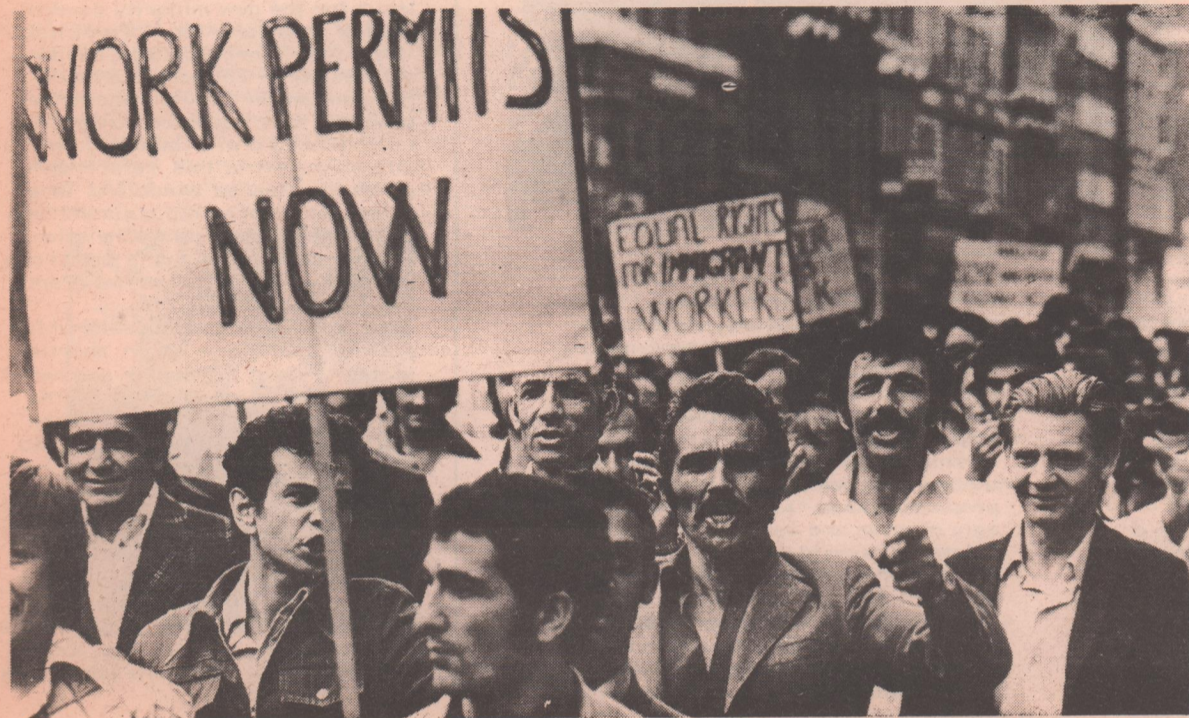


# SOCIALIST ACTION

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## IMMIGRATION REPEAL THE RACIST 1971 ACT



In early January, Enoch Powell hit the headlines once again. The subject of his tirade, this time, was the government's alleged 'covering up' for the fact that it had exceeded 'immigration quotas' in early 1973.

Powell's speech, coming after the press uproar about overseas students 'sponging' off the British taxpayer and immigrant workers entering the country without 'work permits' was carefully timed. It was clearly intended to whip up racial prejudice by suggesting that the real cause of the high jobless total was the influx of black workers.

The response of the Labour leaders to his attack was shameful, if predictable. They meekly admitted a clerical error had been made and promised not to repeat it. This spineless attitude is not new of course but stretches back to 1964 when, shocked by the defeat of a prominent Labour MP in the midlands due to an anti-black campaign they hurriedly introduced a White Paper limiting black immigration to 8400 a year.

### Immigration

Since that time the main aim of the Labour leaders has been to 'out-Tory' the Tories, introducing ever more restrictive laws.

In 1968, for example, James Callaghan went further by introducing the Immigration Act which he 'defended' against Powell by

saying it had kept out more blacks than any Tory laws. The present Immigration Act, passed by the Tory government, in 1971, is, therefore, merely the most vicious in a long series of such Acts.

It introduces a clear 'colour bar on entry into Britain' & ensures that those few blacks who do get past the immigration officers are denied elementary rights. They can, for example, be arrested without a warrant & deported without right of appeal simply for being considered a threat to the public good!

The fact that Labour has collaborated in introducing racist restrictions over the years - & continues to implement the 1971 Act - has created a climate of legalised racism in which the speeches of Powell appear increasingly 'realistic'. Powell is, after all, with his talk of 'tighter quotas', merely taking the racist implications of these Acts to their logical conclusion.

### Dangers

The danger of these policies is becoming only too clear today with mass unemployment on the cards. By backing down before racists

such as Powell - the Labour leaders have laid the ground for a racist backlash.

They have, more precisely, created a climate that could lead to a split in the workers' movement as attention is turned away from the real cause of social problems by creating a scapegoat only too noticeable by its colour. This has already begun to happen in the refusal by the NUT to allow foreign teachers to teach immigrant children or by Harry Unwin's recent call for no foreign workers to be allowed in the catering industry.

The fact that such an attitude is beginning to spread in the labour movement means that socialists are faced with a heavy responsibility. Unless it can meet this challenge, unless it can turn its verbally anti-racist stance into a concrete and effective campaign to root out racism, the prejudices built up over centuries of imperialist rule will be ever more inflamed.

### Challenge

It is for this reason that the campaign launched by CRIA\* is so vital. A serious struggle to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act, which the right wing around Powell are trying to tighten - can provide a powerful focal point for struggling within the labour movement against racist attitudes in general.

The 1971 Act not only excludes blacks entering on the basis of colour but ensures that those few who do get in, are treated as cheap labour in menial jobs and deprived of basic rights. Leading a direct challenge to this Act which legalises racism in society, is to lead a direct challenge against demagogues like Powell, who have got away with their racist garbage for too long.

Already the campaign has won wide support from Labour MPs, trade unions, immigrant organisations and student unions. For it to be really successful - & act as a springboard to take the issue into the labour movement - it is vital to draw in the widest possible support.

B. Swart

## ABORTION The Struggle Continues

Last February, in a 'free vote' in the House of Commons, it was decided, by a large majority, to re-establish the Select Committee to investigate James White's anti-abortion Bill. The decision to set up the committee represents a major concession to the anti-abortion lobby (SPUC) which, in the preceding period, launched a mass 60,000 strong demonstration to influence MPs' thinking.

This re-establishment of the Select Cttee - which has already made proposals to curb abortion rights - is clearly a major setback for women in this country. It is a major set-back because, under its terms of reference, its only course of action can be to determine how far to go in undermining the rights women won under the 1967 Act.

It was undoubtedly this which prompted the 6 pro-abortion MPs to resign from the Cttee. They rightly pointed out there was no point participating in a body that was already firmly biased against abortion.

### Set-back

The 'alarm' felt by the pro-abortion MPs is quite genuine. The only proposals to emerge out of the Select Committee will be those forcing women, once again, to undergo the dangers and humiliation of back-street abortions. It has, already, ignored all the evidence by the Lane Committee in favour of the 1967 Act & there is no indication that the further evidence will make them alter their opinions.

NAC's decision, therefore, not to participate in the fraud of giving evidence and to concentrate on building a mass campaign to force the government to abolish the committee is to be welcomed. Now more than ever mass action on the streets - countering the pressure from SPUC which has been able to 'posture' as representing majority opinion - is key to reverse the present trend.

Fighting to defend the gains of the 1967 Act (let alone calling for free abortion on demand) is going to present NAC, however, with an uphill struggle. If it is to be able to 'draw in' enough support to halt further restrictions, it must draw on the lessons from the past. First of all, it is important to determine why, after all the work done, we are still faced with the same threat that we came together to confront.

### Lessons

There is no doubt that the government's decision to allow a free vote on the re-convening of the

Select Cttee was not only due to the pressure of SPUC and those inroads it has made into the Parliamentary Labour Party. It was also due to the fact that, following on the promising demonstration last June, which drew out 25,000 on the streets, NAC remained paralysed for almost 6 crucial months and was unable to offer any real policy.

The lack of any action gave the government a free hand and, at the same time, helped demoralise the broad forces working in NAC which, thereafter, began to decrease in both size and influence.

Such inactivity, that gave SPUC the chance to masquerade as representing majority opinion, must be laid firmly at the door of those tendencies which fought, throughout that period of time, against all forms of mass action. The IMG, in particular, at steering committee after steering committee, opposed the call by the LSA (supported by IS and others) for a mass demonstration in the Autumn.

That demonstration was central for a number of reasons. First, it was necessary to provide a national focus for the groups which were being set up nationally; secondly, it was important to draw in new forces and, above all, it was vital to show the government just before the 'free vote' was to be held that SPUC represented nothing more than a bigoted and local minority.

### Single Issue

The reason, of course, groups like IMG were opposed to a national action was simply that they were trying to turn NAC from a campaign in defence of women's rights into one opposing the cuts on the N.H.S. Once the 'focal point' of the campaign became a struggle against the cuts, mobilising mass action against the government became unimportant besides local, fragmented activities around hospitals.

It was this political error - of trying to subordinate the NAC to other issues - which was the key reason why NAC was paralysed for six months and why the anti-abortionists won a major victory. The danger today is that it appears the IMG has not learnt from its earlier mistakes.

The main thrust, the IMG says, in building the tribunal NAC is calling is for local groups to enquire 'how the cuts in the NHS have affected abortion rights' in order to work out a 'plan for the health service that caters for the needs of women as well as the whole working class'.

(Cont page 8)

### Campaign to repeal the Immigration Act

## ALL OUT APRIL 11

On April 11th, CRIA is organising a mass demonstration in London. Like other campaigns (the National Abortion Campaign and the Troops Out Movement), CRIA has attracted the hostility of the National Front which has, in the past, tried to disrupt its meetings.

There is no doubt that the National Front will organise a counter-demonstration on April 11th or go further and attempt to break up the CRIA demonstration itself.

