice Minister, up to 70,000 illegal abortions were performed annually until 1975. One Vienna clinic said that no woman had died in 2,400 abortions performed there since January 1975, compared with the nationwide mortality rate of 25% before the new law was passed.

LABOUR IN PERSPECTIVE

First of a series of articles on the nature and origins of the Labour Party..

Writing in the Red Mole in 1970, a few months before the 'elections', Robin Blackburn dismissed the early Labour Party as a 'bureaucratic manoeuvre'. Facility almost always has a knack of distorting the truth. The early Labour Party was not hatched (as Blackburn implies) in the committee rooms of the then equivalents of Harold Wilson or Reg Prentice. It was born despite such figures out of the escalating struggles of the labour movement, at the turn of the century, and the hesitant understanding of ever-wider layers of a common interest to defend.

The creation of the Labour Party took place, interestingly enough, in a period similar to our own in several respects. Its seeds were embedded in a decade of shocks & upheavals sparked off by the growing threat to Britain's dominance in world trade by the industrial powers of Germany and the USA. In order to retain their slackening grip over the world market, British employers resorted to a well co-ordinated attack upon workers' living standards and rights almost identical to the one we have witnessed over the past decade or so.

An intensive drive was heralded to lower working conditions, introduce 'speed-up' (productivity deals) abolish 'restrictive practices' and break the backs of the unions which had grown enormously in the preceding period among semi-skilled workers such as

1890 alone, had tripled).

Such an offensive, coupled with the attempt by the employers to create a ready supply of 'scab labour' in the National Free Labour Association, gave rise throughout the 1890s to a whole wave of 'lock outs' & provoked strikes. Chief among these were the Lancashire cotton workers' strike of 1893, the miners' strikes of 1894 and 1898 and the engineers' lock-out of 1897 which resulted in the imposition of the humiliating York Memorandum.

Taff Vale

The impact of these struggles on the consciousness of the labour movement - particularly newly-unionised sectors who lacked the conservative approach of the older, craft unions - should not be minimised. They gave birth, slowly and hesitatingly, to a growing awareness among more militant layers of a common interest of the labour movement that had to be 'independently' defended.

Up to that point in time, as Pelling is eager to point out, 'there had been little concept of 'labour' as a distinct class in the community', and there was often intense hostility between the semi-skilled and older, craft unions. The offensive launched by the employers, increasingly centralised through the creation of Employers' Federations, slowly began to overcome 'craft' and 'sectional' differences as the unions increasingly identified together around the need to defend the cause of labour.

Even though this process was most obvious, in the initial stages, among the newly unionised, it gradually spread to the more craft-conscious unions whose interests were clearly endangered by attacks upon trade union autonomy which reached a climax in the Taff Vale Judgement of 1901. This judgement, forcing

strike action, was seen to have much wider implications.

It was clearly recognised as a threat not only to the railwaymen's union but to 'trade unionism' itself since, if any union could be made to legally compensate a company for losses incurred in a strike action, the unions were rendered virtually powerless.

Liberals

It was in response to such attacks, in response to attacks upon the unions no longer on a sectional but on a national basis, that the fertile ground was created on which the 'propaganda' of the early socialist groupings such as the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party (long struggling for a 'workingmen's party) was to fall. The deepening awareness among unions of common interests to defend - those of the labour movement - began to drive a wedge through the 'marriage of convenience' which had hitherto caused the unions to clutch at the apron-strings of the Liberal Party.

Up to that point in time, the majority of the unions (particularly the craft unions) had trailed behind the Liberals in much the same way as, today, the labour movement in the USA supports the Democratic Party. The unions advocated support for the Liberals in exchange for the latter's policy of free trade (under which cheap food rates were guaranteed) and a less antagonistic attitude towards the labour movement.

The sharp offensive launched by the employers, however, cementing in the labour movement a growing awareness of its class interests, pushed growing layers in the unions to break from this alliance with 'Liberalism' and seek an independent political voice. They were encouraged in this by the partial success

had concentrated attention on the Irish 'question'.

Step Forward

Such a process did not, of course, take place overnight. Unions such as the NUM only decided to 'break' from the Liberals as late as 1908. Nevertheless, it was out of this deepening awareness of a common class interest that had to be defended that, in 1899, the Labour Representation Committee was formed. The LRC, sponsored by a loose federation of trade unions and socialist currents, set itself, it is true, very limited objectives.

It wasn't even sure whether its aim was to set up a party, let alone a party based on clear socialist principles. Its aims, as originally defined, were as limited and fuzzy as they are today when it was decided it should "... ensure that working class opinion should be represented in the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the labour movement and whose candidatures are promoted by one or other of the organised movements".

Behind these unclear and hesitating words, however, lay a radical change in consciousness by important layers of the labour movement which 'marxists' such as Robin Blackburn contemptuously dismissed when comparing the Labour Party with the Democratic Party in the USA. A radical change because, in the decision to promote candidates 'sympathetic with the aims and demands of the labour movement' lay an awareness of these layers of the need to create for themselves a political voice.

This fact should not be under-estimated by those (particularly outside the labour movement) who see only its negative features represented in the figures of Wilson or Prentice. The Labour Party symbolised, in its creation, an important step forward in the awareness of millions of workers, an awareness of themselves as a class with distinct interests as a class which had to be fought for not only

In our opinion:

UNITY OF THE LEFT

During the early 'seventies, many left groups grew in both size and influence. Groups such as IS and the IMG attracted large numbers of radical youth who had seen the limitations of both the Labour and Communist parties and who had begun to grasp the need for an alternative to the left of 'reformism'.

The dramatic growth of these groups makes the present fragmentation of the left all the more ironic. Groups such as IS, which had the heady illusion of competing with the Communist (if not Labour) party, are now convulsed with inner disputes resulting in 'split-offs', expulsions and growing disillusion.

There can be no doubt that this fragmentation is demoralising not only to those who have 'left' these groups but to a wide layer of radicals, both inside & outside the labour movement, who are still seeking an alternative to the reformist policies of the Labour and Communist parties. It is doubly demoralising that this fragmentation should occur at a time when the need for a strong alternative is more necessary than ever before as attacks on working people and their allies escalate.

Roots

The task, however, is not to remain demoralised but to uncover the reasons for this set-back in order to ensure it is not repeated. The fragmentation that exists at present can be 'positive' if it leads to further regroupments on the clear basis of understanding the errors of the past.

For many, the present situation can be explained away as the result of the decline in radicalisation in the broader labour movement which has, lacking any alternative strategy, temporarily acquiesced to the government's policy of creating mass unemployment and eroding living standards.

There is obviously some truth in this since the 'left' obviously reflects, to a greater or lesser extent, the shifts in mood and consciousness of working people and their allies. It is by no means, however, the full answer. The class struggle knows not only 'flows' but also 'ebbs' which do not always throw the left into a state of disintegration it is in at present.

The real answer is to be found within the left itself and its political inability, over the past years, to relate to the complex developments of the class struggle in Britain on the basis of a clear methodology.

Mistakes

One of the major weaknesses of groups such as IS or the IMG was that their growth was never accompanied by clarity in ideas. Both these groups tended to 'adapt' to the moods of the milieu they were working in which explains the often startling shifts in their positions. The IMG, for example, was able to shift from 'abstention' on the Labour Party in the 1970 election to one of full support only a few years later.

