

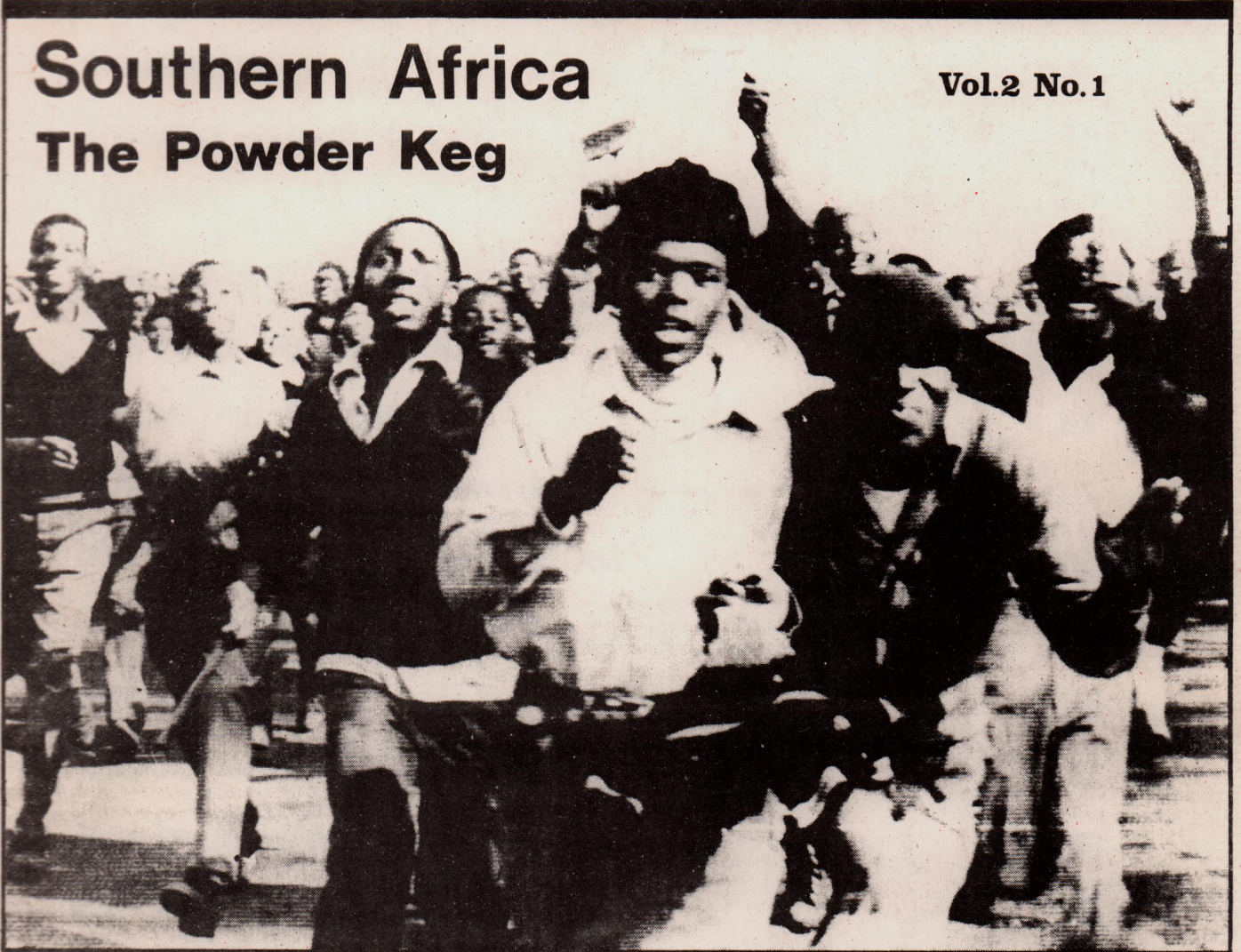
SOCIALIST ACTION

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Labour ~ Which Way ?

The Racist Offensive

The Struggle for Abortion Rights

Mao Tsetung ~ An Appraisal

What is The Transitional Programme ?

SOCIALIST ACTION

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Editorial:

UNITY OF THE LEFT

During the early 'seventies, many left groups grew in both size and influence. Profiting from the 'youth radicalisation', groups such as the IS (International Socialists) and the IMG (International Marxist Group) attracted large numbers of students seeking a clear alternative to the reformist policies of both the Labour & the Communist parties.

The dramatic growth of these groups makes the present fragmentation of the left all the more ironic. Groups such as IS - still labouring under the heady illusion of launching a new 'party' and openly 'competing' with the Labour Party - have been rent with inner disputes leading to splits & expulsions.

There can be no doubt that this fragmentation is demoralising both to those who have 'left' such groups and to the wider layer of radicals - inside and outside the labour movement - who are looking for a clear alternative to the reformist parties. It is doubly demoralising that this should have taken place at a time when such an alternative was never more needed to help combat the attacks on the living standards and rights of working people and their allies.

Weakness

It is not enough, however, to remain demoralised. It is necessary to uncover the reasons for this set-back to ensure it is not repeated. The present fragmentation can, in one sense, be positive if it leads to further regroupments based on a clear understanding of past errors.

For many, of course, the present situation can be simply explained away as the result of a temporary decline in the radicalisation of the broader labour movement as it has acquiesced - over the years - in the government's savage attacks on its living standards and democratic rights. There is clearly some truth in this. The left obviously reflects, to a greater or lesser extent, the shifts in mood and consciousness of working people and their allies.

It is by no means, however, the full answer. The class struggle knows not only flows but also ebbs which have not thrown the left into the state of disintegration it is in at present. If anything, the present 'down-turn' has merely acted as a catalyst in bringing to light the lack of political clarity that accompanied the growth of these groups.

This lack of clarity was manifested, above all, in the constant tendency of groups such as the IMG or IS to 'adapt' to the milieu in which they were working - a fact which explains their often abrupt shifts in position. Such adaptation meant that the composition of these groups was never based on a common understanding of the way forward. While the momentum of the class struggle was on the increase, the internal differences were held together but - the moment it slowed up - they burst forth with dramatic impact.

The recent splits and divisions are the price the left is having to pay for this earlier lack of clarity. The 'positive' aspect of it is that, at least, growing numbers have begun to probe the inability of the IMG or IS to relate to the real dynamic of the class struggle as it has unfolded over the past period.

Confusion

This inability has been shown, firstly, in their 'economism' and refusal to come to grips with the complex - and often new - forms of struggle that have been thrown up over the past decade, such as that by women or Blacks for their liberation. Refusing to support (and pioneer) these struggles has not only alienated wide layers from socialism but has afforded the 'right' the opportunity to launch offensives to divide and weaken the labour movement. Through the neglect of these issues over the years, the left has been quite unable to respond to the recent anti-abortion moves against women or anti-Black offensive whipped up in the Tory press which are attempts to turn layers of working people against each other.

The inability of the left to relate to & pioneer the rights of women or Blacks - or that of the Irish people for self-determination - is an accommodation to the backwardness of the labour movement. Above all, it shows an inability to grasp that fighting for such issues is key not only to pioneer the interests of the doubly-oppressed but also to root out those prejudices in the labour movement that the ruling class will play on ever-more forcibly to split and divide working people.

Secondly, this 'economism' of the left was complemented by an inability to view these struggles as part of a broader strategy of struggle within the labour movement against its reformist leaders. Groups such as the IMG - and still, today, the IS - believed it was possible to 'bypass' the labour movement without building a serious opposition in the unions and Labour Party against its present mis-leaders.

This perspective, which isolated these groups from the mainstream of the labour movement, has shown itself to be increasingly illusory. As ever-wider layers look to the Labour Party as a tool to fight in their interests - a process reflected in the shift left at recent conferences - it is more vital than ever that socialists should intervene in the mass organisations of the labour movement to build there a class-struggle left-wing against the present leaders, left or right.

Unity

While growing numbers have begun to come to grips with these limitations, the present fragmentation will not be easy to overcome. Short-cut tactics (such as that by the IMG calling for unity at any price) offer no solution. Unity on no clear programmatic basis, while 'attractive', can only repeat the mistakes of the past and lead to the splits of the future. The recent split in the I-CL (a fusion of the old Workers Fight with the Left Faction of IS) is clearly indicative of the dangers unprincipled unities can bring.

What is needed today is a perspective of debate which can lead to regroupment on a basis of programmatic clarity. Such a process should not, of course, prevent the unity in action of the left around burning issues, such as fighting to defend abortion rights, to repeal the racist Immigration Act or oppose the cuts. While obtaining unity on these issues of importance to millions, there is however the need for a serious debate on those key questions of strategy facing the marxist movement as a whole.

It is here that Socialist Action feels that it has a role to play. The journal will, of course,

LEAGUE for SOCIALIST ACTION



WHAT WE STAND FOR



LSA Statement of Aims.

continue to report and analyse the key issues in the class struggle nationally and internationally. Most important, however, will be its attempt to present a clear position on the central questions facing the left today and introduce some 'clarity' into the existing confusion.

Tradition

Such clarity is not produced from a hat. The LSA is convinced that understanding the complex and constantly changing developments of the class struggle means arming oneself with a clear method, the method embodied in Trotsky's Transitional Programme. It is only by basing itself on such a method that a serious political tendency can begin to elaborate a clear programme for intervening in the different forms of the class struggle.

For too long the Trotskyist movement in Britain has been represented by the sectarianism of groups like the WRP or the chameleon-type politics of groups like the IMG. The errors of both these groups resides precisely in their inability - despite their pretensions - to grasp the method of the Transitional Programme and to apply it concretely in Britain today.

It is necessary now to re-assert that method - to re-assert what is vital and living in the Trotskyist tradition. The LSA, which is in political solidarity with the Fourth International - or, more specifically, with its Leninist-Trotsky minority - feels that it is in a position to go some way in this respect.

LABOUR WHICH WAY?

Last November, the Labour Party NEC decided by a significant majority to back the November 17 demonstration (called by over 12 unions) against the government's latest round of 'cuts'. Reports in the press stressed the personal friction at the NEC meeting in which - it is rumoured - Callaghan tore up his notes and stormed out.

The fact that the NEC should have been pushed so far as to back a demonstration directly opposing government policy is a clear indication of the growing antagonism building up in the labour movement to the Social Contract which was equally in evidence at the Labour Party conference only a month or so before.

Defeated on numerous points, the Times described Callaghan's reception at the conference as that of "an insulted king in the middle of a revolution". If no doubt exaggerated - the Tribunites intend leading no 'revolution' - the Times accurately describes the growing hostility of the delegates to the government's pro-capitalist policies as the party base swings ever more to the left.

Such hostility could be seen in the voting down of the government's key 'cuts' proposals in favour of a NUPE resolution calling for "...unity in the trade union and labour movement in resistance to the cuts". It was also reflected in the resolution by COHSE demanding a "massive hospital building programme" and one, supported by a massive majority, calling for the nationalisation of the largest banks and insurance companies...

Concretely, of course, as the Guardian hastened to point out, such resolutions will not affect government policy since Callaghan had already, weeks before conference, indicated that he would refuse to implement any resolutions running counter to government economic strategy. What worries the Tory press is that such opposition will grow in the period ahead, as the social crisis 'deepens', throwing the party into a crisis that "...will find a reflection inside the Parliamentary Labour Party itself".

Social Contract

It is no accident, of course, that this shift should begin to occur now. The Labour Party conference took place under the shadow of the Social Contract whose concrete results had been dramatically confirmed only a few days earlier in the latest jobless statistics. The figure of 1.5m, pressing particularly heavily on women, Blacks and young school leavers, is the highest at any time since the last war.

The Social Contract was originally sold to union members on the promise of keeping unemployment down in exchange for 'voluntary' pay curbs. TUC acceptance of Phase 1 - and, more recently, Phase 2 - of the deal means, as the Times put it, that the average worker "...will have suffered a drop of at least 4½% in real living standards" by next summer. After all, as Healey explained, better a fall in living standards than that those "lucky enough to keep their jobs should scoop the pool while millions are living on the dole".

The chickens in that argument have rapidly come home to roost. Despite the TUC's connivance in the wage freeze - at a time when inflation is raging at about 13% - the jobless total has continued to soar at the rate of almost 1000 a day. Even the 'official' figure of 1.5m is wildly inaccurate since it hides the thousands of workers in textiles or cars on a shortened working-week & the thousands more, mainly women, who are not officially registered. (As the Guardian, August 25, noted: "women are now becoming unemployed at twice the rate of men...").

The savage round of social service cuts the government has implemented, while eating away at living standards, add to the mounting jobless total. The measures taken last November - when over £2 billion was lopped from the public sector - will create over 170,000 more unemployed, according to the Observer. What is not mentioned is that the money channelled out of health and education into private enterprise to 'bail out' ailing firms will push the jobless total up still further. This money, far from creating new jobs, is being used to 'rationalise' firms at the direct expense of the workforce, as at Chrysler where the government rescue operation led to the loss of over 9,000 jobs.



Connivance

The government has only been able to pursue these pro-capitalist policies, of course, because of the 'connivance' of the TUC leaders. At no time have the latter sought to mobilise the labour movement in united action in defence of wages and jobs (despite the fact that the government has, itself, reneged on its side of the Social Contract). On the contrary, figures such as Scanlon and Jones have been the foremost defenders of government policy, hitting sharply out at its critics on the left of the Labour Party who dared - on one occasion - to abstain on the government's 'cuts' programme last July on its first reading in the House.

The extent of the TUC connivance can be measured by two facts immediately before the Labour Party conference. The first was their blanket acceptance of Phase II of the Social Contract (by over 18 votes to 1) which places yet more stringent curbs on wage demands. The second was their treatment of the National Union of Seamen (NUS) which was threatening strike action in pursuance of a claim in excess of the norm. Even though the strike was endorsed by a democratic ballot of union members, the TUC took upon themselves the chief role of strike-breakers by actually threatening (it is reported) to expel the NUS from the TUC if it was to carry out its course of action.

It is no wonder that, confronted with such loyalty, the Times should cynically remark that "the inter-

esting thing about the whole affair has been the ease with which union leaders have been brought along. It has been a push-over". The surprise registered by leading Tory papers over the willingness of the TUC to police its own members is not false. It is genuine.

Ruling class circles, after the defeat of the Heath government in 1974 by the miners' strike, were in a dilemma. Direct attempts to 'curb' the unions by a compulsory wage freeze coupled with penalties against strikers had miserably failed. The problem was: how to persuade the TUC leaders to get their own members to make the necessary sacrifices to 'bail out' a decaying system? While they hoped that a Labour government would be able to trade off the loyalty of the unions to go some way in this direction, they undoubtedly never expected them to do the job so enthusiastically or so well. The Times went on to observe, with ill-concealed joy, that strike figures had never been so low for years...

Loyalty

Confident of the loyalty of figures such as Scanlon and Jones ('architect' of the Social Contract), it is no wonder that Callaghan has felt reasonably secure since the Labour Party conference. Despite the antagonism of the majority of delegates there to the policies of the government, he has been able to rest on the backing of the union block vote which, as the Guardian states, "matters more to the government's survival".

Of course, such 'loyalty' by the union leaders is backed up with blackmail threats against the 'left' that any opposition to the government can only lead to its downfall and the return of a strong Tory government implementing still harsher anti-labour policies. At last year's Scottish TUC, Jones went so far as to accuse left critics of the government's policies of being 'accomplices' of the Tories.... Such arguments have received their most apt condemnation in the recent by-elections in Newcastle, Workington and Walsall. With an overall swing of about 12% to the Tories, Labour lost two seats, reducing its majority in Parliament to a mere one seat.

It is not the struggle against the government's policies which threatens a disaster for Labour but precisely the pro-capitalist policies it is at present pursuing and which Callaghan expounded, with barefaced honesty, more recently. "The willingness of industry to invest in new plant and machinery," he said, "requires not only that we overcome inflation but that industry is left with sufficient funds to make new investment. When I say that they must have sufficient funds, I mean they must be able to earn a surplus, which is a euphemism for a profit...".

It is this attempt to increase profit margins - at the direct expense of jobs and wages - which can alienate the mass labour vote and lead, as happened in the recent by-elections, to large-scale abstention. The continuance of such policies in the months and years to come is the surest way of bringing back a strong Tory government which will throw Labour aside like a squeezed lemon after its 'usefulness' has ended.

Opposition

Fortunately, the blackmail attempts by the labour leaders - and their allies in the TUC - are finding less and less response among rank-and-file trade unionists. The growing opposition at the Labour Party conference, which has begun to find a broader expression in the mass demonstration on November 17th, are signs of a deep shift within the mass lab-

our movement as thousands seek to find a clear solution to their problems.

Such discontent, while opposed to government strategy, is still at this stage hegemonised by the labour 'lefts' (Tribunites) who have so far offered no really coherent alternative to governmental policies. While uttering fiery speeches on the need for 'socialism' to unofficial meetings at the Labour Party conference, figures such as Benn or Mikardo have refused to turn their eloquence into a fighting programme in defence of wages and jobs.

The refusal to lead a head-on struggle against the government was shown most dramatically at last year's Labour Party conference itself. While backing motions opposing the 'cuts' programme, these figures ended up supporting a resolution calling for 'unity' within the labour movement and the need to 'endorse the government's economic strategy'. It is difficult, to say the least, to oppose the government while at the same time voting for a strategy which cynically aims to prop up capitalism by creating declining living standards and a mass jobless total.

This is not, of course, new. Despite the 'radical' image such figures have received in the press - and from the Tory 'smear' campaign - on no account over the past years have they really put forward a serious fight against the continuing rounds of wage freeze and social service cuts. Last June, for example, when Healey proposed his latest round of cuts taking over £1 billion out of the public sector, not one of the so-called 'lefts' voted against.

Such figures as Benn and Mikardo, far from intending to lead an all-out fight against the Labour leaders, are in fact doing little more than reacting to the pressure building up in the ranks of the labour movement. While reacting to this pressure, however, they blunt its biting edge, confuse and divert it around policies which are, in no way, a realistic solution to the developing crisis.

Tribunites

The inadequacy of the Tribune MPs can be seen most glaringly in the programme they have advocated to date against the government strategy. Such a programme, far from offering a socialist solution, aims to bolster up private enterprise while making slightly less demands on working people.. It is both utopian and dangerous.

One of the main thrusts of the Tribune group is to increase 'subsidies' to ailing firms (partially to safeguard employment). Refusing to call for their nationalisation, they fail to grasp that pouring public money into ailing firms can only be at the direct expense of jobs as rationalisation schemes are implemented. Isn't this what happened at both Chrysler and British Leyland?

The call for 'import controls', equally designed to protect private enterprise, is equally unrealistic. Such a call ignores not only the fact that keeping out cheaper goods will 'export' unemployment to other countries - hardly an 'international' outlook. It also ignores the fact that keeping out cheap goods, at a time of wage restraint, means that less goods can be bought & therefore pushes up unemployment in another sector of the economy.

These policies are not only inadequate, however, but dangerous. 'Import controls' (coupled with the call by many TUC leaders for a cut-back in the number of work permits) can only create the idea that the cause of the present crisis is not the system itself but 'foreign workers' or 'immigrants'. Such an attitude, instead of uniting the workforce, can create dangerous divisions within it and help

create a climate which ultra-right groups like the National Front will take advantage of to spread their racist poison.

While reflecting, at this stage, the growing discontent in labour's ranks, there can be no doubt that the Tribunitics can offer no coherent opposition to government strategy. What is necessary - both in the unions and in the Labour Party - is the creation of a serious class-struggle tendency that will cut through the confused and inadequate policies of the Tribune MPs and advance a real socialist alternative.

Future

The opportunities for the creation of such a tendency will be favourable in the period ahead. Despite Callaghan's promise that the economic 'squeeze' will lessen by 1980, all indications are that it will get worse and not better. The 'malaise' is deep-rooted. Throughout the post-war boom, British capitalism slipped far behind its rivals - a record symbolised by the slow rate of productivity, very low investment, falling profit rates and a declining share of the world market. The world recession is deepening these traits and the future looks bleak.