They will not succeed in this of the demonstration is large and well-stewarded. The LSA would therefore add its voice to that of CRIA in urging the left to help build for the April 11th march and to ensure it is well defended.



Sabina Roberts speaking at Colchester NAC

## ZIMBABWE :

## STRUGGLE ESCALATES

by Peter Marais

Following the breakdown of the talks between Ian Smith and Joshua Nkomo (of the moderate ANC\* faction), the Zimbabwean resistance fighters have escalated their guerrilla war against the white racist regime. Encouraged to doubt by the recent military victory of the MPLA in Angola, majority black rule no longer appears a pipe-dream but a reality just over the horizon.

According to Martin Meredith, in the Sunday Times, 'the mountainous region with Mozambique, which stretches for 800 miles, is ideal guerrilla territory. About 1000 guerrillas have now infiltrated across the frontier and the area of operation, once confined to north-east, now extends to the south-west'.

In addition to the guerrillas already fighting in Zimbabwe, another 3000 in Mozambique are reported as ready to engage in action and, in Tanzania and Zambia which borders on Zimbabwe, a further 10,000 to 20,000 recruits are estimated to be in training.



African freedom fighter

Vorster and Jaunda after the Victoria Falls talks

## Protected Villages

The Smith regime, while trying to buy time with its negotiations with Nkomo, is meeting this mounting threat with force. The entire zone along the Mozambique border has been declared a 'no go' area in which anyone can be shot on sight. The Zimbabwe blacks are constantly being terrorised and forcible 'resettlement' of the rural population is underway along the borders to 'separate' them from infiltrating guerrillas.

The 'protected villages' into which they are being herded are, as reported in February's Washington Post, little better than concentrated camps based on the 'strategic hamlet' principle used by the US in Vietnam to 'protect' the population from the freedom fighters.

Rhodesian 'rebel leader' Ian Smith is, however, in an unenviable position. While re-asserting the continuation of white supremacy to calm the ultra-right who would be quick to denounce him for a 'sell-out', he is coming increasingly under pressure from imperialist powers frightened that his 'intransigence' could lead to a race war exploding the precarious stability in South Africa.

## Majority Rule

The imperialist powers recognise that the attainment of majority rule in Zimbabwe is now an inescapable fact, and that 250,000 whites can no longer even their 'baaschap' supremacy over 5 million blacks. The hand-over of power to the moderate faction of the ANC (led by Joshua Nkomo) would, in their opinion, be a small price to pay for the maintenance of their vast economic interests in Zimbabwe and in neighbouring states.

Over the past few months, they have not been slow to pressurise Ian Smith into coming to some sort of agreement before it is too late. London's point that Smith could expect no help in the event of a war 'on behalf of the minority against the majority' was soon echoed by Washington which spelt it out: 'We are calling Mr Smith and the white regime to negotiate realistically and seize what may be their last opportunity for a negotiated settlement'.

What the Imperialist powers are, of course, concerned with is not the principle of 'majority rule' (which they have turned a blind eye to in the past) but the fact that refusal to negotiate could lead to what London calls '... a general race war' that could spread throughout Southern Africa and severely upset their interests there.

## Vorster

This is also the reason why South African Prime Minister Vorster, once the major backer of the Smith regime, has himself put pressure on the rebel leader to come to terms with the moderate faction of the ANC. Recently, in a carefully worded formula, it was pointed out to Ian Smith that 'under no circumstances could it (South Africa) commit its army to defence of Rhodesia through it may continue to supply arms'. Vorster realises the need for swift action. A growing race war in Rhodesia could spread like wild-fire into S. Africa or Namibia which is, already, troubled by SWAPO guerrillas. Intervention by South Africa in such a war under pressure from the ultra-right Nationalist Party, could then explode his detente policy with neighbouring black states which has already received a set-back with the Angolan fiasco

For Vorster, pressurising Ian Smith to concede majority rule in Rhodesia is a small price to pay for assuring stability in Southern Africa. He is only too aware that his detente policy - pressurising neighbouring states to collaborate with him at the price of massive economic loans - is the most effective way of maintaining imperialist interests there. It can even be argued that loss of Rhodesia as a 'buffer' state would be advantageous since it would result in a reduction of the border to be 'patrolled'.

## Britain's Role

Despite the fact that both London & Washington have condemned Smith's 'intransigence', the same pressure has not been brought to bear on South Africa. Together with the US which continues to supply helicopters and light aircraft for 'defence purposes', London plays a fundamental part in maintaining Vorster's apartheid regime.

These so-called 'defensive weapons' are ideally suited for operation against guerrilla forces in the 'veldt'. Possibly of even greater importance than arms, however, is the financial investment in South Africa by the US and Britain which enables Vorster to pursue his 'detente' policy of buying



Ian Smith: advocate of white supremacy.

## Whites Leave

More whites emigrated from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) last year than at any time since 1965, when the racist regime of Ian Smith declared unilateral 'independence' from Britain.

According to government figures, about 10,500 whites left Rhodesia last year. This does not include those who are ostensibly vacationing abroad but have no intention of returning.

Government statistics show that 12,425 whites settled in Rhodesia last year, many of them Portuguese who have left Mozambique & Angola. Emigration from Rhodesia has increased steadily since 1972, when Zimbabwean nationalist resistance to the white settler regime began to mount.

off neighbouring black states. This investment has continued, despite the fact that a Labour government is now in power.

The eventual liberation of blacks in South Africa will be by their own struggle. Socialists in Britain, however, can make that task easier by isolating the Vorster regime and attacking the props that keep it in existence. The sale of arms and investment serve to bolster apartheid and help it extend its economic tentacles over the whole southern African continent. It is for this reason that socialists must call upon the Labour government to turn its verbal attacks on racism into action: to halt all military and economic aid for Vorster's regime now!

## SCOTTISH LABOUR PARTY

In a Glasgow Herald opinion poll, held earlier this month, it was estimated that the recently formed Scottish Labour Party (SLP) would be guaranteed 8% of the total Scottish vote in the coming election. This figure (which would give it possibly 12 seats) must gratify Jim Sillars who has seen the party grow to 2000 members in only a few months.

Although leaders of the Labour Party in Scotland have written off the result of the poll as a 'flash in the pan', the Times noted that their fast-dwindling support has forced them to imitate the SLP by adopting a 'tougher' attitude towards the government's devolution plans. The SLP has, after all, already won a quarter of the total Labour vote (now, at 24%, below that of the Tories and the Scottish Nationalist Party).

## Opportunist

The upsurge in support for the SLP is not, of course, a mere 'flash in the pan' as Labour leaders suggest. The reason why Sillars & Robertson were willing to risk expulsion from the Labour Party by setting up the SLP was simple. It was because they realised that unless Labour attach itself rapidly to the nationalist sentiment growing in the Scottish working class, it could easily be reduced to a pitiful rump in the next election.

The SLP represented, in this sense, a calculated attempt by a section of the Labour bureaucracy to 'head off' the growing support for the SNP which, by all accounts, was estimated to gain over 50 seats in the future. The success of this move can be measured by the very rapid support the SLP has been able to muster in the past few months and which enables Sillars to bank on winning over 5,000 members before the year is out.

## Gamble

The gamble undertaken by Robertson and Sillars is not, however, without its risks. The SLP's nationalist stance could attract layers of Scottish workers who, while clearly alienated from the Labour Party, are still suspicious of the pro - capitalist policies of the SNP. Such layers, as they grow, could bring their pressure to bear on the SLP for it to adopt a clearer class-struggle perspective for their nationalist aspirations.

## PROTEST

More than eighty Soviet political prisoners staged a hunger strike in late February and said they would continue for the duration of the 21st congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

According to the Feb 29th United Press International dispatch from Moscow, dissident sources "said the prisoners had been denied the right to present their demands directly to the congress. They complained of harassment, threats of 'psychiatric re-education' and of undernourishment.

The hunger strike involved thirty prisoners at Vladimir jail, near Moscow, and about eight inmates of the prison camps in the Urals and Siberia.

## ABORTION FIGHT

Abortion has emerged as a major issue for the new minority government of Premier Aldo Moro in Italy.

Last year, more than 500,000 signatures were collected to force a referendum on Italy's reactionary abortion law, 'adopted' under the fascist regime of Mussolini. In an attempt to avoid this referendum, which they feared would end in a defeat for them as did a similar one on divorce, the ruling Christian Democrats worked out a compromise Bill with the Communist Party last December.

The compromise proposal, which put the final decision on abortion in the hands of the doctor and not of the woman, was rejected by the Socialist Party. In January, the old government fell before it could push through the proposed law.

A new law is needed by the end of April if the Christian Democrats are to avoid the referendum they fear. In such a referendum, the main allies of the Christian Democrats would be the fascists. The pressure on the Christian Democrats is indicated by the fact that about 800,000 illegal abortions take place every year in Italy.

This trend can already be detected in the fact that Sillars has been forced to criticise Labour not only for its anti-nationalist stance but also for its clear abandonment of 'socialist principles'. The Times, only recently, pointed out that it is this championing of nationalist sentiment within a (at least verbally) socialist framework which has led to its rapid growth in such a short space of time.

It is in this sense that the creation of the SLP represents, despite the opportunist motives of its leaders, a step forward. It harbours the potential of providing a 'labour' solution for the national aspirations of working people that would otherwise be monopolised by the bourgeois SNP. Any disagreement with the SLP on a tactical basis (as to whether or not it should have split from the Labour Party) must, at this stage, be of secondary importance.

## Error

It is their inability to grasp this that explains why the 'Marxist left' were so eager to 'join hands' with the Labour bureaucrats in Westminster in condemning the SLP for its adaptation to 'nationalism'. Despite the substantial growth of the SLP, as late as last month the IMG (in an article by D. Waterson and R. Davis) was ramming home the point that nationalism cannot provide '... any solution to the working class in Scotland'.