This constant adaptation to the moods of different layers they were working with meant that the composition of these groups was never based on a common understanding of the way forward. While the groups were growing fast, the momentum tended to 'hold together' the internal differences - but the moment that momentum slowed up, as at present, these differences burst forth with startling depth.

Lack of political clarity was accompanied by an inability to grasp the complex nature of the present radicalisation in Britain. Almost all the groups (above all IS) were unable to grasp the significance of the development of the women's liberation movement, the black power movement or the struggle by the Irish people for their self-determination.

Refusal to relate seriously to these questions of importance to millions - and refusal to pioneer them inside the labour movement - meant that they, in fact, adapted to a narrow 'Economist' view of the class struggle which saw militancy over wage concerns as an end in itself. The fallacy of this attitude has been dramatically revealed today.

Clarity

In order to go forward, at present, it is important to learn from these errors. Short-cut tactics - such as the decision by Workers' Fight to 'unite' with other forces to create the I-CL on an unclear political basis - is no solution. It merely repeats the mistakes of the past and harbours within it the splits of the future.

What is important today is a perspective which, while allowing for building a group on clear foundations, equally allows for the maximum unity in action by the left as a whole around burning issues. This is the perspective of the LSA.

In the first place, any serious political tendency needs to be built around a clear programme which allows it to respond to the complex developments of the class struggle with a clear method: the method outlined in Trotsky's 'Transitional Programme'. While prepared to discuss with all tendencies on the left, the LSA is convinced that agreement on that programme is the only way in which a real organisation can be built.

In the second place, while such a debate takes place, there is an urgent need for unity in action by all tendencies around key issues effecting working people and their allies. Building united actions around the issue of abortion, Ireland & racist immigration laws are concrete examples of this in practice.

It is by firmness in political programme and by complete flexibility in building mass actions with all other forces on the left that there lies a way forward out of the present fragmentation which both clarifies political ideas and which does not ignore burning political issues.

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MASS GAME

Last June, over 25000 marched through London against James White's anti-abortion Bill. There can be no doubt that this mass opposition - called by NAC - was directly instrumental in getting the White threat 'shelved' and putting back the plans of the anti-abortion lobby who had long been campaigning to repeal the 1967 Act.

NAC's early success was not due, however, merely to the spontaneous outcry that grew up against the reactionary attempt by the SPUC-supported Bill to rob women of their 'limited' abortion rights. It was also due to the type of campaign launched by NAC which was able, in a few months, to tap this potential and draw it onto the streets in mass action against the government.

Winning NAC to this perspective - to building mass action on the streets on a concrete issue of concern to millions of women - was no simple task. It meant a running fight against those tendencies in NAC who were only too anxious to turn it into a 'paper' campaign limited to small meetings abstractly debating the links between abortion and, for example, 'cuts' on the NHS.

This debate which took place in NAC - and which is, in many ways, still continuing - is not unique. It reflects a wider debate taking place in radical circles as to the most effective way of carrying forward defence of living standards and democratic rights against attacks ranging from racist immigration laws to abortion restrictions.

Single Issue

One of the major weaknesses of NAC, in the eyes of such tendencies as the IMG, was precisely the fact that it was organised around the single issue of abortion rights. As early as June 19, Red Weekly was trying to remedy this by encouraging NAC to 'link itself with MCAPP* which aims to unite all those forces fighting for a full and comprehensive health service based on the needs of the working class'.

Struggling against NHS cuts is, of course, an important way to challenge the government's attempt to undermine the living standards of working people. The attempt by the IMG, among others, to force this position on those who had united around the need to defend abortion rights was, however, a serious mistake.

It was a serious mistake because dissolving NAC into an attempt to combat the NHS cuts - downplaying its importance - effectively cut across the ability of the campaign to create the maximum unity in struggling against the real threat facing women through the government's anti-abortion moves. While those forces who built NAC were quite willing to unite around the issue of abortion rights, many were not, as yet, convinced of the need to fight for a 'health service based on the needs of the working class'.

By trying to extend the programme of NAC into a 'multi-issue' campaign, such groups were, in reality, endangering the unity that had been built up and, at the same time, the interests of masses of women for whom the campaign's effectiveness remains the sole safeguard between them and a return to the back-street abortionists.

In their paper following the October conference, the ex-Workers Fight tendency wrote that the LSA 'always single-mindedly insisted on the most narrow campaign'. Keeping NAC to a single issue was not, as Workers Fight infer, a 'fetish'. It was simply the most effective way, at this stage, of creating the maximum unity among the scattered forces of the left which can act as a focal point for drawing masses into struggle as happened on June 21.

The LSA's insistence on the 'most narrow campaign' was simply a refusal

to repeat the sectarian error of the left which constantly tries to dissolve the concrete issue at hand - such as the struggle for abortion rights - into paper resolutions on all and sundry understood only by a few 'initiated'.

Consciousness

Widening NAC's programme would not only, in this respect, have endangered the unity of the left on an issue of key importance to masses of women. It would equally have destroyed NAC's potential for boldly moving out & drawing into action thousands of people who were beginning to identify with its concrete objectives.

This is precisely the advantage of the single-issue campaign since, by taking up a concrete issue that faces people in their daily lives, it can begin to draw them into struggle at their present level of consciousness to change the situation.

This is not unimportant. Those forces in NAC who were so eager to 'extend' the programme should ask themselves why the Working Women's Charter (a campaign organised around a series of demands) was, itself, unable to launch a mass opposition to the government's anti-abortion moves. The reason was, of course, that being based on a multi-issue platform, it was limited in its appeal only to those who were already convinced women's liberationists or socialists.

The significance of NAC (unlike the Charter) was that it was able to break through this 'elitism' and involve not only the committed but the uncommitted. This was a welcome step forward since the only force capable of stopping the government in its tracks is not a few 'convinced' socialists but masses of people who have begun to struggle on an issue seen as important to them.

It has been the left's inability to grasp this simple fact which has held back the building of effective opposition on the streets to the increasing attempts by successive governments to erode democratic rights & living standards. Racist immigration laws remain on the statute books and the troops remain in Ireland because of the inability of the left, over the years, to launch effective movements which can relate to the understanding of masses of people.

Mass Action

For many groups on the left, such a mass action perspective is unrealistic. Workers Fight, writing on Ireland at a time, ironically enough, when over 60% of people had shown in opinion polls they were in favour of withdrawing the troops, pointed out: '... it is utopian to believe that TOM can become a mass movement'. Such pessimism merely cloaks, in reality, the fact that the politics of such groups are not even directed towards drawing layers into struggle (which remains the only way to concretely aid the Irish people in their struggle for self-determination).

This orientation, which rules out the possibility of mounting any effective opposition around key issues, stems in large part from an inability to grasp how people begin to radicalise. It fails to understand that people cannot be changed through 'ideas' alone but only by involving them, at their present level of consciousness, in struggles around issues seen as important to them.

It is only by drawing wide layers into independent action on the streets and



Mass rally in USA against Vietnam war

CAIGNS

Sabina Roberts

in the factories that more and more will begin to see that social change is not dependent on Parliamentary manoeuvres but upon mass action. This was demonstrated most fully by the anti-war movement in the USA which not only contributed to the victory of the Vietnamese people but which also helped radicalise a whole generation in class-struggle methods.

