

SOCIALIST PRESS



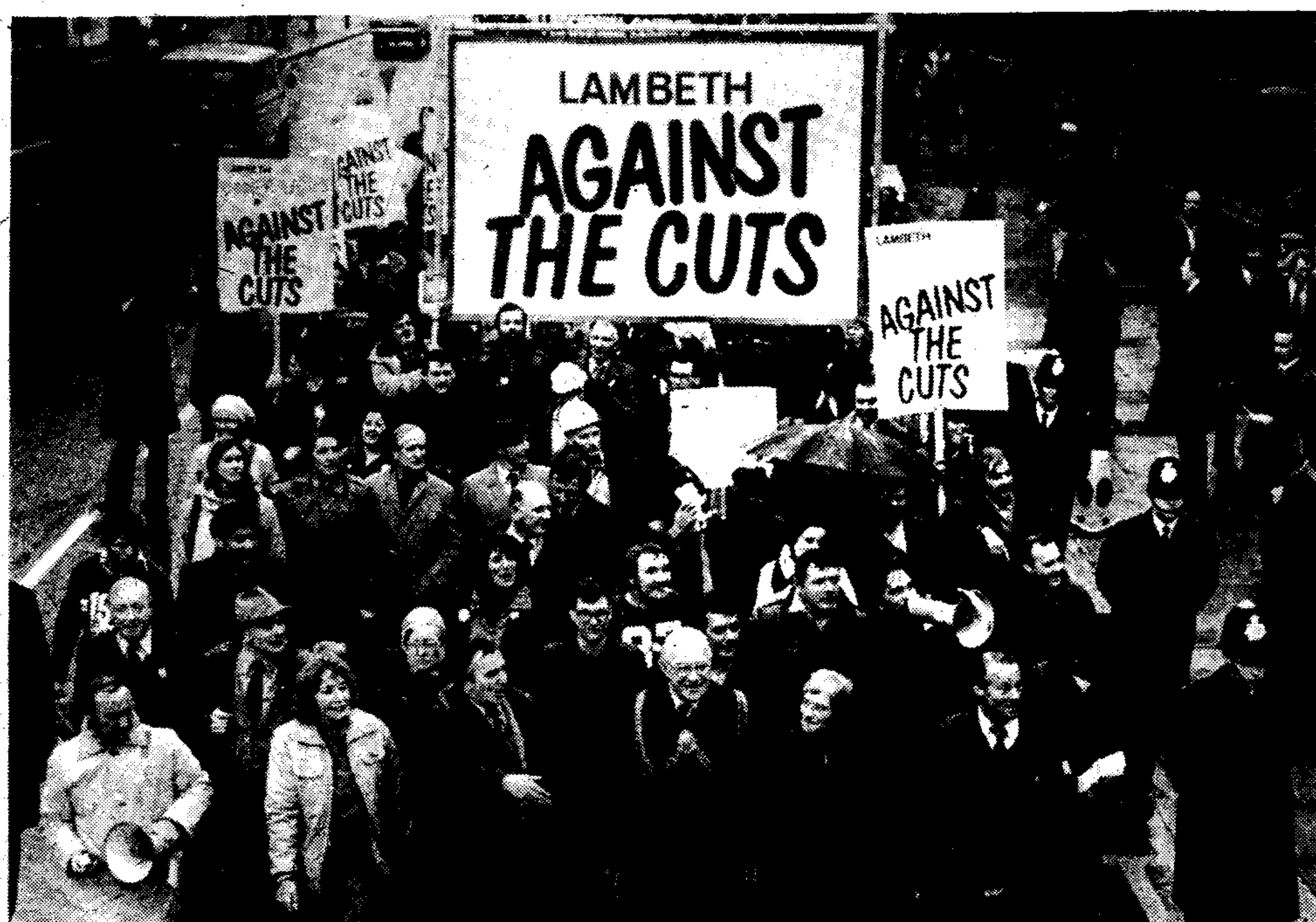
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THE NEXT ISSUE OF SOCIALIST PRESS WILL APPEAR ON WEDNESDAY 9 JANUARY 1980

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THE WORLD IN 1979
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20,000 on Lambeth cuts demonstration



Tory leaders in conference

TORIES BANK ON UNION LEADERS' SELL-OUT

Tories and top employers could almost be heard laughing uncontrollably—all the way to the bank.

They had just heard the response of the TUC economic committee to the devastating and unending series of Tory attacks on trade unionists and the whole working class.

Three whole months after being mandated by the TUC Congress to mount a campaign against the cuts and anti-union laws, these top bureaucrats last week finally spelled out their long-term strategy: a national demonstration on Sunday March 9; and a "day of action"—consisting of a series of lunch-time meetings!—on Wednesday May 14.

These pathetic token gestures are the sum total of TUC resistance to an unprecedented Tory offensive on every front.

Time to bite

Indeed a spokesman actually argued that the incredible delay before even these protests take place is "to allow the cuts to bite", and to "give union leaders time to assess the feelings of the rank and file".

This argument is, of course, nonsense. There have been ample indications to even the blindest and deafest union leader that workers in both the public and private sector are more than ready, given the slightest lead, to take action against the cuts and against the whole battery of Tory policies.

Tens of thousands of workers have taken to the streets in the last few months in protest against Tory anti-abor-

tion laws, local government spending cuts, racist legislation, and cuts throughout the public sector.

Strikes

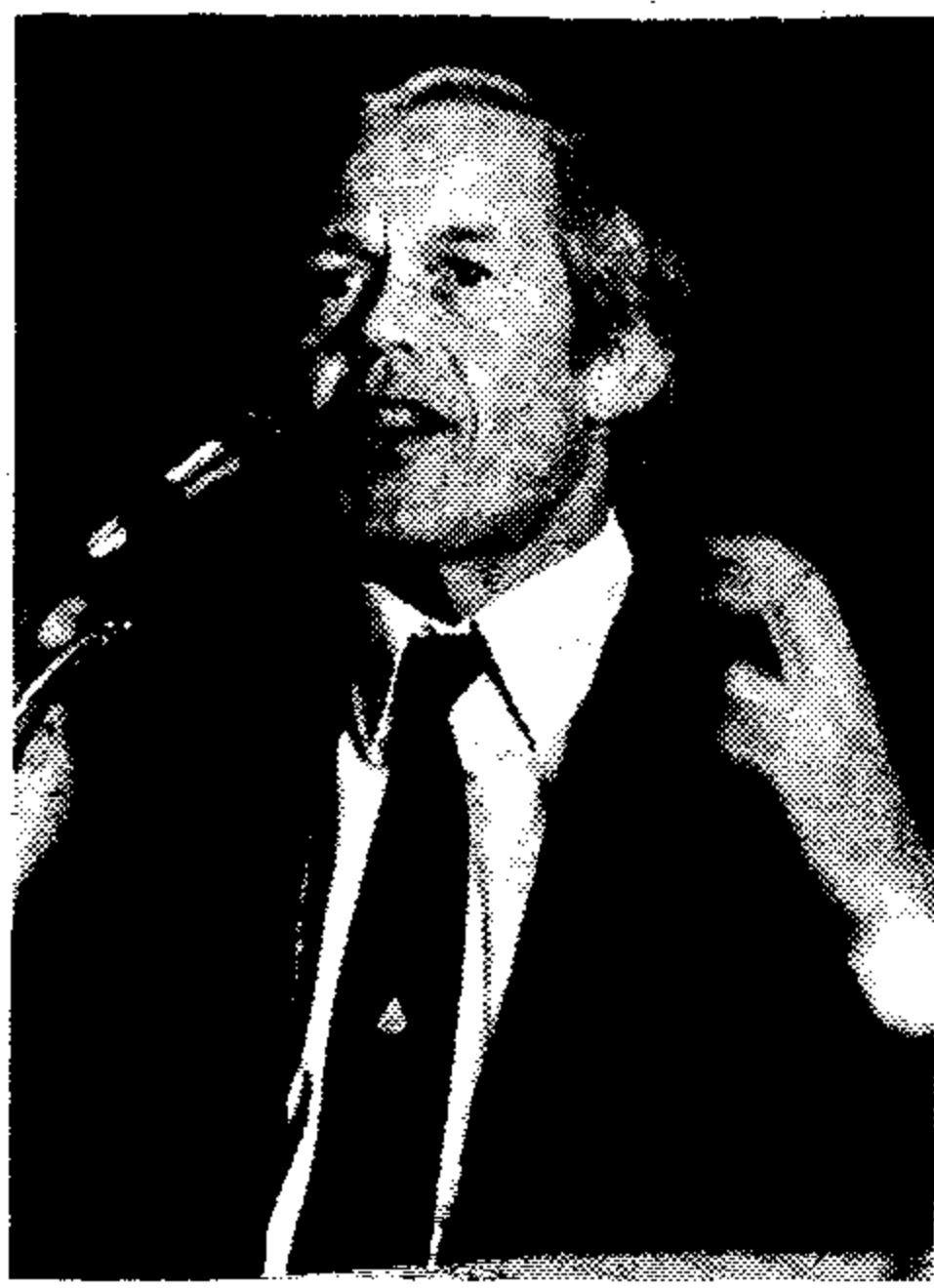
Nearly 40,000 BL car-workers were involved in unofficial strikes against the victimisation of Combine Committee chairman Derek Robinson who opposed mass sackings in BL; and 2 million engineering workers fought a tenacious battle against the Engineering Employers Federation to achieve a cut in the working week.

Even now shop floor resistance to the Tory package of closures, redundancies and cuts in real wages in the steel industry has forced the right-wing-led Iron and Steel Trades Confederation to call all-out strike action on pay from 2 January.

Such is the shop floor militancy against the Tories that even bureaucratic leaders of the Welsh TUC have been forced into making threats of a possible general strike against the mass sackings in the South Wales steel industry.

Tax the dole

This anger can only increase as the Tories press ahead with



No action—Fisher

their programme of vicious attacks on working class living standards.

Last week saw Thatcher vigorously reasserting the Tory manifesto pledge to tax dole and social security payments in order to tackle what she called the "Why work?" syndrome.

This renewed, cynical, onslaught on those thrown out of work by Tory policies, together with still more public spending cuts, are intended to enable the government to introduce yet another cut in taxes for the wealthy, to provide what the Tories describe as

"personal incentives".

But it also runs alongside Sir Keith Joseph's plan to cut £10 per week from benefits paid to strikers' families—regardless of hardship.

The Tory argument is that benefits will be paid on the assumption that a striker is receiving £10 per week in strike pay from his or her union—and will deduct this from any amount due.

Since virtually no union pays as much as £10 per week even for official disputes, Tories hope the effect will be to starve strikers into submission by penalising their families.

With a programme involving vicious anti-union legislation, runaway inflation, the destruction of health, education and social services, the devastation of whole areas of industry, and huge tax cuts for the filthy rich, the Tories are staking their future on one thing: the obvious refusal of Labour and trade union leaders to mobilise the full strength of the working class in mass strike action to bring down the Thatcher government.

Opposed to action

Public sector union leaders like Alan Fisher and Albert Spanswick denounce Thatcher

at mass rallies—but remain implacably opposed even to local strikes and occupations to stop the cuts—let alone the necessary policy of national strike action.

Steel union leaders, who have accepted redundancies by the tens of thousand, have called for strike action on wages alone in the hopes of confining the scope of the struggle to one of seeking a few concessions from the Tories rather than bringing them down.

Even this stand is attacked by TGWU and GMWU leaders, who declare their willingness to 'negotiate' on BSC's insulting 2% pay offer.

Civil service union leaders stand by, mouthing empty phrases of opposition while the Tories butcher jobs and destroy vital social services.

AUEW leaders knife strike action in defence of Derek Robinson, and throw the full weight of the union behind BL chairman Michael Edwards' plan to sack 20,000 workers, destroy every shop floor agreement won in decades of struggle and create conditions for closure of the Corporation.

NUM, AUEW and EETPU leaders have even expressed cautious approval for at least sections of the Tories' new anti-union legislation, while expressing only tactical reservations at Thatcher's frontal assault on picketing rights.

Nowhere in this panorama of retreats and betrayals is there an official leadership prepared to defend on principle the independent interests of the working class.

No union leader has campaigned for a programme of strikes, occupations, and mass action that could prepare the

way for a general strike to bring down the Thatcher government.

Nowhere is there an official leadership fighting to spread struggles against the cuts, closures and other Tory attacks through the building of councils of action, bringing together delegates from local trade unions and labour movement political organisations to debate and decide the way forward.