Such opposition was motivated on the grounds that the 'nationalist stance' of the SLP would only serve to split the united working class struggle against the government's policies. It would be difficult to find a more short-sighted approach. The very fact that Scottish workers feel they are suffering from national oppression - and are ready to quit the Labour Party in droves - is adequate proof that such a 'split' already exists.

Healing this split will not come about by denouncing these national aspirations as a 'diversion'. The result of suggesting that socialism is hostile to the rights of an oppressed people can only be to drive them into the arms of the SNP which is an openly bourgeois party pursuing policies inimical to the interests of the labour movement.

by Richard Munro

# FASCISM:

## The Debate on the left

Angela Michelson

Fascism is once again a subject of debate within the radical and labour movement. The National Front fielded over 90 candidates in the last election. Despite the recent split, it has become active in many campaigns against immigration and abortion rights and, most recently, has indulged in a policy of breaking up meetings organised by the left.

The debate at present taking place in radical circles is not so much about whether the fascists have to be stopped by force. Every socialist realises that genteel Parliamentary manoeuvres are quite inadequate to halt a rising fascist movement, as the German Social-Democrats found out to their cost in the 'thirties.

What is really under discussion is exactly what threat do groups such as the National Front pose today and what are the most effective means of dealing with them. This is by no means an 'academic' debate since, over the past years, groups such as the IMG have, under the slogan 'No Platform for Fascists', called for active disruption of NF meetings and demonstrations which led to the death of Kevin Gately at Red Lion Square in 1974.

Attempting to draw some of the lessons from this experience is of concrete importance in allowing the left to come to grips with the NF in the future.

Q. Are there dangers in using the term 'fascism' lightly?

A. If you read the radical press, you can find figures as far afield as Roy Jenkins (who introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act) to Enoch Powell being defined as fascist. The fact that such 'diverse' figures can be labelled in this way is a sure sign of the confusion of the term, as used.



Martin Webster of the NF

There is a danger here. Careless definitions can actually 'lull' people as to the real dangers of a fascist threat when it does arise. This is what happened in the thirties when the German CP labelled the Social Democrats as 'social fascists' and refused to unite with them in a serious struggle against Hitler's blackshirts. A similar error is being made today in Portugal where many left groups label the Socialist Party as 'social fascist' and refuse to unite with SP militants in a struggle against the right.

Q. What are the conditions for the rise of a mass fascist movement?

A. The most important point is that a mass fascist movement can only develop out of a serious defeat for the workers' movement. Fascism finds its social base in the 'middle strata' and the unemployed - all those who are 'squeezed' by the crisis & who are demoralised by the inability of the workers' movement to solve the acute problems that they face. It is out of these demoralised layers that fascism begins to recruit by posing a 'radical alternative' to the traditional formulas either of the workers' leaders or the ruling class parties. If the workers' movement is bold in fighting for a solution to the crisis, then many of these from the 'middle strata' can be won to the perspective of socialism. If not, then they will begin to turn to the rhetoric and dynamic action of the fascist bands.

Q. Is fascism a threat today?

A. To read most of the radical press - with their 'No platform for fascists' line - one would be tempted to think it was just around the corner. Major changes have taken place since the 'thirties, however. The rise of fascism at that time, as suggested, grew out of the demoralisation and defeats of the workers' movement. No such demoralisation exists today (though it could develop in the future): the workers' movement throughout Europe is on the upsurge as can be seen in Portugal and Spain recently. Moreover, the social base of fascism has grown narrower. The middle strata have, over the years, begun to increasingly identify themselves with the labour movement as can be

glimpsed in the rise of 'white collar' trade unionism and the radicalisation of the student movement.

Q. There still exist, however, deep rooted racist and chauvinist traditions in the labour movement which the NF is playing on.

A. It is true that the NF does participate in mass reactionary campaigns such as SPUC designed to play on the weaknesses of the labour movement. It is important, however, to differentiate between racism - that has deep roots in the workers movement - and fascism. The two are not the same even though one, over a period of time, can lead into the other. The fact that the NF is involved in these broad campaigns, while a sign of their astute attempt to play on the backward prejudices of British workers, is also a clear indication of their weakness since they can only mobilise a few hundred openly behind their own flags.

Q. Nevertheless, the danger is that unless one stops them while they are small, it may soon be too late.

A. No - one doubts that the fascists will have to be stopped - by force. The question is, by whom, when and how. The campaign led by groups as the IMG and I-CL against the NF - trying to break up its demonstrations and meetings - is based upon a totally wrong assessment of the present situation. The main danger today is not the small, isolated NF but the attack launched by the Labour government upon the rights and living standards of working people. To see the NF as the serious threat is to admit the working class has been defeated when the struggle has only just begun. Sending a few NF members 'home' with a bloody nose will do nothing to politically eradicate the breeding grounds of fascism in the future.

Q. What is the best way today of dealing with a potential fascist threat?

A. The answer is 'politically'. The NF is trying to create a 'fertile' ground for the future by playing on the weaknesses of the workers' movement on issues such as abortion, immigration and Ireland. The left, instead of indulging in confrontations with the NF, would do better at this stage to provide a serious political challenge to it by getting involved in building the TOM or CRIA\*. Building a mass demonstration to repeal the Immigration Act or get the troops out of Ireland would be a serious challenge to the NF since it would undermine the basis for future fascist growth. The left, while talking about the need to challenge the NF, have virtually ignored these issues however.

Q. Do you think confrontations are counter-productive?

A. At this stage they are. Of course, if the majority of workers were prepared to tackle the NF - as they did Mosley's blackshirts in the East End in the 'thirties - that would be quite different. It is quite a different thing for a few isolated left groups to try and do so. In the first place, such 'vanguard' actions only leave the vast mass of workers as spectators. In the second place, it suggests that the 'left', instead of being the main defender of democratic rights, is actively engaged in a campaign to destroy them. Thirdly, such action is an organisational solution to the political problem of defeating the NF.



Mass anti-fascist rally in the 30s

Q. What about the attacks made by the NF on left meetings? Would it be correct to call on the government to ban the NF?

A. That would be a major mistake. It would be a mistake to call upon the government to ban anyone since we can be sure it would be the 'left' organisations that would be the first to suffer from any curtailment of democratic rights. History has more than confirmed this. Faced with growing attacks, our first task should be to organise defence guards. As socialists, we are not afraid of taking on the fascists. We want to do so, however, on terms most favourable to the workers' movement. To call for 'defence guards' within the broader labour movement to defend a meeting is the best way of doing this. By posing the NF as the aggressor intent upon destroying the democratic rights of the labour movement, it will be possible to involve wide layers who will begin to see these thugs in their rear view. More important still, it will force them in a real struggle for real rights which the vanguard actions of groups like the IMG miserably fail to do.

# LABOUR IN PERSPECTIVE

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

Reminiscing on the Labour Party, NEC chairman and minister in Lloyd George's post-war cabinet, George Wardle, was to write: "...from the very first, the ties which bound the party together were of the loosest possible kind. It has steadily and in my opinion wisely, always declined to be bound by any programme, to subscribe to any dogma or to lay down any creed". Whatever may be thought of the 'wisdom' of Wardle's comment, it offers an insight into the unique character of the party from its earliest days.

Unlike every other party claiming to represent workers' interests in Europe, the Labour Party was not formed on clear political principles. Unlike the German Social-Democratic Party, for example, it was not built around a socialist programme heavily 'indebted' to marxism but developed much more empirically out of the gradual & hesitating steps of the unions to find a political defence against the employers' offensive.

Both Lenin and Trotsky (the latter in his discussions on the possibility of a Labour Party arising in the USA) were to stress this unique feature. The fact that the Labour Party was, in a very real sense, the 'child of the unions', groping uncertainly forward, is central to understanding its nature and evolution. It meant primarily that the will of those newly-unionised workers, struggling to create an independent political voice, was mediated through the trade union bureaucracy which had strengthened itself particularly in the last few decades (as Brian Pearce was to point out) and who saw "their task as essentially one of peaceful negotiations

## Pressure

While acting under pressure from the rank-and-file, the union bureaucracy continually acted as a 'brake' on this development and sought to contain the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) within a framework politically acceptable to them. They were aided in this by their intellectual allies, breaking from the decaying corpse of Liberalism, (notably the Fabians around Sidney & Beatrice Webb) who helped mould the orientation of the new party.

The political outlook of the labour bureaucracy with their 'whole network of social relations separating them off from their original class' could be sharply detected at the opening of the LRC. The resolution put forward by Hyndeman's Social-Democratic Federation (SDF) calling for a party based on 'the recognition of the class struggle and having as its aim the nationalisation of the means of production' was unceremoniously defeated. This was far too extreme for the trade union leaders & ex-Liberal allies trying to contain the upswell in working class activity which had already pushed them this far down the road.

It was replaced by the ILP proposal that the new party would 'willingly co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the interests of Labour'. Such a perspective led, in the early years, to electoral blocks with the Liberals whereby both sides agreed, in many constituencies, 'not to contest each others' candidates. More generally, it laid the basis for the party's operation in the Commons as a mere prop for the Liberals, prompting 'left-winger' Lansbury to exclaim: "...I do not know a single question of legislation on which the Labour Party has managed to disassociate itself from the

## Myth

The myth recently encouraged by some left groups - such as the International Socialists - that the anti-working class policies of the Wilson government prove that, in some mysterious way, the Labour Party has 'changed its nature' just do not hold any water. An anti-working class leadership, willing to co-operate with forces hostile to the labour movement, has been a constant feature of the party since its inception over 70 years ago. Prentice and Jenkins, with their hints of the need for a 'national government', have their ancestors as far back as the founders of the LRC.

The main function of this leadership - an amalgam of trade union bureaucrats and 'intellectuals' of the Fabian stamp - has, throughout the years, been mainly to contain and discourage all independent activity on the part of the workers' movement. It has acted consistently as what De Leon concisely called 'labour lieutenants of capital' within the workers' movement, breeding respect for law and order, re-inforcing the myth of 'parliamentary change' and teaching that the interests of its class base are not so much opposed to the present system as dependent on its well-being. Reg Prentice's attack on the Shrewsbury building workers for 'breaking the law' is merely an echo of the Fabian position on the 1926 General Strike in which Beatrice Webb condescendingly explained: "On the whole, I think it was a proletarian distemper which had to run its course and, like other distempers, it is as well to have done with it at the cost of a lengthy convalescence".