Fighting for such independent action (as that on June 21st) involves, quite naturally, a tireless struggle against the reformists who continually attempt to downgrade it in favour of placing reliance upon MPs who are boosted as the 'real' force for social change. It also involves a fight, however, against those sectarian forces such as Workers Fight (now the ICL) who, by attempting to limit these campaigns to the already 'initiated', equally tend to downgrade independent action by masses.

This was the major mistake made by those forces inside NAC who wished to link up the campaign with other issues. By suggesting that only those who were willing to support a whole variety of issues could join (i.e. socialists) they were effectively slamming the door on masses of women who were ready to struggle against abortion restrictions but who were not yet at a level to grasp the other points.

Both the reformists & the sectarians join hands, in this sense, in common agreement that, whatever happens, real change will come about not through the independent action of masses of people demanding their rights but either by the manoeuvres of a few MPs or by small 'elitist' actions (such as those organised by the left in the anti-NF campaign). In both cases, the mass of people are reduced to the passive role of spectators.

Government

One of the main achievements of NAC was to force the government to 'drop' the White Bill. By mobilising action on the streets - and winning support from the TUC and Labour Party - NAC forced the government to temporarily retreat on its most extreme measures against abortion rights brought in under SPUC pressure.

Mobilising mass action on the streets is not only, however, the most effective way of creating a viable opposition to anti-democratic moves by the government. It also, by taking ever - wider layers into struggle around a concrete objective, increasingly reveals to them the true nature of class society and raises their consciousness.

Many groups on the left, such as the IMG, have maintained that directing such mass action against the government can actually create illusions in Parliament as a body for social change. Such an argument only reveals an inability to grasp the dynamic of mass action.

The mass of people already possess illusions in Parliament - if they didn't the left would not still occupy the 'peripheral' place it does. It is by building mass action in the streets - and demanding that the government respond to such action - that more & more will begin, through their own experience, to realise the limitations of Parliament and see the motor force for social change in their own independent action.

It is, of course, possible that in the course of such action concessions will be won. Mass action in the USA led for example, to the legalising of abortion and to the withdrawing of troops from Vietnam in the early seventies. To maintain that such concessions could lead to creating 'illusions' in Parliament is as ridiculous as claiming that winning 'wage concessions' through strike action will lead to creating illusions in private enterprise.

On the contrary, winning demands will only give wide layers confidence in their own ability to change the situation without reliance upon the manoeuvres of MPs. It is by gaining such confidence that such layers will be stimulated to struggle further for other demands through class-struggle methods which will deepen their understanding of class society and the need for fundamental change.

One of the basic errors of the left, particularly of young radicals, is to believe that struggles must be posed around demands which cannot be 'conceded'. What these radicals tend to misunderstand is that whether a demand is won or not is purely a question of the relationship of forces in most cases. What differentiates a

revolutionary from a reformist struggle is not solely the demands but the way in which the demands are fought for.

Unity in Action

At present, the left is fragmented and divided. It is vitally important that, while a debate of clarification continues that can lead to further regroupments, broader issues facing masses of people are not sacrificed. Concrete unity around key issues - such as withdrawing the troops from Ireland or repealing the Immigration Act - can assure that an effective opposition is mounted.

Such an opposition, built around a concrete issue, can begin to draw in wide layers of people and give them a concrete perspective for struggle which is, at present, lacking. At a time when the workers' movement is on the retreat on the economic front, campaigns on these issues can begin to offer a real struggle against the government which can, increasingly, 'overspill' into the labour movement.

The positive action shown by NAC over the past period - which was able to draw wide layers of the labour movement into opposition to government policies - offers a real perspective. It is by building such mass action campaigns that the left can begin to relate to masses of people who, for too long, have seen it involved merely in internal bickering.

HANDS OFF ANGOLA!

On January 12th, at an emergency meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) held in Addis Ababa, 22 African states supported the Nigerian resolution calling for the recognition of the MPLA as the sole 'legitimate' government of Angola.

At the same time as recognising the MPLA, many of them condemned the 'aggressive' policy of South Africa in Angola and those nationalist groups, 'UNITA' and the FNLA, which had, in the internal civil war, invited South African assistance.

The decision by large numbers of African states to recognise the Soviet-backed MPLA - stemming specifically, in the case of Nigeria and Ghana, as a result of South African intervention - came as a serious set-back for the aims of US Imperialism in Angola. It was a slap in the face for Kissinger's attempts (through the 'African tour' of his envoy William E. Shaufele) to persuade key African governments to drop their support for the MPLA and adopt the US position on the need for 'unity talks'.

Vorster

The rebuff suffered at the OAU conference was mainly responsible for Vorster's decision to 'pull back' his troops to within 60 miles of the Namibian borders where they remain to protect the Cunene dam & to prevent SWAPO guerrillas from conducting raids. Such a move was motivated to keep what remains of its 'detente' policy with neighbouring states. The fact that key ones, such as Zambia, were being forced to modify their attitude towards the MPLA meant that any further overt aggression would have only served to isolate South Africa still further.

The 'pull back' of South African troops to 'defensive' positions near the Namibian border has, obviously, allowed the MPLA to step up its offensive ever more forcefully. In the north, it has managed to rout FNLA forces (taking such key towns as Uige) and push them over the border into Zaire. In the south, it is pressing UNITA forces hard and seems likely to capture in the near future such central towns as Novo Redmonda.

Mercenaries

The removal of S. African troops to the borders of Namibia must clearly worry the Ford administration which, it is suggested, was the main pressure on Vorster to enter the Angolan situation. It must worry them because, after the painful defeat in Vietnam which has left sections of the US ruling class unwilling to become embroiled, at this stage, in another 'colonial war' they are unable to intervene themselves in a 'direct' way.

Last December, the US congress, by 54 to 22 votes, cut off all 'official' funds to the anti-MPLA forces in Angola. The inability to enter the war directly, and the fact that their erstwhile ally has been forced to 'pull back' obviously strengthens the MPLA position.

Despite the fact that its hands have been tied, however, the USA is still pouring massive funds to UNITA and the FNLA through 'friendly' regimes such as Zaire and its CIA agents are

The LSA & the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

One of the major drawbacks of the British left has been its insularity. It has been this insularity which has prevented it from understanding the complex nature of the radicalisation in Britain - from the growth of women's liberation to that of black power - which can only be grasped from an internationalist perspective.

The League for Socialist Action was not formed to accommodate to this insular tradition but to break through it. It is for this reason that the LSA is in total solidarity with the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL which unites revolutionaries world-wide on the basis of support for the programme and traditions of the Trotskyist movement. It is impossible to build a revolutionary party in Britain separately from building an international revolutionary party.

At the same time as identifying with the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, however, the LSA has deep political differences with the International Marxist Group (which represents at present its British section). Support for the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL is not seen, at present, as compatible with membership of the IMG.

The LSA believes that, while remaining in political solidarity with the FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, the most effective way of clarifying the political differences it has with the IMG is through testing out the different lines in practice. Experience will, we are sure, lead to such a clarification.

Political Cttee

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Holden Roberto (FNLA), and Jonas Savimbi (UNITA)

busy collecting mercenaries from both the USA and Europe. On January 11, the Sunday Telegraph reported that, besides an estimated 300 American mercenaries, British '... and other European mercenaries have entered Angola secretly over the last few months'.