This is because every layer of the trade union bureaucracy fears that, if such a lead were given, the militancy of the working class could develop to a level where their parasitic and privileged positions and 'peaceful coexistence' with management would be jeopardised.

Conditions would be created where an alternative, revolutionary leadership could be constructed, dedicated to the struggle for the independent interests of the working class.

Such a leadership must be built in the midst of the struggles that will undoubtedly erupt in the New Year, and in the fight to mobilise action derailed by TUC and Labour bureaucrats.

Bring down Thatcher

Until this takes place, and until the Tories are brought down and replaced by a government that is made answerable to the mass workers' movement there will be no end to the attacks on the working class.

***Strike and occupy to stop the cuts!**

***Defend living standards! Protect all wage agreements through cost of living clauses!**

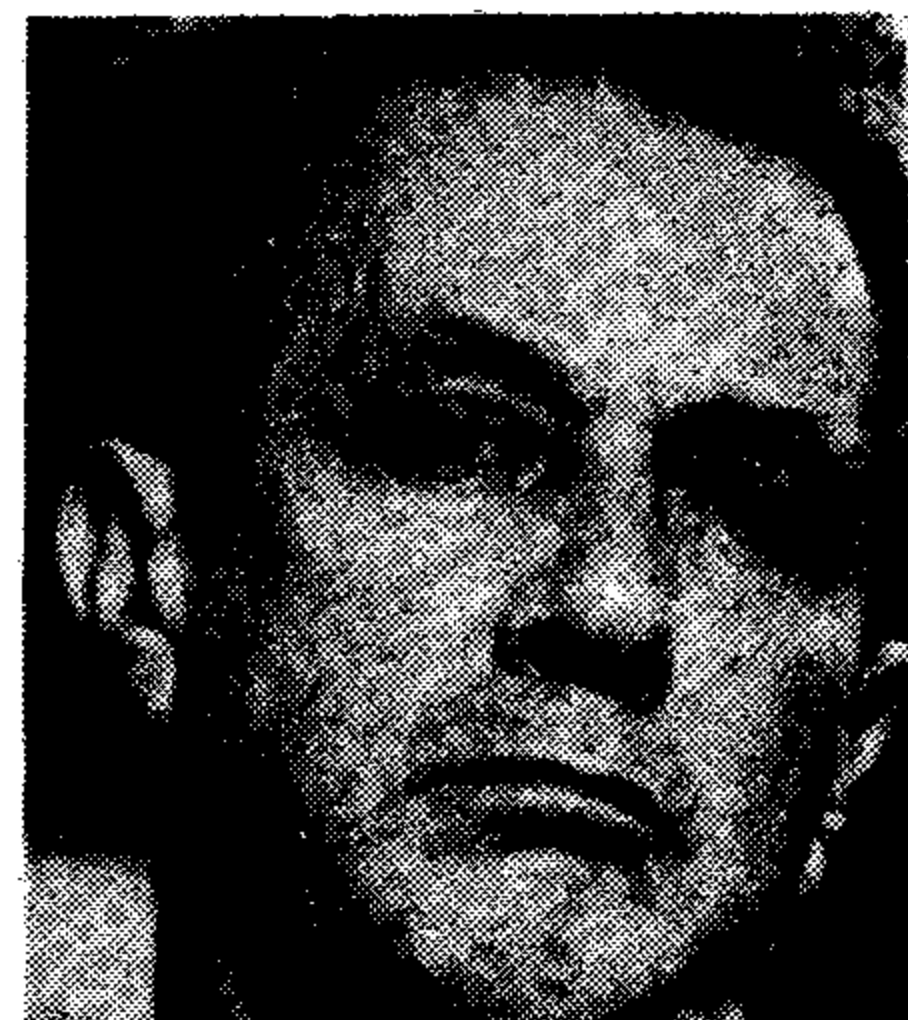
***Defend all jobs! Fight for work sharing without loss of pay!**

***Build councils of action to defend and extend struggles against the Tories!**

***For a general strike to bring down the Thatcher government!**

***For a workers' government!**

***Build a revolutionary leadership in the labour movement!**



Taxing dole—Joseph

East Europe in economic crisis

"Many critical remarks have recently been diverted at the management of the economy and especially at the government. We do not reject these criticisms".

The words, uttered almost exactly on the 9th anniversary of the workers uprising in Poland which toppled the government of Gomułka, are those of a Stalinist bureaucrat under very serious pressure.

They were the response of Polish Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz to a new wave of workers' hostility to the stagnation or worsening of their living standards resulting from the bureaucracy's management of the economy.

The criticisms are bound to sharpen next week when Poland's 'parliament' is called upon to ratify next year's economic plan, which envisages the country's slowest rate of growth in any year since World War II.

Failures

This will come after a year of striking economic failure, in which the rate of growth of production has been well below the 2.8% originally planned.

Workers' living standards are once again being squeezed very hard to pay for the interest charges on Poland's gigantic \$17 billion debt to capitalist banks.

But Poland is not the only East European Stalinist-led state whose economy is in crisis.

Two weeks ago the latest Soviet 5-year plan was officially declared unachievable, and Brezhnev launched a demagogic and hypocritical attack on economic mismanagement.

And many announcements last week proved that the economic crisis was a generalised phenomenon in the Stalinist-ruled countries.

In Hungary it was announced last week that this



Brezhnev

year's growth in the economy fell to 1%—also the lowest since the war.

Inflation had been 9% instead of the planned 4%.

Workers' resistance to this meant that wages rose by 8% instead of the planned 1%.

But that still meant a fall in real wages of workers. Yet another fall is intended by the bureaucracy.

Wages are planned to rise by 4.5% during 1980.

But the vast number of price rises of consumer goods already announced and due to go into force on January 1 will wipe out the whole of the year's proposed wage increase before it has happened.

The latest of the Stalinist bureaucracies to impose sweeping price increases on consumer goods is the East German regime of Erich Honecker. Last week it announced price increases on all but a few basic food items.

It chose almost to the day the anniversary of the 1970 uprising in Poland.

Polish workers and intellectuals hostile to the bureaucracy intend to mark the anniversary for the third year running with peaceful demonstrations outside

the Gdansk shipyards where workers were killed in the brutal repression which followed the 1970 protests.

But it will not be only in Warsaw that the bureaucrats look on in alarm at these protests.

In East Berlin, in Budapest and even in Moscow bureaucrats will also be wondering when the next uprising of workers will occur.

They know that it cannot be long, since even they themselves have abandoned their bombastic boasting that their bureaucratic "socialist" economy—even with the immense advantage of nationalised property relations—can meet the needs of the working class, produce rapid growth, control inflation and so on.

They know today that if they said such things nobody would believe them.

With the "planned" economies increasingly out of the control of the planners, the bureaucracies increasingly stand exposed as obstacles to meeting the needs of the working class.

They begin to look more like wage cutters and debt-collectors for imperialism.

Ayatollahs with no way forward

The political turmoil within Iran is passing through stages of deepening confusion as the forces and factions, both inside and outside the country, bring their pressure to bear on the development of the revolutionary crisis.

Khomeini's regime staggers on from one day to the next, increasingly dependent on mass mobilisations which denounce US imperialism as they hail the 'truths' of Islam.

In reality, the 'Revolutionary Council' is sustained fundamentally only by the absence of a clear principled revolutionary alternative which can place the working class at the head of struggles against religious reaction and bourgeois 'democracy' to lay the basis for socialism through the building of a workers and peasants government in Iran.

Khomeini is besieged on all sides. Carter and the agents of US imperialism have been thwarted for the moment in their bid to impose economic sanctions on Iran through the United Nations.

But the threat of direct military intervention still remains, and poses revolutionary socialists within Iran with the necessity of preparing

united defensive action against such attacks, combined with a determined offensive against the forces of reaction which are working to chain the Iranian revolution in the bonds of Islam and capitalism.

The 'left' nationalists of the Iraqi regime are playing an increasingly bold game with border raids—supposedly directed against the bases of the Kurdish militants, but actually designed to make an intervention among the dissident Arab minority in the oil-producing province of Khuzestan.

The feudal leaders of the south-eastern Baluchi tribes are organising opposition to the central government in the hope of restoring the Shah to power.

As the truce in Kurdistan nears its expiry, Khomeini has been forced to treat with the forces fighting for the right of the oppressed Kurdish people to self-determination, yet has shown little willingness to enter real negotiations.

And in Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan, Khomeini has faced the latest test to his insecure power.

The rising in Tabriz displayed the same tragic political confusion which prevails throughout Iran.

At its head were the followers of the Ayatollah Shariat-Madari—a 'moderate', 'enlightened' Islamic bigot

whose tactical differences with imperialism are absolutely dwarfed by his total opposition to the independent political strength of the revolutionary proletariat.

The movement was directed against the dictatorial powers assumed by Khomeini under the new constitution of the 'Islamic Republic'.

Apparently on this basis, the 'Marxist-Leninist' Fedayeen seem to have supported the rising at first, before rapidly changing to a stance of opposition.

For all that it revealed of the hostility from workers to fundamental aspects of Khomeini's regime, there was nothing progressive about the rising itself.

The leadership of Shariat-Madari does not offer the working class and oppressed peoples of Iran a future of freedom from the want and oppression perpetrated in new forms by Khomeini.

That future can be won only by the revolutionary struggles of the proletariat for socialism—struggles rooted in the rich experience of the international communist movement, and led by a revolutionary party that is founded on the basis of Trotsky's Transitional Programme and fight for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Support grows for pre-conference

Discussions took place at the weekend to make final preparations for the international pre-conference convened by the WSL, being held in Britain on December 28-31.

Talks were held with leading members from the GBL of Italy, the LOB of Chile and the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Each of these organisations will be sending representatives to the pre-conference and will join the eleven other organisations already doing so.

The discussion with the GBL showed that they share many common positions with the WSL. They have also presented documents for the pre-conference.

The meeting with the LOB marked the first real discussions between our organisations, although they already have a close relationship with the GBL.

It was agreed that the exchange of documents between the WSL and the FIT would continue, and further discussions take place.

Leading members of the Workers Socialist League on 15

December also visited the Parity Commission, at the offices of the OCI in Paris.

The Parity Commission was set up jointly between the Bolshevik Faction, the Leninist Trotskyist Faction and the OCFI following the recent split in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The Commission has been in permanent session, apparently organising the "Open Conference" to be called by the three groupings.

But it begins to look as if the conference may not be as "open" as it appeared and certainly that it will not take place for some time.

The purpose of the WSL visit to the Commission was to apply for membership of the Commission on the basis of a genuinely open conference with thorough discussion in line with a recent policy decision of the movement.

But WSL representatives were quickly told by the Commission's permanent representatives, Ernesto Gonzalez and Pierre Lambert, that this was not so simple. (There was no LTT representative in attendance.)

They were informed that full membership of the Parity Com-

mission would be restricted entirely to the three convening organisations.

Associate membership, which would carry only a consultative vote, was possible but would require the unanimous vote of the three convening organisations.

This would require prior political agreement that the other members were all Trotskyists.

The rules of the Parity Commission, which were agreed on October 29 but not made public, discourage polemical discussion between member organisations.

Effort to agree

They urge that political statements made by the member organisations, as opposed to signed articles, should not be made without efforts being made to reach prior agreement between the Parity Commission organisations. This is also to be done at a national level.

It was also made clear that the three organisations would be first holding a conference among themselves. This seems to us to relegate the importance of the 'Open Conference', which in our view should go ahead as soon as possible.

Troops out of Zimbabwe!

As we go to press it appears as if Patriotic Front leaders Mugabe and Nkomo have made their final ostentatious display of intransigence, and seem likely to accept a Tory compromise arrangement on military bases in Zimbabwe as the basis for a cease-fire.

It has been the continual retreats by those petty bourgeois leaders rather than any weakness on the part of the guerrilla fighters in the field or any intrinsic strength of the racist state or British imperialism which have brought about the pro-imperialist settlement.

Neither Nkomo nor Mugabe had any serious intention of mobilising the Zimbabwean proletariat in the struggle for a socialist state.

Capitalist

Their objective from the outset was a "democratic" capitalist Zimbabwe in which black capitalists and petty bourgeois could establish themselves as exploiters, alongside or instead of the whites.

There is no scope for such a reformist development in Zimbabwe.

The danger now is that Patriotic Front militants, betrayed down the line by their leaders and by their Stalinist and "front line state" allies, will find this out to their cost.

Herded into convenient "assembly places" under the supervision of British troops, they will become a sitting target for the Rhodesian state forces should they attempt to pursue the struggle against imperialist oppression.