## Ruthless Fight

The fact that this leadership has been rooted in the party from its creation cannot be explained away as the result

Blackburn tried to suggest. The class-collaborationist policies of the leadership was not sneaked in behind the backs of the labour movement by a clandestine group of Fabian intellectuals & trade union bureaucrats, although this is not to say that such figures were not the conscious promoters of such policies that went into the party's early years.

The roots of this leadership are, in the final analysis, to be found in the political consciousness of the labour movement itself which - while seeing the need to defend its own class interests - still retained deep illusions in the possibility of so doing through the medium of parliamentary reform. The party reflected, in this sense, both the strengths and the weaknesses of the labour movement which was 'groping' towards the need for a political voice but not yet a socialist one.

This is the meaning of Leon Trotsky's acute observation, in his study 'Where is Britain Going?', on the nature of the break from Liberalism which was, let us recall, a long drawn-out process. He pointed out, the Labour Party represents a 'priceless historical achievement', it should not be overlooked that the unions which created it were more 'disillusioned rather as to the goodness of the Liberals than as to the democratic pacifist methods of solving social problems'. While the unions, fighting against the employers' offensive, had seen the need to defend their interests as a class through an independent political party, that party was dominated still by the outlook of Liberalism: i.e. of seeking reforms within the parliamentary system.

It is such an ideological outlook - that accepts the framework of the present system as its arena of activity & merely seeks reforms within it - which has allowed the Labour bureaucrats to retain control over the labour movement down to the present day. They have, of course, been aided in this by the historical inability of the marxist movement to implement an orientation towards the Labour Party which can combine both an appreciation of the gain it represents (in terms of the consciousness of the labour movement) with a ruthless fight

In our opinion:

# WILSON'S RESIGNATION

Wilson's resignation last month was timed, he suggested, to coincide with a period of 'lull' opening up before the government when no urgent problems were pressing. The personal reasons for Wilson's resignation are not important. The timing is.

Far from coinciding with a 'lull', Wilson's decision to go coincides with a period of growing tensions within the Labour Party. The recent decision by the Tribune MPs to abstain on the government's 'cuts' legislation - and their later decision to sponsor the National Assembly on Unemployment due to launch a campaign against government policy this spring - is revealing of the type of pressure building up.

Wilson's resignation is based precisely on an awareness of these tensions and the fact that, in the coming period as unemployment escalates and inflation continues to soar, the pressures in the party will increase.

## Disintegration

This growing polarisation within the Labour Party under the mass discontent developing outside - as in the recent strike by 50,000 Scottish workers against Healey's social expenditure cuts - is not by any means limited to the stand taken by the Tribune MPs.

The decision by Sillars and Robertson to form the SLP as the labour vote in Scotland declines; the resignation of Joan Lester as Under Secretary of Education and the 'removal' of Prentice by the Newham CLP are all indications of this polarisation. The broad coalition Wilson headed for so long, keeping within his cabinet both pro-coalitionists like Prentice and 'lefts' like Benn, is heading for disintegration.

This disintegration is only in its embryonic form, at this stage, but the trends are unmistakable. It will develop more rapidly in the period ahead as the gulf between the anti-working class policies of the government and the mood of masses of workers, expressed through Party conference, begins to take shape.

## Leadership

These pressures have, indeed, revealed themselves in a limited way in the leadership battle itself. The fact that Foot and Benn should, together, have collected such substantial support - while figures like Jenkins had to drop from the race after the first ballot - is indicative of the shift to the left now taking place in the constituency Labour Parties.

While representing a shift to the left, however, the candidatures of these two figures represented equally an attempt by a sector of the labour bureaucracy, trading off their 'left' image, to head off the growing radicalisation. Both Foot and Benn, it should be recalled, have played key roles in the Wilson government in getting across the need for mass 'unemployment' and both, in the leadership race, have not offered any clear programmatic differences with Wilson's policies.

## 'Left' MPs

The 'left' Tribune MPs themselves, despite their refusal to support the government 'cuts' legislation on its first reading in the House, decided not to cut through this sham by offering a clear alternative. Rather than put forward a candidate based upon a clear programme, they meekly caved in and lined up behind either Foot or Benn.

The Labour 'lefts' avoided, in this sense, a real opportunity to use the leadership election to pose the real issues before the labour movement. The resignation of Wilson represented, in a very real way, a crisis of direction for the labour movement as a whole. What was desperately needed was not a 'sham election' within the upper reaches of the Parliamentary Labour Party but a thorough-going debate within the Party on the real problems facing the labour movement and the need for clear policies to solve them.

Calling for an immediate recall of the Labour Party conference to decide these issues and elect a leader to carry them out would have met a real response among thousands of labour activists who quite clearly understand the undemocratic nature of the present election limited, as it is, to 315 MPs answerable to no-one.

At the same time, leading a fight for such a conference would have enabled them to bring to the fore of the discussion the issue of programme since candidates would have had to present themselves, at conference, on clear policies to solve the problems facing millions of working people.

## Real Issue

The fact that the Labour 'lefts' were unwilling to challenge the elections both for their undemocratic nature and the lack of policies discussed is an example of their unwillingness to lead a real fight against the Wilson government.

It was precisely those issues that socialists - eager to use the elections as a means of clarifying the way forward for the labour movement - should have intervened upon. It is, of course, ironical that many of the socialist groups, who have been noted in the past for their ultra-left position on the Labour Party, should have made exactly the same opportunist mistake as the 'left' MPs.

Both the IMG and the I-CL, for example, advocated a vote for Benn in the first round of the ballot on the basis that he at least represented the growing radical trends within the unions and Labour Party. Advocating support for Benn instead of leading a struggle for the right of the labour movement to elect its own leader was to give credence to the undemocratic sham that was being conducted. It was to ignore the fact that Benn's policies are opposed to the interests of the mass of working people in this country and to ignore the right socialists have long championed for the Parliamentary Labour Party to be subordinate to the democratic will of Party conference.

# SOCIALIST ACTION FORUMS

next topic: SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

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# HEALEY'S CUTS MEAN MORE UNEMPLOYMENT



Motivating last month's social expenditure cuts, Dennis Healey commented that that they were the only way of 'restoring and maintaining full employment'. The sugar covering the pill seems to have had the desired effect. Only a short while later, a TUC delegation (including Hugh Scanlon) visited the Labour leaders to inform them that they fully supported government economic strategy.

What, in fact, the TUC was supporting was a guaranteed rise in the jobless total to record levels in the next few years. Cutting social services to inject massive aid into industry will not, as Healey suggests in a neat 'public relations exercise' create more jobs when an export-led boom appears. On the contrary, it is designed to finance 'rationalisation' schemes and 'productivity deals' that will be at the expense of a wide layer of workers.

A recent report published by the CIS (Counter Information Service), which accuses the government of seeking to create a permanent unemployment economy, points out: 'State intervention is no new phenomenon' but it is now 'more oriented to the needs of capital than ever before. Its main effect will be to speed up the process of rationalisation and concentration of capital - which will mean fewer jobs..'

## Stream-lined

The CIS have, of course, put their finger on the government's underlying purpose. The money now being 'saved' on health or education is to be poured into private enterprise to modernise it at the expense of peoples' jobs. The chosen instrument for bailing out ailing firms is the National Enterprise Board (NEB) whose effects have already been seen at British Leyland or Chrysler.

Pouring over £62 millions in 'state aid' into Riccardo's collapsing company was not, as Healey likes to pretend, to prop up jobs but precisely to create a new 'stream-lined' firm in which over 9,000 jobs were 'axed'. What happened at Chrysler recently is, of course, a mere foretaste of what is to come over the coming years, particularly in the motor industry.

The CIS suggests that, on the basis of the Central Policy Review Staff's report on the motor & component supplies industry, a total of 275,000 jobs will need to be axed by 1985 if British cars are to compete in the cut-throat EEC market (where there already exists a 'car glut'). The function of the National Enterprise Board will be to finance this 'rationalisation' in which thousands will be forced out onto the 'dole queues'.

## Viable

Financing rationalisation schemes at the expense of jobs is not the only effect of the recent social expenditure cuts. They will also accelerate similar trends inside the nationalised sector where, as the CIS point out, 'British Rail and the National Coal Board have already shed an enormous number of jobs - over 700,000 - over the past 15 years'.

Cuts of £342 millions in the state sector will force nationalised industry to become increasingly 'commercially viable' both by implementing price increases and cuts in the workforce such as that recently proposed by the Steel Corporation which tried to axe, this year, over 40,000 men.

Running down social services such as health or education will only add to the unemployment total by pushing previously 'protected' jobs (often used

in the past to sop up redundancies in industry) into the danger zone. For the first time in almost fifty years, workers such as nurses and teachers are facing the bleak prospect of large-scale unemployment in the Autumn, as hospitals are closed and the schools' teacher-pupil ratio worsens.

It is little wonder, therefore, that ASTMS in a paper presented to last year's Labour Party Conference predicted that the jobless total by the end of the year would be at the record region of 2.25 millions.

## Connivance

That the government feels confident in getting away with such blatantly pro-capitalist policies must be laid firmly at the door of the TUC. Originally, of course, TUC leaders sold the Social Contract - and the more stringent 10% limit - to the unions on the grounds that it was the only way to save jobs. They faithfully echoed Healey's words that a cut in living standards was preferable to 'millions living on the dole'.

The chickens in that argument have now come home to roost. Despite the fact that wages have complied to the 10% norm - which is likely this year to be tightened still further to 6% - unemployment has continued to rise at the rate of 1,000 a day. In certain areas, such as the Merseyside, the shadow of the 'thirties is once again becoming a stark reality as closures and lay-offs have pushed up the total to 10%.