Dominoes

The real reasons for such 'activity' do not stem, as Kissinger likes to maintain, from the direct threat of a marxist 'take-over' in Angola which could topple the 'dominos' of Southern Africa. The MPLA is not a marxist movement. Agostinho Neto, MPLA leader, has openly pointed out that 'I dislike these classifications, I am not a Communist, I am not a socialist, I am first of all a patriot'.

Far from being a 'marxist' movement, the MPLA has guaranteed the US and other foreign investors such as Britain (which has over £2000m in Angola) that it will respect private property and has been ready, on more than one occasion, to put down strikes and independent working class activity. At the present moment it is confronted with mass walk-outs in Luanda, by teachers, electricians, bakers, civil servants and mechanics. The MPLA's attitude towards this can be detected in a speech made by Neto on December 20th when he indicated that the fight against UNITA and the FNLA must be accompanied by what he termed 'the battle of production, the battle of labour, for productivity, against laziness, against idleness, against sabotage of our rear lines'.

The Ford administration is only too aware that the MPLA is no more a marxist movement than is the FNLA or UNITA which have both, equally, guaranteed to respect foreign investment and who have adopted clear anti-working class stands. The decision to intervene in Angola is motivated by other reasons.

'Detente'

Writing in the Guardian on January 9th, Jonathan Steel pointed out what he considered to be the real motives behind the US moves. The first was that, while the MPLA was no marxist movement, it was supported in the 'mouques' (townships) of Luanda, Angola's biggest industrial base, by workers whose radical aspirations



Demonstration in the USA against intervention in Angola.

have often caused problems for MPLA leaders.

After the downfall of Caetano, for example, the Luanda workers engaged in a powerful series of strikes, demonstrations and uprisings, taking them considerably to the left of the MPLA leaders who tried to put them down. An MPLA 'victory' could lead to serious pressures being placed upon it which could force it to adopt more 'radical' positions.

The second was that a united Angola, rich and relatively removed from the influence of South Africa, would be more independent in its actions and could provide aid to SWAPO guerrillas. Creating conflict in Namibia could be a serious threat to the 'detente' line South Africa has been trying to build over the past period with US help.

The third (and possibly most vital) was the fear that an MPLA victory could give the Soviet Union, which is backing the MPLA with supplies and with 'troops' via Cuba, a very useful bargaining counter in its diplomatic moves with the West within terms of the 'detente'. A USSR-backed regime, rich in natural resources and with massive Imperialist investment, would allow the Soviet bureaucrats to make 'gains' within the policy of detente.

Out Now

US intervention in Angola is not so much motivated by fear of a marxist take-over - it is only too aware that the USSR is not there to foster the aims of revolution - but by a desire to stabilise Southern Africa and keep it within 'its' sphere of influence. It no doubt calculated that to have three squabbling facts was more conducive to this aim than to have a political victory for one of them.

Even though they have been unable to intervene 'openly' (due to the decision by Congress), mass undercover support for UNITA and the FNLA as well as the activities of CIA agents are designed to achieve this aim.

The position of socialists in such a situation must be crystal-clear. They must call on the British government, which has been collaborating with the joint US-South African strategy, to disassociate itself from imperialist manoeuvres in Angola by demanding the immediate withdrawal of all troops and supplies. 'Hands off Angola!' must be the rallying cry.

A Scott

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The death of CHOU EN LAI

The death of Chou En-lai at the age of seventy-eight in Peking on January 8th brought to a close a political career that spanned fifty-seven years of activity at the centre of events shaping modern Chinese history. This, itself, is testimony to his skill in the devious inner-party warfare that had led to the purge and disgrace of all but a few of Chairman Mao Tsetung's oldest and closest associates by the beginning of the 1970s.

In his last years, Chou served as a display piece in China's governmental apparatus and its diplomatic corps. He cultivated a reputation for suave urbanity of odds with the crude strong-arm methods of the regime which he represented.

Chou's extraordinary staying power in the multifarious purges that dot the history of Chinese Stalinism resided in an absence of principles and a keen sense of which way the wind was blowing at the top of the party hierarchy.

'Moderation'

The Western capitalist press, after Peking's turn towards Washington in 1972, professed to be charmed with Chou's personality and pleased with his moderation as a diplomat. On his death, the editors of the New York Times hailed him as 'one of the more far-sighted statesmen of the 20th century', citing as evidence his part, along with Mao, in 'repairing the long-shattered Sino-American relationship'.

These gentlemen, who are no friends of the Chinese revolution, are not shamming in voicing their regrets on Chou's passing. They are expressing appreciation for an erstwhile enemy for real services rendered. It is this internal transformation of Chou, the selfless proletarian revolutionist into Chou the bureaucrat-administrator, which constitutes the central thread of his life and which defines his place in Chinese and world history.

Stalinism

Chou took part in virtually every major event in the revolution of 1925-27, a revolution brought to a bloody and disastrous 'defeat' by Stalin's policies of collaboration with the bourgeois Kuomintang & bureaucratic dictation of tactics to the CCP. It was in this school that Chou was formed as a revolutionist. He was arrested at Canton in March 1926 in Chiang Kai-shek's first move against the CCP; he participated in the Shanghai Uprising in the spring of 1927 & was one of the main leaders in the city who decided to welcome Chiang's troops, leading to the anti-communist

massacre of April 12th.

He was in Wuhan in July 1927 when Stalin's policy of continued collaboration with a 'left splinter' of the Kuomintang led to another massacre; he took part in the Nanchang Uprising of August 1927 which marked a turn towards ultra-leftism, known later as 'Third Period Stalinism' which lasted until 1934.

Corrupted by Stalinism in his first serious experience of the workers' movement, the young, idealistic and talented Chou became converted into the 'prototype' of the functionary-adventurer, exchanging this role in 1949 for the even less admirable one of functionary-administrator. The highlights of his career bear out this harsh judgement.

Chiang Kai-shek

Chou's greatest personal triumphs were all inspired either by obedience to the Stalinist machine or by the effort to conciliate and join together different classes, both nationally & internationally. During the period of Mao's disgrace, after the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising of 1927, Chou became the chief lieutenant of Li Li-san, the Stalin-appointed head of the party after its founding leaders, such as Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Peng Shu-tse, were made scapegoats for the failure of Stalin's policies in China.

When Li was purged, in January 1931, Chou adroitly switched loyalties to the new Moscow-appointed leadership of Wang Ming. Chou acted as Wang's 'hatchet man' in removing Mao from the post of military commissar of the so-called Kiangsi soviet in August 1932 (Chou was rewarded by being given the post himself). Chou was, however, just as supple in dropping his former leaders and submitting to Mao when at the Tsunyi conference in January 1935, during the Long March into North China, Mao's faction succeeded in defeating Wang Ming & taking over the party leadership.

Following the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1935 (which elected both Mao and Chou to the Comintern Executive Committee), Chou found his true niche as the ablest Chinese practitioner of the class-collaborationist People's Front line. His most famous single exploit of the 1930s was his intervention in December 1936 to save the life of Chiang Kai-shek after the counter-revolutionary 'generalissimo' had been arrested by his own troops at Sian for sabotaging the resistance to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.