* The wage curbs, imposed in 1974, are going to continue. Walter Ellis, in the Sunday Times, wrote that "the real post-tax rate of return earned by British companies fell from between 7 & 9% in the early 1960s to 3 & 4% in 1973 and 1974. It is inconceivable that industry and commerce will raise investment to the level the country now needs with less than half the profits of the 1960s". Continuing wage curbs are vital in stimulating larger 'profit margins'.

* Public spending cuts will continue. As the post-war boom began to disappear in the 1970s, the British government resorted to massive 'deficit spending' to shore up British businesses. Central government expenditure shot up from £21 m in 1971-2 to £8,806 billion in 1976. British industries' reliance on 'hand-outs' is now enormous as in the case of Rolls-Royce, Chrysler and British Leyland. To carry on 'supporting' these firms, more and more cuts in the public sector will be necessary.

* Unemployment will continue to rise. The Sunday Times pointed out that the normally "high levels of employment since the war have been the result of high investment levels". At a time when investment is falling - due to lower profit margins - and when recession is looming, we can expect the jobless level to escalate still higher.

The trends of the Callaghan offensive, therefore - wage curbs, public spending cuts and rising unemployment - will deepen in the period ahead, leading to ever-greater opposition in the ranks of the labour movement to the Social Contract. The task is to forge out of this opposition - which will be increasingly open to a socialist alternative - a class struggle tendency ready to move boldly out and fight for measures in the interests of working people and their allies.

Tendency

Key to building such a tendency will be clarity in political programme. Contrary to the divisive and confused positions of the Labour 'lefts', it is necessary to develop those which can create the maximum unity among working people in the fight for their interests. Soaring inflation must be met with a call to end all wage curbs in favour of

automatic wage increases in keeping with rises in the cost of living. Escalating unemployment must be met with a call for work-sharing (the 35-hour week), nationalisation of firms threatening layoffs or closure & a bold public works programme.

Such a tendency should also see as central demands stemming from broader struggles which can further unite the labour movement (and its allies) and hinder attempts, by the right wing, to divide it along racist or sexist lines. The 'resolutions' passed by Labour conferences to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act or support 'free abortion on request' should feature centrally in such a tendency. The call for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Ireland should also be incorporated into the programme.

It is vital that such a tendency should not limit itself to passing pious paper resolutions on such issues in Labour Party branches... It must, itself, be rooted in the struggles in the streets & factories, both trying to stimulate mass action and carrying them into the party. It is only by linking the struggles of tens of thousands outside the party with a serious tendency fighting in their interests within the party that it will be possible to build a viable alternative to the government.

While fighting for clarity in ideas, such a tendency must be totally non-sectarian in its approach, being ready to collaborate with any forces on a given issue - such as the fight against the cuts or in favour of abortion rights - regardless of their position on other issues.

Democracy

It is one thing to fight for these measures but it is quite another to enforce their implementation. At the last Labour Party conference, a resolution calling for the repeal of the racist 1971 Immigration Act was passed by a large majority. Despite this expression of democratic will, however, Mervyn Rees stated he had no intention of carrying out conference decisions on 'race' any more than Jim Callaghan intended carrying out conference decisions on 'nationalisation'.

A central issue which must be taken up by any real class-struggle tendency must be that of party democracy - the right of conference to expect any government to implement those decisions democratically arrived at. Such an issue has already been raised within the Labour Party over the past period. At conference, a resolution was moved that all MPs should come under mandatory re-selection before elections - an obvious attempt to make MPs abide by conference decisions - and that the Party leader should be elected not merely by the Parliamentary Labour Party but by conference as a whole.

These moves are an indication that growing numbers are beginning to question not only the policies of the right-wing but also their undemocratic practices as well. A vital part of this struggle for real democracy within the party is the right of tendencies to exist with full freedom of criticism.... The response of Callaghan to the reception he met - at last year's conference - was to launch a vicious red-baiting campaign against what he called "...the bully boys" of the left and to demand the NEC start to "examine their activities and report back to the party". This witch-hunt, which has grown in the past few months, is an obvious attempt to stifle all independent opposition within the party. As the challenge to the government's pro-capitalist policies mounts in the next period, such witch-hunts against the left will escalate. It is vital, regardless of other differences, that the maximum unity in defence of democratic rights be obtained.

Walsall - Electoral Tactics

Last October, IS announced its intention of running an independent candidate in the Walsall by-election. The decision to run Jim McCullum - against the official Labour candidate - opened up a wide-ranging debate on the left as to the correct attitude to take to candidates of the left.

The question is not merely a tactical one. The arguments put forward by certain tendencies - such as the IMG who offered full support to McCullum - carry in them serious implications which challenge the traditional position adopted by 'revolutionaries' to elections.

It is for this reason that it is useful to explore the questions raised by the Walsall by-election and the broader implications that the stand by groups like the IMG carry within them.

In defending their position, the IMG pointed out that support for Labour candidates is by no means a 'principle'. That is correct. While not a principle, however, such support is an extremely important tactic for socialists often too weak to run their own candidates in elections.

Support for Labour - a party based on the unions and retaining the allegiance of the majority of working people - allows them to insert a 'class' criteria into an election. It allows them to advance the concept of counterposing class against class, of drawing the line in the electoral arena between the working and ruling classes.

Support of Labour candidates, allied with stringent criticism of the programme on which they are running, allows socialists to go further. It allows them, at the same time, to develop a real struggle within the mass organisations of the class against their reformist leaders.

Support for candidates outside the Labour Party is not, in itself, unprincipled. Such support, however, to be meaningful, can only be given to a party running candidates on a clear programme which can inject clarity into the situation and which can stimulate the independent activity of the labour movement. It is possible, for example, that a party would run a candidate of its own or even arrange a 'united candidate' with another party in a limited programme which, at the least, achieved this clarity.

The decision by the IMG, however, to support McCullum can in no way be said to be based on the above considerations... The programme of IS did not offer a 'clear alternative' to the thousands of workers going to vote in Walsall. The perspective that IS offered was that of an ultra-left group attempting to turn workers away from the struggle within their mass organisations around a programme which was confused and inadequate.

Even the IMG - which openly refused to support the Labour candidate - was forced to admit in Red Weekly that: "...the only concrete proposals McCullum has for the Walsall working class appeared to be to join the Socialist Workers campaign. Not once did (he) raise any socialist demands". On another occasion, Red Weekly pointed out that "the policies of IS are quite inadequate".



Jim McCullum (ISCandidate)

The reasons given for supporting McCullum seem to fit into a new category outside those used traditionally by revolutionaries in elections. Red Weekly argued that the policies of the Labour government have led to such a demoralisation within the ranks of the labour movement that the likelihood is of a hard-line Tory government being returned at the next election with a growing ultra-right active on the streets.

In such a situation, it is argued, it is correct to support IS (despite its programme) since it can at least open up a fighting alternative to those forces who wish to struggle against the policies of the present Labour government.

Such an argument is, to say the least, contradictory. In what way can IS offer an 'alternative' if the programme on which McCullum is running is 'inadequate' and 'unrelated' to the real tasks facing the

labour movement - the struggle to combat the racist offensive, the high jobless total and cuts in the social services? Far from posing an 'alternative', support for such a candidate running on a confused and sectarian ticket could merely have helped spread confusion.

Moreover, support for McCullum could only have created a diversion from the key tasks facing the labour movement at this critical time. The anti-working class policies of the government are slowly beginning to create - as the IMG itself now recognises - embryonic opposition currents in the unions and the Labour Party, seeking alternative policies. This opposition was to be clearly seen at the last Labour Party conference in the rejection of the government's cuts proposals & undemocratic methods.

To support the IS candidate at that time was to divert attention away from the need to intervene in this process on a clear programmatic basis. It was to forsake the real struggle opening up within the labour movement against the reformist leaders and participate in a 'side-show'.

Under cover of providing a realistic alternative to the Labour leaders, the IMG position merely reflected a get-rich-quick attempt to by-pass the real fight opening up in the labour movement against the government's policies.

Such a position stems, of course, from the IMG concept of trying to group together the 'new mass vanguard' which will then be able to 'bypass in action' the Labour leaders... Presumably, the IMG felt the IS electoral campaign was going to group around it - however sectarian & confused it may have been - all those willing to fight the pro-capitalist policies of the Labour government.

The campaign may, indeed, have grouped around it a thin layer of militants - but that layer, while willing to struggle, was given an 'alternative' that led it into a sectarian dead-end, away from the mainstream of the labour movement. All the IMG achieved by its support for McCullum was to cut itself off as well from this mainstream and, at the same time, to adapt to IS's ultra-left brand of politics.

Far from endorsing McCullum, a revolutionary position would have been to support the Labour candidate, combining such support with ruthless criticism (both inside & outside the Labour Party) of Labour's programme, counterposing to it one based on the real interests of working people.

THE RACIST OFFENSIVE

by

Bob Swart &
Jale Kayahan

Over the past months, the press has indulged in an almost unparalleled witch-hunt against the Black community. Hardly a day has gone by without 'scare stories' of 'illegal immigrants' hitting the headlines or innocent families from Malawi being denounced for living in 'luxury' at tax-payers' expense.

This attempt to whip up race hatred has not only led leading Tories - such as Whitelaw - to call for immediately tightening up on immigration quotas. Figures such as Powell, sensing the new mood, have jumped on the band-wagon by renewing their prophecies of an imminent race war. Accusing the Labour government of 'covering up' for the fact that it has wildly exceeded immigration quotas, Powell however goes further than his erstwhile allies in the Tory Party. Suggesting at a recent Police Federation meeting that 'mugging' was a direct result of the high influx of Blacks into the country, he called for 'repatriation' as the sole way of avoiding 'massive violence'.

Sheltering behind the new-found respectability of this campaign, ultra-right groups like the National Front have stepped up their racist antics. No doubt 'flushed' with their success in local elections only last year, they have now announced their intention of standing over 315 candidates next time round on the issue of repatriating all non-white immigrants.

Their 'anti-immigration' campaign has not been merely verbal but has sparked off a whole series of assaults on the Black community. Over the past six months alone, there has been a string of vicious attacks on Asians, such as that on Gurdip Singh Chaggar in London, last June, who was stabbed to death.

Spineless

The response of the Labour leaders to this campaign has been spineless. Instead of 'challenging' figures like Powell head-on, they answered his accusations by meekly admitting that a clerical error had been made in the immigration quotas and leading Labour spokesmen, such as Bob Mellish, rushed to stress the need to tighten them still further.

The back-down of the government before this offensive can also be measured by Callaghan's decision - last year - to sack Alex Lyon (Minister of State at the Home Office) who, while no radical, had been calling for fairer treatment for Blacks. Lyon's comment on his dismissal - that Callaghan has never had 'much time for the Blacks' - is indicative of Labour's intention of introducing severer measures in the next period.

Such measures will not only include passing the Nationality Act which will further restrict the right of Blacks to enter the country. It is also rumoured that the government intends stepping up the hunt for 'illegal immigrants' in the Black community & introducing a register of all immigrant dependants in the country. Such measures, which will give added fuel to racist attitudes, come hard on the heels of Labour's crack-down on overseas students which has included

both limiting the numbers allowed into the country & escalating the fees for those who do manage to get past immigration control.

This spineless attitude on the part of the Labour leaders is not, of course, new. It is part of a long tradition of capitulating before racist demagogy that has led them, over the past few decades, to try and 'out-Tory' the Tories in introducing restrictions against Black immigrants. The development of such an attitude can no doubt be traced back to the startling defeat of Patrick Gordon-Walker in the 1964 elections by a Tory candidate in Smethwick who ran on a strong anti-immigration ticket.

Racist Demagogy

Gordon-Walker's defeat in 1964 was primarily due to the growth in the Midlands of pockets of racist feeling stimulated by the large-scale influx of Black immigrants in the late 'fifties. Although the Tories had encouraged such immigration - to fill the 'labour shortage' particularly in service industries - they had, as early as 1962, tried to play on these racist moods by proposing their Commonwealth Immigration Act. This Act, which introduced a 'voucher system', was the first to openly base immigration control on what was, in effect, a 'colour bar'.

While the Labour leaders had previously opposed any immigration policy with a racist bias, they allowed the 1962 Act to go through without a murmur of protest. The defeat, two years later, of Gordon-Walker - on an anti-immigration ticket - pushed them ever more to the 'right'. Instead of launching a strong anti-racist campaign, the Labour leaders, frightened of losing out at the polls, were panicked into accepting the racist premises of their opponents. From then on, successive Labour governments have presented the gruesome picture of 'competing' with the Tories in introducing ever-harsher restrictions against Black immigrants entering the country.

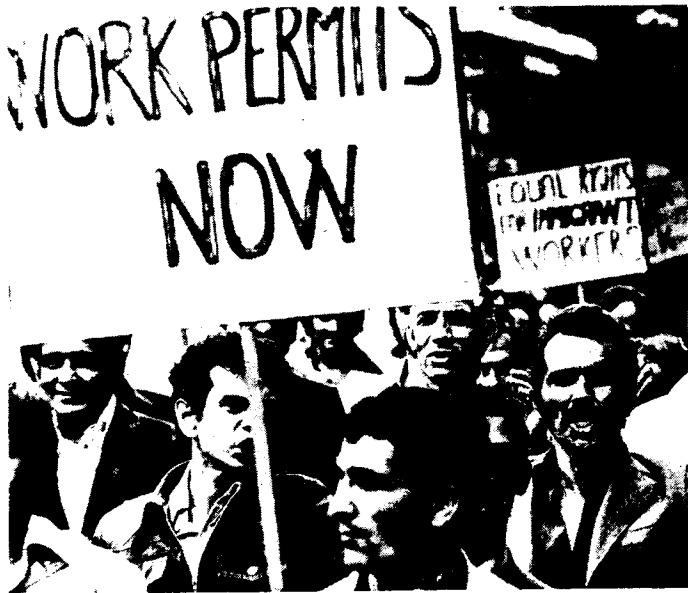
In 1965, Harold Wilson published his first White Paper which suggested limiting Black immigration (under the voucher system) to 8500 a year and, in 1968, Jim Callaghan proposed his Immigration Act which he defended against Powell on the grounds that it had done more to keep Blacks out than any piece of Tory legislation.

These Acts were introduced with hardly any opposition within the Labour Party or trade union movement - or, at least, any active opposition. It is true that certain trade unions such as the T&GWU are on record as being opposed to all forms of racist immigration controls. Very little has been done, however, over the years, to turn this 'verbal' opposition into a real struggle to prevent the Labour leaders from adopting ever-more racist positions, under pressure from their opponents.

Immigration Act

Labour's back-down before the racists over the years has inevitably led it into a position where it is openly prepared to implement racist laws. The present Immigration Act, although introduced by the Tories in 1971, is merely a refinement of previous laws which have served to legalise and justify the racism Blacks face in every aspect of their lives.

The racism implicit in this - and previous - Acts is not just limited to the fact that, under its 'patrial' clause, it discriminates against Blacks entering the country purely on grounds of colour. Its racist bias permeates into the very lives of those few who do manage to get past the 'immigration officials' and enter the country. It reduces them, effectively, to second-class citizens thrust into dead-end jobs and denied the most elementary of rights.



When Roy Jenkin's Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed last year, it was widely seen as a savage inroad into civil liberties. As far as the Home Secretary and police were concerned, it signified little more than the application of powers that they already possessed under the 1971 Act. The licence given them is one that assumes that civil liberties are restricted to whites - Blacks being considered a second-class sub-group.

If you are considered 'undesirable' (or, as the Act specifies, a 'threat to the public good') you can be taken to a special detention centre near Heathrow and deported overnight. You have no right of appeal. If the police suspect you of being an 'illegal immigrant', you can be picked up off the streets, taken to the police station and asked to 'prove' you have a right to be in Britain. If you can't prove it, at once, you may well be on your way to deportation or sent to Pentonville where you may be kept for months while 'investigations' are made.

Of course, there are a hundred variations of police harassment of this sort. You may be dragged out of your bed at night, picked up in a club or arrested at your place of work as happened to Abdul Malik. The fact that such intimidation is legally condoned helps explain the constant 'tension' that surrounds the Black community both in areas like Southall and Bradford.

Back-lash

Far from being a 'legal oddity', therefore, the 1971 Immigration Act (and its predecessors) has become a legal 'cover' for racial prejudice. After all, if it is accepted that Black people can be denied entry on grounds of colour - and denied basic rights on the same grounds - racism has received official sanction. All the Race Relations Acts in the world cannot alter this basic fact.

The fact that the Labour leaders have helped to create - and implement - such Acts is extremely dangerous. Such an attitude, which tacitly admits that Blacks are to blame for high unemployment & poor housing, has helped to create a climate of 'legalised' racism which right-wing demagogues like Powell will increasingly feed off. Powell is, after all, with his talk of voluntary repatriation, merely taking to a logical conclusion the racist implications in the Acts which Labour helped introduce in the 'sixties. As Robert Moore suggests, in his study 'Racism and Black Resistance', once "...you play the numbers game, then Black people already here, and every Black child born here, becomes a problem and the discussion shifts to questions of deportation".

The danger of such an attitude is only too clear today with an escalating jobless total. By refusing to challenge figures like Powell head-on - or, rather, by preparing the ground for him with their previous restrictions - the Labour leaders have helped pave the way for a racist back-lash. Such a trend can even now be glimpsed in the refusal by teaching unions (the NUT & NAS) to accept immigrant teachers while unemployment exists or in the call by Harry Unwin to stop all foreign workers entering the catering industry.

If this attitude were to spread in the months and years to come, it could seriously 'split' the labour movement and turn its attention away from the real cause of social problems - such as unemployment - by creating a scapegoat only too noticeable by its colour. The local election results in Bradford last year - where the National Front achieved about 30% of the poll - are disturbing in this respect. While partially a 'protest' vote, they are indicative of a dangerous trend developing at the direct expense of Labour itself.

Labour Campaign

Although the Labour leaders have, verbally, condemned the National Front, they are quite unable to challenge them since they have accepted - by their attempt to curb Black immigration - that it is Black people who cause the 'problems'. The debate has been reduced to a 'numbers' game between them and the ultra-right in which the latter increasingly make the running. As long as Labour continues to implement a racist law, they will find it impossible to struggle against the racists and stop the steady trickle of desertions at the polls to racist candidates.

It is this fact which undermines the campaign recently launched by the Labour Party against 'racism' which brought 15000 out into the streets last November. While the campaign is a welcome change from the passivity of the labour movement to date on the issue - and potentially can lead to a real challenge to racist attitudes - its edge was politically blunted.

Despite the fact that Labour's annual conference has called - by a large majority - for the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act, the Labour Party campaign refused to feature this demand as the

central one in the struggle against racism. That was no accident since, far from challenging the idea that Blacks cause the problems, the campaign made major concessions to it. It sought to 'calm' racist anxieties by stressing that immigration is under 'strict control' and that the entry of Blacks is on the decrease. It sought to justify the presence of Blacks - those few who manage to get in - by stressing their contribution to the economy as cheap labour in dead-end jobs.

Such a thrust panders to racial prejudice. It tries to offset the influence of groups such as the National Front by assuring people that Labour already operates a 'firm' immigration policy and that those few who do get through the net occupy a second-class status. If the campaign is to become really effective, it is vital that it challenge and not accommodate racist views. This means implementing conference decisions and making the central aim the building of mass action to force the government to repeal the Immigration Act.



Responsibility

The fact that the Labour leaders have not, so far, challenged the racists head-on places a clear responsibility upon socialists in the labour movement. It means that unless they can turn their verbally anti-racist stance into concrete action - into helping to build a serious campaign to root out racism - those prejudices implanted over centuries of imperialist rule will become ever more inflamed by racist demagogues in the years ahead.

It is an urgent question. The influx of Black immigrants (now 2% of the population) has tended to create a more explosive situation than in pre-war years. The racial prejudice rooted in the Labour movement over 300 years of imperialist rule are no longer directed at the 'colonies' but, potentially, at the thousands of Blacks encouraged to enter Britain during the past decades. The ugly results of this prejudice could already be seen as far back as the early 'sixties with the Notting Hill race riots and the demonstrations of support for Powell among the dockers.