Despite this growing evidence, however, the TUC has at no time sought to challenge head-on the government's policies by putting forward a viable alternative - based on the real need to defend jobs and living standards - and mobilising the entire labour movement to fight for it. The massive majority Wilson won at the last Labour Party conference, supported even by 'lefts' such as Foot, is proof of this.

Even now when the social expenditure cuts are bound to push unemployment to record levels, the TUC has meekly toed the line and - in the person of Jack Jones - sharply criticised those Tribune MPs who dared vote against the government's proposals in their first reading in the House. The most they have done is to utter a few 'concerned' noises, hinting to Healey that it will be difficult to continue selling the Social Contract without a few token unemployment safeguards (such as 'import controls').

## Isolated

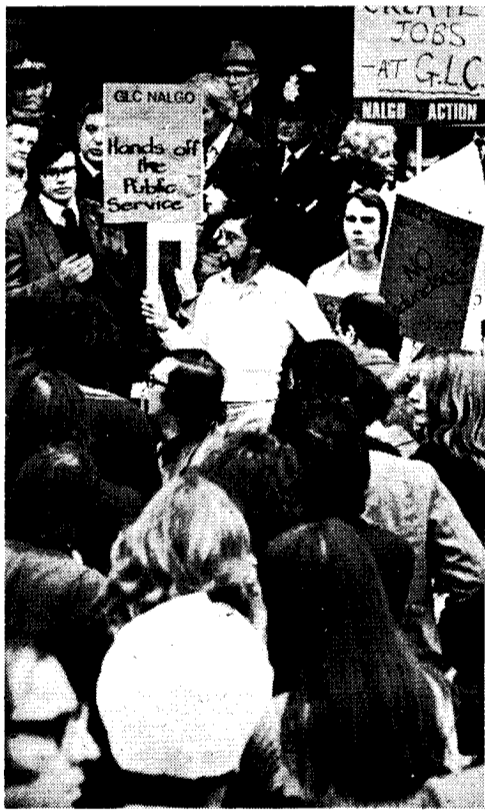
The TUC's cynical connivance with the government's pro-capitalist policies, prepared to watch dole queues lengthen as living standards plummet, has had a major impact on the labour movement. This is not to say that militancy in fighting redundancies & lay-offs has been wanting. Factories from Plessey's in Liverpool to Persona in Glasgow have been occupied as workers have spontaneously begun to reject the 'irrationality' of a system that, at a moment's notice, can throw people on the scrapheap.

# EMPLOYMENT

Lacking a national perspective, however, these struggles have remained isolated and have generally ended in defeat. While supporting initiatives of this kind, the key task at present is to spearhead the fight for the right to work inside the labour movement as a whole - in the trade union and Labour Party branches - demanding that the leadership challenge head-on the government's policies.

The problems of individual groups of workers - from teachers to dockers - can no longer be solved in isolation. They must act as the springboard for hammering out in the labour movement a national programme to safeguard jobs which the present government, elected by working people, must be called upon to implement in the interests of working people.

The proposals submitted by the TUC so far are totally inadequate. Demands such as 'import controls' - or 'tightening immigration quotas' - are not only unable to stop dole queues rising but are extremely dangerous. Instead of uniting the workforce in a common fight for the right to work, they can lead to inner divisions by suggesting that it is 'immigrants' who are to blame for the high jobless total. Such a position, at a time when unemployment looks like



Workers protesting Denis Healey's massive social expenditure cuts that will result in mass unemployment.

becoming a permanent feature of the landscape, clearly opens up the door to the racist demagoguery of figures such as Enoch Powell.

**"The key task at present is to spearhead the fight for the right to work inside the labour movement as a whole"**

## Campaign

Instead of splitting workers, the TUC must be called upon to champion the right to work of all workers - not only those facing redundancies but also the thousands already on the dole - by counterposing to government policies those in the interests of labour.

The recently held National Assembly on Unemployment, sponsored by forty Labour MPs and collecting together at least 3000 delegates from trade union and Labour Party branches, can offer a significant first step in this direction. The coming together of the biggest conference on unemployment since the thirties clearly reflects the growing understanding among ever-wider layers of the need for a national struggle against government policies.

While the conference showed confusion over the demands to raise - calls for 'selective import controls' jockeying those for more 'nationalisation' - it at least holds within it the first serious challenge to the TUC's meek submission to government policies. For this promising beginning to develop into a really effective campaign - capable of mobilising thousands in action - two things are required:

**FIRST;** that the call for a one-day strike on May 26th not be allowed to become a mere 'token' protest but be the beginning of an ongoing campaign inside the labour movement to demand the present leaders fight in the interests of their members, or else to replace them with those who will.

Calling for an emergency Labour Party conference as the aim of such a campaign would be the most effective way of challenging head-on the pro-capitalist policies of the Labour leaders and calling them to account. **SECOND:** That the campaign should clarify its objectives in working out a clear labour solution to the unemployment crisis. Import controls and curbing the export of capital are not only inadequate but divisive. What is needed is a programme which can unite the employed and the unemployed in a joint struggle around the following demands.

**Pat Brain**

## PROGRAMME TO FIGHT UNEMPLOYMENT

- \* **35 HOUR WEEK:** In factories where lay-offs are on the cards, the call should be made for dividing the existing amount of work among the existing workforce with no loss of pay. This call can be popularised nationally in the need for a 35 hour week.
- \* **OPEN THE BOOKS:** Employers who refuse work-sharing - and who insist upon the necessity for cut-backs - must be called upon at local and national level to open their secret accounts to workers' representatives.
- \* **NATIONALISE UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL:** If employers refuse to open the books - or 'prove' thereby the case for lay-offs - the demand must be raised for nationalisation under workers' control. Unlike the TUC's proposal for increased subsidies for firms obviously incapable of managing their own affairs, they must be nationalised as part of a workers' plan for production.
- \* **PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME:** In order to rapidly absorb the thousands of unemployed, a bold public works programme should be called for. All cuts in social expenditure should be opposed and the labour and material at present standing idly by used to improve housing, schools and hospitals.

# PORTUGAL: THE COMING ELECTIONS

by  
**Tony Roberts**

On February 26th, the major parties in Portugal - including the Communist and Socialist Parties - signed a new 'constitutional pact' with the Armed Forces Movement (AFM). According to New York Times Correspondent Marvin Howe, the new pact was designed to end military rule and establish a democratic system!

That claim no doubt echoes the propaganda line of the military and of its 'allies'. It is clearly false. If the AFM wanted to withdraw from politics, it would do so without obliging the other parties - from the CDS to the CP - to sign a new pact. The very fact that a new formal agreement between the AFM and the parties has been imposed tends to show that the military is hanging on to its role as 'arbiter' in Portuguese political life.

## Retreat

The provisions of the new pact show, it is true, a major retreat by the AFM from earlier proposals. A report on the pact negotiations of January 16th, for example, indicated that the military were demanding that the office of president be reserved for an armed forces commander. According to this scheme, the president was to have the power to declare war and make peace, proclaim a state of seige or emergency, and dissolve the legislative assembly.

With the approval of the Council of the Revolution, the leading body of the AFM, the president would also have had veto powers over all legislation concerning economic, social and financial policy.

Under the new agreement, the Council has abandoned many of these earlier demands. As Marvin Howe points out, it has 'abdicated its powers to veto the choice of president, to define the broad lines of domestic and foreign policy, to rule on the constitutionality of laws & decrees, and to legislate in civilian matters. The Council will function, in the future, essentially as an advisory body to the president...'

## Safeguard

Although this represents a 'retreat' on its former positions, the military may very well believe that it will be able to manage Portuguese politics more effectively, at this stage, from a formal position as 'advisor' than from one of being directly responsible for decisions.

In the months following the Caetano coup, in 1974, the AFM was forced to assume direct control of the situation. The mass upsurge and the weakness of the bourgeois parties (the CDS & the PPD\*) left the leaders of the AFM suspended virtually in mid-air. They had to try and ride out the 'radicalisation' while retaining the essential underpinnings of capitalism and bourgeois state order.

They undertook this 'task' mainly by involving the various workers' parties, over the years, in coalition governments whose main thrust was to hold back the ground-swell in working class activity. The disastrous policies of the CP and SP leaders, acting as a civilian facade for the AFM, did the trick. Not only have their attacks on democratic rights and living standards confused their own followers but they have also alienated many more who have begun to fall prey to the rightist demagoguery of parties such as the CDS.

It is this growing trend to the right - leading many papers to predict a clear majority for the bourgeois parties in the coming elections - which has convinced the AFM that it is now 'safe' to remove themselves more from the political stage and adopt a 'backstage role'.

## Workers' Unity

While many observers in Portugal still expect a government based on the coming elections to be a continuation of the present centre-left popular front, they are all unanimous in pointing out that it will be under strong pressure from a right-wing opposition led by the CDS holding more than a quarter of the total vote.

This shift to the right - a major change from the May 1975 elections - can be laid firmly at the feet of the leaders of the CP and SP. Instead of mobilising the workers independently of the AFM for a socialist programme, they have tried to defend their positions in the government by clinging to the coat-tails of an ever-more discredited military rule.

In competing among themselves for the



Portuguese CP leader: Cunhal.

aged ally', they have been prepared to champion attacks on the economic gains and rights won by the mass movement in the period after the 1974 Caetano coup. While they have been prepared to openly subordinate themselves to the military in this way - despite the fact that they won almost 60% of the popular vote in last year's elections - the right has whipped up a large campaign for 'democratic government' which has won growing support.

The AFM's decision to 'retire' to the sidelines is based precisely on a clear awareness of the confusion and demoralisation in the workers' movement due to its leaders' policies coupled with the upsurge in the fortunes of the right. It no doubt hopes that such a trend, if it continues, will provide a favorable context for the gradual restoration of bourgeois 'law and order'.