Meanwhile the hefty imperialist figure of Lord Soames will attempt to utilise the confusion sown by the Patriotic Front leaders to press through the consolidation of a stable, capit-

alist state machinery.

British workers—whose Labour leaders have scandalously endorsed the "peace" moves must demand the withdrawal of the troops, whose sole task is to ensure the smooth transition to orthodox bourgeois rule in Zimbabwe and the continued repression and exploitation of the Zimbabwean workers and peasants.



Nkomo

SOLIDARITY WITH TURKISH WORKERS

The first meeting of the Turkish Solidarity Campaign was held last Sunday in London.

Representatives from the Workers Socialist League, Socialist Labour Group and Bolshevik Faction mapped out a programme of work for the next stage of the campaign.

Messages of support were sent by Workers Power and the IMG, who were both unable to attend due to pressure of other commitments.

It was agreed to establish a campaign bulletin, the first issue of which will be published on January 20.

It will contain a founding statement and news of campaign activities.

A series of meetings, to be held in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Loughborough, Brighton, the University of East Anglia and Thames Polytechnic, were planned.

Combat fascists

These meetings will stress the need to combat the activities of Turkish fascists in Britain, as well as explaining the general work of the Turkish Solidarity Campaign.

The organising meeting

adopted the text of a resolution prepared for labour movement organisations, and it was emphasised that the Campaign would seek concrete support and affiliations from a wide range of such bodies as well as sponsorship from prominent figures in the labour movement.

It was also agreed to support a meeting and picket of the US Embassy called on December 22 by the Association of Kurdish Students. The meeting begins at 2 p.m. at Conway Hall.

The next issue of *Socialist Press* will carry a further report on the Turkish Solidarity Campaign and a feature on the political situation in Turkey.

Councillors dodge fight against the Tories

"A slump is inevitable from this government's policies. The solution if your markets are falling away is to spend more money—like Roosevelt did in the 1930s."

Thus spoke Alan Fisher at a rally and demonstration called by Coventry District Labour Party and the Coventry Trades Council last Saturday.

The demonstration was called to coincide with the national conference of Labour Councils convened by Coventry Council to organise a united opposition to the Tory cuts.

World War 2

Fisher's open espousal of the capitalist New Deal is not only historically inaccurate—the real driving force behind the temporary recovery of the US economy was of course the preparations for the Second World War—it is also extremely dangerous for those who may be taken in by his militant credentials.

Perhaps sensing the inadequacy of his "solution" to current economic problems he went on to answer the much asked question "Where will the money come from to expand public spending?"

Defence

He gave three answers:

One, cancel the £1,000 million paid annually to the EEC; two, don't implement plans to compensate Rhodesian landowners; three, cut defence expenditure.

As if clear commitment to tinkering with the capitalist economy were not pathetic enough, he went on to call strongly for rate increases:

"Labour councils must be honest and say this. If the government prevents it Labour Councillors ought to resign en masse and go back to the electorate".



Two-faced maybe, but single-mindedly opposed to strikes and occupations - NUPE's Fisher

What would happen then, Fisher didn't tell us. But he hinted at the possibility of a national revolt against the government.

"More AHA's should have followed Lambeth and Southwark", he argued; "if the lot had refused to implement the cuts then it would have made all the difference—it would have been worth fighting for."

Strikes

In the whole of his speech there was not one word about direct action such as occupations or strikes to stop the cuts.

But, of course, this is not surprising, since Fisher is bitterly opposed to action

of this kind.

His preoccupation—like that of Callaghan—is to wait for a general election.

"What a pity we can't have an election tomorrow", he moaned.

He did, however, offer one ray of hope for those reeling under the Thatcher/Joseph axe—by-elections.

"The by-elections will show what mandate the Tories have, and when we get a general election we need to elect a government which will support the alternative strategy proposed by the TUC".

Luckily for those who do not have the advantage of living in Tory seats which might fall vacant at some time in the next five years

Fisher did have a more general programme for action for everyone.

"The most important message of this rally is that this is a battle we've got to fight—demonstrations, lobbies, send a letter to your MP.

"We have a massive movement which must not lose its steam".

Throughout his speech Fisher steered clear of any reference to direct action.

Lambeth

He specifically referred to AHAs which oppose the cuts but did not see fit to mention Lambeth or Lothian councils, which are at present at the forefront of the anti-cuts fight.

Other speakers did bring out the importance of committing Labour councils to a refusal to implement the cuts or increase the rates.

Dave Nellist, chairing the rally and speaking on behalf of the Coventry SE CLP, struck the right note when he said:

"As far as the SE CLP is concerned the way to fight the Tories is not through discussion but with defiance".

But Nellist, too, steered clear of any specific reference to strike action, speaking only of the mass response from the working class which defeated the plans of the Heath government.

Abstract

This attitude is, of course, not surprising when you know that Nellist is a supporter of the Militant tendency, which combines generally correct abstract

positions on the need for socialism and a genuine fight against the Tories with absolutely no attempt whatsoever to expose the confusing and obstructive role played by the likes of Fisher.

John Hughes, Chairman of the Coventry Council and the Coventry NE CLP put forward a militant stance:

"You cannot influence the Tories by civilised detente" he said, "they can only be resisted physically".

"Lambeth is the vanguard. We need united action around their fight—don't let them become another Clay Cross, whose betrayal is a stigma on the Labour Party".

Speaking of the conference he said:

"If we get the right decision today the battle is on".

But Councillor Hughes himself sees no alternative to an increase in the rates!

'Moderation'

In the week after the conference and demonstration he argued for this in the Council Labour Group—and lost.

The conference itself was a complete victory for what euphemistically goes under the name of 'moderation'.

Not only did the 300-odd delegates agree to oppose the Tories "within the law" but they also agreed that it would be best to leave each council to do this in its own way.

The logic of this position was clear for all to see, and quickly found its expression in the policy subsequently adopted by the Coventry Labour Group.

Their solution to the

problem of the cuts is a budget shuffle which aims to protect education and the social services—at the expense of other items of expenditure.

Announcing the plans, council leader Arthur Waugh Senior said:

"Coventry will become a dirty city. The streets will not be swept so often and we will be encouraging infestation. Parks will become untidy, a tree planting programme will be reduced and the freezing of posts at the Council House will lead to reduced services to the public."

As we got to press, these revised budgets are due to be put to a full council meeting on Tuesday.

The Labour council's position is quite clear. They are trying to hide the cuts behind a smokescreen of rhetoric about trying to save the services which create the most emotional outcry.

At the demonstration and lobby a Workers Socialist League leaflet hit the nail on the head in its opening sentence:

"Today's conference of Labour councils has been called in order to prepare the way for accepting the Tory cuts."

Sooner than admit this outright, however, Councillor Waugh again sheltered behind vague rhetoric, claiming that:

"The plans are only provisional. We have not yet decided to implement the cuts, and will strongly resist the government—through the city's Labour MPs".

Such cynicism is, of course, typical of these people. They have shown time and again that they will not resist the Tories. All their talk of doing so is a hollow fraud, designed to head off militant opposition from Labour Party activists.

The only way open is to prepare direct action by the working class against the cuts.

Labour councillors must be told that those who refuse to vote against cuts will be driven out of their seats by Labour wards.

The campaign against the Tories has gained much success in Coventry Labour Party.

An excellent opportunity exists in the forthcoming Trades Council conference against cuts and unemployment to establish a broad-based committee with delegates drawn from the trade unions, Labour Parties, shop stewards' committees and tenants' associations, which can be charged with the task of organising a united fight for strike action and occupation to stop the cuts.

There must be supporting strike action to back those workers who go into action to protect jobs and services.

* Defy the Tories!
* Coventry council must join Lambeth and Lothian!
* No cuts — no rate increases. Confront the bankers and moneylenders!
* Strike and occupy to stop the cuts!
* Drive the Tories out!

PHOTO: E.H. COVENTRY

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Somoza's National Guard under fire in Managua



PHOTO: Andrew Wiaard (Report)

Pro-Patriotic Front demonstrators

In the old days, Lord Palmerston would have sent a gunboat. But today imperialism does not have enough gunboats to contain the rebellions and uprisings it confronts at home and abroad: nor does it have sufficient reliable crews or enough safe ports from which to operate. On every side it is under siege from a workers' movement and colonial liberation struggles that are now rocking its puppet regimes and dictatorships, its outposts and pools of cheap materials and labour. Even the Shah,* bloodthirsty and apparently unshakeable, armed to the teeth and fabulously wealthy, now clings on to power only by his fingernails, resting on the complete absence of revolutionary leadership in the Iranian working class on the one hand, and the support of 'human rights' Carter, the British Labour leaders, and the Kremlin and Peking Stalinists on the other.

In Latin America, the crisis of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua has brought the prospect of a new overturn of capitalism on the very doorstep of US imperialism: developments have again been only held back by the complete absence of a developed Marxist leadership, and the conscious abstention of the nearby Castro bureaucracy, which has restricted its "support" to the level of vague verbal proclamations. Somoza's plight is not unique; it is only one of the sharpest indications of the growing threat to pro-imperialist military juntas throughout the sub-continent.

And in Southern Africa it has taken the combined efforts of bourgeois nationalism, Stalinism and reformism at the head of the African masses to give the racist Smith regime the leeway to mount repeated attacks on Zimbabwean liberation forces' guerrilla camps. Such leadership offers the heroic liberation fighters nothing more than an endless prospect of diplomatic manoeuvres aimed at getting Patriotic Front "leaders" Nkomo and Mugabe seats in a black bourgeois cabinet.

In each instance the weakness of imperialism is obvious to all; the militancy and strength of the oppressed masses is beyond doubt; but the key to victory—a Marxist leadership that has learned the lessons of the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals, and that fights tenaciously for the Transitional Programme which represents the sole continuity of the revolutionary traditions of the Bolshevik revolution—is lacking.

The objective conditions for the world socialist revolution—the stagnation of the productive forces in the epoch of imperialist decay, and the emergence of the working class as the central, pivotal force that must lead the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism—are already rotten-ripe.

But the development of the *subjective factor*, the preparation of Trotskyist parties adequate to the huge task of leading the revolutionary struggle for power, has been retarded by the disorientation and crisis that has developed within the post-war Trotskyist movement.

Our task is to resolve that crisis through the struggle to reconstruct the Fourth International which, in the conditions of today's class struggle must reaffirm not only in theory but in practice the programme and principles on which the Fourth International was founded in 1938. Now, perhaps more so than when the words were written, we can understand, and must act upon the opening declaration of the Transitional Programme that:

"The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat."

POPULAR FRONTISM

The common factors of recession and the drive for rationalisation to boost profitability have driven both the imperialist leaders and the bonapartist regimes of the semi-colonial countries to resort simultaneously to austerity programmes—cuts in social services, in public spending and in taxes on big business; closures, rationalisation of production and imposition of new technology; cuts in manning levels and attacks on real wages.

Thus in both the colonial and the developed economies the working masses are driven forward *simultaneously* into struggle against a common assault. And with them come the

THE WORLD IN 1979

The events of 1979 have shown, possibly more clearly than since the massive 1968 upheavals in France and Czechoslovakia, the acute leadership crisis that grips the world's working class.

In Iran and Nicaragua in particular, the chosen defenders of imperialist control have been toppled by mass struggles: and in Zimbabwe the racist settler regime has been forced to concede ground in the face of a rising guerrilla war.

Yet in none of these instances has a revolutionary leadership emerged that is capable of leading the masses to the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' state.

Meanwhile in South East Asia the outbreak of wars between the deformed workers' states of Vietnam and Kampuchea, followed by the Vietnam/China war, has exposed once again the reactionary, nationalist nature of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies.

Yet though these developments in the class struggle point more sharply than ever to the necessity for a conscious Trotskyist International to spearhead the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism

and for political revolution, they have helped further to expose the profoundly opportunist politics of many currents posing as Trotskyists, and the profound theoretical confusion and deep divisions which these currents had for years struggled to cover up. The result has been a succession of splits and inadequate attempts at regroupment.

It is with a view to countering such confusion and pointing to the necessity of the Marxist method of analysis that the Workers Socialist League is taking advantage of the holiday period to publish the bulk of an International Perspectives document drafted by the WSL more than a year ago, and adopted by our conference last March.

In our view its general assessments have been rightly confirmed by events in 1979.