Such prejudices represent a trump card for the ruling class in its ability to divide and confuse a labour movement potentially strong at the 'economic' level. Although this card has not yet been decisively played - Powell representing only a

marginal strand in ruling class thinking - it embodies a rapidly growing threat that will be used in the coming years to divert ever-more workers from the real causes of unemployment & falling living standards.

Unfortunately, despite the urgency of the situation, the left have downplayed - if not virtually ignored - the issue. Not only have they failed to respond to the growing racist threat represented by figures such as Powell. They have even remained inactive when this 'threat' has found a direct reflection inside the labour movement in the willingness of successive Labour governments to operate racist immigration laws.

Confrontation

Far from fighting within the labour movement to make the Labour leaders abide by conference decisions - building mass actions on the streets around the central issue of immigration - they have made their key thrust building a 'No Platform for Fascists' campaign. For years, groups such as the IMG or ICL have tended to concentrate their efforts on 'vanguard actions' against the National Front to prevent it holding demonstrations or public meetings. Only recently, *Red Weekly* patted itself on the back for its efforts which "helped produce the internal warfare and eventual split in the National Front that for a time weakened its activity".

The startling error of this tactic can be seen most clearly in the fact that, despite the IMG's claim, the National Front is probably bigger today and has more influence than ever before. The recent election results in areas like Bradford are proof enough. The attacks on the National Front - the 'heroic' confrontations - were a substitute for seriously trying to combat racist ideas in the labour movement. Sending a few National Front members home with a bloody nose may have been emotionally satisfying; it certainly did nothing to 'uproot' the racial prejudice among backward layers of workers which has continued to grow and which has drawn many of them to the anti-immigration policies of the ultra-right.

The 'No Platform for Fascists' tactic was not only inadequate but dangerous at two levels. First, by campaigning under such a slogan - extended, at times, to include figures like Powell - the left were pictured as being in favour of 'denying' the right to free speech. Instead of posing the issue defensively, instead of standing as defenders of democratic rights which the ultra-right are intent on destroying, the left allowed groups like the National Front to appear as the 'victims' of an anti-democratic campaign.

Secondly, while the left was concentrating on 'heroic' confrontations - isolated from the ranks of the labour movement who were reduced to the role of mere spectators - the National Front was engaged in more serious activity. Sinking roots in the mass movement, it was playing on the racial prejudice of backward workers to whip up support for its anti-immigration campaign. Instead of politically meeting this threat, instead of building a campaign to repeal the Immigration Act that could have drawn thousands into real struggle against the National Front, the left gave them virtually a 'free hand'.

Campaign

Even today, when the virulence of the racist offensive is clear, the left has learnt little from its

previous mistakes. While Powell and the ultra-right continue to gain support for their policies, the left has not yet launched a political challenge to them. It is not enough, as has done Red Weekly and Socialist Worker, to wax indignant over the growing assaults on the Black community and call for protest actions against the fascists. It is a question of organising a political challenge to the right that can mobilise thousands in real struggle and that can begin to break down the prejudices in the labour movement off which the right are beginning to feed.

Such a challenge must take into consideration the political focus of the offensive launched by the right. All forces - from Whitelaw to the National Front - have stressed that the cause of high unemployment and falling living standards is due to the high influx of Blacks into the country. To whip up race hatred - and divide the labour movement - they have made calls for tightening the present Immigration Act, ending immigration altogether or repatriating those Blacks already here. It is no accident that their offensive has centred precisely around the immigration issue. They hope to use the racist climate past Acts have helped to create to carry the attack against Blacks one step further.

The central task before socialists is to meet this challenge head-on. This means building a campaign calling on the Labour government to repeal all racist Immigration as demanded by last year's Labour Party conference. Building such a campaign will not be easy and will mean confronting the deep prejudices built up over centuries within the labour movement. It is utopian, however, to think that the racist offensive can be stopped while this Act - which justifies racism and which the 'right' are seeking to tighten still more - remains on the statute books. It is by building mass action to repeal the Act - and not by small 'vanguard' actions against the ultra-right - that a really effective challenge can be mounted which will undermine those prejudices off which the National Front will increasingly feed.

This is not to say, of course, that the struggle against racism should be 'limited' to a campaign to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act. Such a struggle should also include supporting, as well as popularising, in the labour movement the need to build defence committees against fascist attacks



on the Black community. The key question, however, is to give the struggle a concrete, political focus which takes up head-on the policies of the ultra-right. It is only by calling for the repeal of the present Immigration Act - countering head-on the idea that Blacks cause unemployment - that it will be possible to check the growing support for the racists.

Many left groups have, belatedly, begun to raise in their press the need to repeal the 1971 Act. It is not enough, however, to confine that demand to the pages of a newspaper. It is necessary to turn that demand into a concrete campaign by fighting, within the labour movement, for the government to abide by conference decisions.

LEON TROTSKY

ON

FASCISM



Should the labour movement or anti-racist movement support laws aimed at restricting fascist or ultra-right groupings? The growth of the National Front today - its deliberately provocative marches and assaults on the Black community - have made the question a serious one at present being debated in the socialist movement.

Only recently Red Weekly (journal of the IMG) pointed out in an article headed 'How do we fight Racism?' that socialists should demand that "...the Labour government ban all provocative marches & demonstrations of the National Front and other similar fascist bodies".

Such an attitude is not confined to the pages of Red Weekly. It has spread to wider layers of the labour movement where, over the past months, increasing calls have been made for legal action to be taken against the National Front.

The following article by Leon Trotsky is a valuable contribution to the debate over what attitude socialists, trade unionists and anti-racist fighters should adopt to calls on the government to 'act' against the fascists.

The article was written in 1935, only a few years after Hitler's seizure of power in Germany. The coming to power of the Nazis gave an impetus to the violent attacks launched by native fascist movements in countries throughout Europe.

In countries like France and Holland, the ruling class began to move to the 'right', seeking to build a 'strong' state that could keep both the 'right and the left' in order. In December 1935, the French parliament passed a law disbanding all para-military organisations which, it was obvious, could be used as easily against the workers' self-defence organisations as against the fascist bans.

The idea was picked up in Holland where it won the support of the conservative government headed by Premier Colijn. Trotsky's article was an attempt to orient the Dutch Trotskyists to oppose the Bill and to provide them with arguments to use against it. While the situation has changed from the time Trotsky wrote the article, the arguments it puts forward are as valid today as they ever were.

The question of our attitude towards governmental measures ostensibly aimed against fascism is highly important.

Since bourgeois democracy is, historically, bankrupt, it is no longer in a position to defend itself on its own ground against its enemies on the right and the left. That is, in order to 'maintain' itself, the democratic regime must progressively liquidate itself through emergency measures and administrative arbitrariness.

This self-liquidation of democracy in the fight against right & left brings to the fore the Bonapartism of degeneration, which needs both the right and the left danger for its uncertain existence in order to play them off against each other and to progressively raise itself above society and its parliamentarism. The Colijn regime has seemed to me for a long time to be a potentially Bonapartist regime.

In this highly critical period, the main enemy of Bonapartism remains, of course, the revolutionary wing of the proletariat. Thus we can say, with absolute assurance, that as the class struggle deepens, all emergency laws, extraordinary powers etc will be used against the proletariat.

After the French Stalinists and Socialists

voted for the administrative disbanding of para-military organisations, the old scoundrel M. Cachin wrote in 'L'Humanite' as follows: "A great victory. Naturally, we know that in capitalist society, all laws can be used against the proletariat. But we will strive to prevent this".

The lie here is in the word 'can'. What should have been said was: "We know that as the social crisis deepens, all these measures will be used against the proletariat with tenfold intensity". There is a simple conclusion to be drawn from this: We cannot help build up the Bonapartism of degeneration with our own hands and supply it with the chains it will inevitably use to bind the proletarian vanguard.

This is not to say that for the immediate future, Colijn will not want to free his right elbow from the excessive presumptuousness of the fascists. The social revolution in Holland does not seem to be an immediate threat. Big capital hopes to allay the threatening dangers by using the strong, concentrated state. But to keep the real enemy, the revolutionary proletariat, within bounds, Colijn will never completely eliminate or even sidetrack fascism. At the most, he will simply keep it in check.

That is why the slogan for the disbanding and disarming of the fascist gangs by the state (and voting for similar measures) is reactionary through and through. This would mean making a whip out of the proletariat's hide, one which the Bonapartist arbiters might use to softly caress the fascist rear ends here and there. But it is our binding responsibility and duty to protect the hide of the working class, and not to hand over the whip to fascism.

There is another aspect of the same situation which seems even more important. Bourgeois democracy is a sham by its very essence. The more it flowers, the less it can be utilised by the proletariat (compare the history of England and the United States). But the dialectics of history commands that bourgeois democracy can become a powerful reality for the proletariat, at the very time when it is falling apart. Fascism is the outward sign of this degeneration.

The struggle against fascism, the defence of the positions the working class has won within the framework of degenerating democracy, can become a powerful reality since it gives the working class the opportunity to prepare itself for the sharpest struggles and partially to arm itself. The last two years in France, since Feb 6 1934, have given the workers' organisations an excellent opportunity (and perhaps one that will not be so soon repeated) to mobilise the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie on the side of the revolution, to create a workers' militia etc. This precious opportunity is supplied by the decay of democracy, by its clear inability to maintain 'order' by the old means, and by the equally clear danger which threatens the working masses. Anyone who does not take advantage of this situation, who calls on the state, i.e. the class enemy, to 'act', in effect sells the proletariat's hide to the Bonapartist reaction.

Therefore we must vote against all measures that strengthen the capitalist - Bonapartist state, even those measures which may for the moment cause temporary unpleasantness for the fascists. Naturally, the social democrats & the Stalinists will say that we are defending the fascists against Father Colijn who, after all, is better than the evil Mussert. We can say with assurance that we are more far-sighted than the others, and that future developments will completely confirm our perceptions and our demands.

We can, however, formulate certain amendments which, when they are rejected, will make it clear to every worker that what is at stake is not the fascists' rear ends but the proletarian hide. For example: 1) Workers pickets are not to be affected by this law under any circumstances, even when they are obliged to take action against strike-breakers, fascists and other lumpen elements; 2) the trade unions and the political organisations of the working class reserve the right to construct and arm their self-defence organisations in the face of the fascist danger. The state is committed to aid these organisations with weapons, ammunition and financial support on demand.

In parliament, these motions will sound rather strange and Messrs. Statesmen (and the Stalinists) will regard them as 'shocking'. But the average worker, not only in the NAS*, but in the reformist trade unions as well, will find them quite justified.

Naturally, I offer these amendments only as

an example. One could, perhaps, find better, more exact formulations. Will Messrs Social-Democrats and Stalinists deny their support or even vote against them? Even if they vote for them, the motions will fail nevertheless and then it will be absolutely clear why we vote against the government motion as a whole - and we must do this without any second thoughts whatsoever for the reasons given above (even if the Colijn parliamentarians rule these amendments out of order on the grounds that they apply only to propaganda technique and not to the essence of the matter).

We have to take strong measures against the abstract 'anti-fascist' mode of thinking, that finds entry even into our own ranks at times. 'Anti-fascism' is nothing, an empty concept used to cover up Stalinist skulduggery. In the name of 'anti-fascism', they instituted class collaboration with the Radicals. Many of our comrades wanted to give the Peoples' Front, i.e. class collaboration, positive support in the same way that we are ready to support the united front, i.e. the separation of the proletariat from the other classes. Starting from the thoroughly false slogan 'Peoples Front to Power!', in the name of 'anti-fascism' they go still further and declare that they are inclined to support Bonapartism - for voting for Colijn's 'anti-fascist' Bill would mean nothing less than direct support for Bonapartism.

How to Defeat Racist and Right-wing Attacks



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The Struggle for ABORTION RIGHTS

One of the focal points of the women's movement, internationally, has been the issue of abortion. The National Abortion Campaign (NAC) is by no means unique. Mass movements have grown up in numerous countries against reactionary abortion laws which deny women the most elementary of rights: the right to decide whether or not to have a child.

The turn of the decade saw the mass mobilisation of WONAC in the United States which led, after a bitter battle with the 'right-to-lifers', to a significant victory when the Supreme Court declared abortion legal in all states up to the twelfth week of pregnancy.

In France, a few years ago, the mass actions of MLAC forced the French government (in the teeth of strong medical opposition) to permit the right to legal abortion up until the tenth week of pregnancy. In Italy, under the pressure of the women's movement, the Socialist Party put forward a Bill allowing abortion within the first 10 weeks of pregnancy and, in Canada, the unprecedented persecution of Dr. Morgentaler has given a powerful impetus to the campaign for the right to choose.

It is no accident that, throughout the world, the abortion issue should have been taken up as the central one facing women intent upon fighting discrimination. In many ways, it has taken on an almost symbolic character. The right of women to control their own bodies is so fundamental that masses of women have realised that unless they can win it, it will be impossible to make further inroads against sexual inequality.

That's not to say, of course, that any of these struggles has been easy. WONAC had a tremendous battle with the 'right-to-lifers', who launched a massive publicity campaign, issuing slides, filmstrips and pamphlets in schools to prove abortion was 'murder'. The anti-abortionists have not given up as was highlighted in the recent Presidential elections. Nearer home, of course, we have witnessed attacks, stemming from James White's Bill, which have resulted in restricting the limited gains women won under the 1967 Abortion Law.

These attacks upon abortion rights have not been limited to a parliamentary opposition. Whole sectors of the ruling 'establishment' - from the Church to leading Tory MPs - have united in a determined effort to roll back any gains won by women on the road to their liberation. The massive campaign run by anti-abortionists in the USA have found their echoes in France or in Britain with the mass SPUC demonstrations that have drawn thousands onto the streets to repeal the present Abortion Law.

Backlash

It may, at first sight, appear strange that the attempt by women to win such a right - the right to control their own bodies - should have produced such a violent 'backlash', particularly in Britain.

by
Sabina Roberts



After all, just because animals have no control over their fertility is no reason why women should be denied 'technological' advances to control their own bodies. Such a step hardly seems unreasonable in an age when human beings are defying gravity, thinking of controlling the weather by space satellite and transplanting human organs. Why, therefore, should forces from Tory back-benchers to the Church, willing to build mass SPUC demonstrations on the streets, be so passionately in opposition?

The answer is contained not merely in the lurid and emotionally fraudulent arguments used to convince people that abortion is 'murder of the innocent'. No doubt this 'argument' does attract people to the SPUC campaign - people worried about the 'callousness' of present-day society and who (mistakenly) identify abortion with a general tendency to 'devalue' life. There is, however, a much more fundamental reason.

'Victims'

The back-bone of SPUC detect in the struggle of women to control their own bodies a more far-reaching and (for them) dangerous implication. They realise that such a struggle implicitly challenges, or leads women to challenge, all those myths that have been used over the centuries to justify their oppression and keep them prisoner within the family unit.

After all, the main 'career' for a woman is seen - from birth - as preparation for marriage and her role in the family as 'child-bearer' and 'home-maker'. As late as 1963, the Newsom Report pointed out that this "incentive for girls to equip themselves for marriage and home-making is genetic". It is because women are conditioned almost from the cradle to see themselves as 'victims' of their biology - as breeders of children - that a justification can easily be found for discriminating against them in every aspect of their life.

It is woman's future role as 'mother' and 'wife' (for which, she is assured, she is genetically geared) that is used to deny her equal educational

opportunities with boys. She is denied, on the same grounds, equal opportunities at work. After all, her main role is to have a family, isn't it? Even if she opts for a career before having a family, she is still prey to unplanned pregnancies, isn't she, and therefore not to be trusted in a job of responsibility? She is denied equal pay and dismissed first in times of recession because she is not considered to be the main 'bread-winner'. The money she earns is thought to merely supplement that of the husband since her primary role is still viewed as being at home, having and rearing children.

The myriad forms of sexual discrimination that a woman suffers in all aspects of life have their roots in her role as child-bearer in the family unit for which she is educated from her earliest days. In order to acclimatise her to her role as a second-class citizen, a 'mystique' is built up around the idea of motherhood & she is assured by the priest and the anthropologist that this is a natural role for which she has a 'maternal instinct'.

Implications

The demand for 'free abortion' cuts through these myths like a hot knife through butter. By demanding that a woman should no longer be victim but mistress of her body - by demanding that she and not the church or the state should decide whether or not she should have a child - the whole justification for her second-class status is undermined.

If a woman is assured of having a safe, reliable abortion when she needs one, then her role as 'unpaid servant' inside the family, economically dependent on the man, begins to lose its justification. She begins to emerge as an individual in her own right, liberated from the shackles of centuries. At the same time, it would be hard to maintain the discrimination levelled against her in all other aspects of social life (and which stem from the role she is forced into within the family unit).

Partially freed from her dependence upon the man (who is seen as the 'support' for her and her children), more and more women would begin to see the injustice of these forms of discrimination. They would begin to sit up & challenge the fact that they are denied equal opportunities and equal pay. They would begin to demand further liberation from their sole role as 'wife' and 'mother' by calling for increased nursery facilities. It is no accident that women in the USA, for example, since the Supreme Court decision, have begun to extend their challenge to sexism in many different fields from education to employment.

It is for these wider implications - the general thrust such a right would give to women's fight everywhere - that has prompted the sharp resistance of reactionary forces in Britain, united in the SPUC campaign, against the Abortion Act.

These forces are only too aware that the right to abortion, by beginning to liberate women from their second-class status as 'wife' or 'mother', questions the very nature of the family unit itself. It is by pigeon-holing woman as a victim of her natural functions - as a prisoner of the family - that the present ruling class are able to enjoy considerable benefits.

After all, it is by conditioning women to see their main role as child-rearers that the ruling class avoids the financial burden of providing socialised child-care facilities. The 'unpaid

labour' of the woman in the family has other advantages. It allows the ruling class to instil into children respect for authority and class/sex roles which equip them later to 'adapt' to a society based upon class and sexual discrimination.

It allows them to divide the working population along sex lines since the woman, cut off and isolated in the family unit, economically dependent upon her husband, is less likely to identify with the struggles he undergoes at work. At the same time, the fact that women are trained to see their main role as wife or mother enables the ruling class to draw them into industry as a cheap labour source, employing them in dead-end jobs, denying them equal pay and sacking them with little social unrest when recessions loom.

All these benefits the ruling class enjoy stem from the existence of a stable family unit in which the woman acts as the 'hub' in her role as unpaid servant. The struggle by women for control over their own fertility will not change this situation overnight. It will, however, strike at a basic pillar on which the family is built and - by stimulating more and more women to seek further rights - will increasingly liberate her from the family unit which is the medium for her oppression.

It is for this reason that the forces of reaction, from the Church to Tory MPs, have united in a common block to roll back even the very limited rights of the 1967 Act. In order to bolster the stability of the family, in order to undercut the 'permissiveness' of the young, they want to put women back 'where they belong': in the kitchen. They realise only too well that the undermining of the family unit begins to undermine the very fabric of this society on which they depend for their privileges.

NAC- the way forward

The campaign launched by SPUC, over the past number of years, has had a significant impact. The mass demonstrations it has launched - culminating, only recently, in those 40,000 strong in Bradford and elsewhere - have deeply influenced government thinking. Last year, it prompted Labour MP James White to propose his notorious Bill (resting on mass SPUC backing) aimed at curtailing the number of abortions by 180,000 a year.

Even though White's Bill soon 'lapsed', the government felt under sufficient pressure to set up a Select Committee to investigate abortion rights (or rather 'abuses' of these rights). The Select Committee, on its first sitting, made a series of recommendations to the government which, in themselves, made inroads into the rights won under the 1967 Act. These include curbing the numbers of foreign women able to obtain an abortion in Britain and what amounts to decreasing the time limit on abortions. It is now rumoured that SPUC, heartened by the restrictions that have gone through, is trying to promote a Private Member's Bill which will restrict these rights still further.