## Election

In such a situation, it is more important than ever that socialists intervene to provide an alternative strategy. The election period could be very profitably used to call upon the mass reformist parties to break their alliance with the 'progressive' military and to campaign in unity, around a socialist programme based on the needs of working people & their allies among the poor peasants.

Such a programme should not merely take up workers' economic interests but also their democratic rights which the CDS and other right-wing parties have skillfully used to build up a mass base but to which they are, in reality, quite opposed.

Campaigning for unity in the workers' movement around a clear programme - & demanding that the reformist leaders form a workers' government to implement that programme - would find a positive response in the labour movement which has still not suffered any major defeats.

## BOLIVIAN STUDENTS

Student strikes broke out again in Bolivia on March 6th, eight days after the Banzar regime briefly succeeded in ending an earlier strike wave that had been going on for almost a month.

Police arrested twelve students in La Paz on the day the new strike began. A number of social science students occupied the archbishop's office, where they launched a hunger strike. Students at the Technical University in Oruro suspended activities for thirty-six hours.

The strikes resumed after the Banzar government refused to meet student demands on examinations and to release 7 student leaders arrested in the earlier strike. The regime has indicted these students under the state security law for being involved in an alleged subversive plot along with sectors of the labour movement and the teachers.

Support to the students' demands has come from the 7,000 miners at Cataw and Siglo XX. On March 6, they stopped work for 72 hours demanding that the Banzar regime settle the university conflict. The 30,000 member Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolívia called on Mining Minister Jose Antonio Zelaya to intercede on the

# STALINISM

## The Historic Compromise

Is something new happening in the West European Communist Parties? This is the impression of many, especially after the Twenty-Second Congress of the French CP, held in a Paris suburb early in February. Declaring a policy of 'Communism under the French colours', the congress voted to recommend dropping any mention of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from the party programme.

Reacting to this news, the editors of the New York Times said: 'However one appraises the sincerity of the changed image the French Communists seek to project, the historic nature of the change in line is undeniable...'. It is certainly true that the aim of the congress was to give the impression of a new course.

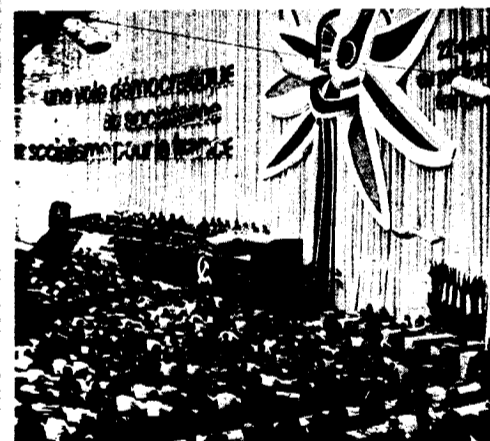
French CP chief George Marchais told the delegates that there were 'noticeable divergences' between the French and Soviet parties and that 'we do not intend to give lessons to anyone, nor will we accept any from anyone'. Moreover, in the name of the 'Communist ideal' and 'the happiness of man', Marchais criticised the Kremlin's brutal suppression of political dissent.

### Historic Compromise

In approaching the significance of the French CP congress, it should be borne in mind that the general approach outlined there is being followed by most of the Western CPs. The British CP, for example, published an article by former leader John Gollan in the January issue of its theoretical magazine criticising the treatment of dissidents in the USSR, the remnants of 'anti-semitism' and the general lack of democratic rights.

The leaders of the Italian and Spanish Communist Parties have been attempting for years to demonstrate some independence from 'Moscow' in order to gain acceptance from those capitalist allies they seek. The Italian CP has gone so far in pursuit of its 'historic compromise' with the Christian Democrats that the Economist ran an article last December urging non-Communist parties in Europe to seriously ponder whether the Italian Communists may not have taken on a role normally associated in Northern Europe with the Social Democrats...'.

The question raised by the Economist is the basic one that must be answered in analysing the meaning of the line now being followed by the Communist Parties of Western Europe. Is the link between these parties and Moscow dissolving? Are they developing into Social Democratic Parties like the ones currently in power in Britain or Sweden?



The French Communist Party Congress

### Stalinism

Certainly the Communist Parties, like the Social Democrats, make no secret of their desire to help administer the capitalist system as they openly 'seek' electoral alliances as in Italy. Stalinist reformism, however, arose differently from Social Democratic reformism and responds to different pressures.

Stalinism, itself, is the result of the degeneration of the Soviet party and state that developed in the 1920s. The narrow bureaucratic caste that arose in the war torn country wanted only to defend its own privileges within the borders of the Soviet Union. This turn away from any perspective of world revolution was, in December 1924, elevated to the status of a theory when Stalin proclaimed (in defiance of the Bolsheviks' tradition) the possibility of 'socialism in one country'.

This concept inevitably led the bureaucracy to view the Comintern not as an association of revolutionary parties but as 'foreign supporters' of its diplomatic moves. Trotsky, in explaining the deadly logic of such a new policy, pointed out: 'The new doctrine proclaims that socialism can be built on the basis of a single state, if only there is no intervention. From this there can and must follow... a collaborationist policy towards the foreign bourgeoisie with the object of averting intervention, as this will guarantee the construction of socialism... The task of the parties of the Comintern assumes, therefore, an auxiliary character; their mission is to protect the USSR from intervention & not to fight for the conquest of power'.

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### Popular Front

In accordance with Trotsky's views, the perspective of 'socialism in one country' led the Stalinist Comintern to offer 'political support' to whichever capitalist government was prepared to maintain friendly diplomatic relations with the USSR. This orientation was, so to speak, codified in the doctrine of the 'popular front' at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935.

The popular-front strategy was rationalised to the masses as the best way to defend democracy against fascism. But the method of defence proposed by Stalin was not the independent mobilisation of the working class, but rather its subordination to the capitalist parties who claimed to stand for democracy.

This policy of holding the struggle of the working class within limits acceptable to the liberal capitalists was an attempt to win their friendship. It was an integral part of Stalin's strategy: the establishment of military and diplomatic alliances with the imperialist democracies in return for his help in opposing the extension of the Socialist revolution. In pursuit of this counter-revolutionary strategy, the Stalinists were quite willing to strangle the Spanish revolution as, more recently, they were willing to passively watch the genocidal war against the Vietnamese.

From the point of view of programme, as Trotsky pointed out after the Comintern's Seventh Congress, 'Nothing now distinguishes the Communists from the Social Democrats except the traditional phraseology, which is not too difficult to unlearn...'.  
If there were - and are - no serious differences in programme, there still exists a major difference in another sphere. The Social Democrats practice 'class-collaboration' in the service of their own ruling class, whereas the Stalinists do so to further the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Perhaps the clearest example of this came in 1939 when Stalin concluded the 'non-aggression' pact with Hitler. The parties of the Comintern changed their line overnight without a whimper. They stopped warning about the Hitlerite danger and started protesting the threat of an imperialist war. When Hitler attacked the USSR in 1941, they flipped back without hesitation and began calling for an all-out war against the menace of fascism.

### Fragmentation

It could, of course, be argued that the recent declarations of the Communist Parties - from their criticism of the USSR's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 - indicate that the situation is fast changing and that they are well on the way to breaking the 'Moscow stranglehold'. Certainly, it is true to say that today there exists wider differences in the 'Communist bloc' than ever would have been tolerated in Stalin's time.

Trotsky, it should be noted, did say that the orientation of the Comintern towards the 'liberal' capitalists does, generally, generate social-democratic wings in the Communist Parties. The example of the Garaudy tendency in the French CP or the Johnson tendency in the British CP illustrate this clearly. Such tendencies have never successfully altered, however, the fundamental character of Stalinist parties.

The basis on which these parties continue to recruit & hold their members in face of social-democratic 'competition' is precisely through their link with the USSR. The link with Moscow can be camouflaged for tactical reasons but to break from it would require the type of factional struggle that has not yet happened. Moreover, from the viewpoint of the CP bureaucrats, any attempt to sever the link with the Kremlin would be a dangerous adventure. The field of Social Democratic politics already is occupied by sizeable formations with their own independent apparatuses. A place for the Stalinist bureaucrats is not necessarily assured.

### Detente

The fact that the Western CPs have not yet broken their links with Moscow does not mean that, for tactical reasons, they have not seen 'fit' to take their distance from it. Such a distance is not only, at times, in their own self-interest but also in that of the Kremlin as well.

One of the major problems facing the Western CPs is the revulsion felt by most workers at the crimes perpetrated by Stalin in the USSR. This alone has been a major obstacle to them winning votes and gaining allies in the

electoral field. While being careful not to criticise the theoretical legacy of Stalinism, they have been forced ever more to distance themselves from the grosser crimes such as the barbaric denial of rights to political dissidents or national minorities. This trend was detectable particularly after the revelations of Krushchev in 1956.

During the 1930s and 1940s, it was possible for the Western CPs merely to deny that any such crimes existed. This is no longer possible. The coming to power of numerous CPs after WW2 - and the resultant rivalry between the

suppression of the Hungarian & Czech uprisings, the armed confrontations on the Sino-Soviet border accompanied by mutual criticism of having 'abandoned' socialist principles has weighed heavily on the credibility of Western CPs.

It is under this pressure that trends have developed to distance themselves from the Kremlin to the extent of dropping the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' because it is identified in the minds of most workers with Stalin's criminal policies. While such critiques represent a growing fragmentation in the Stalinist 'bloc', they do not mean that these parties are breaking their allegiance to Moscow. Nor does it mean that Moscow is not, within the framework of 'detente', prepared to tolerate verbal criticism of its policies in exchange for the mass pressure the CPs in the West can bring to bear in its interests by a more democratic image.

### Opportunity

The real significance of the recent declarations of the Western Communist Parties is not that they are, in some way, 'breaking' from Stalinism. It is that, in being forced to echo today the criticisms of Stalinist crimes voiced long before by the Trotskyist movement, they serve to open up a serious debate among the many thousands of honest members who wish to discover the truth.