For reasons of space an extended section on the international economic crisis has had to be omitted.

other socially oppressed layers that suffer the burdens of the capitalist crisis—the rural peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, squeezed by the banks, the monopolies and the distributors, and faced with financial ruin. The imperialists do not have the option of picking off one section at a time as they tried to do in previous periods. Now resistance to attacks and threats to imperialist rule embrace every continent and penetrate every section of the working class. And this resistance is only temporarily deflected when the attacks are carried out by ever-pliable reformist politicians rather than the open political parties of the bourgeoisie.

The forward movement of the working class internationally has disrupted the balance of forces between imperialism and Stalinism on a world scale. Imperialism has been decisively weakened by its economic and political crisis. These defeats and setbacks have compounded the growing strength of the proletariat. The revolutionary potential of this enormous objective strengthening will be realised only by a reconstructed Fourth International that can overcome the massive subjective weakness of the world proletariat in its crisis of leadership.

But the weakening of imperialism has not worked in any simple way to the advantage of the Stalinist bureaucracies ruling in the USSR, China and the other deformed workers' states. Their economies, increasingly linked with crisis-ridden capitalism through the Stalinist strategy of 'peaceful coexistence' and deals to preserve 'socialism in one country', have suffered a certain dislocation. These problems have increased the pressure driving individual national bureaucracies into disagreements and conflicts. Such forces have significantly weakened the authority and power of the Soviet bureaucracy in particular. But the crisis of Stalinism has taken on a new dimension.

The ruling bureaucracies justly fear above all the revolutionary movement of the masses. Such a movement, with its potential to overthrow imperialism and end the isolation of the workers' states, opening up the prospect of an internationally-planned socialist economy, throws into question the continued bureaucratic power and privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy itself (which feeds precisely off the isolation and imperialist encirclement of the workers' states).

This forward movement of the working class has developed in every continent and every corner of the earth, continually threatening to pass decisively beyond the counter-revolutionary control of Stalinism and raise itself

into a politically independent and genuinely revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat.

As in 1968, when the rise of workers' struggles throughout Europe found its reflection in the Czechoslovakian events which posed the threat of political revolution, the Kremlin leaders recognise that the world-wide offensive of the working class today is a direct threat to their bureaucratic interests. And their chosen servants in the national Communist Parties also recoil in horror at the prospect of independent revolutionary action by the working class. They recognise in such action a threat to the Kremlin strategy of 'peaceful coexistence' on which their whole political perspective is based; they see it as a threat to their own bureaucratic apparatus and to their leading role within the working class of their own countries; and the very independence of the working class runs counter to their decades of training in the counter-revolutionary school of Stalinism. For some of these leaders, the many years of tireless adaptation to their own bourgeoisie (carried out in the name of preserving 'peaceful coexistence' through peaceful, 'Parliamentary Roads' to socialism) have now been rationalised in the so-called 'theory' of Eurocommunism.

"Eurocommunist" or not, the Communist Parties, along with the servile reformist bureaucracies, have come to play an important role in safeguarding imperialism from the angry resistance of the working class. Whether drawn into open Popular Front alliances with capitalist parties, or used to provide a 'left' cover for fake "democratisation" moves by beleaguered military juntas, or simply offering workers no more than empty left rhetoric and demoralising token gestures of opposition to "austerity" measures, the Stalinists have come to the front line of the defence of imperialism at home and abroad.

In Latin America and elsewhere, crumbling bonapartist regimes have been forced to take tentative steps towards legalising Stalinist and reformist parties in order to exploit their class collaborationist positions. In Spain, Carrillo's Communist Party has been almost the foremost defender of the Francoist regime of Suarez and Juan Carlos. Spain indeed is now cited widely by bourgeois leaders and bonapartist juntas as a model of the technique of fake "democratisation".

The treachery of the Popular Front—which, by prostituting workers' independence to bourgeois political groupings can lead only to the consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie, or in the worst instance, to a new Chile-style catastrophe—marks the almost universal signature of Stalinist and reformist politics in this period of chronic

* The text of this document was drafted before the fall of the Shah in February, and it was decided not to add updating amendments.



Iranian oil workers after the fall of the Shah

capitalist crisis and advancing class struggle internationally.

In India, Iran, Iceland or Italy; in Spain, Portugal or Southern Africa, the unmistakable lesson for the workers' movement is that there must be a decisive *break* from all such political blocs with the bourgeoisie. A turn must be made to the construction of revolutionary Trotskyist parties which are capable of analysing and fighting every manoeuvre of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The struggle for the building of such a party is at the same time the struggle for programme.

Recent events in many countries have demonstrated beyond question that it is neither indomitable strength on behalf of the exploiting capitalist class, nor any timidity or passivity among the masses that holds back the overthrow of capitalism. It is rather the absence of a revolutionary leadership equipped with a programme which can embrace and mobilise the evident strength and combativity of the masses and turn the bluntness of spontaneous struggle into the sharp cutting edge of successful revolutionary strategy and tactics.

The essence of this task in all countries is the correct application of the method of the Transitional Programme. This consists in the combination of political and economic demands, and democratic demands along with transitional demands which lead workers to challenge the very nature of capitalist power. It is essential to develop the ability to use the programme flexibly in response to the constant ebb and flow of the mass struggle itself, while maintaining the fundamental thrust in the direction of the complete political independence of the working class from all forms of bureaucratic and petty bourgeois misleadership. The relative emphasis accorded to different demands will vary as the objective situation and the consciousness of the masses change in the course of the struggle. But at all stages we continue to link the appropriate demands of today with the strategic objective of the seizure of power by the working class, the destruction of the machinery of the capitalist state, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In this context it is necessary to emphasise in many of the struggles now developing the necessity for the construction of organs and institutions which represent the unity and the independence of the working class and its need to ally with and give a lead to other oppressed classes in the fight to overthrow capitalist exploitation.

Whether in the wages struggle in Britain, the mass upsurges of black workers in South Africa, or the revolution against the Shah in Iran, the programme of the revolutionary party must at key stages of development bring right to the forefront the need to build factory and strike committees and councils (Soviets) of representatives of workers and other oppressed social classes as a necessary basis both for defending the gains which have been made and for advancing the struggle towards new goals.

As Bolsheviks, we see these organs as representing the unity and independence of the working class, and its historic role in leading behind it the other oppressed classes. But this does not mean that workers councils are sufficient in and of themselves to advance the spontaneous struggles of the working class. The crucial role in the development of such councils must be played by the intervention of the revolutionary party itself. We argue that all representative organisations of the oppressed masses must be allowed to participate in these soviet-type bodies; and to fight within them for the adoption of their programme. Representatives of the bourgeoisie must be excluded.

Given such political leadership from a developing Trotskyist party we see such bodies as the future organs of workers' power. At some stage in the struggle it will be the task of revolutionaries to call for all power to devolve to these bodies. At the present stage, however, it is crucial not to outpace the developing mass movement. Workers have first to be shown in practice that the soviet-type bodies can play a role in furthering their struggles. They must at the outset therefore be firmly linked to all the demands—economic and political—which can at the present stage of development of the mass struggle arouse sections of the working class to take action.

Thus the future instruments of workers' power can begin life as bodies to unite and organise strikes for specific demands or to fight for the implementation of democratic demands such as the release of political prisoners or free elections to a Constituent Assembly.

The renewed crisis of capitalism, added to its long-term economic failures, especially in the semi-colonial countries, have meant that its survival depends more and more on the erosion of hard-won democratic freedoms in the imperialist countries and their virtually complete suppression in most parts of the semi-colonial world.

These facts mean that revolutionaries are obliged to give democratic demands (freedom of expression and organisation, representative elections, release of political prisoners, etc.) substantial prominence in their programme. Such demands respond to the objective needs of the mass movement and are therefore often capable of strongly mobilising the masses.

To prevent these demands becoming 'a democratic noose fastened round the neck of the working class by the agents of the bourgeoisie', revolutionaries must fight for these demands by linking them at all times with a programme of democratic and transitional demands. At the same time of course revolutionaries fight for democratic demands by revolutionary methods—through mobilisations of the working class, the construction of independent organisations committed to fight for these demands. Neither the programme nor the method of fighting for it must in any way be subordinated in the interest of forming alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie and its agents.

THE POLITICAL CRISIS OF IMPERIALISM

In the wake of the profound defeats inflicted on US imperialism by the successful liberation struggles in Vietnam and Cambodia and the struggle against imperialist-backed forces in Angola, the main feature of the recent period remains the *weakness* of imperialist control over the underdeveloped nations. Puppet regimes—military dictatorships or uneasy bonapartist regimes awkwardly straddled across the labour bureaucracy and the repressive military apparatus—have found themselves increasingly isolated from a hostile mass movement, at the head of which, contrary to the false impressions and schemas peddled by the Pabloite movement throughout the 1960s, has been the organised working class.

LATIN AMERICA

The re-emergence of strikes and trade union organisation in Chile expresses almost more clearly than anything else the independent forward movement of the working class in Latin America in defiance of the most savage dictatorial measures and abysmal, treacherous leadership. Chile was the only Latin America dictatorship established on the basis of an outright military *defeat* of the working class. It held out for Pinochet's US imperialist sponsors and the capitalist class internationally a ray of hope that barbaric repression could—if necessary—restore stability and ease their economic difficulties. But a newly-reemerging workers' movement—driven into struggle by the same material forces that have mobilised workers in their millions in country after country—has given the lie to this illusion. There can be *no* long term stability for capitalism, which must always rest upon the open or disguised repression and exploitation of the propertyless proletariat.

Alongside the rise of struggle in Chile, the recent

period has seen military juntas all over Latin America quail in the face of working class militancy: Nicaragua, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru (where the economic crisis has reached the point that 55% of the country's export earnings are pledged to debt repayments to the IMF and imperialist banks) all show this. The huge votes achieved in Peru by the electoral bloc headed by USFI and OCI 'Trotskyists' in the General Election, combined with the combativity of the Peruvian workers' movement and the IMF's demands for further austerity measures all indicate the acuteness of the combined political and economic crisis facing the imperialists.

Throughout Latin America the necessity to fight all forms of Popular Frontism, and to combine democratic demands with transitional demands pointing the way beyond reforms to the necessity for revolution is the overriding task to be taken up in the building of Trotskyist parties.

AFRICA

In Africa too the combined struggles for national liberation and militant actions by the working class have emerged in both the more advanced and the more economically backward countries, though the generally lower level of industrialisation has meant that in more instances the peasantry is playing a central role. But the working class remains the most powerful force challenging the rule of imperialist-backed regimes, and breaking asunder the fragile political compromises on which their rule is based. In Tunisia a massive general strike movement sparked off by wage demands has resulted in the arrest of hundreds of supposedly "reliable" trade union leaders, a number of whom have now received punitive jail sentences. In Ghana, too, the military regime has been shaken by major strikes following on the political removal of former junta chief Acheampong.

But the most profound upheavals of all have emerged in South Africa, the most advanced industrialised capitalist country on the continent. The working class there has grown numerically while denied the most basic of bourgeois democratic rights. This poses problems both of organisation and of political leadership. During the Soweto events, working class mobilisations went far beyond the political limits of the traditional nationalist, Stalinist and petty bourgeois-led organisations—but found themselves up against a complete absence of political leadership and perspective to advance the struggle against South African capitalism.