Whatever may happen in the next period, two facts are clear. The first is that women's rights under the 1967 Act have already been curtailed

under mass anti-abortion pressure. The second is that further restrictions are in the pipeline. Even though both the TUC & Labour Party have gone on record as supporting 'abortion on request', it would seem that the government would not be averse to them. After all, forcing women back into their traditional role in the 'home' fits in with their current policy of creating mass unemployment.

Disillusion

There is no doubt that, in the initial stages, setting up NAC to combat anti-abortion moves was a major step forward. It meant that wide forces, previously content with discussing the problem of women's oppression in the 'abstract', had come together to seriously challenge a concrete aspect of it. Such collaboration itself made it easier to move out & involve ever more women in a struggle to defend (and extend) their rights, as happened on June 21st 1975 when over 25,000 came out onto the streets.

Since that time, however, even though the anti-abortion forces have stepped up their pressure and won certain gains, NAC has not lived up to its early promise. Not only has it failed to involve broader layers of women in struggle but it has even begun to lose the support of many of those who were initially attracted to it. Today it almost certainly has less support than when it was launched over a year ago, despite the fact that the situation is hardly less grave than then.

As a result, many women in the campaign have begun to question NAC's orientation over the past

period. Trying to find the cause of the 'downturn', many have been led to question whether the idea of building a mass-action campaign around a single issue was, in itself, a mistake. Writing only recently in Red Rag, two supporters of NAC suggest that "...the emphasis away from the single issue campaign is a healthy one in so much as it presents the need to push the fight into a more extensive analysis of women's oppression". The Red Rag article reflects a wide feeling growing up in NAC branches which - disillusioned at the apparent downturn in the campaign - have begun to get involved in wider issues.

Articles such as that in Red Rag can be useful if they stimulate a serious debate on the way forward for the campaign. A danger is, however, that 'rash' and incorrect conclusions can easily be drawn which can lead thousands of women back into the political passivity (or disillusion) from which NAC originally drew them.

Single-Issue

Many of us were at the House of Commons meeting (May 1975) which publicly 'launched' NAC.. That meeting, over 800 strong, was so big that another room had to be found to 'house' the overflow. This positive response, which soon allowed NAC to sponsor a 25000 strong demonstration, was not accidental. It was due precisely to its nature as a 'single issue' campaign which is now being criticised in articles such as the one in Red Rag.

Limiting NAC to a single issue was, indeed, its greatest potential. First, it permitted the collab-



NATIONAL TRIBUNAL ON ABORTION RIGHTS DAY OF EVIDENCE 29 JAN 1977

From 11 am
Central Hall,
Westminster SW1

Tribunal Mobilising Committee
c/o NAC, 30, Camden Road,
London, N. W. 1.

oration of wide forces who, while disagreeing on other issues, were willing to unite in concrete action in defence of abortion rights. This was a positive step forward from the endless (and often non-productive) debates in the women's movement. Secondly, this unity allowed the campaign to draw in thousands more who would never have been attracted by 'academic' discussions on women's oppression but who were willing to seriously fight against a concrete aspect of that oppression that directly touched their lives.

The wide support NAC built up in the initial months - registered in the number of branches affiliating nationally - was, however, rapidly to be squandered. By the end of 1975, the White Bill had 'lapsed' and many forces in NAC thought that either the threat to abortion rights had vanished or that there was no longer any real 'focal point' around which it was possible to mobilise. Ignoring the fact that the government-appointed Select Committee was busy planning further curbs to the 1967 Act, groups such as the IMG concentrated on trying to 'link' up NAC with other issues, such as the 'cuts' on the NHS. From early 1976 onwards, the IMG in particular fought consistently against any mass action to defend - or to extend - legal abortion rights, stressing rather the priority of 'local work' around cut-backs in hospitals etc.

The result of this 'turn', over the past year, has been disastrous. While the anti-abortionists' rallies have escalated - and while the government Select Cttee has introduced new curbs - NAC has remained paralysed. Not only has it been unable to move out and win new forces to oppose the new attacks but it has lost many of its own supporters as local NAC groups, lacking a national perspective, have 'drifted' into other issues. As Red Rag points out: "The West London NAC" (for example) "has extended its meeting into women's self-help and its work in the Charing Cross Hospital. In fact, many local groups are funnelling their meetings and activities in this way". This downturn from a promising beginning has 'grown' as NAC, under the influence of groups like the IMG, has turned away from the single-issue and lost any national thrust.

Mass Action

Before NAC was formed, small counter - demonstrations were often called against the large SPUC rallies. The women supporting them know how ineffective and demoralising they were. The mass SPUC rallies, on the other hand, had a powerful impact on government thinking. Appearing to reflect wide opinion, they were not only behind the James White Bill but, later, the creation of the Select Committee which introduced a number of restrictions against women's abortion rights under the 1967 Act.

One of the major tasks before NAC was clearly to explode this myth - to show that SPUC represented merely a small (if vocal) minority intent on imposing its reactionary moral views on the mass of women. The only way to do this, of course, was to mobilise mass support in the streets, thereby showing MPs that the majority of women would not tolerate any attempt to put the clock back. Calling for mass action on June 21st - which brought an unexpected 25,000 out onto the streets - was the first step in this direction.

Instead of building on this positive beginning - instead of using it as a springboard to organise ever-bigger demonstrations - NAC allowed the opportunity to slip between its fingers. The 'turn' towards local work (around the cut-backs in hos-

pital facilities) meant that any perspective for mass action was gradually abandoned. Of course, this refusal to move out boldly was 'justified' on the grounds that there was no longer, after the lapsing of the White Bill, any focal point around which it was possible to mobilise new forces..

From June 1975 until the present, the majority of the Steering Committee (dominated by the IMG) opposed all calls for mass action. They opposed the LSA/IS call for a mobilisation in September of that year, despite the fact it was known well in advance that SPUC intended calling a mass rally. They originally opposed the call for a demonstration in April 1976 and that for one in late Autumn, counterposing to it the need for a tribunal which was obviously inadequate as a 'focal point' for the campaign. In other words, for over eighteen months the Steering Cttee rejected the need for any form of mass action. Is it a wonder that this policy of inactivity forced many former supporters to drift away?

While NAC has remained paralysed, the SPUC forces have been given a free hand and have, of course, mobilised a series of rallies which must have further convinced the government that opinion is firmly on the side of the anti- & not pro-abortion movement.

Parliament

One of NAC's major successes, in its early period, was the fact that it forced several MPs to stand up and fight the anti-abortion threats. It was a 'success' in the sense that these MPs, many of whom later walked off the Select Cttee, carried on the struggle against the government in Parliament itself where the danger to women's rights centred.

NAC's aim should have been to continue linking up the struggle on the streets with that in Parliament as the best way of defeating the anti-abortion menace. Such a link-up could, however, only result from a mass action perspective. The group of MPs who initially fought the government moves acted not only out of personal conviction but because they felt the mass pressure of thousands building up outside demanding their rights. Winning more support in Parliament could only have come by NAC widening its base, mobilising ever-more forces to show these MPs that it was they - and not the anti-abortion bigots in SPUC - who represented majority opinion.

The fact that, in late 1975, both the TUC and Labour Party conferences came out in support of 'free abortion on request' could easily have given an added impetus to this process. By attracting ever-wider support from the labour movement for its activities, NAC could have put added pressure on MPs to make the government live up to the democratic decisions of conference.

When NAC began to abandon its mass action perspective, however, it began to lose any hope of winning this battle. By turning towards 'local' work, by downplaying the need for national demonstrations, it let these MPs off the hook. Or, more precisely, it abandoned them to the pressure of the anti-abortionists who continued to promote their mass rallies which had a significant impact upon the government. It was, after all, under their influence that the government, even after the 'fall' of the White Bill, decided to set up the Select Cttee which came out with a series of recommendations against the 1967 Act.

In other words, the paralysis of NAC over the whole past year has given the government a 'free

hand! in that it knew any anti-abortion curbs would meet with little resistance.

Leading Role

There is no doubt that the curbs on the right to abortion witnessed recently are by no means over. Not only has the Select Cttee come up with a further series of restrictions waiting to be discussed by Parliament but SPUC is, itself, still working at eroding, if not repealing, the 1967 Act through a Private Member's Bill. The urgent task before NAC is how to begin, now, to combat the possibility of further curbs on the basis of going forward with the fight for a woman's right to choose?

At present, when our limited abortion rights are under attack, our first duty is to unite to defend what has already been won. It is only by defending what has been won from the attacks of SPUC and its supporters in Parliament that it will be possible to go ahead later and begin the struggle to extend our rights. This means, to be concrete, ending the paralysis existing in NAC and leading a campaign both to rescind the curbs already accepted from the Select Cttee and any new ones it has in the pipeline.

Defending our rights means, however, not being 'sidetracked' by linking NAC up with other issues such as the cut-backs on the NHS.... We need to draw more and more women into struggle on a concrete issue of real meaning to them and not create a campaign on 'many issues' open only to the already convinced (as exists at present). If the proposed restrictions are not introduced, it will only be because thousands of women, on the streets, have shown their determination not to

accept them. Nothing should prevent NAC from moving boldly out to draw these wider layers into action. To 'broaden' the campaign's programme will merely create internal friction, limit its appeal to these layers and show scant interest for those who will suffer most if the restrictions do go through.

The second task is to re-adopt a 'mass action' perspective. NAC has to move boldly out and pick up not only those forces which have drifted away but many new ones. For some, of course, 'marching, picketing and leafleting' are looked down on as belonging 'to the realm of action rather than analysis' (Red Rag) Unfortunately, NAC has not lacked 'analysis' but it has been short on action for some time now and it is only action - mass action of thousands of women in the streets - that will stop any future restrictions in their tracks. There is no substitute for working out a concrete programme of activities for NAC nationally over the coming period which can culminate in a mass demonstration later in the New Year.

Finally, we need to make greater inroads into the labour movement and use that weight to call on ever-more MPs to force the government to live up to conference decisions by scrapping any idea of further restrictions. It is by putting ever more weight on MPs to act that a broad coalition can be created, both inside and outside Parliament, to fight any anti-abortion moves.

NAC, in the early stages, was the most promising development to date to emerge from the women's movement. It won more publicity for women's rights and drew more women into concrete struggle than anything previously. If NAC can break out of the 'dead-end' imposed upon it by groups like the IMG - which has turned it into a shell of its former self - there is no reason why it cannot once again take up a leading role.

THE DEATH OF MAO TSETUNG

An article by LES EVANS taken from INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

The death of Mao Tsetung, though not unexpected, has stirred consternation in high places across the globe. In Peking, of course, he was the symbolic embodiment of his party's monolithic power. He permitted no figure of remotely equal stature to exist within his apparatus. This can only have bequeathed a certain uneasiness to his bureaucratic 'successors' who will now have to fill his oversized shoes.

Beyond China's borders, Mao was the architect of China's role in the major re-alignments in world politics over the last half decade that goes in the name of 'detente'. This shift from verbal denunciation of Western Imperialism to alliance with it against the Soviet Union earned Mao the unfeigned gratitude of Imperialist 'foreign offices' and 'state' departments from Tokyo to Washington and from Bonn to London. At the same time, it shocked and disoriented thousands or even millions in the capitalist world who had looked to Peking for aid in their struggles for national liberation and socialism.

Mao liked to see himself portrayed as an intransigent communist revolutionary and champion of the toilers.... In the 'cold war' propaganda of the '50s and early '60s, Washington seemed to many to share this opinion. But by the time of his death, the chieftains of Imperialism eulogised Mao Tsetung almost as one of their own.

Gerald Ford called Mao a "remarkable and very great man," adding that the chairman "had the vision and imagination to open up the doors to the United States". It was indeed Mao's 'Open Door' policy that won the hearts & the minds of his former foes.

Henry Kissinger praised him for creating a "durable relationship" between Peking and Washington "based on mutual confidence and perception of common interests".

United States Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, in his tribute to Mao, declared that he had led "an untiring search for the achievement of international understanding and world peace".

Prime Minister Takeo Miki of Japan sent a message of condolence avowing himself "shocked and grief-stricken".

Collaboration

The principal fear in imperialist circles seemed not to be that Mao Tsetung's policies would be continued after his death but that they might be abandoned by his successors. James Reston, writing in the September New York Times the day after Mao's death, asked: "Will Peking follow the line of the Shanghai communique cooperating with Washington? Or - and this is the anxiety here - will new Chinese leaders try to put together the "Sino-Soviet" alliance and confront the free world with a solid continent from Vladivostok to Berlin?"

Spokesmen for the capitalist free world, despite undying enmity for the social gains of the Chinese revolution, were quite willing to overlook Mao's autocratic rule over the Chinese masses & paint him up as a democrat of some kind. Daniel Sutherland, writing in the September 10th Christian Science Monitor under the headline "Mao gave China self-respect" had this to say:

"Much more than Lenin had been, Mao was prepared to involve the ordinary people in the political process and bring them into action against the administrators & organisation men in order to check abuses of authority".

It should not really be surprising that the pundits of the bourgeoisie should see something familiar and comfortable in Mao's 'realistic' foreign policy and manipulated top-

down "democracy". Nor that they instinctively feel that Lenin's proletarian democracy & revolutionary internationalism are something quite different, something they can never make peace with.

Mao's collaboration with the capitalist powers of the world serves to define his place in history and to dispel his claims to represent a revolutionary or proletarian current. It was not an accidental turn but flowed from the petty bourgeois social character of the bureaucratic caste in China that Mao represented, and was the goal of Chinese CP foreign policy from the day Mao Tsetung became chairman in 1935.

Flexible

The 'opening to the West' that so upset many of Mao's supporters arose from no evolution on Mao's part but from the adoption of a more flexible tactical stance by American Imperialism. Joseph Hansen, editor of Intercontinental Press, pointed this out at the time of the first open step toward a new alignment in 1968. Peking, at the height of the murderous American aggression in Vietnam, had sent a message to Nixon on November 26th offering "peaceful co-existence", the class-collaborationist policy perfected by J. Stalin. Hansen commented, in the December IP:

"It would seem that it would be of considerable mutual advantage to Peking & Moscow to close the breach & establish a common front against the common imperialist

Writings on China

* *Revolutionaries in Mao's Prisons*

The Case of the Chinese Trotskyists

By Li Fu-jen and Peng Shu-tse. 24 pp.

* *The Chinese Revolution and Its Development*

Documents of the Socialist Workers party.

Education for Socialists publication, 48 pp.

* *Women in China*

By Katie Curtin.

95 pp.

Parallel

To find a parallel, it is necessary to go back to the USSR of the thirties when Stalin butchered a generation of revolutionists and potential political opponents on 'frame-up' charges of plotting to make a deal with German Imperialism, only to end up making a pact with Hitler himself.

Like Stalin, Mao represents a bureaucratic caste. This formation in China is not identical in all its features to the one in the Soviet Union but it is basically similar. Its chief characteristic is that it places its own narrow, nationalistic interests above the interests of the world revolution, including the interests of the Chinese revolution. This was not seen by many analysts primarily because of the persistence with which US Imperialism rejected dealing with this conservative caste. Washington's refusal to recognise China helped maintain the revolutionary aura of the Mao regime.

The Peking government undertook defensive measures that sometimes had revolutionary consequences, outstanding examples being the military defence of China at the time of the Korean war and the accompanying expropriation of capitalist holdings within China.

It was notable, however, that at home Mao sedulously blocked and rooted out any tendency towards proletarian democracy; while abroad, he relied in the main on alliances with the treacherous national bourgeoisie.

This course was in conformity with the nature of the social formation represented by Mao. The veneer of ultra-leftism was not in contradiction to this; it constituted a necessary part under the circumstances..".

Unrest

In the year before his death, there were mounting indications that masses of the Chinese people were dissatisfied with the chairman's rule and anxious to assert their own voice in the government of China. The strikes in Hangchow in the summer of 1975, reports of resistance among the millions of city youth arbitrarily sent to the countryside & finally the massive protest demonstrations of 100,000 in Peking's Tien An Men Square in April are the best-known examples. These are the first signs of the coming political revolution in the country, when the workers, peasants & revolutionary intellectuals will unseat Mao's bureaucratic heirs and take the reins of power into their own hands.



CULT OF PERSONALITY. April 5 showed growing inability of Maoist propaganda to intimidate opposition to bureaucratic rule.

foe. Neither of the bureaucracies sees it that way, however, & each blames the other for the situation. Worst of all, in their rivalry, each seeks an understanding with imperialism at the expense of the other...

If the demarche meets with a favourable response, there can be no doubt that the Mao regime would move further along this line with a readiness that might astound not a few observers..".

Stalin

Two and a half years later, with the announcement of Nixon's visit to Peking, Mao's opportunist course was unveiled for everyone to see. In assessing its meaning in the July 26 1971 Intercontinental Press, Joseph Hansen summed up Mao's career and its final chapter. His words are worth recalling today as an obituary for Mao Tsetung.

"Why the change at this particular time? The reason is quite clear. The Mao regime has indicated to Nixon that it is willing to help him in Vietnam. In short, Peking is in the business of betraying revolutions in the tradition of the master betrayer whom they hail as their guide and teacher - Stalin.

The proofs could not be more palpable. Peking came out foursquare against the people of Bangla Desh who rose almost unanimously against the dictatorship of Yahya Khan. Peking supplied arms and money to the dictator to crush the rebellion; and openly denounced the people of Bangla Desh for striking out for their freedom.

Peking followed precisely the same course in the case of the rebellion in Ceylon. Chou himself went to the most brazen lengths to associate Peking with the Bandaranaike regime and against the rebels. He put money on the line in the form of a most generous loan. He offered arms to be used against the rebels; and he denounced the rebels.

Not even Nixon could fail to understand that language - if he had not completely grasped the meaning of Mao's consistent policy over the years of seeking alliances with 'progressive' sectors of the colonial bourgeoisie, a policy that helped pave the way for the debacle of 1965 in Indonesia and the slaughter of as many as a million Indonesian communists.

Those most stunned by the current diplomacy of the Mao regime are the currents on the left that have been favourably disposed towards Maoism. The ultra-left posture of the Mao regime was mistakenly interpreted by them to be genuinely revolutionary. They were taken in by the willingness of Peking to offer training to prospective guerrillas and to supply them with small arms in certain countries. The ultra-left language of Mao Tsetung Thought bolstered this false interpretation.

One of the most ironic aspects of Mao's decision to make a deal with US Imperialism is that this was one of the main charges leveled against his opponents of the Cultural Revolution. Mao is now doing directly what he accused Liu Shao-Shi of wanting to do.

Southern Africa:

THE POWDER KEG

In late September, Ian Smith announced acceptance of 'black majority rule' in Zimbabwe within a space of two years. He also made it clear, in the same statement, that the plan was only agreed to by the white settler regime under considerable pressure. As he put it, referring to the intervention of Dr Kissinger and his ally Premier Vorster, "...they had us in a nut-crackers".

Certainly, the press made much of Kissinger's diplomatic 'coup' in forcing the Smith regime to accept a plan which it had resolutely opposed for the previous decade. They also made much of the United States 'change of policy' in Zimbabwe to one of 'championing' the rights of the oppressed black majority.

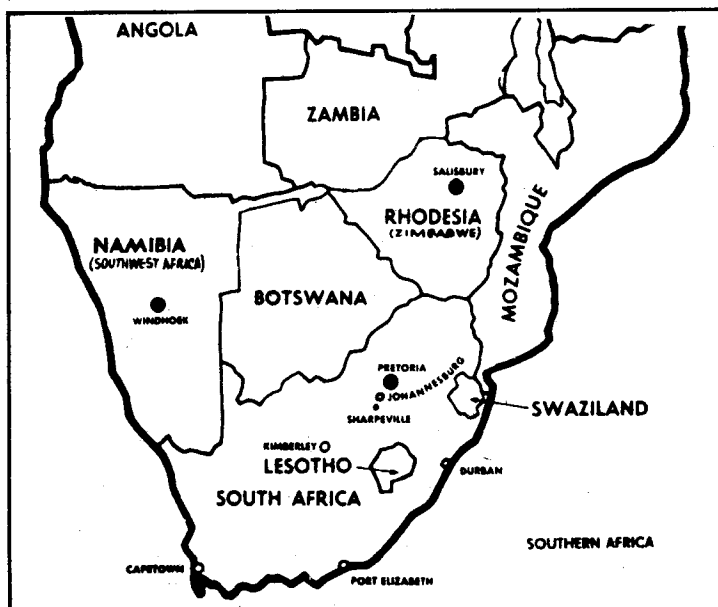
In reality, of course, Kissinger's pressure on Smith represented anything but concern for the rights of the Zimbabwean people (to whom a conveniently blind eye had been turned in Washington as in London during the years of UDI). His urgent meetings with Vorster in late July and August had one aim and one aim only: to create an 'orderly' settlement in Zimbabwe that could cut across the escalating liberation struggles.