At the war's end in 1945 Chou again distinguished himself as the most energetic collaborator of American generals Hurley and Marshall in trying to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to accept the CCP as junior partner in his government. This was typical of the outlook of the Stalinist functionary: seeking to use the massive forces accumulated by the CCP in the anti-Japanese struggle as a bargaining counter in an effort to bring together the contending classes.

It was through no fault of Chou's or of General Marshall's that this reintegration of the CCP-held territories into Chiang's government failed. It was the aristocratic and obdurate Chiang who launched a military offensive against the CCP in July 1946, precipitating the civil war that he ultimately lost.

Chou was entrusted by the CCP regime after 1949 with the abortive attempt to organise a capitalist coalition government (the explicit political content of Mao's heralded 'New Democracy'), a project that collapsed only in 1953 under the pressure of bourgeois sabotage of the government and economy during the Korean war.

'Peaceful Coexistence'

From the early 1950s, Chou found his true calling as the diplomatic arbiter of Stalinist 'peaceful coexistence' with world capitalism. As the Chinese representative to the Geneva conference in 1954, he tried to placate Washington by pressuring the Vietnamese to concede to the French the reoccupation of the south of their country after the Vietnamese military victory at Dien Bien Phu. Chou, in fact, is credited for being the initiator of the formula - 'two Vietnams' - which laid the basis for

the genocidal American aggression of the 1960s and 1970s.

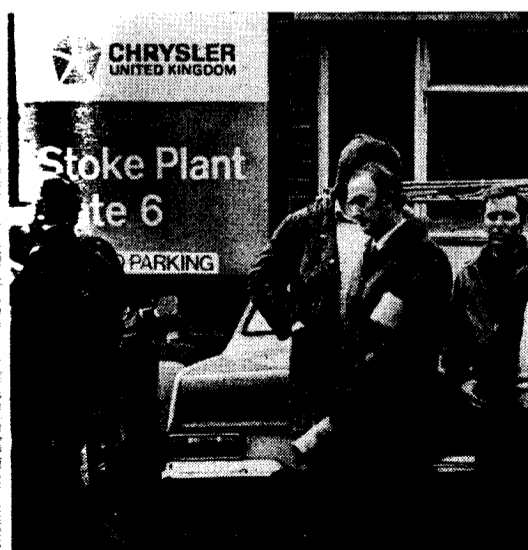
Chou's next 'triumph' was at the Bandung conference in 1955 where he hobnobbed with Nehru, Sukarno and other 'unaligned' bourgeois leaders of the semi-colonial world. What was involved here was not simply China's attempt to breach the American embargo or to offer support to oppressed nations fighting for genuine independence from imperialist domination. The something more Chou offered that was characteristic of Stalinist diplomacy was peaceful co-existence with capitalist regimes in exchange for trade and diplomatic concessions.

The meaning of this formulation has become unmistakably clear in the years since the Cultural Revolution. Under Chou's guidance, China has explicitly withdrawn support from revolutionary movements in countries whose governments are friendly with Peking. The examples range from Sri Lanka, where Chou complimented the Bandaranaike regime on its efficiency in suppressing its radicalised youth to Chile some years later where China was among the first governments in the world to recognise the military dictatorship of General Pinochet.

For the international working class, the Chinese revolution remains a major progressive accomplishment. But the motor forces of the Chinese revolution do not reside in functionaries like Mao or Chou who were thrust into power in 1949. They are in the immensely powerful mass movement of the workers & peasants who will again resume their march towards socialism.

Based on an article by Les Evans in INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

CHRYSLER THE LESSONS



Chrysler workers at Stoke

Last month, after a concerted campaign by national trade union officers, the Chrysler workforce was pressurised into accepting the government proposals for 'saving' the firm. In voting at mass meetings in Linwood, Ryton and Stoke for these plans - thereby overturning previous decisions to occupy the plants at the threat of any redundancies - the Chrysler workers were persuaded to accept 9000 lay-offs.

The decision at these meetings to accept the recommendations of senior stewards and union officials does not just mean, however, forcing one third of the labour force out onto the 'dole'. The Times, in a recent analysis, gave a clue to the other strings tied to the government's decision to pour £162m

subsidies are dependent on what is a 'no strike' pledge, on a guarantee to support the government's wage policy - even though it may 'tighten' in the period ahead - and on a recognition that all existing agreements protecting working conditions are to be scrapped as 'rationalisation' measures are now introduced.

Strategy

There can be no doubt that persuading the unions to ram this deal through is a major victory for the government's long-term strategy towards the car industry. The problems facing Chrysler - a decrease in sales due to fierce competition in a shrinking world market - apply, to a greater or lesser extent, to all car firms in Britain.

The government is only too aware that if these firms are to compete today in a world market which, following entry into the EEC, has become ever more competitive, higher productivity and lower manning levels are vital. Over the past 20 years, Britain's share of the world market in car sales has slumped by 15% and, at a time of what is considered a 'car glut', will slump even faster.

Only recently, the Central Policy Review Staff (the government 'think tank') submitted a document entitled 'The Future of the Car Industry' in which it spelt out, in black and white, the problem. Unless, it said, there is a drastic improvement on such issues as productivity levels, over-manning and labour relations, 1985 could see an industry in which the balance of trade in cars would deteriorate by £1 billion a year (by 1975 prices). More concretely, it recommended redundancies of between 50,000 and 275,000

The government's attitude towards Chrysler - forcing through a smaller, more stream-lined company by mass redundancies - is merely the first step in a long-term policy that will, in the period ahead, be applied to other firms. It is obviously taking seriously the think tank's report that it must 'give a lead'.

Viability

The government's ability to 'push through' this rationalisation scheme at Chrysler would clearly have been impossible without the 'co-operation' of union leaders. Accepting the 'viability' of private enterprise is not just the hallmark of the government but also of the leaders of the AEUW as well, such as Bob Wright, who made no attempt to force the government to nationalise Chrysler lock, stock and barrel as the sole way of protecting jobs.

That such a campaign would have won the wholehearted support of the workforce is demonstrated by the fact that mass meetings at Linwood and Ryton had already made this call, demanding occupations at the first sign of any lay-offs. Instead of channelling this mass feeling into a viable opposition to the government's policies, the union leaders tried to intimidate the workforce by suggesting that if Varley's plans were not accepted, they could be withdrawn under Tory pressure, thus leading to even greater redundancies.

This attitude, which ties jobs to the 'viability' of private enterprise, has not only led to 9000 lay-offs for the Chrysler work-force but will prove equally disastrous in the fight against redundancies in the period ahead as 'similar solutions' are posed to solve

as British Leyland.

Accepting the starting point of 'viability' leads inevitably to accepting cuts in manning levels and working conditions. It leads to fragmenting the work force in the scramble that ensues as workers fight to 'save' their job at the expense of fellow workers. This will become even more obvious at Chrysler in the coming period as the 'voluntary redundancies' scheme ends and the management begins to wield the axe.

Lessons

This is not, of course, to suggest the union leaders found it easy to get the Varley-Riccardo plans accepted. At the various shop stewards' meetings, the vote in favour of the plans was only narrowly passed - being carried at Ryton by 45 to 43 votes and at Linwood by 156 to 129.