In such a situation, socialists have a real possibility of explaining that it is not sufficient to dissociate from the crimes of Stalin which have done more than anything else to discredit socialism in the eyes of millions. It is necessary to root these crimes in the political legacy of Stalinism - which still guides the Western CPs - and to break from it.



Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin concluding the Yalta agreement.

various national bureaucracies, each pursuing its own 'self-interest' - has brought to light too many uncomfortable facts for ignorance to be an answer even in their own ranks. The violent

Based on an article by David Frankel in INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

## South Africa:

# THE SASO NINE

The largest wave of political trials in South Africa since the early sixties is now underway. Since late in 1974, the white racist regime has arrested scores of people opposed to apartheid, including Black and white student leaders, trade unionists, university lecturers & writers. Many of those arrested were detained - without any charges or trial - under the provisions of the Terrorism Act.

The most important of these political trials is that of the SASO nine, leaders of the all-Black South African Students Organisation (SASO) and of the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC). Their trial resumed in Pretoria last month, a year after their first appearance in court. They are charged with conspiracy under the Terrorism Act - a charge which can lead to a minimum sentence of 5 years in prison and to a maximum sentence of death.

In South Africa, the term 'terrorism' has a very broad definition and can be applied to almost anything the apartheid regime considers 'subversive'. Any attempts to obstruct the 'free movement of traffic' or embarrass the 'administration of the affairs of State' are seen as examples of the 'terrorism' the Act is designed to outlaw.

### Campaign

The case of the SASO nine is part of a repressive campaign directed against the Black student organisation and related groups that has been going on for several years. The SASO was formed in 1969 by Black students who wanted their own organisation, independent of the white-dominated National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). The SASO adopted a Black nationalist outlook, publicly denounced the apartheid policies of the white regime and condemned foreign investments in South Africa.

Pretoria did not formally outlaw the SASO as it did other anti-apartheid organisations. Nevertheless, it set out to destroy its growing influence as SASO leaders were instrumental in organising university 'sit-ins' and helping to set up other Black organisations. In 1973, eight leaders were 'banned' (i.e. prevented from attending meetings of more than 3 people, travelling outside his or her town and publishing anything). Five more SASO leaders were soon to follow.

Such victimisation and harassment by the South African Security police against the SASO and the BPC was to force about sixty members to flee to neighbouring Botswana. Even there, they were not safe. In February, 1974, Onkgopotse Abraham Tiro, a former SASO leader at the all-Black University of the North at Turfloop, died by a parcel bomb in Botswana.

In spite of this repression, the SASO and BPC organised demonstrations in Durban and Turfloop, in 1975, in solidarity with the Black Nationalists' struggle in Mozambique. Although the rallies were banned, the Durban one drew between 4000 and 5000 people. A large contingent of police, armed with rifles, dogs and clubs, attacked the marchers, injuring many & arresting fourteen. In the following days, the police carried out a nationwide wave of arrests, detaining about 40 leaders of the SASO and BPC.

Some of the political prisoners were kept in solitary confinement for four months and were not allowed even to see lawyers or relatives. Thirteen of them were brought to trial early last year and were charged, under the Terrorism Act, of conspiring to 'transform the State by unconstitutional, revolutionary and/or violent means'. Of this thirteen, three have subsequently been released and one other - Sadecque Variava - will be tried separately from the SASO nine.

The present trial of the SASO nine is, of course, merely the clearest example of the South African regime's repressive policies. There is every indication that, in the months ahead, the number of political prisoners will escalate still further. The February issue of 'Africa' stated that, with the victory of the MPLA in Angola only recently, 'observers believe that the South African government will tighten up internal security and clamp down ruthlessly on all serious opposition this year'.

The growing repression against black nationalists in South Africa places a particular responsibility on socialists in Britain whose government 'props up' the white racist regime through economic and political aid. It means they should campaign ever more forcefully within the Labour movement to compel the government to break off all links with Pretoria.

## FIGHTING FUND

Many thanks to those of our readers who, last month, sent unsolicited donations of £12.60. We thought that if we asked, we might get more.

Having successfully launched Socialist Action as a monthly, our next objective is to publish it fortnightly. For this we need funds. So how about it?

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# EDUCATION

# FIGHT THE CUTS by DAVE PICTON

In February, Denis Healey introduced proposals to slash education expenditure by £618m in the next few years. These swinging cuts come on top of Labour's steady erosion of the education service since coming to power. Its 1974 White Paper had already called for major cuts of £357m between 1974-5 and £264m between 1978-9.

The fact that the government should be seeking to make inroads into education is not, of course, new. Every economic crisis since WW1 has brought forth demands for education cuts. The Tories, in 1922, cancelled many of the reforms of the 1918 Education Act; the MacDonald government, in the thirties, postponed the implementation of the Hadlow report and cut teachers' salaries; and, in the post-war austerity period, the Atlee government backtracked on many of the provisions of the 1944 Education Act.

The present cut-backs are, however, among the most severe yet seen. They are not only what Fred Jarvis (NUT Gen Sec) called 'spitting in the face of the TUC'. They are also 'spitting in the face' of thousands of students and teachers who will face larger classes, cut-backs in nursery facilities, the continuation of old, dilapidated schools and rising teacher unemployment.

## Control

The government obviously intends to ram through these cut-backs by tighter control over local authorities. Whitehall has long exercised control over school building expenditure but only this year has it sought to 'dictate' to LEAs over other education expenditure.

This autumn, while negotiations were taking place with local authorities on the 'rate support grant', Crosland issued guidelines on expenditure for the coming year. LEAs were urged now to reconsider their nursery programme, to refuse places in schools to children who are not five until after the start of term and to make economies in 'sixth form organisation'. In addition, they were instructed not to improve pupil-teacher ratios and to reduce the number of teachers in schools where the pupil rate was likely to fall.

Tight restrictions on the rate support grant coupled with no supplementary payments during the year are clearly the weapons whereby Crosland hopes to force local authorities - the Labour ones in particular - into towing the line. Tory authorities are likely to see his 'advice' as the green light to make yet more extensive cuts.

## Unemployment

While these financial curbs have not yet affected the schools directly, they have already begun to bite in terms of teacher unemployment. The NUT estimates that although only 4000 teachers are registered as unemployed, at least 8000 are seeking jobs in schools but are unable to find them. In some areas, even a part-time teaching post will produce over 100 applicants when advertised and the situation will be much worse next September.

In recent years, the number of teachers has increased annually by about 20,000. In September, the increase should have been of the same order but was only in the region of 11,000 (which confirms the NUT's estimate). LEA plans for next year, which are being ratified by local councils at the moment, nearly all assume no increase in the number of teachers employed and, in some areas, they involve substantial reductions.

At the same time, the number of teachers leaving colleges and universities would allow for a further increase in the total workforce of about 17000. So unless some drastic action is taken in the coming period against the cuts, it can be predicted that 25,000 teachers will be looking for a job next Autumn.

## Long-term

It is not only in the days ahead that teachers' jobs are threatened. The long-term prospects for the education system are even worse. In 1965, the National Advisory Council on the Training and Supply of teachers established, as the target for teacher supply, the teacher-pupil ratios necessary to reduce all but 5% of classes to 30 or less: 19.7:1 for primary schools, 16.3:1 for secondary schools and 10.6:1 for sixth forms.



Teachers protest mass jobless prospects

Ms. Thatcher, when Secretary for Education, subtly changed this target to that of a 110% improvement on the 1971 figures, which meant a reduction of about 50,000 teachers on the previous target for 1981. The Labour government has accepted the new target and has actually gone ahead with the wholesale closure of colleges of education which it implied. This year, the number of students entering colleges was 30,000 and, if the current plans go through, it will be reduced to a mere 12,000 in 1978.

Thus a Labour government, elected on a platform of reducing class sizes, is in the immediate future ready to force thousands of newly-qualified teachers onto the dole as part of a long-term trend to worsen the teacher-pupil ratio.

## Conditions

Fewer teachers dealing with larger classes will not only, of course, affect teacher employment but will also worsen the standard of education offered in the schools. Pupils will be taught by over-stretched staff in out-of-date buildings with inadequate facilities. In order to pursue such policies - advocated by the Tory Rhodes Boyson for some years - the government has had to ride roughshod over the decision by last year's Labour Party Conference to begin to

reduce class sizes to a maximum of 25. The government's attack on education is, of course, only a part of a broader onslaught on the social services which also rides roughshod over Conference decisions. It is part of a strategy to donate, at the expense of the mass of working people, massive sums into the hands of private manufacturers to prop up their ailing firms. The fact that this will create even wider unemployment & worsening living standards for millions is callously ignored.

It is vitally necessary, therefore, that in the coming period the teacher unions begin to organise a mass resistance to these cut-backs and (where possible) united action with other sectors of public employees facing similar problems. While Fred Jarvis may complain of the government proposals, the NUT leadership has not yet seen fit, however, to propose a series of demands defending teachers' interests - and those of the wider education system - & mobilising members to fight for them.

It will be up to socialists in the NUT to spearhead this struggle for a programme (taking up such burning issues as teacher unemployment, class sizes and the school building programme) which can provide the membership with a concrete alternative to the policies of the present government.

# A FIGHTING PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS

The policy of the present government - particularly in the light of the recent cuts - has meant a major attack upon both teachers and public education.

Despite the Houghton award, the government's 10% wage ceiling has caused teachers' real income to be seriously eroded as inflation escalates at about 20% a year. This is particularly true of younger (mainly women) teachers who were penalised under the Houghton pay award.

Continued cut-backs in the educational budget (which will continue at least to 1980) will further affect teachers as quotas are cut back, 'natural wastage' not replaced and redundancies created. The present unemployment level of over 5,000 is widely expected to rise to the figure of 25,000 by the end of 1976 and more beyond. Once again, it is younger teachers, women trying to 'return' to work and immigrant teachers who will bear the brunt of this cut-back.

Reductions in staff will not only hit teachers, however, who will be forced to teach longer in larger classes with less time for lesson preparation. Such a 'deterioration' in staff-pupil ratios will, in addition, directly harm the educational possibilities of the mass of pupils - particularly immigrants in high industrial areas.