PETER MARAIS analyses the background to developments in Southern Africa that led to Geneva.

of political independence constitutes a powerful and important advance for the liberation struggle throughout southern Africa.

The shock waves that spread from the Angolan victory could be felt particularly strongly in Zimbabwe. They led to a major surge forward in the liberation struggle as thousands of youth began to leave for the 'training camps' in neighbouring Mozambique & Zambia and the guerrilla activity sharply increased.

As early as April last year, according to the Sunday Times, about "1,000 guerrillas have now infiltrated across the border and the area of operations, once confined to the north-east, now extends to the south-west. In addition to those guerrillas fighting in Zimbabwe, another 3,000 in Mozambique were reported ready for action and, in Tanzania and Zambia, a further 10,000 to 20,000 were estimated to be in training.



Angola

The pressure on the white settler regime in Zimbabwe to reach a 'negotiated settlement' was not, of course, new. It stemmed basically from a re-adjustment in policy in Washington - and its ally in Pretoria - after their defeat at the hands of the freedom fighters of the MPLA in Angola in early 1976.

The MPLA regime that emerged from the civil war in Angola, in which both American and South African troops had intervened on the side of the FNLA and UNITA, remains a capitalist regime which has since directed heavy attacks on the militant workers of Luanda, radicals and national minorities. Despite its neo-colonial character, however, its willingness to co-operate with the giant US combines such as Shell oil, the winning

Race War

It soon became clear to Washington, as the guerrilla action mounted, that only a 'controlled' transfer to majority black rule could possibly prevent Zimbabwe being plunged into a mounting race war.

The fear of such a war was not merely that it would threaten imperialist interests in Zimbabwe itself but that it could easily 'spill over' into the whole southern continent, particularly into South Africa where the major imperialist powers have massive investments. American firms, for example, had over \$1.2 billion invested there in 1975 & British investment exceeds even that.

Worse still, the growth of the liberation movement in Zimbabwe and other white strongholds could possibly begin to break out of the 'controlling' influence exerted over it by the various Black capitalist states such as Zambia, Botswana & Mozambique and take a more socially radical direction. It was, after all, only the influence of these governments that had forced the four liberation groups - ZAPU, the ANC, ZANU and Frolizi* - into a united movement and had pressurised them to 'open' talks with the Smith regime for a settlement.

It was even possible that not only would the liberation movement break out of the control of the Black capitalist states but would also spark off internal struggles against the governments of these countries seeking a 'compromise' with the white racist regimes. A foretaste of this possibility had already been seen in January of last year when Zambia's Kaunda imposed a 'state of emergency' to intensify repression against students and others who were protesting Zambia's collaboration with South Africa in Angola.



Soweto

The explosive implications of Smith's course were soon readily apparent. Not only did the guerrilla action in Zimbabwe increase but it began to spread beyond the borders. In June, on an alleged 'anti-guerrilla' raid, Rhodesian security forces violated Mozambique territory, thus confirming the 'spill-over' effect Kissinger & Vorster feared.

Even more disturbing was the impact of this struggle within South Africa itself. The Soweto riots which developed in late summer & which spread through the Black townships - involving, significantly enough, the two million strong coloured population - added to the dangers of the situation facing imperialism.

The appearance of mass riots on the streets of Soweto and other main townships was a severe blow to the strategy applied up to then by the South African regime (with the backing of both London and Washington). This strategy, often called the Lusaka strategy, was an attempt by South Africa to win the support of the neighbouring Black states in curbing the liberation struggles in exchange for massive aid and investment grants. Through such a policy, it was no doubt hoped to 'buy' security by binding the Black states economically to South Africa and making them dependent on her.

The Soweto riots - reflecting the general rise of the liberation struggle in the southern continent - was a severe blow to this policy. It threatened to force the neighbouring Black states - adapting to the widespread sympathy in their own countries with the Black South Africans - to develop a more hostile attitude which could potentially isolate her.

Danger

There was, however, an even greater danger implicit in the mass riots that began to engulf South Africa last summer. The struggles that had developed in Angola & Mozambique, while winning political independence from imperialist rule, were still dominated economically by the giant US combines. Parties such as the MPLA remain bourgeois nationalist movements which, when in power, have been anxious to woo the US combines such as Shell Oil and have been ready to use armed force against radical workers who want to destroy imperialist economic as well as political control over their country.

The riots that began in South Africa held within them a potentially more radical character than in any other country in the southern continent since they were predominantly proletarian in character.

The expansion of the South African economy since the middle '50s has brought on the scene a working class more than 6 million strong in which the Black Africans are an integral - and expanding - sector. This fact carries within it a particular danger since the struggle against the apartheid system there is more and more pursued through 'proletarian' methods of class struggle. This can be seen most clearly in the increase in strikes that has developed in the early '70s as Black workers, tasting the new power, begin to flex their muscles.

The increasingly strategic role played by the Black workers in the South African economy means that the struggle against white supremacy can - at any time - very easily become linked

Carrot & Stick

Forcing Smith to adopt the principle of Black majority rule was, therefore, a central plank in maintaining the status quo in southern Africa (and protecting imperialism's interests there). Pressure was placed on Smith - both in London and Washington - to negotiate with the liberation forces to this effect.

A negotiated settlement, it was acutely noted by the Economist, would enable the West to influence "...the scope of the franchise which will help to decide what sort of men will lead the first majority rule government". What the Economist was stressing, of course, was the hope that the West could install a 'moderate' Black regime - no doubt led by the Nkomo faction of the ANC - which would prove itself loyal to imperialism's interests.

In order to force Smith to the negotiating table, they applied both financial inducements to the white settlers and the threat that, in the event of a mounting race war, they could rely on no outside assistance. Even Vorster was forced, despite opposition from his own Nationalist Party at home, to warn Smith: "Under no circumstances could it (South Africa) commit its army to defence of Rhodesia..".

Despite the carrot and stick treatment, Smith stood firm, doubtless aware that even a moderate Black government would initiate a process whereby the white settlers would lose most of their privileges. His reply was to prepare for a long drawn-out war with the liberation army. From the end of 1975 until August 1976, a campaign of intimidation and terror was launched against the Black majority. The entire zone along the Mozambique border was declared a 'no go' zone in which anyone could be shot on sight. Blacks were arrested on suspicion of terrorism, tortured and thousands more were subject to 'forcible resettlement' plans along the borders to separate them from the infiltrating guerrillas.

As the February Washington Post put it, the 'protected villages' into which they were herded were little better than concentration camps based on the 'strategic hamlet' principle used by the US in Vietnam to 'protect' the population.

**All correspondence to—
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and inter-related with a struggle against the capitalist system itself.

Inner Dynamic

The logic of this development could be seen most clearly in the Soweto upsurge. It began around a limited issue that applied to a few junior high schools: the imposition of the Afrikaans language. A student strike, starting in some of the schools, ended in a mass rally that brought out over 10,000.

The brutality of the Security Forces dealing with the rally brought thousands more workers and students out onto the streets in rebellion against the racist regime. They tried to assert control of the streets in a week of battles with the South African armed forces. The rebellion spread to the Black communities where day-long strikes were called and demonstrations organised around the slogan 'Power to Soweto'.

From a student struggle against one aspect of racist discrimination, the movement widened to bring millions of Africans into struggle calling for power to be placed into the hands of those to whom it belongs - into the hands of the Black working masses. The inner dynamic of such a process - in which the struggle against aspects of apartheid merged into one challenging the very nature of the regime - presented a direct threat to Imperialism. It was this threat, above all else, which led to the scramble of 'negotiations' between Kissinger, Vorster and Smith in late August of this year.

What was seen to be at risk in the Soweto uprising was not merely 'white supremacy' but also the very nature of the system in South Africa which protected imperialism's interests there.

Weaknesses

The pressure applied to Smith in August and September to reach a negotiated settlement must have been severe. At the same time, however, he was probably beginning to realise the impossibility of continuing his 'holding operation' in the teeth of opposition from Washington and Pretoria. Military operations against the growing guerrilla threat were proving ineffectual; the economy was under a severe strain and - worse still - emigration among white settlers was increasing as demoralisation set in.

While forcing Smith to the conference table, however, Kissinger's proposed deal is designed to pave the way for a 'moderate' majority rule government which will not threaten, in any way, the economic power left in the hands of the white settlers and their economic backers. He is facilitated in this task - of setting up a 'neo-colonial' state in Zimbabwe - precisely by the internal weaknesses in the liberation movement itself. These weaknesses can be detailed as:

- a) The continuation of tribalism and sectionalism among the leadership which has led to numerous 'rifts' often settled by the gun.
- b) The lack of any independent political line by the liberation movement - particularly the guerrillas - which could offer any real perspective of struggle for the urban population.
- c) The continued stranglehold retained over the liberation movement by the 'front-line' neo-colonial regimes who are more concern-

ed with their relations with South Africa & the West than with the Zimbabwean struggle itself.

Kissinger obviously hopes to take advantage of these weaknesses. By playing off the rival factions, and by trading on the support of the neo-colonial regimes like Mozambique & Zambia who want to renew the policy of 'detente' with South Africa, he hopes to ensure a 'moderate' majority rule government controlled by figures such as Nkomo and Muzorewa.

Socialist Strategy

While Kissinger may be able to impose a deal in Zimbabwe, the prospects for imperialism and white racist rule in southern Africa as a whole are bleak. The collapse in Angola of Portuguese imperialism, the failure of South Africa's so-called 'detente' policy, the mass riots that took place in Soweto and the acceptance by Smith of majority rule are indications of a dynamic now opening up.

Such mighty events in themselves, however, are insufficient to bring liberation. The outcome of the struggle in Angola, for example, has been the creation of a Black capitalist state eager to co-exist with the white racist regimes & ready to use arms against radical workers. What has happened in Angola is true of a great number of African countries where Black majority rule and formal independence has occurred. In spite of undoubted dedication to the struggles, these regimes have ended up defending imperialist property and crushing attempts by the working masses of these countries to fight back against patterns of exploitation set under colonialism. It is likely, if Kissinger's deal succeeds over the next two years, that a similar process may occur in Zimbabwe.

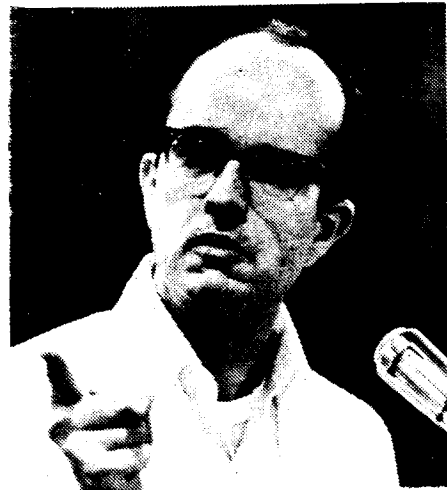
In order to achieve real liberation in Africa - liberation for the majority of Black people - what is needed is a strategy of socialist revolution. This is not a question of using a little 'socialist' rhetoric as do many of the leaders of the liberation forces (such as the MPLA). It is a question of mobilising the mass of workers & peasants in a real struggle to destroy not just imperialism's political but also economic power by nationalising all its holdings.

If southern Africa, today, such a strategy means complete independence for the liberation forces from the neo-colonial regimes in Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana. Fighters for independence in Namibia, South Africa and, of course, Zimbabwe, should see their main allies in these countries as the mass of workers and peasants and not the governments who have refused to break from imperialist domination, who have failed to cure poverty or grant elementary democratic rights.

Indispensable to their task is the need to construct a revolutionary marxist party. Many people assumed that the guerrilla movements in Angola and Mozambique - or even Zimbabwe today - were sufficient to lead to a socialist state. In reality, of course, all these forces ended up as accomplices of imperialism since they refused to base their struggle on mobilising the masses of workers and peasants around a series of demands which would destroy both the economic and political domination of imperialism - and its 'supporters' among the Black capitalists themselves. Such a party can play a decisive role in winning genuine liberation through socialism in southern Africa.

THE MEANING OF DETENTE

An abridged article by Jack Barnes (National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, USA) that first appeared in *The Militant*.



Jack Barnes

Kissinger is being portrayed as a historian with a gloomy philosophy. Among the gloomy citations ascribed to him has been the following: "No responsible leader should encourage the illusion that America can ever again re-capture the strategic superiority of the early post-war period".

On reflection, it becomes obvious that the essence of Kissinger's problem is not merely psychological ('excessive gloom') but goes much deeper. He sees the reality of the shifting world relationship of class forces. What he is trying to grapple with is the biggest single fact of world politics: the striking decline in American power. This fact is verified anew with the events of every passing month. Most recently, it was symbolised by Angola. Far from inheriting the Portuguese empire, as was projected by American foreign policy, another disaster struck.

The fact that Cuban troops got away with landing in Africa to fight for the 'other side' which won, sent shock waves not only through the American ruling class but also through European imperialist circles who look to and count on the strength of American imperialism to see them through their own coming trials.

There was much comment in the press about the American government's lack of an Angolan policy. In truth, while American imperialism has definite objectives, it has no clear-cut foreign policy nowadays. It lacks any confident scheme like 'rolling back the Iron Curtain' to assure the 'American century'. Instead there is only a pragmatic adjustment day by day, month by month, using power - overt military power, covert military operations, the threat of military intervention, economic might - to shore up its defences against a deteriorating world situation.

The *New York Times* summed this up with unusual frankness in an editorial (last April): "Many of the international dilemmas confronting the US cannot be solved but only managed. How to manage them in the new, more sober period opening up is the central question that the nation must begin to face - and the candidates have yet to answer".

But they won't.

Whoever occupies the White House, the answer ultimately given to all problems of foreign affairs is to increase the military budget, that already monstrous burden on the people. Guns instead of homes, food, social benefits - that is what is decreed.

Diplomacy

Turning to the diplomatic side of the situation, detente remains a component of American foreign policy, in spite of Ford's electioneering decision to drop the term. Not a single one of the conditions

that gave birth to detente has changed. There is no realistic alternative course open to the American ruling class for the time being. In fact, detente is central to their efforts to 'muddle through'.

Detente was based on the new realities of world politics, not just on ideas in Richard Nixon's head. It grew out of the dead-end in Vietnam, mutual nuclear destructive capacity between the USSR and the US, growing economic pressures and what Kissinger calls his greatest foreign policy problem - the opposition of the American people to the use of American military force in foreign countries.

This created a new situation which precluded a return to the cold-war strategy of rolling back the Iron Curtain. In fact, on Washington's side, detente signified recognising the status quo in Eastern Europe, recognising the borders of the Workers' States as they now exist. Although a little battered, detente has already weathered the oil crisis, the depression of 1974-75, a Mideast war, the defeat in Vietnam, the crisis in Portugal, and Ford's debacle in Angola.

On the side of the Soviet bureaucracy, detente is based on the need for economic aid, especially advanced technology, and access to grain in the United States. These help cushion domestic tensions arising from the incapacity of 'socialism in one country' to meet the demands of the masses.

In exchange, the American imperialists get some help in policing the world and maintaining as best they can the precarious division into 'spheres of influence'. Both sides, hoisting their nuclear umbrellas, try to freeze the class struggle around the globe.

In different ways, both the American presidential elections... and the recent Twenty-Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union have re-affirmed the mutually-agreed upon course of detente.

Impediment

But there is one great impediment in the way. The very prize that both the American rulers and the Soviet bureaucracy are after - stability, class peace, maintenance of the status quo - is exactly what detente cannot produce for them. Along with the ebbing of American power, the second major factor facing the American rulers is the instability, the challenges to the status quo, the ceaseless turmoil of the world situation, the unpredictability of outbreaks. Who would have said several years ago that Portugal and Angola were next in line?

One example is the Middle East, where no force has been able to stabilise the situation. Despite the collaboration of various Arab regimes from time to time, neither Washington nor Moscow can stop the struggle against the racist, colonial - settler state of Israel; they cannot stop the class struggle. That is true throughout the region, not just at the current flash-points of Lebanon and the West Bank....

Another feature of the instability is its pervasiveness in the semi-colonial world, which has been devastated by the world recession. Here

1. European Crisis

The political instability & rising social turmoil in capitalist Europe has been (equally) unnerving to the American rulers. That continent is where American foreign policy, which included colossal material aid under the Marshall Plan, had supposedly worked a post - World War II miracle, creating the strongest concentration of satellite powers. Now, even the most optimistic official spokesmen recognise the depth of the growing social crisis of European capitalism.

Instead of moving towards Common Market unity, which would re-inforce stability as they hoped, Western Europe is moving towards greater disunity, sharpening competition and increasing social unrest. The strongest countries like Germany grow at the expense of the weaker ones like Italy. But the crises of the weaker threaten to pull down the entire edifice.

The very things the American rulers need most seem to be slipping away. The prospect of a confident, stable capitalist Europe governed by strong bourgeois parties that can be counted on sharing more and more of the burden of policing the world & picking up the tab for the armaments budget - that's a fading vision. Not since the consolidation of their victory in World War II have America's rulers been faced by so grim a perspective.

It is worth taking a closer look at developments in Europe, along with the spectre of 'Communist power'. What is behind this great fear? What is behind the drumbeating of Kissinger and his colleagues that they will not accept Communist parties in the governments of major capitalist countries in Europe?

Behind the bellicose rhetoric, the truculent diplomacy, the sabre-rattling for electoral purposes, there are two elements of prominent importance for understanding what is happening in Europe today and the implications of these developments for the class struggle in the United States and elsewhere. One is the depth of the social crisis in Europe which is more reminiscent of the 1920s and 1930s than anything we have seen in recent decades. The other is the advancing disintegration & vulnerability of world Stalinism.

Trade War

First, we have to estimate the economic and social crisis and the resultant radicalisation of important sections of the European working class. This is partially a result of one of the important successes of American foreign policy - the economic offensive begun in 1971 with the Nixon Conolly wage freeze, the wage cut-back campaign and the foreign trade offensive, an offensive that was carried forward during the oil crisis & the 1974 - 75 depression. This tough economic policy which brought substantial victories to the Amer-

ican ruling class vis-a-vis its Italian, French & British competitors, has had some other results as well. The very success of the American monopolists has deepened the social crisis in these countries.

On the US side, in order to attain the capitalists economic goals, the Nixon offensive meant reversing the few social concessions of the 1960s. Their administrators probed to see what level of unemployment they could get away with. To their amazement, they pushed it to 10% with no big kick-backs. They probed to see what kind of cut-backs they could engineer, to see how big an increase in military spending they could push through. They have been successful beyond their fondest hopes. Such progress on the domestic front allowed them to step up the attack on their business rivals abroad.

The two competitive devaluations of the dollar plus the use of food produced by the giant US agribusiness monopolies as an economic, political and social weapon have yielded some surprising results in the world trade offensive.

The Economist last April, summarising one of the key results of this offensive, said: "In terms of the floating dollar, America's wage costs plus fringe benefits are no longer much higher than those of workers in northern Europe. Sometimes they are lower; in mid - 1975, hourly labour costs for employing an American shipworker were \$ 7.06 against \$ 8.07 for a Swede and \$ 7.46 for a German".

The same trends are noticeable in steel and auto. Of course, this shift shouldn't be exaggerated. The wage gap between the United States & its rivals has certainly not been eliminated. But what seemed only a dream to the American ruling class a decade ago is within reach. In several major industries, wage levels may well be lower in the US than in some European countries.