The fact, however, that the unions were pushing support for government policy as the 'lesser evil' seriously confused the membership who, in the light of no viable alternative, clearly felt intimidated into accepting them. The major lesson, in this sense, to emerge from the Chrysler experience is not - as groups such as the International Socialists maintain - the need for more militancy. The Chrysler workers do not lack militancy as the recent strike action at Linwood - in the teeth of government threats to end subsidies - only goes to show.

The major lesson is that the struggle against unemployment cannot be solved locally but is inseparable from a real national struggle in the unions and the Labour Party around a clear programmatic alternative to the policies of the right-wing leaders. It is only by building a political opposition nationally to the 'lesser evil' policies of the labour leaders - an opposition pioneering the demands of work-sharing, opening the books and nationalisation under workers' control - that this militancy can be given a real alternative perspective to the dole queue policies of a Scanlon or a Jones.

Immigration: POWELL: LAUNCHES ANTI-IMMIGRANT ATTACK

In early January, Enoch Powell hit the headlines once more on the question of immigration. The main thrust of his speech, which received wide press publicity, was that the Labour government was deliberately covering up for the fact that it had 'exceeded' immigration quotas for the year 1973.

Powell's speech, which accused Labour of 'conspiring' to hide the true facts was carefully calculated. Coming on top of the press 'scare stories' of large numbers of immigrant workers in the country without 'work permits', it was clearly intended to play upon the worst racial prejudices of backward workers by suggesting the real cause of escalating unemployment lay in the influx of black workers.

The response of the Labour leaders was not to challenge the racist basis of Powell's attack but, on the contrary, to meekly admit that a 'clerical error' had been made. This spineless attitude on the part of labour leaders is not new but part of a long tradition of capitulating before racist demagogues which has led them, over the years, to try and 'out-Tory' the Tories in introducing restrictions against black immigrants.

Dangers

In 1965, after the racist back-lash in the Midlands which led to the dramatic defeat of Patrick Gordon-Walker, the Labour government introduced the White Paper which proposed restricting black immigrants to 8500 a year and, in 1968, brought out the Immigration Act which Callaghan defended against Powell on the grounds that it had kept out more black immigrants than any piece of Tory legislation.

The present Immigration Act - which the Tories introduced in 1971 - is merely the latest in a long line of such acts which reduce black immigrants to the status of 'aliens' dependent upon a work permit to enter the country.

Such policies of the Labour leaders, which tacitly admit that black people are at the root of unemployment or bad housing, have helped create a climate of legalised racism in which speeches by right-wing demagogues like Powell appear increasingly realistic. Powell is, after all, with his talk of 'voluntary repatriation' and 'tightening quotas', merely taking to a logical conclusion the racist implications which lie in the Acts Labour introduced way back in the 'sixties.

The dangers of such policies are only too clear today with escalating unemployment. By refusing to openly challenge figures like Powell - or, rather, by preparing the ground for him with their previous 'restrictions' - the Labour leaders have paved the way for a right wing backlash. Such a trend can already be detected in the decision by unions such as the NUT or NAS who, recently, refused to allow immigrant teachers to be employed to teach immigrant children their own language on the grounds that there are already many unemployed British teachers.

Campaign

If this attitude is to spread in the months and years to come, it could seriously split the labour movement & turn attention away from the real cause of social problems - such as unemployment - by creating a scapegoat only too noticeable by its colour.

It is for this reason that the decision by the Campaign to Repeal the Immigration Act (CRIA) to launch a mass demonstration in April this year is to be welcomed. A serious struggle to repeal this Act - which the right-wing around Powell are trying to 'tighten' still further - could begin to act as a powerful focal point for struggling, in



Enoch Powell: hoping to stir anti-immigrant prejudice.

the labour movement, against racist attitudes in general.

The Immigration Act not only discriminates against black people entering the country on the basis of their colour. It also helps to 'institutionalise' racism in this country by ensuring that the few who do manage to enter (under the work permit system) are treated as 'cheap labour' in the most menial jobs and are deprived of the most elementary rights.

By challenging, in a direct way, legalised racism in society - 'legalised' in the sense that it justifies the oppression black people suffer in every aspect of their lives - a serious resistance would be offered to figures like Powell who, for too long, have been allowed to get away with their racist garbage.

Responsibility

Already, the call for the demonstration has met with a positive response from immigrant organisations, Labour MPs and trades councils. For it to be really effective, however - for it to be able to act as a springboard to take the issue into the labour movement - it is vital to draw in the widest possible forces.

The fact that the Labour leaders have, over the years, backed down before racist pressures, means that a heavy responsibility lies on the left. Unless it can meet this responsibility and turn its anti-racist stance into a concrete and effective opposition to the demagoguery of Powell and his followers, the coming period could see the prejudices built up over centuries of imperialist rule evermore inflamed.

Building a mass demonstration in April could become a real focal point for developing such a campaign and pioneering it within the broader labour movement. The LSA would add its voice to that of CRIA's in urging all student unions, trade union and Labour Party branches and - in particular - socialist groups such as IS or the IMG to affiliate to the ad-hoc committee building the demonstration and to publicise it widely.

Information about the ad-hoc cttee can be obtained from Franco Caprino, c/o 45, Kensington Park Road, London W.11.

Bob Swart

**REPEAL THE IMMIGRATION ACT
ALL OUT APRIL 11th
National Demonstration
Assemble Marble Arch 2.30**

EUROPE-WIDE CAMPAIGN

The legalised racism against black immigrants in Britain - which can be traced back to the attempt by the Tory government - in 1962 - to introduce their Commonwealth Immigration Act - forms part of an ominous campaign which has been gathering force throughout Europe. Workers in countries from Norway to Germany have been facing increasing entry restrictions and racist attacks.

*Switzerland

Immigrants comprise one-sixth of the total population & foreign workers make up more than one-third of the workforce. Last October, a referendum calling for the expulsion of half the foreign population by the end of 1977 received 34% of the vote. The government responded to the racist campaign by announcing that a new measure, limiting the number of new foreign workers to enter the country in the next 12 months to 20,500, would be introduced.

*Germany

The economic 'downturn' has led the government to launch severe attacks on the 2.5m 'gastarbeiter' (guest workers) which includes some 600,000 Turks. On January 13, last year, Bonn announced new measures to reduce the numbers of foreign workers in Germany and to give 'preference' to German job-seekers.

In addition, many factories are now offering lump-sum payments to workers who offer to resign. Most who accept the offer are immigrant workers. As the New York Times put it, 'the feeling of being less than welcome was a factor for many who decided to take severance pay'.

*Norway

Eager not to be left out of this anti-immigrant campaign, the Norwegian government announced last February that it had decided to ban the entry of foreign workers for one year. Workers from other Scandinavian countries and those with 'special skills' would, of course, be exempt.

*France

Immigrant workers account for more than 15% of the labour force and, with their families, for about 8% of the population. Often confined to the worst slums and shantytowns, those from N. Africa have been subject to continuing racist attacks.

Only recently, for example, following the murder of a Marseille bus driver by an Algerian, the mass circulation daily 'Le Meridional' felt confident enough to write: 'We have had enough of Algerian thieves, Algerian thugs, Algerian braggarts, Algerian troublemakers, Algerian syphilitics, Algerian pimps, Algerian lunatics and Algerian killers'. During the next three weeks, 11 Algerians were murdered and scores more assaulted.