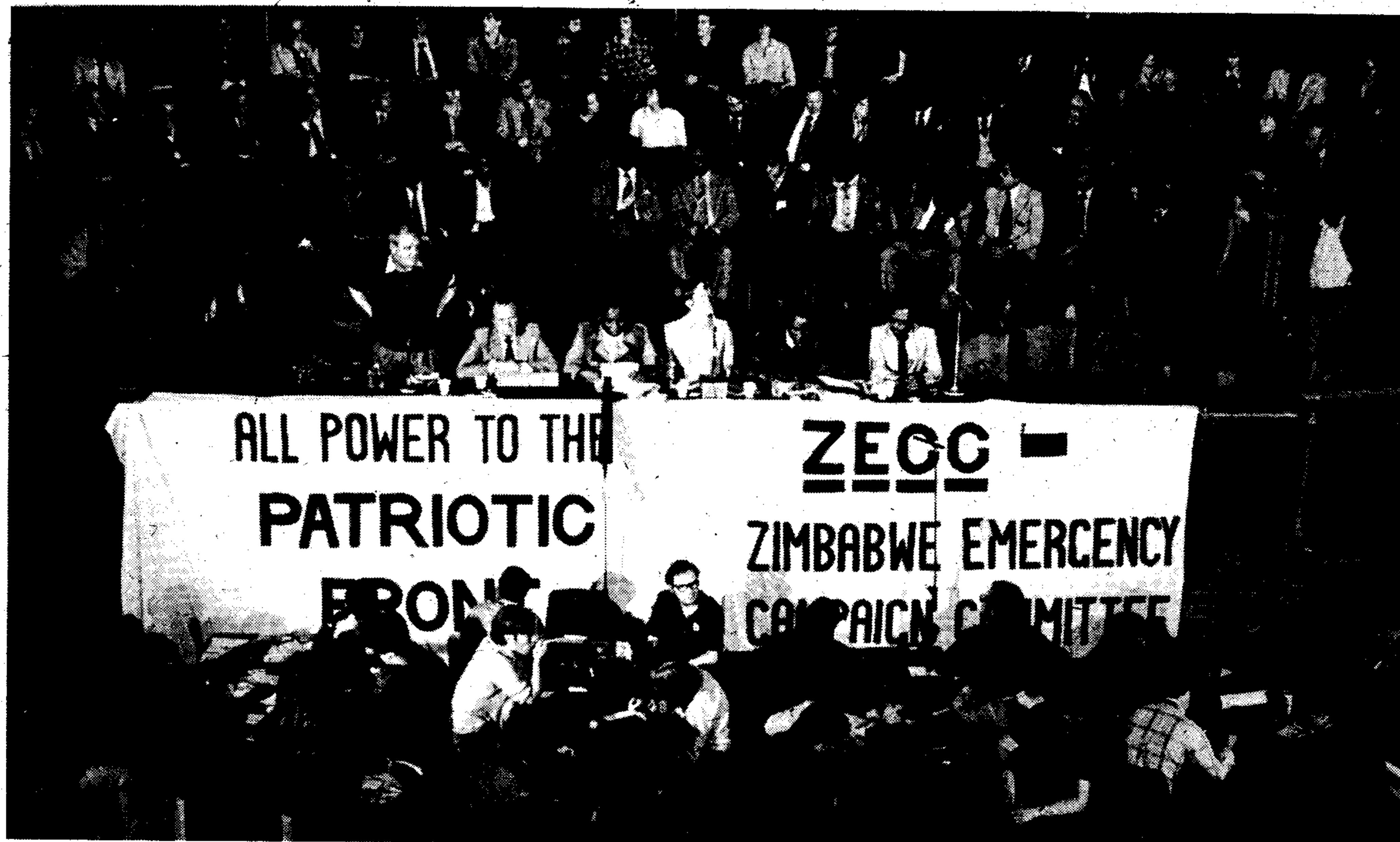
The essential question in South Africa is the construction of a leadership which can demonstrate to the proletariat in practice that mass democratic demands are only achievable in connection with the struggle for transitional demands designed to unleash the independent strength of the working class in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

The black petty bourgeoisie can only play a progressive role in struggle *under the leadership of the working class*. If allowed to take the leadership of the movement, the petty bourgeoisie will seek merely to exploit the power and militancy of the working class as a battering ram to force from the capitalist dictatorship a number of token demands—such as extension of home ownership, entrepreneurial and trading rights, votes in the 'homelands', etc.—which benefit the petty bourgeois but fall miles short of answering the material exploitation faced by the millions.

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Angolan workers celebrate the defeat of imperialist-backed forces



Zimbabwe struggle exploited by Stalinists for diplomatic purposes

strong black African proletariat.

All notions that a "national liberation struggle" rather than a social revolution is on the agenda in South Africa today must weaken the struggle for revolutionary leadership and lead inevitably to a Stalinist-type "two-stage" concept of the struggle that could leave it decapitated at a crucial point.

The implicit or explicit popular frontism of the existing nationalist and petty bourgeois groupings must be fought. One way of doing this is to challenge its reflection in the various solidarity movements in the imperialist countries, where the independent action of the working class to enforce blacking and other solidarity action is subordinated to "pressure" campaigns on capitalist multinationals, banks, and governments to aid the "anti-apartheid" struggle, in isolation from the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism itself in South Africa.

But if South Africa is a clear case where a proletarian mobilisation is essential to carry forward the struggle, elsewhere in Africa the struggle against imperialism has taken the form of the struggle against national oppression and puppet regimes. Such are the protracted wars now taking place in the Sahara—where the Saharoui people are fighting an unholy alliance of French imperialists and Moroccan and Mauritanian armies—and Chad, where guerrillas continue to fight the French puppet regime. The refusal of the Stalinist bureaucracies to offer any material support to these struggles is further testimony—if any were needed—to the counter-revolutionary strategy of Stalinism in Africa.

So, too, is the role played by Soviet arms and Cuban troops in supporting the reactionary Derg military dictatorship in Ethiopia, with their bloody attempts to defeat the Eritrean liberation struggle. While they wish to consolidate a diplomatic and military foothold in Ethiopia, the Stalinists want no part of any independent revolutionary struggle—and recognise in the Eritrean war of liberation a force which could spur on militant resistance not only to the Derg within Ethiopia itself, but also against national oppression throughout the Middle East and the African continent as a whole.

The crucial force in the development of the revolution in Eritrea has been and remains the EPLF. Owing no allegiance to the Kremlin or the Peking Stalinists (or indeed to any external force) the EPLF nonetheless seems to hold some positions—particularly on the two-stage theory of revolution—that echo those of Stalinism. Yet it cannot be stated categorically at this stage whether these signs are the traces of political immaturity and confusion or the hallmark of a bureaucratic leadership that will become exposed as the major obstacle to socialist revolution in Eritrea. The EPLF has displayed a resilience and strength which go well beyond the examples of any previous liberation movement, and clearly it is still passing through a process of political development. Its formal positions on the 'National Democratic Revolution' have been increasingly contradicted in practice in the liberated areas. Under attack from the Stalinist bureaucracies, it has struggled nevertheless to preserve a principled position towards the Soviet Union.

While not accepting the theory of permanent revolution and the Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism, the EPLF has so far resisted the blandishments of Maoism. The EPLF thus represents a political formation whose progress we should follow with the greatest attention and seek to develop at every step, and win to Trotskyism.

Yet even while claiming to support the Eritrean struggle the 'Trotskyists' of the USFI have continued to peddle the idea that Castro's troops in Africa are fulfilling an "internationalist" role independently of Kremlin policy, and stressed the 'socialist' measures of nationalisation undertaken by the butcher Mengistu regime. The task of

building revolutionary parties in both Ethiopia and Eritrea cannot be carried out with such a perspective, which condones the counter-revolutionary role of Cuban Stalinism.

But though the Stalinists' role in Eritrea is so nakedly exposed that the empiricists of the USFI have trouble ignoring it, it is no less pernicious in the behind-the-scenes where a military overthrow of the Smith regime would spell danger to the whole fragile balance of forces on which bourgeois nationalist leaders throughout the continent are precariously balanced. At stake for imperialism is its control over the huge mineral wealth and industrial development it holds in Southern Africa. If it were lost, the economic crisis itself would immeasurably worsen, and the stimulus to world revolutionary struggles would shake the stability of the imperialist nations themselves.

It is in this area therefore that the most devious, back-door wheeling and dealing is in progress. The full weight of the reformist and Stalinist apparatus has been set to work in the hopes of achieving what the open spokesmen of the capitalist class internationally could not hope to achieve—the construction of a black bourgeois government in Zimbabwe without the military defeat of the Smith regime.

Behind the scenes talks have been combined with conscious Stalinist sabotage and under-equipment of the guerrilla forces in a desperate bid to stem the revolutionary tide that gained such momentum with the defeat of the South African/CIA puppet forces in Angola. Inside Angola itself Cuban forces remain at hand to control the restive working class movement should it oppose the policies of President Neto. Neto's line of developing a friendly working relationship with multinational firms, imperialist governments and the puppet Mobutu regime is clearly one worked out with the consent of the Stalinist bureaucracies—who have simultaneously taken steps to draw Angola into the Comecon set-up. They would hate above all to see their military/diplomatic bridgehead turned into a centre from which confrontation with imperialism was organised—prompting full-scale struggles throughout Southern Africa. "Peaceful Coexistence" remains the basic watchword for the Kremlin and Havana Stalinists and their chosen allies. This is why in Mozambique also, Stalinist "advisors" have helped ensure total impotence of the armed forces in the face of repeated armed assaults by Smith's racist troops.

The task of the Trotskyist movement in the Zimbabwe struggle is to expose the collaboration and sabotage being carried out by all the so-called leaders of the liberation struggle, and point to the need for a Marxist Party based on a programme of democratic and transitional demands to combine the guerrilla warfare in the countryside with the mobilisation of the black Zimbabwean working class in the towns in the struggle for socialism.

ASIA

In Asia, as in the remainder of the underdeveloped economies, capitalist regimes have found themselves under renewed pressure from a workers' movement held back only by a total absence of revolutionary leadership, and the counter-revolutionary, Popular Frontist policies of the Stalinists.

The crisis of proletarian leadership has taken perhaps its sharpest form in India. While the reformist and openly capitalist politicians of the Janata stagger from one crippling catastrophe to the next, ex-dictator Gandhi has been able to step forward as the "champion" of the oppressed masses. Meanwhile in West Bengal the workers are occupying factories and the peasants seizing land even as the non-aligned Communist Party (Marxist) struggles to hold together its local Popular Front and urges capitalists to invest profitably in this particular Indian state. In Sri



PHOTO: Carlos Augusto (IFL)

Counter-revolutionary alliance in the Horn of Africa: Castro



The Portuguese events shook the entire European bourgeoisie

Lanka, the bourgeois regime rests even more openly than the Janata on repression and on emergency legislation which gives the lie to the facade of 'democracy'.

In Pakistan that facade fell with ex-President Bhutto and was replaced by a stop-gap device of military rule based on nothing more than the imprisonment of Bhutto (the only politician in Pakistan with any mass base of support) and willingness to use armed force against the masses. But the weakness of the regime is openly demonstrated by its failure to implement the death sentence on Bhutto for fear of unleashing the full fury of his supporters and the government's many other enemies.

Pravda's opposition to the anti-Shah demonstrators and strikes in Iran, and Brezhnev's notorious birthday greetings to the butcher Shah himself spell out beyond doubt the commitment of the Stalinists to stemming the revolutionary process in this key, revolutionary, oil state. Against the prospect of such a profound, revolutionary upheaval on the very borders of the USSR itself is too terrifying for the Kremlin. On top of this the Stalinists recognise the blow that it would strike against world imperialism, thus



the Ethiopian butcher Mengistu



disrupting the entire balance of forces internationally. While joining the efforts by international capital and social democracy to shore up the Shah, therefore, the Stalinists have not hesitated to use their particular secret weapon—the Stalinist Tudeh Party inside Iran itself. This Party has now played the Popular Frontist card—calling for the establishment of a cross-class government of national unity, designed to defuse the independent struggle of the workers' movement.

In this situation the necessity for a Trotskyist programme for the arming and self-organisation of the working class through militias, factory committees and soviets, combined with democratic and transitional demands, is the essential element needed to combat the political and religious forces seeking to divert from the struggle for the socialist revolution.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Like Iran, the Middle East offers little comfort to other Stalinist leaders or the imperialists. The US continues of course to cultivate Sadat as its main stooge in

the Arab world. And Sadat—driven by the lure of cutting Egypt's military budget and thus easing the massive economic problems which threaten to arouse the exploited masses against his regime—continues to be drawn closer into this arrangement. But these moves have brought renewed pressure on the bourgeois heads of the other Arab states to act in support of the historic liberation struggle of the dispossessed Palestinian people.

Since there is no way that the Palestinian national question can be resolved without the destruction of the racist settler state of Israel, and since the bourgeois and petty bourgeois Arab nationalist regimes are determined to avoid such an outright collision with imperialism, this pressure must be headed off in other ways—the establishment of endless "rejectionist" committees, fronts, funds and conferences. The Arab leaders also recognise that with the long-standing interconnection between the Palestinian struggle and the Arab masses, an all-out mobilisation against Zionism would also encourage revolutionary struggles against their own military and dictatorial regimes.

The Stalinists recognise this too. So while paying lip service to the Palestinian struggle and verbally opposing the Zionist state which Soviet abstention helped to create, the Kremlin has increasingly lent its assistance to the "rejectionist" leaders' efforts to contain the struggle—and in particular to the latest realignment between the Syrian and Iraqi dictatorships. As in Africa, the so-called 'Front-line' states are to be found in reality in the rearguard of the liberation struggle.