The same Economist article explained another disadvantage facing capitalist enterprises based in Europe. "Job security laws and customs in Europe are an even greater grouse. During a slump, American companies lay off workers to cut output & reduce wage bills. Most American employees are on contracts that permit a single weeks' notice. The unions co-operate in picking the men who will be given dismissal slips; those laid off are rehired when demand picks up again. American workers with the longest service get their jobs back first. Such economic Darwinism is an historical curiosity in most European countries"....

These are some of the reasons for the tremendous success of the American employers' national and international economic offensive that began in 1970 and accelerated during the oil crisis & the world recession. It is all based on the fact that

the bosses were able to carry through their drive against the real wages, working conditions and standards of living of the American working class with minimal resistance

Consequences

Among the consequences of this 'successful' drive has been the relative weakening of Japan & capitalist governments in the semi-colonial world. Capitalism in Europe itself has become more vulnerable, particularly in the south. The hope is that Germany will continue to play a strong and stabilising role. But even that bastion cannot hold out indefinitely. The crucial dilemma is clear: the very successes of high-powered American economic competition undermine capitalism elsewhere.

To a growing extent, the struggle is not simply between Europe and America but between the strong imperialist powers & the weak, in which the very successes of the strong further undermine the weak & thus threaten the entire system. This, in turn, exacerbates relations within the North Atlantic Alliance, that bloc of imperialist competitors aligned against the Soviet Union and against the world working class. Every single problem that was supposed to be solved by Kissinger's "Year of Europe" - that was in 1973 - has been exacerbated.

The basic conflict among the Atlantic allies is over who pays for depression and who pays for increasing competition. The notion that there could be a single Common Market evolving towards a single European entity in which the strong would help the weak, has become a will-o'-the-wisp. Far from any capitalist United States of Europe, the strong are increasingly adamant about their refusal to help the weak - except insofar as it is in their interests. The German imperialists look upon Italy in about the same way as Washington looks at New York City.

The second big problem facing the imperialist bourgeoisies, pressed by these worsening economic and social conditions, is military. How to organise - or re-organise - the policing of the world? How to get someone else to pay a bigger share of the arms cost. How to get gendarmes? How to make it possible for American imperialism to start intervening again with troops? If not with their own troops to begin with, then with troops from some other imperialist or satellite country? How to strengthen NATO? How to increase the war budget in France, in Italy, in Britain where the masses are demanding the opp-

II. Communist Parties

This is the new context in which the question of Communist parties participation in the governments of Italy, Spain, France & elsewhere arises. In a period of growing social crisis, of economic pressure, of working class radicalisation, the masses of Western Europe are attracted to the Communist and Socialist Parties.

At root, this is not a complicated or unprecedented matter. They want jobs and stable prices, a decent and rising living standard. They want expanded rights, not new restrictions. They want an end to the terrible uncertainty that hangs over their lives under capitalism. They want an end to militarism and to the increasing threat of nuclear warfare... In addition to a radicalisation of the working class and the labour movement as a whole, women, oppressed nationalities, foreign

osite?

The third big headache is the role of the United States itself. What sort of political help can the US rulers give?

It is useful to recall what American imperialism was able to do a few decades ago. The Truman administration openly and crudely intervened with the navy, the CIA, the threat of troops, massive amounts of secret subsidies, campaign speeches by the US Ambassador and his military attaches, to put the government and parties they wanted in power in Greece, Italy and Japan. The relationship of class forces on a world scale made it possible for the American ruling class to proceed in this manner.

But who can imagine the occupant of the White House going on television today to announce that in order to help the Christian Democrats in Italy he plans to send the Seventh Fleet into Italian waters, to threaten the land marines if the Communists win, while covertly aiding the Christian Democrats in a holy crusade against Communism. Such a course would sound a pipe dream in the US or Italy. Yet that is precisely what Washington got away with in Italy in 1947-48.

Today, in fact, the probability is that every time Kissinger or Ford or Alexander Haig gives a speech about how they 'cannot accept' the CP in any Italian government, the Communist Party wins thousands of votes.

The moral standing of the US rulers has dropped to bottom level. After Vietnam, after Watergate, after Lockheed, after all the events of the last decade and a half, the pretence of American democracy, of America as the anti-colonialist power, of America as the moral beacon, have been destroyed. There is little confidence in the reality of American 'ideals', or Washington's grand designs. The peoples of Europe know that the American government's ideal of a stable, successful ally is Brazil or Iran. They know how the US ruling class approaches the difficulties of a New York City - cutbacks, layoffs, freezes on the working people.

The US press has not indicated the full effect on the domestic politics of Italy and Japan of the partial exposures of the role of the CIA and US corporations since WW II. These developments go beyond the simple 'internationalisation' of Watergate. They betoken the end of an era when ruling bourgeois parties in major imperialist countries could be created, financed and kept in power by the American ruling class and by its world-wide network of spies, industrialists, bankers and hoodlums.

workers who have been incorporated in large numbers into the economies of the advanced countries of Europe, youth who will have to fight the wars if they come, students who want a decent education - all these radicalising forces begin to assert themselves. Quite simply, they want socialism as an alternative to capitalism. This is the heart of the question.

In this framework, the Communist parties in countries like France and Italy face a basic problem. They are in competition with the Socialist Parties (and to some degree with forces further to the left...) for the adherence of the very same workers. The key question for them is how to attract these workers - how to hold their allegiance, how to grow, how to increase their voting strength.

Legacy

The CPs claim to represent the legacy of the Russian Revolution. They claim to be more militant in industrial struggles. They claim a special relationship with the 'bastion of world peace', the Soviet Union. But all that is no longer enough. They also have to clean themselves up a bit from the filth of Stalinism.

This is no longer the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s when millions of working people in France and Italy believed that anything negative said about the USSR was probably a lie being spread by bourgeois secret agents, capitalist agents etc. Those naive days are gone forever. The Stalinists have to refurbish their image. They must not only be associated with the USSR, they must simultaneously not be identified with the most notorious crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy... They have to counter public knowledge that dissenting workers and intellectuals in the USSR are sent to insane asylums, that there is no freedom of the press, no freedom of assembly, no right to emigrate, no right to strike, no right to self-determination for oppressed nationalities, no liberation for women, and that 'socialism with a human face' will be obliterated by soviet tanks. They can't carry that albatross around their necks and win the mass of workers away from the Socialist parties in advanced capitalist countries.

Expectations

The US ruling class is (however) genuinely concerned about the prospects of governmental coalitions in Europe that include CP ministers. Kissinger expounded his views on this at length before a meeting of American Ambassadors in Europe last December:

"One thing is clear", he said, "the dominance of Communist parties in the West is unacceptable. This has nothing to do with the reasonableness of these parties or with the degree of their independence from Russia".

We must remember, he went on, "the primary appeal of Communists to the electorate has to do with their position on social and economic problems that bother the people of that country".

The result, as Kissinger outlined in an April 13 statement, is that "this in turn is going to produce governments in which the degree of cooperation that has become 'characteristic' of Atlantic relations will become increasingly difficult, in which their own internal priorities are going to be away from concern with defence, which will produce new opportunities for outside pressure and a move towards a neutralist conception of foreign policy".

From the point of view of the class he serves, Kissinger sizes things up fairly well. The masses are attracted to the CPs and the SPs because they want socialism, not because they want 'Communists' or 'Socialists' to manage austerity



Representatives of other CPs observe as Brezhnev addresses 25th Congress of CPSU

Thus the Stalinists have to lay claim to their own 'national road to socialism', proclaiming a 'union of the left' in France or a 'historic compromise' in Italy. In reality, these are in no way roads to socialism, national or otherwise, and there is nothing new or innovative about them. They are simply old vinegar in new bottles, a catchy proposal for winning mass support for the CPs long-established aim of sharing responsibility for governing Italy & France as capitalist states, as they did immediately after the war.

But this is not obvious to the millions who vote for the CP. What they want and what the Stalinist bureaucrats want are two different things.

programmes for the capitalist state. Secondly, electoral successes by the CP and SP raise the expectations of the masses too much, embolden the workers, the women, the youth, the immigrant workers, the oppressed nationalities. This encourages them to press forward and can even impel them well to the left of the CPs & the SPs they put in government. The last thing these sectors of the population have in mind is electing a SP or CP government just to have it spend more money on missiles.

Kissinger speaks the truth when he says it is not a question of the reasonableness of a given CP. He knows the ruling classes can make arr-

angements with a Berlinguer, with a Marchais, with a Cunhal regardless of what they say or don't say about the worst excesses of the Soviet bureaucracy. The capitalist rulers know that these men and their colleagues are not proletarian revolutionists, but class collaborationists through and through. That is not the problem. The hooker is that big class forces can unintentionally be set in motion because the workers believe less in class collaboration than do their misleaders.

NATO

From the point of view of the Atlantic alliance, and of NATO, Kissinger sees a weighty difference between the CP and SP. The SP leadership is much more dependable. The SP, based on the labour aristocracy in its own country, loyally manages the affairs and defends the interests of its own ruling class.

The CP and its leadership is a slightly different kettle of fish. The CP and the SP are not differentiated from each other on the basis of programme, method and aim. Both are class-collaborationist. If the party labels were removed from the programmes of the Italian and French SPs & CPs and the terminology homogenised a bit, no-one could tell which belonged

III. Nature of Stalinism

What are these Communist Parties? What is the nature and degree of this recent 'critical' independence they are exhibiting? Where does it come from? What are these political personages who are going to be sharing cabinet posts sooner or later?

It is worth stepping back and taking a broader look at what has happened in the world Stalinist movement. This will bring forward the question that is being debated by radicals around the world: can the CPs still be considered, characterised & treated as Stalinist parties? Haven't these parties, which 'dogmatic' Trotskyists, insist on referring to as Stalinist, really become something else? Aren't they well on the road to becoming facsimiles of Social-Democratic parties in some countries, and in other, more radicalised countries, aren't they now really centrist formations that may even project a revolutionary orientation and be pressurised into leading a struggle for power if the upsurge of the masses and the 'far left' is strong enough to make them swing in that direction?

For answers to these questions, one cannot simply look at these parties as they appear today. We have to begin with the Stalinised Comintern, with the theory of Socialism in one country and its correlative of class collaboration. We have to see the disintegration and weakening of world Stalinism since 1956, caught between the rise of proletarian revolution in the West and those forces moving towards political revolution in the degenerated & deformed workers states. From this historical viewpoint, the 'historic compromise' in Italy, the degree of independence of the CP in France or Spain, are further steps down a well-established road.

Dissolution

Long before the Comintern was dissolved, Trotsky predicted it could not last. He insisted that the rise and bloody consolidation of the Soviet bureaucracy... the establishment of a

to which.

The essential difference between the two kinds of workers parties resides in the relationship of the CPs to the Soviet bureaucracy - regardless of any critical opinion members and heads of a CP may voice. Without their special relationship to Moscow, the CPs would erase the partition that separates them from Social Democracy. It is this special relationship to the Soviet bureaucracy that presents the capitalists with their vexing problems.

It is quite evident what the American bourgeoisie favour. They want the Christian Democracy in power in Italy, the Gaullists in power in France, the Tories in power in Britain and the Liberal Democrats in power in Japan. But they, and especially their colleagues in Europe, have to answer a very difficult question.

What parties can administer the severe austerity programme that capitalism needs and keep social peace at the same time? What parties have the best chance of keeping the increasingly radicalised masses accepting wage freeze policies, stepping up productivity in the factories and offices, and staying off the streets?

This question points to the importance of the CPs in the eyes of the ruling class as the social-political crisis deepens.

nationalist socialist outlook as the 'guiding' ideology of this formation and the direct material and political corruption of the Communist Parties around the world spelled the doom of the Comintern.

Trotsky has been proved right. The last congress of the Comintern was the seventh, held in 1935. In 1943, as a little present to Roosevelt, Stalin junked the Comintern. That was the first overt organisational sequence of the logic and practice of national bureaucratic socialism on the world arena.

After the Yalta and Tehran period, marking the settlements of WW II, a post-war makeshift replaced the Comintern. In September 1947, an organ entitled 'For a Lasting Peace, for a Peoples Democracy' announced the birth of the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform. Its life was shorter than the Comintern's... It lasted exactly three meetings. The last meeting, in late 1949, announced that Tito and all his colleagues, as well as the indigenous Stalinist rulers in Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland and Czechoslovakia were assassins, bourgeois spies, Zionists and infiltrated by Trotskyists. Moscow-type trials swept the capitals of Eastern Europe. That was the last act of 'proletarian internationalism' performed by the Cominform.

Beginning in mid-1953 and ending in 1956, explosions took place in East Berlin, Poland & Hungary. This was followed by the first 'world gathering' of Communist parties. The Stalinised Comintern couldn't last through the second imperialist war and the Cominform survived for three meetings. The subsequent 'world gatherings' of Communist Parties were convened only twice. The first meeting was in 1957. The second world gathering came in 1960. At that meeting, the Chinese attacked the Yugoslavs. The Soviets attacked the Albanians. Both were surrogates for the real targets aimed at by Moscow and Peking....

Subsequent semblances of 'world gatherings'

degenerated into invitations to attend Soviet CP congresses as 'honoured guests'. The Twenty-First Congress in 1959 was followed by the Twenty-Second in 1961 which featured sharp open attacks on the Chinese CP. In 1967, 1971 & at the just-concluded Twenty-Fifth Congress of 1976, each has witnessed a further evolution of the 'polycentrism' of the national socialism of the bureaucracies, accentuating the weakness of world Stalinism as such....

From Comintern to Cominform, to fraternal gatherings of world CPs, to invitations to the congresses of the CPSU. Such have been the milestones in the disintegration of that world force headquartered in Moscow pretending to fight for the workers and their allies.

Changed

If all this is true, doesn't that tend to support the argument that there are few genuine Stalinist parties around anymore? Haven't some of them evolved basically into Social-Democratic parties and some into centrist parties - or, at least, aren't they rapidly evolving along these lines?

To answer this question, it is necessary to determine: is there something essential that every one of these parties, regardless of its professed independence from and criticism of the Soviet CP, holds in common. The answer is yes, and that is what defines them as Stalinist organisations.

The first principle that these parties stand on is that the degenerated Soviet Union remains their model for democracy. They reject workers' democracy. They reject the Marxist & Leninist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat with its immensely democratic forms. This dismissal is not just a matter of terminology or of electoral cosmetics; it concerns the heart of the revolutionary-socialist programme. Every single one of the Stalinist parties reject the most democratic of regimes yet developed, which Lenin and Trotsky stood for and fought for. This is the democratic rule of the workers themselves in and through council-type organisations. Their model for a socialist regime remains the bureaucratised Soviet Union - perhaps cleaned up and reformed a little, without insane asylums used as political prisons etc. But no socialist democracy....



Brezhnev with Italian CP leader Berlinguer who said NATO could help his party build 'socialism in one country'.

Second, all the Stalinist parties accept the Soviet bureaucracy's thesis that, in view of the extended character of this epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, the sine qua non of the march towards socialism is detente, peaceful co-existence, peaceful competition with capitalism. Above all, what is necessary is time for the Soviet bloc to demonstrate what a socialist economy can achieve, and to gain more and more authority in the world. This, and not the international socialist revolution, is the paramount goal. The class struggle the world over must be subordinated to these goals.

What are the 'theoretical' underpinnings of these general Stalinist positions?

First, they all accept the theory of socialism in one country. They believe it is possible and imperative to establish socialism in a single country. To be sure, it would be very nice if all the other countries could enjoy the advantages that are to be seen in countries like the USSR and China.

But pending that far-off event, it is possible to establish socialism in one country, if the workers sacrifice enough, if the workers leaders are flexible enough, if the advanced workers abroad have a high enough level of class consciousness. Without exception this theory - or rather nationalisation - of socialism in one country is accepted in principle and practice.

Second, peaceful co-existence & popular frontism are accepted by every Stalinist party. National and international class-collaboration is a fundamental guideline. They see no violation of Marxist principles or working class interests in such a line.

Third, without exception, every Stalinist party accepts the 'two stage' theory of the development of the class struggle. They may not call it that any more; they talk less and less about the second stage. But that is what it amounts to. Next on our century's agenda is the 'anti-monopoly coalition', 'advanced democracy', 'Peoples' Power' - or whatever the code name may be in any particular country for the Stalinist goal of class-collaborationist capitalist regime that is friendly to the USSR. That is considered to be the indispensable next stage without exception. Someday, somehow, it will be followed by the second stage 'socialism' like in the Soviet Union.

Fourth, and this is important for differentiating Stalinists from the Social Democracy - they all claim to trace their roots back to the October revolution in Russia. They try to justify their policy in Leninist language or Marxist theory. While the Social Democrats as a rule tend to justify what they do in the name of Western or parliamentary democracy, the Stalinists disguise their twists and turns in the name of socialism & marxism. This results in a gross perversion of the language of Leninism. The dictatorship of the proletariat, instead of signifying the democratic class rule of the overwhelming majority of the people, turns into its opposite: the brutal totalitarianism of a small minority, a bureaucratic caste....

Finally there are two organisational principles that all Stalinist parties hold in common. One is explicit, the other is not.

First, the emergency measures taken by the Tenth Congress of the CPSU in March 1921 to temporarily prohibit factional activities is viewed as a permanent injunction rigorously enforced to this day. This includes those parties such as the Italian CP that claim to be the most dem-

ocratic internally. Of course, the inevitable result is permanent secret factionalism, rampant cliquism and continuous internecine warfare. The rest of the world and the party learns who the winners and losers are only when the fight is over and the 'winners' explain what the losers really were - capitalist roaders, Trotskyites, agents of foreign powers, revisionists etc.

Second, every Stalinist party, regardless of

what its leaders say about the bad old days, has a cult leader to one degree or another. These parties have to have a bureaucratic 'arbiter', some final authority to adjudicate conflicts within their own leaderships, and in their relations with the Soviet bureaucracy... That is the role played by Marchais in the French CP and Berlinguer in the Italian...

IV. Internal Contradictions

But the efforts of the Halls, Brezhnevs and Berlinguers to clean up the image of the CPs can't overcome the contradictions of a decaying Stalinism. These continue to unfold inexorably.

In the post-capitalist countries, there is, first of all, the contradiction between the nationalised means of production and bureaucratic planning by the government which produces disproportions and dislocations owing to unfulfilled production goals, agricultural crises, waste etc. There can be no basic solution to these deep-going problems other than the democratic control of economic planning by the workers themselves through their own councils.

A second contradiction is created by the very success of a planned economy, which brings a higher standard of living for the great mass of people and a rising cultural and political level. Their ability and desire to democratically govern themselves comes into growing conflict with the unbridled domination of the bureaucratic caste and its material privileges.

Third, each Stalinist party in power has its own material base and narrow interests, and in the struggle to maintain its own privileges, it must inevitably come into conflict with the bureaucratic castes of other countries. Once the guideline of national socialism - socialism in one country - is adopted, and once there exists a voracious social caste that draws its tribute and privileges from the monopolisation of power in one workers state, by its very nature this caste must come into conflict with comparable castes elsewhere.

This makes intelligible the Tito break, the Sino-Soviet dispute, the conflicts between the USSR and the Eastern European states. Far from being 'inexplicable accidents', they were inevitable. Such breaks are a fundamental feature of world Stalinism...

The fourth contradiction is that the sum of class-collaborationist policies in the world, in whatever guise, cannot control or stop the class struggle for any length of time. It continues to surge beyond the grasp of every bureaucrat, dictator... or class-collaborationist.

Finally, another contradiction continues to trouble the Stalinist bureaucracies. This is the false claim that they 'represent' the Russian revolution... Their refusal to explicitly disown the teachings of the great founders of scientific socialism, their insistence on rationalising each twist and turn of their endeavours with some bowdlerised quotation from Marx & Lenin, continually generates interest in genuine Marxism and Leninism. The challenge to go back to live up to Marx or Lenin is one of the ideological spurs to the coming political revolution.