They will be further harmed by the grinding to a halt of the present school building programme and growing lack of adequate facilities which the massive educational cuts, introduced by Denis Healey, will lead to. Pupils will be expected to be educated in out-of-date schools with inadequate facilities in larger classes by over-stretched staff.

To meet this attack, it is urgently necessary to win the NUT to campaign (in united action with other teachers' unions) on a clear programme based on the needs of teachers and the mass of pupils. Such a campaign should be pro-

\* Against all cut-backs. For a sliding scale of educational expenditure to ensure no worsening of standards from kindergarten to university over the period ahead due to inflation.

Take the tax burden for education off working people. Tax the banks, monopolists and wealthy. Slash defence expenditure by withdrawing the troops from Ireland now in order to devote massive funds into education and other socially necessary programmes.

\* For equal opportunities for women teachers, for paid maternity leave and for free abortion on request as demanded by the TUC. For adequate child-care facilities for the under-fives.

\* Against all forms of wage restraint. For a cost-of-living clause built into all wage agreements to ensure that teachers' real incomes are not eroded by inflation. Opposition to the existing 'differentials' within the pay structure in favour of a single basic scale.

\* Against all teacher unemployment. For cutting all class sizes to a maximum of 30 which will improve the quality of education & provide employment for all jobless teachers (whether through 'cutting quotas', 'natural wastage' or redundancies). Opposition to any form of teacher transfers.

\* Against all attempts to 'penalise' immigrant teachers for growing unemployment levels. For the repeal of the present racist Immigration Act.

\* Support for free speech & assembly for students, their right to form political organisations and participate in political activities.

\* For the affiliation of the NUT to the Labour Party where, alongside other unions, it can participate in a united struggle by the labour movement to determine educational policies in the interests of the mass of

## US STUDENTS FIGHT CUTS

- March 3: 1,000 students rallied at York College in Jamaica, Queens, and then marched through the surrounding community.
- March 4: 2,000 students at John Jay College in Manhattan held a rally and marched to the board of higher education offices.
- March 5: More than 1,000 students from Hostos College, which has extensive bilingual programs to serve the Puerto Rican community of the South Bronx, blocked the Grand Concourse to protest the planned shutdown of their school.
- March 8: 3,000 students protested outside a hearing by the board of higher education on cutback plans, while another 2,000 rallied at Queens College.



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# SPAIN

## STRIKE WAVES

J.L.

On March 8, a massive general strike swept through the oppressed Basque provinces in northern Spain while thousands of students and workers staged solidarity strikes and assemblies in Madrid. The protests came in response to the killings of several Basque workers in the city of Vitoria the previous weekend.

According to a Reuters dispatch from Bilbao, 'Labour sources said that the strike brought out 250,000 Basques in the biggest stoppage in the north since the 1936-39 civil war...'

### Protest

This current round of protests grew out of a two-month long strike by over 5,000 Vitoria steelworkers. Employers answered the workers' wage demands by firing strike leaders. On March 3, an estimated 80% of Vitoria's whole workforce staged a general strike in support of the striking steelworkers.

Police attacked the demonstration & arrested picketers outside the shops that had remained open. Reinforcements were called in from nearby provinces to help quell the strikers. The groups



that called the March 3 protest state that six people were killed in the assault and that more than one hundred were wounded. Government sources & most newspapers list four dead.

The murders in Vitoria touched off strikes and demonstrations in Basque cities of Pamplona, Bilbao and San Sebastian. Protests also occurred in Barcelona, Madrid and at several universities. Authorities tried to break up most of these demonstrations.

### Political Freedom

During the weeks prior to the killings, major strike struggles had broken out among truck drivers, bakery workers, teachers, nontenured professors, and construction workers. Campuses throughout Spain also continued to be centres of opposition to the regime of King Juan Carlos.

Since the death of Franco last November, his handpicked successor has failed to widen political freedom in Spain. Trade unions and political parties are still illegal, for example. Juan Carlos has also imposed an unpopular wage freeze; denied amnesty to most political prisoners; and refused to grant any real autonomy to the oppressed Basque and Catalan nationalities, whose languages and cultures constantly fall victim to Madrid's chauvinism.

The new king claims that he has put Spain on the path towards 'orderly' democratization, but his cabinet's statement on the Vitoria murders shows what these promises are worth. The statement, issued March 5th, said that the actions of the Vitoria police were 'directed' toward protecting the exercise of individual freedom'. It called the Vitoria general strike 'a clear attempt to hinder the programme of reform that the Spanish people desire and which the Government is not disposed to abandon'.



Basque workers packed Vitoria cathedral March 5 to honor three strikers gunned down by Juan Carlos's police during general strike two days earlier.

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 on 8th March.

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 ride out the present wave but not those of the future. Franco's legacy won't be removed from 'above' but by Spanish workers who will reject the CPI's plans for an 'orderly transition' to create a true socialist democracy.

## OVERSEAS STUDENTS VICTIMISED

In late February, over 25,000 students marched through London protesting the government's decision to slash £618m off the education budget in the coming years. The impact of this attack will, it is estimated, reduce college places alone from 750,000 to about 600,000 by 1981.

While these cut-backs will affect all students, they will fall particularly heavily on the shoulders of overseas students around whom the press has recently been building a racist witch-hunt. The ILEA, for example, is considering plans to cut back on overseas students from 8,400 to 3,400 by 1982. If such plans are accepted, colleges like South West London (with an 82% immigrant student rate) will face closure and many individual courses in other colleges will be scrapped.

The ILEA's plans are, of course, only the thin edge of the wedge. If implemented, they will spread like wildfire up and down the country as local authorities try to split the student movement by suggesting that British students will benefit from the cut-back on those from overseas who are a 'drain' on limited resources. Dividing the student movement on racist lines will, it is hoped, weaken the entire student body and prepare the ground for the acceptance of these and future cuts.

### Grants

Overseas students are not only threatened with course closures, however, but also with escalating fees at a time when inflation is soaring at around 20% a year. Only recently, the cost of fees for overseas students has risen by 30% (from £320 to £416) and the Times has suggested that an official cabinet 'policy group' has recommended yet further increases five times above the 1976/7 rate.

Such increases are justified by claims that overseas students are 'sponging' off the tax payer to the tune of £120m a year. Little mention is made of the fact that, since they bring approx. £150m into Britain every year in foreign exchange, they are in reality helping to subsidise the British taxpayer.

The effect of such increases (if implemented) would clearly be to slam the door in the face of thousands who are either self-supporting or dependent on assistance from their own governments. It will limit entry into Britain for study to those students of wealthy or powerful families alone, thus reinforcing class differences in the underdeveloped world.

### Immigration Act

The implications of the government's attack on overseas students has been glaringly revealed recently in its treatment of those applying for places from Rhodesia. Of the 2000 well-qualified black Rhodesians seeking courses here, it is estimated that only 160 will be allowed entry - and, of these, 16 have already been deported for various reasons.

The government is able to enforce its racist attitude mainly by the wide powers that it possesses under the 1971 Immigration Act. It is under the provisions of this Act that it is able to keep out potential students who cannot afford rising fees or find a place, and deport those who, under the cut-backs, can no longer be guaranteed a course.

Furthermore, by placing any student under immediate threat of deportation merely for associating with anyone considered 'undesirable', it consciously aims to undermine any possible protest that might gather momentum against its arbitrary powers.

### NUS Campaign

The NUS is, at last, beginning to recognise the specific problems faced by overseas students and, following the February demonstration, organised one on March 12th particularly around this issue. It is vital, in the coming period, that the momentum building up not be allowed to dissipate and that the NUS should place defence of overseas' students' course places and grants as central in the struggle against the 'cuts'.

At the same time, it should be recognised that the attack being made on overseas students is part of a general attack upon black immigrants under the 1971 Immigration Act which prevents blacks entering the country on the basis of their colour and denies those few who do gain entry elementary rights on the same basis.

It is for this reason that NUS should also be called upon to affiliate to the Campaign to Repeal the Immigration Act (CRIA) and help mobilise for the April 11th demonstration.

**Marian Delaney**

## ABORTION

(Contd. from front page)

Such a perspective, if adopted, would be a major error for NAC. To stress the NHS cuts at a time when a cttee of known anti-abortionists is planning to take away women's rights to abortion would be disastrous. There is no point in campaigning against cuts in NHS abortion facilities, if, under the committee's proposals, women are not allowed to have abortions.

The main task before NAC in the period ahead is to realise what stage the struggle is at. At present a major onslaught is being launched on the legal right of women to obtain an abortion, by the Select Committee. Unless this battle is won, it will be impossible for us to extend our rights by pressing home the demand for the right to choose.

To pose anything else at the present stage - such as fighting the cuts in the NHS facilities - is simply, at this stage, a diversion. Before we can go on to pose further demands we will have had to defeat all attempts at restricting the limited rights we have now. It is only when the right to abortion is established in law, that the struggle to make it a real right in practice - posing demands such as 'full availability on the NHS', 'extend outpatient facilities', etc. becomes meaningful.

Posing the defence of abortion rights

can involve thousands in struggle. Every woman in this country is threatened by the Select Committee, which aims to return thousands of them once again to the back streets and NAC, by pioneering the struggle against that Committee, can begin to tap a vast reservoir of support. It is by involving these women in action, by struggling with them around a concrete issue that they can relate to, that we will be able to explain to them the need to go further and fight for the right to free abortion on demand. Stages cannot, however, be skipped.

A recent opinion poll carried out by MARPLAN on behalf of the SUN found that 72% of parents were in favour of abortion on demand. The fact that there exists such massive support means that the NAC has the potential for involving thousands in action on the streets and concretely showing the government that the plans of the Select Committee will not be tolerated.

With such a mass action orientation around the concrete issue of abortion rights, together with the new avenues of support opening up in the labour movement, there is no reason why NAC should not be able to reverse the present trends.

**Sabina Roberts**

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