Under these conditions the PLO strategy of appealing solely to the United Nations and the Arab heads of state offers nothing to the Palestinian masses. The key to the situation must be the construction in every Arab country and within Israel of Trotskyist parties, equipped with a programme of demands to mobilise the exploited masses in the struggle for the overthrow of the Zionist state, and for socialist revolutions throughout the Arab countries.

Like the Palestinian struggle, the Kurdish national liberation struggle has profound implications in the struggle against imperialism in the Middle East. As the recent developments in Iran have shown, the emergence of centrifugal struggles by Kurds in Iran, Turkey and Iraq are unavoidable whenever the class struggle advances in those countries. The formation of an independent Kurdish state in the area represents a major threat to the bourgeoisie in these countries.

Trotskyists must combine uncompromising defence of the right of the Kurdish people to self determination and the formation of an independent Kurdish state, with the struggle for the independence of the Kurdish masses from bourgeois leaders like Barzani and Talabani. The future of the Kurdish masses lies in the fight not for a supposedly "democratic" bourgeois state of Kurdistan, but for the establishment of a united socialist states of the Middle East.

In Europe, too, the explosive role of the national struggle is a crucial factor. The re-emergence of major anti-imperialist demonstrations and armed struggle in the occupied six counties of Ireland, and the growing sentiment within the British working class against the complicity of the Labour leaders in the military repression of the Irish people, are partial reflections of the sharpening international class struggle.

In Spain, too, the national struggle by Basque workers has remained a constant factor in the struggle against Franco's heirs and their treacherous assistants in the Stalinist and reformist parties. The Basque struggle, by its sheer persistence, has highlighted the unreformed nature of the Francoist repressive apparatus, despite the efforts of the CP and PSOE to conceal the reality behind the fraudulent new "constitution". In fact, despite the propaganda suggesting that Spain has been "democratised" and the confusion on this by many 'left' groups, the continued struggle of the working class against speed-ups, sackings and wage cuts has already brought one abortive attempt at a military coup and a mass mobilisation of the still-organised fascist forces.

THE AFTERMATH OF PORTUGAL

While the defeats of Vietnam, Cambodia and Angola have shaken the entire colonial world and shaped the recent period, the collapse of dictatorships in Portugal, Greece and Spain have inflicted major setbacks on European capitalism. Since these events the bourgeoisie has had to carefully assess its political methods in imposing austerity plans, rationalisation and speed-up.

The sheer scale and scope of the Portuguese events following the April 1974 overthrow of fascism brought back to the capitalists agonising memories of the French 1968 General Strike. Portuguese workers, once apparently firmly under the fascist jackboot, were suddenly breaking down all kinds of cherished barriers—occupying factories, forming their own workplace committees, marching in their hundreds of thousands, publishing capitalist bank accounts, forming joint committees with students and even with rank and file soldiers, and jointly patrolling the streets in armed

squads to protect against fascists. The bourgeoisie was terrified. They needed a political answer to this mass movement of the working class.

And the key in Portugal and elsewhere rested with the bureaucratic leaders of the workers' movement—the newly-constructed Socialist Party and the (Moscow-line) CP of Alvaro Cunhal, which proved itself no less frightened of revolution than its "Eurocommunist" stable-mates.

The Popular Front roadblock to the Portuguese revolution was first pieced together in the form of a variety of Armed Forces Movement governments in which Stalinists and centrists played prominent roles. It has continued to this day with the period of Socialist Party coalition government and the tacit CP support to the restoration of open bourgeois rule.

As a result, the mass movement that once horrified the capitalists of Europe appears to have been restrained—though not eliminated—and a "democratic" edifice created to decorate the continued power of the army which has formed the bedrock of capitalist rule under both fascism and AFM "revolutionary" government—a telling confirmation of the Leninist theory of the state.

Portugal also demonstrates that, no matter how 'left' its rhetoric, no Communist Party offers workers any alternative or independent road. And, far from being pressured towards revolutionary positions by a mounting mass movement (as the Pabloites still fondly believe) the Stalinists and 'left' reformists move—as we have always insisted—time and again into more and more desperate attempts to hold back the working class. It is in the wake of the Portuguese events that Santiago Carrillo and Enrico Berlinguer have hastily put the finishing touches to their ramshackle "theory" of Eurocommunism—hoping once and for all to prevent any repetition of the Portuguese experience.



Both looking for cover: PLO leader Arafat with Spanish Prime Minister Suarez.

These policies have found practical expression in the diehard CP support for Italy's reactionary Christian Democratic government, and Carrillo's willing backing for the wage-cutting Moncloa Pact. In France, the classic Stalinist policy of the Popular Front took the form of the Union of the Left, while the CP is now responding to the militant demands of its membership not by fighting the Giscard austerity measures but by blocking strikes and actions designed to protect jobs and wages.

Such treacherous policies have provoked a real, if totally confused response from among the mass membership of the Stalinist parties. Splits and crises have taken place in the French, Spanish and Italian CPs, and in Britain, too, the much smaller and more docile CP has split, with the formation of the pro-Moscow New Communist Party. Such splits and feuds have been distinguished in each case by the bankruptcy and confusion of both sides in the argument, and the necessity for a sharp intervention by Trotskyists on the Transitional Programme if any development towards revolutionary politics is to emerge. Meanwhile whole sections of workers and youth are turning away from the Stalinist Parties in the search for a way forward. In Italy, whole groups of hospital workers, organised in a union confederation largely autonomous of Stalinist control, recently brought the hospital system to a grinding halt in pursuit of their pay demands—and forced a further governmental crisis for the Christian Democrats.

Meanwhile, as reformists and Stalinists conspire to hold back the working class, in France, in Italy and in Spain, and—above all—in Turkey, fascist groupings are beginning to prepare in the wings.

The experience of Germany and Spain showed clearly that the only defence against fascism is the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system that fascism arises to defend. The whole effort of the mass parties of the working class is to prevent such a mobilisation. But they have not fully succeeded in this task. The power of the masses arises again and again. This is why throughout Europe the bourgeoisie has sought to stave off governmental crises through Popular Front arrangements.

Even Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Iceland have witnessed attempts made to construct governments which

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Kremlin leaders - using opportunities in Africa to preserve 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism

combine the brutality of the bourgeois parties themselves with the more insidious treachery of the bureaucratic leaders of the workers' movement.

And West Germany, the supposed pinnacle of class compromise, has found itself beset by a series of major strikes, culminating in the November 1978 steel strike—the first in 50 years. These struggles flow from the plans for rationalisation and speed-up forced on the German capitalists by the impact of the international crisis.

Nor has Britain escaped the Europe-wide move towards Popular Front forms of rule—as our British Perspectives document points out. The CPGB was not of course a direct partner in the Popular Frontist formation of the Lib-Lab coalition—which rested tacitly on the counter-revolutionary perspectives and policies of the Stalinists acting through their bureaucratic positions in the trade union movement—but the arrangement proved crucial in the preservation and extension of wage controls in the face of a militant working class. The attempt—fostered by the Stalinists—to extend the method of the Popular Front into industry itself, with the creation of joint management/union "workers' participation" schemes as in British Leyland has failed to convince the working class—and the Leyland scheme itself is under notice of union withdrawal.

The vast scale and increasingly political development of the proletarian movement throughout Europe cannot be ignored. Huge sections of workers have not only taken militant strike action despite the massive collaboration and blatant manoeuvres of the labour bureaucrats; they have also entered into the process of directly challenging their existing reformist and Stalinist leaders, although often in a confused and misguided way. The formation of the 'autonomous unions' in Italy is once clear example of this. In Spain, large groups of workers have again and again struck for higher wages despite the collaboration of union bureaucrats in the Moncloa Pact, while in West Germany the pressure of the economic crisis has been great enough to cause major strikes, despite all the suppressive apparatus of labour laws. At the same time, expulsions and other anti-democratic methods have not been enough to safeguard the reformist leaders against the opposition of militants. These growing signs of independence by the working class pose sharply again and again the question of the fight for transitional demands to develop forms of workers' control over production, transport and distribution and every aspect of capitalist society.

The renewed onslaught on pay and jobs by the Carter administration points yet again to the essential unity of the twin capitalist parties that contend for workers' votes in US elections. The construction of a Labour Party based on the US trade union movement is a demand that in the developing crisis remains of paramount educational and agitational importance. It offers workers an avenue for struggle against both capitalist parties and against the union bureaucracy who bolster the existing political set-up. The 100 million abstentions in the last elections despite hugely expensive advertising campaigns shows what a large proportion of the working class in the USA has seen through the capitalist shroud of propaganda and recognised that neither of the two main parties has anything to offer.

Indeed the growing scale of the world imperialist crisis and the sharpening antagonisms that it fosters are the motive forces stripping away the facade of credibility from

the treacherous labour bureaucracies in every country of the world. As imperialism grasps desperately for support in preserving the existing balance of forces, so also its faithful servants who have posed as "progressive" nationalists in the underdeveloped and colonial countries are increasingly exposed for what they are in the eyes of their former supporters.

But for such exposure to lead to the necessary conclusion—the need to construct revolutionary parties in every country as part of a reconstructed Fourth International—the political contradictions of the period must be consciously drawn out by the intervention of Trotskyist forces. For such an intervention it is necessary to uphold and develop the understanding of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism and social democracy in the post-war period.

STALINIST EXPANSIONISM IN AFRICA?

The puppet regimes of imperialism in Africa are crumbling, as the oppressed masses move forward. In this situation, the Kremlin Stalinists have been forced to move dramatically beyond their everyday methods of counter-revolution.

They continue to supply arms on a restricted basis to the liberation movements, so as to exercise political control over their development. On this basis, the Stalinists can bring maximum pressure to bear to force the African nationalist movements to make compromise deals with imperialism. But this well-worn method of preserving the balance of world forces in relation to imperialism has come against new problems. After the defeat of the US imperialists in Vietnam, the weakness of imperialism—evident to all—has placed the Kremlin leaders in an embarrassing dilemma, since imperialist forces were clearly in no position to withstand the advancing struggles in Angola, Mozambique and elsewhere for any prolonged period.

But this period for Stalinism coincided with a new turn in its own internal crisis. As the split between the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies grew deeper and more bitter, the Kremlin leaders were also faced with the increasingly open willingness of the leaders of the mass European CPs to collaborate with NATO and their own bourgeoisies even in the event of war with the USSR, and with a growing confrontation within the Warsaw Pact with Rumania and other sections of the Stalinist national bureaucracies.

These divisions dangerously weakened the ability of the Kremlin bureaucracy to defend itself against any offensive by imperialism against the nationalised property relations of the Soviet Union. To restore the balance, the Brezhnev clique was forced to look for new allies and bases of support.

It is a combination of all these factors that accounts for the entirely new level of Soviet involvement in Africa. The tool for these operations has been the armed forces of puppet Stalinist Fidel Castro (now completely absorbed into the Stalinist economic and military orbit). Cuban troops, combined with Soviet and East German advisors and judicious supplies of arms and material aid, have been used to secure Stalinist bridgeheads in the wake of imperialist defeats in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia.

This intervention has had a contradictory character. In order to preserve their own bureaucratic interests, the Kremlin Stalinists have actually assisted in the victory of anti-imperialist struggles.

In this way, the Soviet bureaucrats sought both to forestall any deeper radicalisation of the masses that might result from a more prolonged struggle, and also to exercise immediate control over the leadership of the newly-independent states or new regimes.

In each instance Stalinist opposition to the independent struggles of the masses has been demonstrated vividly—most blatantly of all in the Eritrean war.

Our position on such military involvement must underline these dangers, while seeking to strengthen the fight of those forces now in struggle against imperialism. We do not ourselves raise the demand for the sending of Soviet or Cuban troops—though we do demand that a maximum of arms, finance and material aid is provided to every anti-imperialist struggle by the workers' states. On the other hand where the leadership of liberation struggles themselves issue an appeal for Cuban or Soviet troops to assist them, we should support such a demand, while at the same time spelling out the necessity for every possible link-up between the liberation forces and the troops concerned to ensure the expropriation of landlords and capitalists in the liberated areas and the creation of soviets and committees of workers and peasants, which must strive for the involvement of rank and file soldiers.

Only such an approach offers any independent road for the masses in the struggle against their own petty bourgeois leadership and against the reactionary hold of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

But for the imperialists the harsh fact still remains that, while their own power in Africa is on the wane and they face severe problems in Latin America and Asia, the Soviet bureaucracy is ensconcing itself in key strategic ports and outposts, and consolidating as best it can economic and military links with the ruling petty bourgeois nationalist regimes. Posed with this problem in Africa, the question of whether or not to unleash a renewed "cold war" confrontation with the Stalinist states, or even a military confrontation with Cuban detachments in Angola and elsewhere, has raised its head.