Meanwhile, twentieth-century history keeps pointing a silent finger towards the one name that can't be invoked by the Stalinists - that of

Trotsky. Regardless of how much a Communist Party scrubs its surface, or with what bright new image it adorns itself, there is one thing it cannot do. It cannot genuinely rehabilitate Trotsky and the full range of his ideas. The rehabilitation of Trotsky would not simply mean the rehabilitation of a dead marxist, but the rehabilitation of living marxism. And that is a mortal menace to Stalinism, in any of its variants.

New Left

With this clarification of the characteristics of Stalinism, it is easier to evaluate some of the misconceptions concerning it. Many erroneous ideas are circulated in the 'new left', as people try to grapple with changing events and shifting alignments, the actions of the French and Italian CPs, the threats by the American rulers etc.

1. Stalinism is not synonymous with its origin in the rule of the parasitic Soviet bureaucracy in the late 1920s and 1930s, a period of great defeats in the international class struggle. The basis of Stalinism is determined by the needs and interests of a caste, not by conditions that gave rise to such a social formation.
2. Stalinism does not simply refer to that period when the subordination of CPs to the Kremlin was complete and total, when no-one could demur at Stalin's decisions no matter how brutal or irrational they might be.
3. Stalinism is not simply a term designating the kind of police-state apparatus that existed during the worst period of the Moscow trials and purges.
4. The phenomenon of Stalinism is not restricted to the period of extreme poverty in the Soviet Union. That poverty was crucial to its origins but not to its maintenance.
5. The criticisms of the Italian and French leaders do not represent a qualitative turn, but the continuation of a process bound up with the weakening of world Stalinism. They represent an attempt by parties that remain Stalinist to the core to attract radicalising workers and to compete more effectively with the Social Democracy as labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, interested in maintaining the status quo.
6. We have seen no transformation of Communist parties into either Social Democratic or centrist parties. Short of a deep-going split with Moscow (or Peking), both of these roads are blocked off. To move too far in either of these directions would mean the disintegration of a Stalinist party.

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME TODAY

by Tony Roberts

For many on the left today, the Transitional Programme has become a source of renewed interest. It has led to significant debates among various left tendencies and, more recently, to serious internal struggles ending in splits, as happened with the WRP.* Despite this fact, however, the Transitional Programme occupies a place in marxist tradition that is generally not well understood.

There are some on the left today who consider it to be irrelevant to the present situation. D. Hallas, writing in *International Socialism* 40, points out that the changed world situation in the post-war era has rendered the programme ineffective. As he put it, criticising the Trotskyist movement after the war, its errors "...arise, fundamentally, from the attempt to apply this analysis to a world situation in which it is irrelevant or false".

Others, verging on the opposite extreme, see the Transitional Programme as a 'sacred text' with which only 'heretics' dare meddle. The WRP, in its hysterical attacks upon the Fourth International, has strenuously denounced all attempts to add to it demands stemming from the new forms of class struggle that have grown up over the past few decades - particularly those of women or Blacks for their liberation.

What both these extremes misunderstand is the real significance of the programme. Such a significance resides not so much in the precise demands it raises - although, it is worth noting, most of these remain valid for today - as in the method underlying them. This method was succinctly explained by Trotsky himself in the early part of the programme when writing:

"It is necessary to help the masses in the process of their daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and leading them, unalterably, to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat".

The uniqueness of this programme - which has to be concretised at every step - must be found precisely in the method Trotsky outlined as one of finding 'bridges'.

Method

Such a method, it should be noted, was not at all new. Trotsky, in his discussions with leading members of the Socialist Workers Party who helped elaborate the programme, stressed that it was not sucked out of the thumb of any one individual but represented the 'accumulated experience' of the marxist movement.

The point was well-made. Such a method can be traced back to the 'healthy' years of the Third International and its attempt to establish "...the necessity of the struggle for transitional

"The current debate on the left on the significance of the Transitional Programme is not an academic discussion on a 40 year old document. It is a key debate on the way socialists should intervene in the labour movement and amongst its allies."

demands, making the necessary reservations about the dependence of these demands on the concrete circumstances of time and place". It can, indeed, be traced back even earlier to the Communist Manifesto drawn up by Marx and Engels which, likewise, attempted to 'bridge' the gulf between the day-to-day struggles facing working people and that for socialism.

In this sense, the Transitional Programme (and its predecessors) occupies a unique place in marxist tradition. It does not, of course, include all the programmatic positions developed by that movement over the years. It is an 'action programme' applied to the present. It attempts to apply the marxist method to the ongoing class struggle by drawing up a series of demands which, while relating to the problems facing working people and their allies, leads them through struggle to heighten their consciousness & grasp the necessity of socialism.

As Trotsky himself put it: "It is a programme of action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution. And from the practical point of view, what is most important is how we can guide the different strata of the proletariat in the direction of social revolution".

The discussion around such a programme is not, therefore, an academic discussion on an historical document. What is being debated by the 'left' is the way socialists should intervene in the class struggle, how they should relate to the different forms of struggle thrown up and what demands they should propose for these struggles. Unfortunately, despite the renewed interest in the Transitional Programme - and the debate that has taken place - there is very little real grasp of the method behind it.

I. Objective Conditions

One of the major errors of the left is to look at the Transitional Programme as a static set of demands - 'fixed' for all time - to be applied regardless of time, place and circumstance. This does damage to the very method of the programme which was, itself, a modification of earlier programmes in the light of experience. Trotsky, in his discussions with SWP leaders, stressed how it arose out of the concrete experience of sections of the Left Opposition in the 'thirties.

The Transitional Programme was drawn up to correspond to the objective conditions operating at that time and was, in this sense, necessarily open-ended. The very division of the programme into four parts - dealing with the advanced capitalist countries, colonial countries, fascist regimes and degenerated workers states - is in itself a confirmation of the conjunctural nature of this analysis, open to change.

The task of marxists is not to repeat, parrot fashion, the demands stemming from conditions operating over 30 years ago (despite the fact many of these demands still remain valid today). It is, using the method of the programme, to modify and adapt it to the very real changes in the objective situation that have taken place in the intervening decades. Such changes include the creation of nuclear warfare, the rise of new workers states from China to Cuba, the growth of revolutionary nationalism and of the women's liberation movement.

Unlike the WRP, for whom the world stood still in 1940, the Transitional Programme has to be constantly amplified, adjusted & concretised to take into account such changes. Only by constantly checking the programme against the reality - an empirical process - is it possible to avoid falling into sectarian errors as happened with the WRP which refuses to recognise the dynamic of new struggles because they don't fit into their pre-1940 'blue-print'. Such an attitude has led the WRP to isolate itself from the new waves of radicalisation, denouncing the struggle of Blacks as a 'diversion' and that of women as a 'middle class' cul-de-sac.

Mentality

To adjust the Transitional Programme - to expand on certain demands and remove others no longer relevant - does not mean, however, to adapt the programme to passing moods of layers of the working class & its allies. While the programme has to be adjusted, such adjustments must take place in accord with changes in the objective situation. Trotsky himself was to stress this point when suggesting to SWP leaders that the task consisted of "helping the masses, of adapting their mentality politically and psychologically to the objective situation".

This point is often overlooked. The starting point of adjusting the programme is not the given consciousness of the masses - or even changes within it - but the objective situation which gives rise to new tasks to which the 'mentality' has to be adjusted. If it is incorrect to refuse to take into account the changes over the past decade (like the WRP), it is equally wrong to adapt the programme to passing moods.

The converse of Healy's sectarianism is the 'adaptationism' of groups such as the IS and IMG who often capitulate to the latest moods among the layers with which they are working. These moods can often run counter to the interests of working people both nationally and internationally.

This can clearly be seen on the issue of Vietnam. In the middle 'sixties, groups such as the IMG played a central role in building a mass movement in support of the Vietnamese freedom fighters. Building such a movement was a recognition that the Vietnam conflict represented the pivotal point, internationally, of the class struggle which could help determine the balance of class forces for years to come. Mass demonstrations around the world were of decisive aid to the liberation forces as they made clear on numerous occasions.



Mass anti-war demonstration in the USA

Towards 1970, however, many of the student youth who had pioneered the struggle were, themselves, beginning to lose interest in Vietnam and identify more with the industrial struggles in Britain. Instead of fighting to win these youth to a recognition of the importance of the Vietnam conflict, groups such as the IS and IMG capitulated to passing moods and began to 'back-peddle' on the need for a solidarity movement. They 'back-peddled' to such an extent that in 1972, when the US was

dropping the equivalent of one atom bomb per day on the cities of North Vietnam, the left was incapable of mobilising anyone.

The adaptation of groups such as the IMG or IS to passing moods represents substituting for the objective needs of working people the moods of isolated layers (often called, by the IMG, the 'vanguard!'). Politically, this can be very dangerous and lead to abstaining on key issues because they are not 'in tune' with the 'concerns' of that vanguard at any one time. Vietnam represents, in this sense, merely one example. Another is the refusal of the 'left', over the past years, to take up the issue of racism in a central way and, equally vital, that of Ireland. In the latter case, it is not just a question of 'abstention' - i.e. refusing to build a mass Troops Out Movement - but in the case of IS, actually moving to an anti-socialist position. Instead of denouncing the entry of British troops in 1968 as an attempt by Britain to re-assert its control over Irish affairs, IS actually welcomed them at first as a 'peace-keeping' force designed to prevent pogroms against the Catholic community.

Once again, the error made was to substitute the passing moods of layers of Irish Catholics - who themselves had illusions originally in the peace-keeping role of the troops - for an objective analysis of the role of British Imperialism in Ireland and the need for socialists to call for their immediate withdrawal. Of course, once the illusions had begun to break down in the Irish community, they began to break down in IS as well.

"Moods"?

In a more general sense, adapting to 'moods' of isolated layers can lead to constant shifts in position as the moods themselves change... Groups can thus be left varying their demands at bewildering speed to 'fit in' with the latest mood, thus adding to the confusion that exists instead of combatting it and fighting for a position based on the objective needs of working people and their allies. This danger has been the central one in the British left over the past decade or so as it has succumbed to the pressure of the youth radicalisation.

II. Transitional Methods

Understanding the need to base the programme on an analysis of the objective needs of working people - and not upon fluctuating moods - is the first step in an appreciation of the Transitional Programme. The second step is, as Trotsky put it, "...to bring the mentality into harmony with the objective factors, to make the workers understand the objective tasks".

The 'second step' is, in this sense, mainly a pedagogical one. It involves elaborating a series of demands which, while relating to the real problems facing wide layers, can lead them through struggle to raise their consciousness and grasp ever more inevitably the need for socialism. Such demands create a 'bridge' between the day-to-day struggles of working people and that for socialism.

The guiding element behind applying such a

While, as was pointed out, many left groups adapted to the student movement in its workerist phase in the early 'seventies, this adaptation was to a movement that itself had an ultra-left understanding of the labour movement. Radicalising largely outside the workers' movement & horrified by the Wilson government's attacks on working people, the young radicals saw only the 'bureaucratized' face of the Labour Party that they (falsely) identified with the Tories.

Instead of fighting this false understanding, instead of struggling to win the young radicals to a correct understanding of the Labour Party as a gain as well as an obstacle for working people, the left groups largely capitulated to it. In the 1970 elections, the IS and the IMG advocated virtually an abstentionist position. Figures like Robin Blackburn (writing in Red Weekly) openly called on people to abstain and disrupt Labour Party meetings.

The gradual rise of workers' struggles in the early 'seventies and return - in 1974 - of the Labour government brought about a major shift in these positions. The ultra-left rhetoric of the past was a major handicap in relating to growing numbers of workers who were attracted to the radical speeches of the Labour lefts such as Benn. In the years that followed, the 'abstention' calls gradually disappeared as the IMG and other groups tried to cuddle up to the 'new vanguard' developing within the workers' movement. The only problem was that, in trying to reach this new layer, they adapted as much to its centrist illusions as, previously, they had to the ultra-left ones of the students. The abstention calls were replaced by those giving support to centrist figures like Benn and Foot in the recent leadership battle within the Labour Party.

It is difficult to reconcile 'abstaining' on the Labour Party to giving support to centrist figures like Benn all within the space of a few years (and with no explanations at all for such an abrupt shift in line). Certainly, neither position is based on a programme in the interests of working people. It is based on adapting to the moods and illusions of different layers, which can only lead to bewildering shifts and about-turns. Such shifts can only serve to confuse working people on what is the correct position to adopt on the Labour Party - or on any other issue.

system of demands is not to view them in 'isolation' but as links in an ongoing process of raising the consciousness of working people and their allies. Socialist groupings - when small - have no real control over the direction of the class struggle. They have to intervene in areas and on issues which they do not necessarily choose. The part of the Transitional Programme is to be able to select, at any time, that demand which can relate to the mentality of given layers and draw them into a struggle to raise that mentality. **Such a struggle, in itself, prepares these layers for further struggles around demands which challenge - ever more deeply - the capitalist system.**

The idea of many socialists - and radicals - that a demand which can be 'won' should not be raised shows a surprising ignorance of the

method of the programme. Whether or not a demand is won depends, in the final analysis, on the balance of class forces at any particular moment. We can be sure that in the overall process, certain demands will be won and others will not. That is not in itself key. What is key is that in struggling for a given demand - a 'link' in a chain - layers of people will go through an experience which will deepen their understanding of class society & their resolve to replace it.

Democratic Demands

One of the interesting aspects of the Transitional Programme - and one which many left groups who pay lip-service to it often fail to understand - is that it is divided, in terms of the demands it raises, into three parts. It is important to understand what these demands are, wherein they are different and why they are raised.

The first type of demands raised are democratic demands (which are particularly misunderstood by so-called socialists). These demands relate to peoples' human & political rights which were originally pioneered by the bourgeois revolution. They concern issues such as the right to free speech, the right to organise in unions, the right to self-determination & freedom of the press. The original Transitional Programme called for granting, re-instituting and broadening these rights for the mass of people. That was by no means accidental.

While these demands were originally fought for by the bourgeoisie - during their period of growth - they become ever more incompatible with the dynamic of late capitalist society as it seeks to preserve its powers and its privileges. These rights are increasingly eroded & taken away as the 'strong state' develops. In Britain today, for example, we face a situation where, over the past decade, Black people have been denied the right to enter the country; workers have been denied the right to strike (under the Tories' Industrial Relations Act); the Irish people have been denied the right to self-determination and women the right to control their own bodies.

Defence of these rights in order to broaden them assumes, at a time when capitalism is seeking to erode them, an integral place in the struggle for socialism. It is impossible to begin to struggle for further 'gains' if one is unable to defend & extend democratic rights which have been won over the years. One of the major errors of the left has been a tendency to ignore or 'downplay' struggles over democratic rights as, in some way, a 'liberal' issue. The left have been notoriously absent, for example, from the struggle to repeal the 1971 racist Immigration Act or the Anti-Terrorism Act because they are seen as less 'important' than those struggles at an economic level.

This is a basic mistake and reveals an inability to grasp that, at a time when capitalism finds it necessary to erode these rights, to pioneer them can lead to a serious challenge to the capitalist system itself. The building of a mass movement calling for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Ireland could become for example, a major threat to the stability of the government as the mass anti-war movement did in the USA in the late 'sixties.

Transitional Demands

The second type of demand raised by the programme are 'partial' demands. These relate primarily to the struggle on the factory floor around questions such as working conditions & wages (i.e. around the day-to-day defence and improvement of the living standards of working people). Socialists are duty-bound to be in the forefront of these struggles since they teach layers of people the need to organise and the need for elementary class solidarity in the teeth of opposition from the bosses.

While supporting these struggles, however, participating in and leading them, socialists try to broaden this consciousness, to extend it by raising a third type of demand: transitional demands. Such demands - the heart of the programme - question the inability of the capitalist system to satisfy the needs of working people as a whole. While relating to the real problems facing them, such demands pose a solution that encompasses, within it, the need to create a rational, planned economy.



CRIA demonstration against the 1971 Immigration Act, April 11th. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report).

The two most pressing issues facing working people today are inflation and unemployment. It is useless (as do groups like IS) to call for 'more militancy' or 'higher wages' as a solution to these problems. They aren't. In the first place, such calls can lead to increasing fragmentation of the labour movement as the strong unions win claims and the weaker fall ever more behind. In the second place, such calls do not lead ever-wider layers to challenge the system but merely seek 'gains' within it.

The 'answers' provided by the Transitional Programme to these problems - a sliding scale of hours and wages - do the opposite. First of all, they pose the need for the labour movement to close ranks and provide a solution (a realistic solution) in the interests of all workers, as a class. Calling for automatic wage increase (a sliding scale of wages) can, for example, help stop the fragmentation which can arise over a period of time as 'strong' unions prosper and 'weak' ones go to the wall.

Secondly, such demands pose a solution that - while stemming from real problems - can help ever-wider layers to grasp the need for a rational, planned economy. Calling for a sliding scale of hours (work sharing) is to call for industry to be run in the interests of the

mass of people and not a profit-seeking few. In other words, such demands 'bridge' the gulf between the struggle for decent wages & jobs and that for socialism by showing that the first can only be won through the second.

These demands can act as a spring-board for yet further demands which question, ever more sharply, the 'irrationality' of capitalism. To call for a sliding scale of hours might evoke the reply that an individual enterprise is unable to afford it. This can open the way to another demand ('Open the Books!') to allow workers access to the secret accounts of the firm. If the books actually prove that such a firm is financially un-

III. "Mobilising the Masses"

There are, of course, many groups on the left today who would 'formally' adhere to the demands raised in the Transitional Programme. Groups such as the Workers Socialist League, for example, who commendably broke from the WRP for its inability to grasp the significance of the Programme, can be seen on demonstrations as diverse as those on abortion to unemployment distributing leaflets which carry a whole string of such demands.

While 'formally' adhering to the programme, however, the mechanical way in which these demands are repeated shows that they have not assimilated the method behind it. As was pointed out earlier, socialists do not choose their terrain of operation but, unfortunately, have to intervene in situations where they can.

The art of the transitional 'method' is to be able to choose that demand which, while relating to the level of consciousness of masses of people, can lead them forward in concrete struggle. The struggle itself helps to heighten their consciousness and prepare them for yet further demands.

In this way, the Transitional Programme can be compared to a 'tool kit'. The art is to select the correct 'tool' at any given stage of the struggle. Naturally, this must, to a certain extent, be a matter of empirical judgement as there is a constant inter-relation between trying out a demand and modifying it in the light of experience. It is only by finding the right demand to fit a given situation that it is possible to engage people in struggle to modify their own consciousness.

This fact is 'misunderstood' by left groups like the WSL who try to impose on struggles demands - or strings of demands - unrelated to the consciousness of those forces beginning to get involved in action. A recent example of this was the response of the left to the attack on abortion rights by the government - under pressure from the anti-abortion forces in SPUC. This attack on abortion rights was an attack upon the real, if limited, gains that had been won under the 1967 Act.

While sections of the left responded to this attack, they utterly failed to understand the nature of the struggle and the demands needed to involve wide layers of women (and men) in action. Groups like the WSL stood on the sidelines distributing propaganda telling women to link up their struggles with that of workers in the factories. Even groups like the IMG - who at least participated in the NAC* - tried to tie the campaign to the coat-tails of the struggle against the cut-backs in the NHS. Presumably,

able to afford such a claim, this can again open the way to calling for its 'nationalisation under workers control'.

The important thing to grasp is that these demands can often flow into each other slowly raising workers' consciousness to grasp that only by a socialist solution can their real needs for jobs and decent wages be met. Deciding what demand to raise at any one time depends upon correctly gauging the level of understanding of the workers in question. While such demands are often raised locally in the first instance - in a given factory or depot - the aim should be to popularise them in the whole labour movement.

the IMG did not realise that even if 'abortion facilities' on the NHS were provided, women might still be denied the right to use them because of the legal attacks on that right.

What all these groups did was to impose on NAC demands too far in advance of the consciousness of those layers active in it. These layers were quite willing to fight to defend the right to abortion but not yet willing - at this stage - to link the struggle with one opposing cuts on the NHS or other issues. The raising of these other issues was not, in itself, wrong. It was just a sectarian misgrasp of the transitional method which aims to relate to people & involve them in mass action. As a result of these groups' sectarian antics - particularly the IMG - NAC has declined in both support & influence.