WRP SLANDERS TROTSKYIST MILITANT

The Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) is hardly known for its savoury polemics with other left tendencies. Its latest offering is, in most respects, even less savoury than previous ones. In a recent series of articles, entitled 'Security and the Fourth International', the Healyites open an investigation into the death of Leon Trotsky.

Such an investigation is not inspired, as in the case of an honest biographer like Isaac Deutscher, by a real desire to discover the facts but by far more sinister motives. Its aim is to 'indict' former Trotskyist secretary, Joseph Hansen, of 'criminal negligence' in Trotsky's death, if not of being an 'accomplice of the GPU'.

It may seem strange that the Healyites should devote more space in their fast-moving 'daily' to witch-hunting a leading Trotskyist militant than to covering key issues such as the national struggle in Ireland. The answer is not so strange, however, as it may at first appear.

Set-backs

Since its split with the OCI, its sister organisation in France a few years ago, the WRP has suffered some severe set-backs. It recently lost several leading members of the Workers' League, a sympathising section in the USA, and, closer home, launched a witch-hunt against over 200 trade union members in its own ranks who had the audacity to oppose the leadership's sectarian political line.

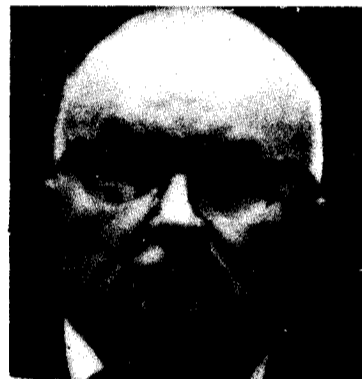
The cause of these set-backs - which have left the WRP more isolated than ever before - was analysed by Joseph Hansen in a hard-hitting article in Intercontinental Press (Vol 13 No 12). In particular, Hansen singled out the politically sectarian course followed by the WRP and its well-known organisational 'thuggism' which denies its own members elementary rights - like thinking for themselves.

Unable to reply politically to such an argument, the Healyites have reverted to the level of politics where they feel most at home: personal slander. Healy no doubt hopes, by concocting frame-ups in the Stalinist tradition against his critics, to cloud the issue and divert the members of the WRP from probing the real reasons for these set-backs & the lack of rights they possess in his monolithic set-up.

New victim ?

The slanders directed against Joseph Hansen, a leading member of the world Trotskyist movement for over 30 years, need not be refuted. They are based on rumours culled from self-confessed GPU and CIA agents. A clear, factual reply to them can be found in the pages of Intercontinental Press (Vol 13 No 42).

What is worth refuting is the method used by Healy in dealing with political tendencies he has differences with. It can serve as an object lesson for young radicals as to the ultimate logic of sectarian politics.



Gerry Healy: uses Stalinist methods.

Hansen himself, in his reply, notes how, for the Healyites, 'All other political tendencies... are regarded as agencies of the bourgeoisie to be dealt with accordingly'. This attitude on the part of the WRP is, of course, merely a substitute for taking up and arguing against the political ideas advanced by rival tendencies. There is no point, after all, discussing with ones' political opponents if they are 'agencies of the bourgeoisie'. On the contrary, the task is to 'expose' them, even if this means juggling with the facts.

Such a premise leads, quite inevitably, to the wildest slanders and frame-ups (in the Stalinist tradition) to prove the 'case'. The accusations against Joseph Hansen are not new, in this respect, but merely the spiciest dish yet to be seen from the Healyite kitchen.

The April 23rd issue of Workers' Press tried to 'smear' Bala Tampoe (leading Trotskyist and head of the Ceylon Mercantile Union) as 'associated with the CIA'. Tim Wohlforth, last year expelled from the Workers' League, was accused of 'harbouring and covering for a CIA agent' and, most recently, Alan Thornett, who was expelled from the WRP for exercising the right to think for himself, was described by the General Secretary as a 'police agent'.

'Big lie'

The fact that Healy should be reduced to labelling every political opponent - inside and outside the WRP - as some form of police agent is not just a simple question of paranoia. It is an attempt to 'shield' the dwindling membership of the WRP from the political arguments of rival tendencies by the use of what can only be called Stalinist methods.

It is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the leaders of the WRP have turned a once-promising group into a barren sect unable to relate to the real issues facing working people and unable to tolerate any real criticism of this course.

We can assure the WRP however that the time when it could pass such false coin as 'Trotskyism' is long past. The WRP broke with Trotskyism, politically, and in its organisational practice, long ago. The technique of the 'big lie' will not hide this fact.

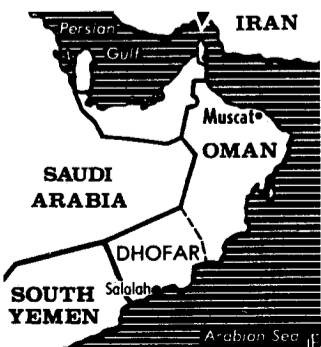
QUABUS VICTORY

The Omani regime is claiming victory in its ten-year war against the Dhofari tribes. The Dhofari, ethnically different from the Arabs living in the northeast of Oman and long denied economic benefits from the central government, have carried out a tenacious guerrilla war with support from South Yemen.

Situated in the south-eastern tip of the Arabian peninsula, Oman is in a strategic position because of its proximity to the oil-rich Arab-Persian Gulf and vital shipping lanes.

Sultan Quabus of Oman was aided in the fight against the Dhofari rebellion by a 4000 man Iranian force and a smaller Jordanian force. The 12000 strong Omani army is commanded by British major Kenneth Perkins and officered by about 350 British soldiers.

Officials of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman deny that they have been defeated and vow to continue the struggle. Although the Omani regime does appear to have improved its position substantially, it is indicated that it will continue to keep the Iranian force in Oman.



NHS CUTS



Castle: implementing massive health cuts.

Last year, Barbara Castle admitted that 'we will be lucky if in the next few years we will see any growth whatever in the service'. Castle's comment was, if anything, an overstatement since only a few months later it was announced that the NHS grant would be slashed - by £76m - at a time when inflation was on the move at an annual rate of 25%.

Castle's stand against 'pay beds' in the NHS, attempting to placate the labour movement by finishing the work of Bevan, cannot cover up for the fact that such cuts have pushed an already inadequate service to breaking point. It is the final 'turn of the screw' in the NHS which has since 1964 seen government expenditure drop from 15.1 to 11.5%.

These cuts show that the government is not only prepared to sacrifice the living standards of working people - as the pay freeze bites ever deeper - but to sacrifice their very lives as well as ever more are abandoned to illness, pain and premature deaths. At present, with building programmes grinding to a halt, staff being cut and facilities worsening, it is more difficult to get into hospital today than it was back in 1949.

Building programme

Quite recently, David Owen went on a tour of new hospitals and commented it was very 'sad' to see so many holes in the ground where new hospitals had been planned. The 'holes' Owen referred to are, of course, the result of these cuts which, as in the case of Newcastle, have seen building allowances cut from the £750,000 requested to a mere pittance of £125,000.

The impact of reducing the building programme can be seen to full effect when it is realised that 75% of all beds available are in hospitals built prior to 1948 and that only 42 hospitals have been built after 1945. It is hardly a wonder, therefore, that at present there is an estimated half a million on the waiting lists to be admitted to hospital care and that those who are admitted find themselves in semi-Victorian buildings often without adequate facilities or staff.