Indeed at the time of the Zaire events during 1978 and the Stalinist show-trials of pro-Western "dissidents", the sabre-rattling by Carter and other leading US spokesmen demonstrated the real content of the fraudulent "human rights" crusade—designed to lay the basis for an offensive against the degenerated and deformed workers' states.

But the Cold War tactic in itself—seeking to isolate the workers' states and on this basis also repress the revolutionary and left wing organisations within the main capitalist countries—is of dubious value to the imperialists in a period where the forward movement of the working class makes witch-hunting of communists an uncertain proposition.

Moreover when the Stalinists are playing such a crucial role in holding back struggles in so many parts of the world, and (as the accommodation between Angola and Zaire shows) are plainly hostile to any upsurge of revolutionary struggle that might jeopardise the global balance of class forces, an all-out confrontation with them could only threaten further problems for imperialism.

The military intervention in Zaire also spotlighted the massive problems faced by the imperialists in any challenge to Stalinism—particularly in the wake of the Vietnam defeat. The US imperialists themselves had to sit on their hands, unable to send troops, and were forced to do no more than supply cash and transport planes. The job thus fell to the second-string imperialist powers, France and Belgium. These states themselves could not move until the Stalinist leaders of Cuba and the Soviet Union made it clear they would under no circumstances support or defend the rebel forces. But even here, with the mobilisation of only a few hundred troops to intervene in Africa, thousands of French and Belgian workers took to the streets in protest. And while the operation was on the class struggle in France erupted into strikes on wages at naval dockyards and munitions plants, and riot police called in to break up illegal mass meetings.



Carter - 'human rights' a cover for war moves?

If all this happened with only a few soldiers committed to a brutal, but short and small-scale military intervention, what chance have the imperialist nations got of carrying through the huge task of directly controlling events throughout the vast African continent by military force?

In any event Carter's vague threats soon drew forth apologetic gestures by the Stalinist bureaucracies. Castro disavowed any intention of interfering in Zaire, offering to help police the border. And top Cuban bureaucrat Carlos Rafael Rodriguez pointed out:

"Cuba does not aid subversion, but on the contrary participates as the American ambassador to the UN admitted, in an effort of stabilisation or struggle against subversion."

Despite their deep mistrust of the Stalinists, the imperialist leaders are impelled increasingly by their own weakness to rely on the Stalinists to police the world against social revolution. In recent months the Stalinists have shown off their counter-revolutionary credentials in Iran, in Nicaragua and in the Middle East.

And in Angola the imperialists have scented the willingness of the Stalinists to honour an unwritten "spheres of influence" arrangement. They have therefore pulled back from the kind of economic and political measures that forced Castro's Cuba completely into the willing embrace of the Kremlin bureaucracy. They have instead agreed with Neto on terms under which they will continue the multi-million dollar oil operation in Cabinda and the Benguela railway. And Neto—himself reluctant to see any extension of the Angolan struggles into Southern Africa—has willingly collaborated in the moves to block guerrilla struggles in Zaire, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Under these conditions the dark threats bandied about earlier in the year by the Carter administration and in particular by top aide Brzezinski, have been largely set aside in a renewed effort at tactics of class collaboration to retain control of Africa. These tactics are summed up in the reactionary manoeuvres by the British Labour traitors. Callaghan was one of the first to criticise Carter for heavy-handed "Christopher Columbus" tactics on Africa. Now imperialist errand-boy Owen and other Labour leaders are effectively the mainstay of hopes for a "peaceful" transition to black bourgeois rule in Zimbabwe, while the Stalinists use their material and political influence with the guerrilla forces to give the imperialist powers the leeway for such a squalid deal.

While the contradictions of the economic and political crisis of imperialism therefore still must drive the capitalist class to contemplate the necessity for a war to recapture the lost markets and once-exploited masses of the degenerated workers' states, this same crisis also produces the *obstacles* to such a strategy—a forward moving working class challenging capitalist rule in every continent on the globe, acute economic constraints on the major capitalist powers, and a profound political crisis penetrating the very heart of the imperialist nations themselves.

Before the imperialist ruling classes can contemplate a military confrontation with the degenerated and deformed workers' states they need to remove that obstacle. In their fight for survival they can count on the aid of international Stalinism. The political reality in the world today is the unity, albeit uneasy, of imperialism and Stalinism against the working class.

If the imperialists succeed in crushing a significant section of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries it will be in no small measure the responsibility of the Stalinists who will have then laid the basis for a military assault by imperialism on the gains of 1917.

Our principled call for the defence of the nationalised property relations of the workers' states against attack by imperialism, and for the extension of these gains through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and *political revolution* in the Stalinist states therefore gives a conscious focus and direction to the spontaneous radicalisation of the world's proletarian and peasant masses in the current situation.

And in doing so it raises to the forefront the task of constructing Trotskyist parties not only in the capitalist countries and the colonial world, but also in the degenerated workers' states themselves.

FOR POLITICAL REVOLUTION!

The forward movement of the working class that has characterised the period in the capitalist states is also a material factor within the deformed workers' states of Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba. The growing demands of the working class are the ever-present factor underlying the splits and divisions between the different national Stalinist bureaucracies.

Rumanian leader Ceausescu, fearing a repetition or extension of the recent mass strike by Rumanian miners, has allocated an increased portion of the state budget to increase working class living standards—hoping in this way to buy off the working class with concessions while retaining the political power in the hands of the bureaucracy. But this course has driven him into conflict with the Kremlin's demands for an immediate increase in defence spending from all the Warsaw Pact countries.

Fears of repetition of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak events has therefore also persuaded Ceausescu to refuse

to place Rumanian troops at the complete disposal of the Warsaw Pact whose chiefs of staff are Soviet officers.

Meanwhile, unable within the confines of the bureaucratically deformed Rumanian economy to find the resources for the expansion required to placate the working class, Ceausescu has set out to further his opportunist links with the capitalist nations. 'Socialism in one country' and the failure of Comecon to attempt any overall planning of the economies of the workers' states save in the interests of the Kremlin leaders, have thus drawn the Rumanian bureaucracy on to the path of increasing reliance on capitalist loans and technology. In so doing it renders the Rumanian economy increasingly liable to disruption as a result of the capitalist economic crisis. Similar pressures can be seen at work in the Yugoslav economy. Tito's flirtation with 'Eurocommunism' is little more than a reflection of the Yugoslav bureaucracy's increasing dependence upon investment from the capitalist states, and its search for a measure of independence from the demands of the Kremlin.

Given the interdependence of the Stalinist bureaucracy and imperialism in the face of the forward movement of the world working class the penetration of imperialist investment into the non-capitalist economies is the major form which imperialist aggression against the gains of 1917 takes at present.



PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

Ceausescu — fears anger of masses

The emergence of differences between Rumania and the Kremlin over military spending will intensify the pressures on other national based Stalinist bureaucracies to place as a priority the placating of their own working class, and to resist efforts by the Kremlin leaders to buttress the Soviet economy at their expense.

The emergence of *territorial rivalries* between the deformed workers' states—both in Europe and between Vietnam and Cambodia, Vietnam and China—also demonstrates the utterly reactionary, nationalist basis on which each Stalinist leadership attempts to resolve its problems. Such splits and conflicts offer imperialism its only real chance of making inroads into the gains represented by the nationalised property relations in those countries.

But the developing antagonisms between the bureaucracy and the working class which lies at the root of these upheavals offer the prospect of developing in the direction of political revolution for the overthrow of the parasitic Stalinist ruling caste and the establishment of a government based on workers' councils.

The Soviet bureaucracy itself, as shown by the recent spate of show trials and punitive sentences handed out to intellectual "dissidents", isolated supporters of imperialism, and other opponents, feels the kind of unease which suggests that they are concerned not so much to punish the individuals concerned as to intimidate more substantial forces likely to move into opposition to the bureaucracy—the working class.

Such nervousness must also underly the bureaucratic crackdown in East Germany against intellectual "dissident" Rudolph Bahro and the Czech "Charter 77" grouping, which has had the audacity to demand the implementation of rights written into the Czech constitution.

The Stalinist leaders will be acutely aware that isolated, often confused protests by intellectuals were the first symptoms of the emergence of the mass struggles now gripping the Iranian dictatorship.

But more than this is involved in the struggle for democratic rights in the degenerated and deformed workers' states. The bureaucracy knows that one crack in the armour that is its repressive apparatus will be enough to encourage the unleashing of mass struggles. We fight *alongside* the 'dissidents' for democratic rights, aiming always to develop that struggle *away from* any notion of a united front with the 'democrat' Carter towards the *resurgence* of a genuine dictatorship of the independent

class organs of the proletariat.

The 'human rights' crusade by Carter does not extend to serious support for dissidents within the Stalinist states. Carter knows well the effects of a genuine struggle for democratic rights against the Stalinists. He is not yet ready to organise open parties of restoration.

A sense of this internal weakness is also a factor in the moves by the bureaucracy to seek new diplomatic and military bases of support in the Middle East and Africa. In particular the economic and military alliances formed in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia seem to be attempts to repeat the experiences of the Cuban revolution, in which the use of such measures to bolster up Castro's nationalist government led to complete assimilation of the Castroites into the orbit of Stalinism, providing a "low cost" extension of the defence of the USSR through the establishment of a military outpost on the very doorstep of the USA itself.

Such a strategy—in total opposition to and in mortal fear of the revolutionary mobilisation of the independent strength of the world proletariat—is possible only as a result of the weakness of world imperialism at a time of acute crisis for the Stalinist leaders themselves.

The bureaucracy which clearly feels most menaced by the mass movement of the working class, and most driven to measures designed to bring rapid improvements in living standards, is that in Peking.

Acting from a far more isolated and weak economic position than the Soviet bureaucracy, and denied the resources they need from any of the degenerated workers' states, the Chinese Stalinists have set out to build their own 'socialism in one country' with the aid of huge loans and deals with imperialism, and to buttress themselves against the Kremlin bureaucracy through the most brazen bureaucratic and military manoeuvres. In its bid to win Western respectability and justify its appeals for credit, the Peking regime has offered its services as an ally against the Soviet Union. And, trying to establish itself as a rival force to the Kremlin on a world scale, Peking has set out to establish its own network of opportunist links with selected regimes—including some of the most outrageous despots and dictators. Such a strategy is simply an alternative version of the opportunism of the Kremlin leaders themselves.

The scale of the borrowing and of purchases, and the opening of doors to direct capitalist investment of up to 49% in new Chinese industrial projects, are reflections of the unresolved economic backwardness inherited after the 1949 revolution and preserved through the policy of "socialism in one country". Now this massive commitment to world capitalism carries real dangers to the nationalised property relations of the Chinese workers' state itself.

The bureaucracy has clearly remained split on the need for such extreme measures. And this division, combined with the growing militancy and awareness of the working class itself, led to the emergence in late 1978 of the wall poster campaigns which now the bureaucracy is attempting to contain.

The range and vigour of the wall posters now appearing in the capital—and surrounded by crowds of readers—suggests that the bureaucracy is so split that its rigid control is slipping fast. Ten years after the 'Prague Spring', the crisis of Chinese Stalinism is producing a "thaw" in this much vaster nation. The Central Committee has already made desperate attempts to close ranks. But there can be no Soviet tanks coming to the rescue of Chinese Stalinism.

For this reason all factions of the bureaucracy will tend to be drawn towards the protection of the army chiefs. If the masses are to find a way forward, the struggle for the building of workers' councils as the focus of organised power independent of the bureaucracy is crucial.

In each of the workers' states, therefore, the reflection of the capitalist crisis and the movement of the masses raises the necessity for the construction of Trotskyist parties to lead the political overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. The vitriolic attacks on "Trotskyism" carried recently in the Cuban press, and the anxious efforts of the Stalinist regimes to repress intellectual opponents who might turn in the direction of Trotsky's analysis and programme for the political revolution, all indicate that this point is not lost on the bureaucracy itself.

RECONSTRUCT THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

The international crisis is such that the continued disorientation of the world Trotskyist movement is becoming a material factor in prolonging the life of imperialism and shackling the working class to its bureaucratic leaders.

The Workers Socialist League restates its determination to fight for a return to the basic principles, the programme and the method of the Trotskyist Programme of 1938 as the basis for discussions and practical work designed to pave the way for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Only in this way can Trotskyists come to play their historic role in the vanguard of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, the armed overthrow of the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies, and the establishment of a world federation of socialist states as the only answer to the threat of fascism and barbarism raised by capitalism in its death agony.