Reformist ?

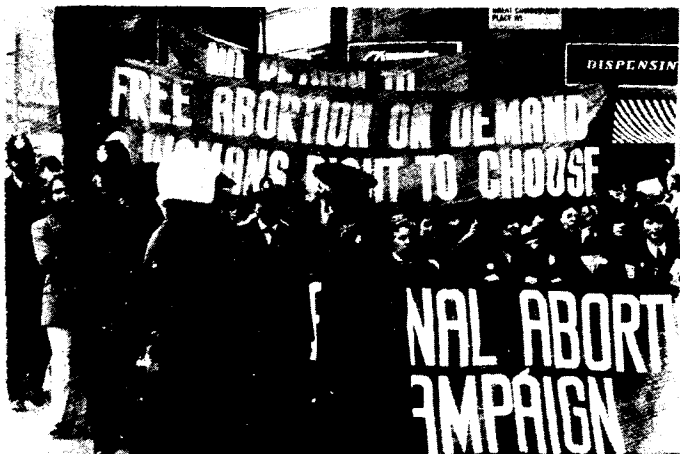
The reason why such groups adopt such a sectarian stance is that they fear concentrating on democratic and other demands - like the 'right to choose' - can lead in a reformist direction. After all, they might be won. Such an attitude, widespread among many young radicals, is to completely misgrasp the method of the Transitional Programme.

Socialists do not start out by elaborating a series of demands that cannot be 'met' under capitalism. If that were true, it would mean refusing to support struggles for higher pay or better conditions which can indeed be won. They start out by elaborating a series of demands in the interests of working people and their allies and struggling for them. In the process, some will be won and some will not. As Trotsky put it, the "realisability or unrealisability is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces which can be decided only by the struggle".

The real point for socialists is that in the process of struggle masses of people can go through an experience that will change their consciousness about the system and educate them in class-struggle methods to reach their goals. It is through struggle that people learn to place reliance on their own power, to develop self-confidence and enlarge their understanding of the system that will prepare them for further struggles.

What the sectarians do not grasp is that the development of consciousness is not a simple 'act' but a continuing process around varying issues in which struggles over a given demand can play an inter-connecting role. The fact

that workers are encouraged to fight around transitional demands does not mean that socialists ignore, for example, struggles over a straight wage claim. On the contrary, fighting for the latter often prepares the psychology of wide layers to understand the former.



In a broader sense, what many left groups do not understand is that the Transitional Programme is not a 'propaganda' document. Trotsky himself points out in the programme that its aim is what he calls the "systematic

mobilisation of the masses...". The reason why Trotsky emphasised this was that he was aware that changing consciousness does not take place through literary ideas alone... Changing consciousness can only take place through the self-experience masses tend to go through in struggling for demands which they consider relevant to their needs.

This is where those groups - such as the WSL among others - make a mistake when they counterpose to the struggle for abortion rights struggles around a whole string of other demands. They see changing people's consciousness as merely repeating, parrot-fashion, a series of demands learned from the Transitional Programme. The art of this programme is not, however, to raise demands totally unrelated to the matter at hand. It is, on the contrary, to select that demand which can relate to the concrete needs of masses of people, at any one time, and to lead them forward in struggle which can change their consciousness.

Mobilising 25,000 young women (and men) June 21st around the struggle for the right to free abortion was a hundred times more effective than mouthing a string of (abstractly) correct demands on other issues.....The former involves people going through a real experience of struggle whereas the latter involves merely sectarian preaching.

IV. Forms of Struggle

The Transitional Programme of 1938 contains a sentence that is often overlooked. It is an admonition to the sections of the Fourth International to "...work out with all possible concreteness a programme of transitional demands concerning the peasant and urban petty-bourgeoisie". In this sentence can be found the important idea of elaborating a series of demands to win over allies to the side of the working class in the struggle for socialism.

The importance of this idea has received added relevance in the developments over the past decades which have resulted in the emergence of different forms of class struggle; in particular, that by women and Blacks for their liberation. These strata, engaged in struggles for their specific rights, have to be convinced by socialists - both in theory and practice - that the internal logic of their fight leads in an anti-capitalist direction.

Many left groups, such as the WRP, totally neglect this question of drawing up a programme of demands for such layers. In doing so, they alienate these layers who can become convinced, after experience with such groups, that socialism has nothing to offer them in the struggle for their sexual or racial liberation. The disillusion of wide layers of the Black or women's movement with the left is concrete proof of this.

In refusing to draw up such a programme for these layers - often the most oppressed and under-privileged sectors of the working class - the left implicitly capitulates to the backwardness of the labour movement which itself often manifests sexist, racist & chauvinist prejudices. The 'Militant' grouping in the Labour Party is the clearest example of

this, with its refusal to support the struggle for abortion rights led by NAC, to pioneer the issue of self-determination for Ireland or to popularise the fight for Black liberation.

Drawing up a programme for these sectors means elaborating a series of demands - both democratic and transitional - which challenge the various forms of inequality that capitalism imposes on them. It is by struggling around such demands (on various issues) that ever-wider layers will progressively grasp that the source of racism and sexism is class society and can only be uprooted along with that society.

The women's movement today - which has thrown up struggles as diverse as that for abortion rights to equal pay - is a concrete case in point. The demands that the movement has developed all challenge the subordinate role women are forced into within the family unit. This is as true for demands such as the 'right to free abortion' to more extensive ones such as 'free nursery facilities'. In challenging this role, in challenging their position as 'child-breeder' and 'child-minder', they come increasingly into conflict with the family as a class institution supported by all the forces of class society. It is in this way that ever-more will begin to see that the fight against sexism is inter-related with the fight against class society, and will begin to grasp the necessity for socialism.

Pioneering the struggle against racist and sexist oppression can be of decisive importance in two ways. First of all, it can lead thousands to see they have a direct stake in socialism and, thereby, render them allies of the labour movement. Secondly, it can be instrumental in breaking down the prejudices

that exist inside the labour movement - prejudices which the ruling class seize upon to divide workers as they are presently doing over the question of racism.

Unfortunately, whereas the ultra-right has astutely played upon these prejudices to gain increased support, the left has virtually ignored them. They have refused to combat the mass anti-abortion rallies pioneered, over

the last years, by SPUC by building the NAC into a mass movement. They have refused to challenge the growing right-wing propaganda over immigration by building a movement to repeal the racist 1971 Immigration Act, and they have refused to systematically oppose growing anti-Irish sentiment by viewing the Troops Out Movement as a priority.

V. Governmental Slogan

Socialists intervene in the mass movement, armed with the method of the Transitional Programme, to advance struggles around its demands which educate layers in independent action and increase their understanding of the need to end class rule. Building such actions constantly poses, however, the need to 'centralise' them around a governmental slogan which poses the question of power: who is going, concretely, to implement the demands raised by the labour, Black and women's movements? As Pierre Frank points out, the slogan of a "government of the working masses to carry out anti-capitalist measures" is "the culminating slogan" of the programme.

A key obstacle to the formation of such a government is the continued allegiance of the mass of working people to the Labour Party. Despite growing disillusion with the Callaghan leadership, working people still retain deep illusions in the party which they built and, as their radicalisation deepens, will increasingly seek to transform that party into a vehicle for anti-capitalist struggle. This has already begun to take place in the sharp shift to the left the party has undergone recently, bringing it into conflict with the government on numerous issues.

Breaking the illusions that working people (and their allies) have in the Labour Party is a central question for socialists. It is futile, however, to think that this can be done, in the manner of IS, by 'denouncing' it from the sidelines. Such a position, which ignores the deep loyalty the majority of working people have in 'their' party, can only cut socialists off from the consciousness of wide layers as they enter into struggle. Far from denouncing the Labour Party, what is necessary is to devise a strategy which can show these layers - through their own experience - that the Labour Party cannot be won over to implementing demands in their interests.

Trotsky outlined such an approach in 1938, in the Transitional Programme, when writing: "Of all parties and organisations which base themselves on the workers and peasants and speak in their name, we demand that they break politically from the bourgeoisie and enter upon the road for a workers and farmers' government. On this road, we promise them full support against capitalist reaction".

Such an approach has, as Trotsky stressed, "tremendous educational value". Calling on the Labour leaders to implement anti-capitalist

demands allows those layers - who still retain illusions in these leaders of a 'right' or 'left' variety - to see in practice the limitations of reformism. They will only learn it through their own concrete experience of 'testing out' their present mis-leaders who claim to speak in their name.

Action

Concretely, this means turning the mass struggles emerging - around the 'cuts', around abortion rights or the racist Immigration Act - towards the Labour Party and calling on its leaders to implement demands in the interests of working people. Taking layers through an experience of the limitations of the Labour Party is not, however, confined to building mass action on the streets.

The struggles around such issues have to be 'complemented' by an attempt to carry the fight into the Labour Party itself by building a class-struggle left-wing ready to challenge the leadership on all aspects of its programme. Such a fight to pioneer the interests of the mass of working people would, in the process, spark off a serious debate around the issue of party democracy - particularly the right of the party conference to make its decisions binding on a Labour government. The past period has already given many embryonic indications of the importance of this issue.

Waging such a struggle both inside & outside the party is not aimed at winning the Labour Party to a 'socialist perspective'. It cannot be. It is aimed at convincing the broad ranks of the labour movement who have illusions in the party - in its ability to be 'pressurised' into adopting class-struggle measures - that it is unequal to the tasks facing them.

The call on the Labour leaders to implement a socialist programme is, in this sense, the pivot of the Transitional Programme - the culminating slogan of all the others. Firstly, it provides all the diverse struggles - around different issues - with a common focal point. Secondly, it allows ever-wider layers to see in practice that the Labour Party is inadequate in the fight for socialism and educates them in the need to build a different kind of party: a party which is ready to challenge capitalism to safeguard the living standards and democratic rights of working people and their allies.

Healy's Slanders Exposed

Over the past year, the WRP (Workers Revolutionary Party) has led a scurrilous campaign of lies and slander against veteran Trotskyists Joseph Hansen and George Novack. They have been accused, in Healy's kangaroo court, of acting for almost 40 years as accomplices of the GPU and of 'criminal negligence' in Trotsky's death.

More recently, the WRP leaders have decided to escalate their campaign by scheduling public rallies throughout the country. Only last year, a London meeting, ostensibly to commemorate Leon Trotsky's death, was turned into a show 'trial' where veteran Trotskyist Georges Veereken¹ was turned out, among others, to provide fresh evidence against the accused.

It may, at first sight, appear strange that the WRP leaders should be more concerned to 'hound' leading socialists like Hansen and Novack than to take up such key issues as defence of the Irish freedom struggle. The answer is not, however, as strange as it might appear.

The WRP has, over the years, suffered some dramatic set-backs. In 1972, its sister organisation in France (the OCI) split the 'International Committee'. More recently, leading figures of the WRP's co-thinkers in the USA and Australia have broken with Healy and moved towards the Fourth International.

In Britain itself, it was only last year that 200 trade unionists were expelled from the WRP for rejecting Healy's sectarian politics and demanding the right to think for themselves. They later formed the WSL.

This increasing isolation and fragmentation of the WRP - under the political pressure of the Fourth International - has been a growing threat to the WRP's leaders. They have replied to it by the only method they know: by launching a slanderous personal attack upon their opponents in an attempt to immunise their dwindling ranks against the possibility of contagion. Such an attack is - quite clearly - rooted in Stalinist 'frame-up' methods.

Hansen and Novack, who have fully answered the charges against them, are not of course the sole victims of Healy's frame-up methods. Tim Wholforth (who left the WRP's sister organisation in the USA) was denounced for being a 'CIA agent' and Alan Thornett, who led the opposition within the WRP, was accused of being a 'police agent'.

The systematic campaign launched against cdes Jo Hansen and George Novack is, however, the most frightening example of what can happen when factional abuse replaces political polemic.

By indulging in these methods, Healy not only brings discredit upon the WRP but upon Trotskyism itself. The Guardian, for example, defined the campaign as an "internal witch-hunt" among the "eternally squabbling" Trotskyist groups. The good name of Trotskyism is, obviously, far from the minds of the WRP slander - experts who, both in their sectarian political line and organisational methods, abandoned Trotskyism a long time ago.

There is increasing evidence, however, that Healy's use of the 'big lie' against his political opponents is losing its effect. Below we reprint a statement - fully endorsed by the LSA - which totally condemns these methods.

The signatures on it represent a wide spectrum. Included are a number of tendencies and individuals who, while disagreeing among themselves, are united in defending free dialogue among working class organisations and opposing the use of 'frame-up' tactics borrowed from the traditions of Stalinism.

We would single out the support of 5 former secretaries and guards of Leon Trotsky; pioneers of the early Trotskyist movement such as Arne Swabeck; leading Trotskyist figures today such as Ernest Mandel, Hugo Blanco and Pierre Lambert and other fighters for free discussion - Ken Coates and Tamara Deutcher.

The wide-spread repulsion for Healy's frame-up methods the world over implies that his desperate campaign is bound to fail. The technique of the big lie is dead.

Statement

For almost a year the Workers Revolutionary Party, the British group headed by Gerry Healy, has conducted a vicious slander campaign against the Socialist Workers Party of the USA and two of its veteran leaders, Joseph Hansen and George Novack. Healy and his followers in various countries have published articles and pamphlets, held public meetings and distributed leaflets and posters accusing both men of 'criminal negligence' in Trotsky's assassination and of being 'accomplices of the GPU', alleging that they have covered up crimes of the Soviet police and shielded its agents.

They also insinuate that Hansen colluded with the FBI. By implication, their charges likewise dishonour James P Cannon, founder of the American Trotskyist movement, as well as Trotsky and his son Sedov.

Healy and his associates have not brought forward the slightest probative evidence, documents or testimony to substantiate their libelous accusations against Hansen or Novack. The script of their polemic is fabricated out of baseless innuendos, gratuitous suppositions and outright lies that do not have any political foundation in fact. They constitute a political frame-up.



Joseph Hansen

The specific allegations have been exposed and refuted point by point in articles by various organisations and individuals printed in Intercontinental Press, which can be consulted for extensive information.*

The records of Hansen and Novack as political figures and writers are well known to us and to many others the world over. Both have been continuously active for more than 40 years as prominent members of the American Trotskyist movement and as supporters of the Fourth International. It is especially odious that they have been singled out and falsely accused of aiding Stalin's assassins, since they

devoted themselves to protecting Trotsky's life during his last exile in Mexico.

The signers of this statement feel obliged to speak out in defence of Hansen and Novack, and the Socialist Workers Party, against the smear campaign impugning their integrity.

But there is more to the matter than that. We are concerned about the practice of such disruptive methods in the workers' movement. They are not new. The Mencheviks maintained that Lenin was a paid agent of the Kaiser. Later Stalin accused Trotsky of being an agent of the Gestapo. Marxists and civil libertarians have, from the first, repudiated

these frame-up techniques employed by the Stalinists against their political opponents & critics. Anyone else who resorts to them must be opposed. Otherwise, the struggle for socialism, which includes the honest presentation of conflicting views, becomes discredited.

We call upon the leaders of the Workers Revolutionary Party & their followers to cease their scurrilous attacks. They discredit the authors, not the accused. We further ask others who share our position that frame-ups have no place in the socialist movement to add their voice of protest and public condemnation to ours.

Review: by Dave Macleod

ANTI-FASCIST STRUGGLE

The growth of ultra-right wing groups like the NF has sparked off, within the socialist movement, an ongoing debate as to the tactics and strategy necessary to deal with them. A recently published and important contribution to the debate is "Counter-Mobilisation: A Strategy to fight Racist and Fascist Attacks".

The pamphlet consists of a discussion (in May 1976) between the leaders of the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party. Led off by Farrel Dobbs, the discussion raises the tactical & strategic problems that have been thrown up by the racist offensive in the USA (similar, in many respects, to the one taking place in Britain today).

The discussion occurred in the wake of a demonstration organised by several ultra-left groups against an American Nazi speaker at San Francisco university. By using 'confrontation' tactics and directing their propaganda against 'free speech for fascists', these groups so alienated the bulk of students that the administration was able to launch an effort to expel them from the campus.

Dobbs' presentation is premised on the decisive importance of the mobilisation of the working class in beating back fascist attacks. While fascism does not represent a major threat today, he points out, the ruling class is certain to rely more heavily on it as the class struggle heats up.

'Tactically', he continues, 'your actions must be calculated to aid the mobilisation of the workers & their allies and obstruct the mobilisation of the fascists. The fascists are trying to do the same thing. They are trying to develop a system of tactics that will facilitate the mobilisation of fascist forces and block the mobilisation of ours'.

Dobbs discusses the dangers involved in attempts to 'smash' the fascists now with only limited forces - the type of confrontation politics used by many left groups in Britain (such as the IMG & the ICL) under the slogan of 'no free speech for fascists'.

'If you start by attempting to gather together hastily a vanguard force & crush fascism in the egg', he indicates, 'you are playing into the hands of the fascists. You are losing ground on the mobilisation of the real class that can do away with fascism, and the fascists are gaining ground as a result'.

The truth of Dobbs' point can be seen by reviewing briefly the result of the tactics used by groups like the IMG over the past years. Despite their attempt to 'crush' the NF 'in the egg', the NF today probably has more support than at any time before. While the IMG & other groups have been busy organising 'vanguard actions' against the NF - which have left the mass of workers as mere spectators - the NF has been busy sinking its roots in the mass movement on key issues such as immigration & abortion.

Dobbs goes on to stress the importance of avoiding slogans that create the false impression that revolutionaries seek to suppress free speech rather than put a stop to fascist attacks on the Black or labour movements.

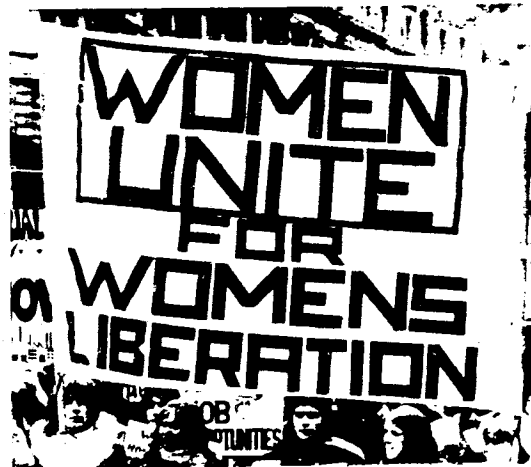
Discussing how socialists mobilised in the 'thirties, he points out: 'We didn't say a word about depriving the fascists of their right to free speech. Our remarks concentrated on explaining to the workers why they couldn't rely on any arm of the state apparatus to protect them against the fascists and why they should rely only on themselves to do so...'

Dobbs continues to explain the importance of presenting the issue defensively in mobilising workers against racist and fascist attacks. 'Don't forget Lenin and Trotsky made a revolution under defensive slogans. If you are obliged to clobber some fascist in order to protect your rights, it's always good if this is done in the name of defending yourself. It helps make more allies'.

The contributions made in this pamphlet are a 'must' reading for all those concerned with organising a serious response to the growing threat of the NF. They are particularly relevant to the British left which has substituted 'vanguard heroics' for building a serious opposition in the Labour movement against the policies on which the NF is making ground.

NEXT ISSUE

- Scottish Nationalism
- The Roots of Inflation
- Portugal - A Balance Sheet
- Feminism and Socialism



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An analysis of the current radicalisation and a strategy for taking it - in all its diverse forms - forward.

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A marxist evaluation of the Labour Party and the problem it has posed, historically, before the 'left'.

Revolutionary Dynamics of Women's Liberation 25p

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The key nature of abortion rights, in the struggle by women for their liberation, and defence of the mass-action perspective in winning them.

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An analysis of the EEC and the ongoing debate it has provoked within the labour movement..

Discussion Forums

The LSA holds regular weekly discussion forums on the problems facing the labour, women's and Black movements together with the liberation struggles taking place internationally. If you are interested in attending these forums or would like to know more about the LSA then please write to: LSA, 58, Auckland Road, London, SE 19.

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