The government has partially tried to 'remedy' the situation by its new policy of redistributing financial resources from more privileged areas (London) to those in most need. If it is realised that the 'privileged' London area was shown, in a DHSS report, as being composed of pre-1948 hospitals lacking adequate provision for geriatrics and virtually none for mental illness, the full extent of the present crisis can be grasped.

Standardising health throughout the UK which is the aim of the government's

'redistribution' policy) simply means closing London hospitals to keep open already inadequate ones in Leeds.

Staff cuts

Labour's cuts do not only mean making inroads into the building programme but into staffing as well. It has already been estimated by COHSE that, for some time, there has been a shortage of 70,000 nurses and that most hospitals lack their complement of technical staff (e.g. radiologists and psychotherapists).

Despite this inadequate situation, cut-backs have already meant hospitals are being forced to further reduce their limited staff - 50 nurses being sacked in S. Glamorgan and 80 in Portsmouth last year - and implement a policy of non-replacement and chopping training quotas.

Axing staff ratios means, of course, fewer patients being treated (as wards are closed) which can lead to serious health risks. A recent report on mortality rates points out that, due to lack of hospitalisation facilities, mortality rates of young children under one year old increased by 212 in the four months up to November 1975 compared to the same period the preceding year.

It also means placing an unbearable workload on remaining staff who are notorious for being under-paid. It is partly the result of this new situation which accounts for growing militancy among ancillary workers, nurses and more recently junior doctors who were held up, by Barbara Castle, as showing 'a reckless disregard for the interests of the patients in the NHS'.

It is not, of course, the junior doctors who have shown this 'reckless disregard' for the NHS but the present Labour government which, following pro-Tory policies, is prepared to sacrifice the health of patients and jobs of health workers to bail out ailing firms such as Chrysler.

Alternative

Solving the problems of the health service does not lie, as pretended by Barbara Castle, in the phased withdrawal of private medicine while cuts in funds and staff in the public sector continue. Such a 'solution', in reality, encourages the growth in 'private medicine' as trends show.

Recent cuts have seen a rapid growth in new members to private health insurance organisations (such as BUPA) and increasingly large profits being made by drug companies as doctors, unable to 'hospitalise' patients due to lack of facilities, are forced back on prescribing ever more drugs. At a

time when the NHS is being crippled due to lack of funds, the Financial Times estimates that drug companies are expected to make record profits in the region of £538m.

The real task before the labour movement today is to begin working out a strategy for implementing what Nye Bevan once termed a 'comprehensive health service free to all in which poverty would not be a disability and wealth not an advantage'. A positive start was made in this direction at the MCAPP* conference in October, last year, which planned out a clear programme in opposition to Labour's pro-Tory measures.

The conference called for an end to all cuts, for a sliding scale of social expenditure, for opening the books and for the nationalisation of the basic drug companies. Such a programme, which could begin to pose a serious fighting alternative to the government's policy, is not only of importance to workers in the NHS, it has the real potential, if its demands are pioneered within the broader labour movement, to draw ever-wider layers into support for a health policy in the interests of the mass of working people.

Ann Fiander

Cuts demo

NALGO has recently decided to support the demonstration called by the NCC (National Co-ordinating Committee against Cuts in the NHS) to be held probably this spring.

The support of a major union such as NALGO, whose members have already been subjected to the Government's cut-backs in 'social expenditure', is obviously of key importance.

The main task now is to build for the demonstration within the labour movement - inside trade union and Labour Party branches - to mobilise the largest possible forces against the cuts. The demands of the NCC are:

- * for a sliding scale of social expenditure
- * for opening the books
- * for a Workers' Enquiry into the NHS
- * for an end to private practice inside and outside the NHS.

STRIKE WAVE HITS SPAIN

In a massive strike-wave, last month, involving more than 100,000 in Madrid alone at its peak, Spanish workers served notice that they will not sit by in silence while Franco's old collaborators in the government debate timid, piecemeal reforms.

The Carlos regime's response to the outbreak, which rapidly spread from Madrid to Barcelona where dockers, electrical and telephone workers were involved, was typically brutal.

Demonstrations & assemblies - such as the one in Madrid's main university on January 12th - were quite savagely dispersed by the police. Many leading strikers were arrested and charged with planning a 'general strike'. The postal and telephone workers were drafted into the army & made subject to 'martial law'.

Extremists

In the midst of this upheaval, the regime tried to preserve an air of 'calm' & looked round for suitable scapegoats. On January 15th, at a time when over 250,000 workers were estimated to be on strike, the Carlos government attributed it to the 'action of certain extremist groups that have sought to disturb or delay the government plans'.



Workers in industrial suburb of Villaverde

The pretence that the opposition to the regime's policy is limited to the extremist fringe obviously flies in the face of the facts. In a January 16th dispatch from Madrid to the New York Times, reporter Henry Giniger even pointed out that the strike wave could not be placed at the door of the illegal 'workers commissions' (influential in the growing strikes last year) who 'found themselves joining in after the campaign had started'.

The mass outburst was not due to any 'extremist fringe' but, on the contrary, to the growing impatience of layers of workers not only with the economic policies of the Carlos government - which is holding wages down at a time when inflation is soaring at 17% - but also with its clear refusal to grant any substantial democratic rights.

Reforms

It is true, of course, that the Carlos regime has tried to put on a 'liberal' image to undercut the groundswell of opposition that was growing in the last few years of Franco's rule. The plans it has put forward however - such as granting greater political freedom to 'respectable' parties, reforming the

official trade union movement, and, at a later date, allowing 'universal suffrage' - are marginal.

Their true purpose, as admitted by Justice Minister Antonio Garrigues, is not so much to dismantle the Franco dictatorship as to 'tart it up'. Quoted in a Reuter's report from Madrid last month, he pointed out that '... the new government would not dismantle the Franco regime but improve it & bring it up to date'. While Carlos promises a parliament based on 'universal suffrage', he still intends to keep an appointed upper house with powers to block the decisions of the 'elected representatives'.

It is Carlos' inability to even begin dismantling the Franco heritage (shown most clearly in his refusal to release those thousands of political prisoners still rotting in the dictatorship's jails) which is the real cause of growing unrest. The minor reforms he has put forward cannot even begin to satisfy the desire among Spanish workers for elementary rights - such as the right to free speech, to form political parties or to demonstrate - which the death of Franco seemed to promise them.

Despite the brutality of the regime in dealing with mass opposition, such unrest will continue to explode in anti-

government action as happened only a few weeks back when over 50,000 demonstrated in Barcelona demanding the release of all political prisoners.

Dilemma

Continuing to defend Franco's legacy will only bring the Carlos government (and its fascist supporters in the army) into ever-sharper conflict with mass pressure for democratic change. The recent strikes and demonstrations are only the opening shots of a growing working class opposition which, already, has seen the struggle by the Catalan & Basque nationalists, long oppressed by the Franco regime, for self-determination.

Carlos may have been able to ride out the current wave but this is merely a foretaste of what is to come. The Franco legacy won't be dismantled from 'above'. It will be dismantled by the Spanish workers who will not be afraid to 'go beyond' the plans for an orderly transition parties such as the CP have in store for them in order to create a socialist democracy.

J.L.

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