CONCLUDED

CLOSE AND DISTANT ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PAST

Sumerian Civilisation is a small but interesting exhibition showing until January 11 at the Iraqi Cultural Centre in London.

Although there are only a few exhibits, this exhibition, (partly as a result of its informative catalogue) conveys a lot about a civilisation which marked one of the most gigantic steps forward ever taken by mankind.

Sumerian civilisation was a qualitative leap in man's struggle against nature and so towards that development of the productive forces which must form the material basis of the advance towards a classless society.

Sumerian civilisation which lasted from about 5000 to 2000 BC was one of the civilisations of the so-called Bronze Age.

During that period there arose a series of societies in the rich, fertile area (now Iraq) between the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates and also in the Nile valley and in the north of India.

Steps forward

These new societies were based, probably for the first time in human history, on widespread settled agriculture, the permanent production of a surplus of food and the growth of large scale urban society.

Sumerian society developed and made use of new techniques of metallurgy as well as the wheel, irrigation, the sailing ship and writing.

These were massive steps forward for humanity, though they took place within the framework of an authoritarian priest-ridden society which eventually became an obstacle to the further development of productive forces.

Within Sumerian society the exchange of commodities developed to a very advanced degree.

A monetary system was founded and capitalist trade and probably even the rudiments of capitalist production began.

But the reactionary features of the society—slavery and religious oppression—prevented the formation of a "free" labour force not tied to the means of production.

Material conditions

Sumerian civilisation, therefore, did not provide all of the material conditions which would have permitted capitalism at that time to become the world's dominant mode of production.

Another 3000 years of advances and retreats for humanity were to be required before that occurred.

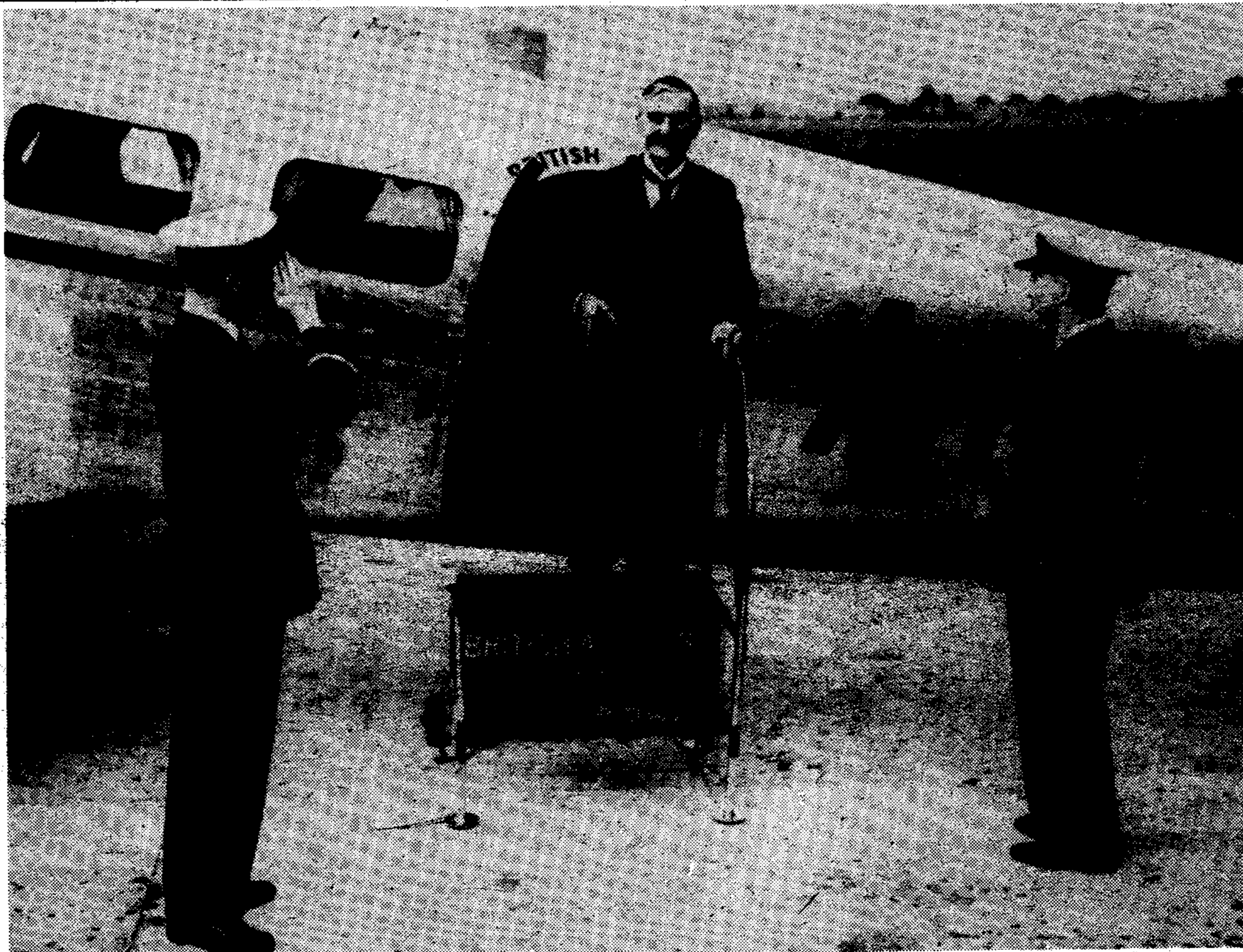
But the unprecedented material advances of which Sumerian civilisation was capable can be clearly seen in this exhibition—not so much in the stark, staring faces of the religious statues but in the plans, pictorial reconstructions and photographs of excavations of the complex and highly developed cities.

But if the exhibits of the Sumerian exhibition appear to be staring at us a little mysteriously across the distances of millennia there is another much vaster exhibition now on in London in which many of the exhibits could scarcely be more familiar and immediate.

Art and design

"The Thirties" at the Hayward Gallery is an exhibition of the art and design of the decade and the country in which I was

HENRY PHILLIPS reviews exhibitions on Sumerian civilisation and the 1930s. 'THE THIRTIES' is showing at the Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London SE1 until January 13, admission £1.20 (60p on Mondays)



Pointer to politics in the 1930s—Chamberlain returns from Munich 1938

born. The exhibits include many of the everyday household objects, books, comics, magazines and advertisements of my own childhood.

Familiar

That is one feature of the exhibition which makes it particularly visually arresting.

But you don't have to have been born in the Thirties to find a very striking feeling of familiarity in many of the designs.

A few stand out as designs which are so much a standard part of our surroundings that we have forgotten to look at them as conscious creations.

An example of these is the London Underground sign which was designed in the '30s but in no way seems dated today.

That particular one, however, is a somewhat exceptional instance of a brilliant, forward-looking piece of design serviceable for decades.

To me one of the noticeable features of the exhibition was how few of the 1930s designs had been so durable—and how many of the objects seemed relatively dated.

And that is partly because many of them were, even at the time, backward-looking designs—in particular much of the glassware and ceramics and some of the architectural extravaganzas like Edwin Lutyens' design for Liverpool Cathedral, to be the second largest church in Christendom.

It is the industrial designs of the exhibition which personally found its most interesting feature.

And this is partly because the 1930s was the decade in

which industrial design as a separate speciality was born.

The exhibition's huge and exhaustive catalogue says that in 1930 there was not a single professional industrial designer working in Britain while by the end of the decade there were 300.

This fact is reflected in the tensions between backward and forward looking designs.

Some of the early designs for such new products as TV sets and radios try to make them look like something totally different by encasing them in housing which harks back to a previous age.

This tendency to disguise technology is in sharp contrast to such exhibits as an early Whittle jet engine or Sir Malcolm Campbell's car, 'Bluebird', in which he broke the world speed record.

Durable

In both cases design is subordinated to the technical needs and the result is a design which is more honest and more durable.

But another problem with the most original and forward looking designs however, many of which owe a good deal to German designers of the late 1920s, is the over-enthusiastic use of some of the new materials which became available at that time.

These include moulded plastics, chromium plate, bent plywood and various new building materials.

Many things made of these materials which must have seemed futuristic at the time now look merely vulgar (for instance the Nash bathroom and much of the furniture).

But many of these questions

will be affected by individual taste. This is even more true of the large collection of paintings.

There will be few people who fail to find some interesting aspects of a huge exhibition which covers painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, industrial design, print, book and magazine design, commercial advertising and leisure.

But at the same time a socialist will be puzzled by the exhibition.

The '30s, after all was the decade of deep capitalist crisis and slump, of mass unemployment, of fascism and the approach of war.

Those things do impinge on the exhibition but in the form of very shadowy and distant images, especially in the section devoted to photography.

It would be wrong to ask this to be an exhibition of political history.

But there are no more than a few hints, some of which appear accidental, about the way in which the art and design of the period reflected social and political factors.

The images of the exhibition seem to reflect a number of long term trends which continued or even accelerated during the '30s—the development of new materials, the increasing role of the capitalist state as a patron of art and design and the emergence of new products, especially electrical and electronics goods.

But it is less successful at reflecting the way in which economically and politically the '30s was a decade of crisis, regression and barbarism.



The Silver Bullet - functional design

**YOU SHOULD
JOIN US!**

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class.

Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or left—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their "own" employing class.

In a period where the contradictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

To achieve such a perspective a leadership is needed which, in today's struggles fights to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain and internationally.

We invite all readers of Socialist Press to seek more details of the WSL and its work and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

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WSL MANIFESTO
A basic statement of the policies of the Workers Socialist League. Price 15p including postage from WSL, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

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92% vote for Derby work-in!

Workers at Etwall Hospital in Derby last week began a work-in to prevent the closure of the 97-bed hospital.

A ballot of the 130 union and non-union staff had earlier produced a staggering 92% vote to stage the work-in as a last ditch means to fight the closure.

Such occupations are officially the policy of both NUPE and COHSE. But

neither union has taken the slightest national initiative to implement it.

Indeed NUPE leader Alan Fisher has actually counterposed a policy of work-ins to the call for strike action—though the experience of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital work-in in London proved that the threat of supporting strikes is decisive to the defence of threatened hospitals.

The Etwall Hospital

work-in is significant therefore in taking up the fight for this tactic outside the London area, where every other major hospital occupation has taken place.

Support

Health workers facing cuts and closures must rally in support of the Etwall struggle and demand that their unions:

*Officially give the call for occupation of all threatened hospitals and facilities.

*Call nationwide supporting strike action to back struggles against the cuts.

*Take the initiative in forming local labour movement councils of action to defend and extend such struggles and create the basis for bringing down the Tories.

*Fight for the removal of Labour's reactionary leadership that initiated the health cuts.

*Campaign for a policy of a sliding scale of health expenditure to protect services against inflation, as assessed by elected committees of workers' management.

Robinson: need for action plan

The British Leyland Longbridge joint shop stewards have called a national labour movement delegate conference in defence of Derek Robinson on Sunday January 13.

The West Midlands No. 20 Confed has already supported this call.

This conference must be supported but it must not be allowed to become another jamboree of standing ovations like the rally in Birmingham Town Hall, held on the Monday after Robinson was sacked.

This conference must demand all-out official action throughout Leyland in defence of Robinson.

It must organise a mass lobby of the AUEW Executive. It must also campaign for a ballot of AUEW members to

remove Duffy and the Executive.

This needs 10% of the union's branches to call for it (about 250) and a two-thirds majority.

Support has been coming in from AUEW branches, district committees and other labour movement bodies all over the country.

But the Communist Party is trying to limit the struggle to this. At the NUS conference CP members actually opposed a resolution condemning the AUEW Executive!

January 13 must not just be for support, it must point the way forward. Branches must send delegates and put forward resolutions doing this.

Credentials can be obtained from Steve Willetts, 25 Hawne Lane, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 3RN.

Shop floor destroys ballots

An unusual shop floor revolt by the 140-strong TGWU membership at Biddles, Nuneaton, last week succeeded in defeating management attempts to force in a wage offer by a secret ballot.

After an initial 15% offer had been thrown out by a mass meeting, management offered a further 50p—but insisted that this had to be put to a ballot.

The convenor and a majority of shop stewards caved in to this demand, and agreed to recommend acceptance.

But angry shop floor workers succeeded in forcing a mass meeting which, despite the convenors arguments, voted unanimously against participating in the ballot—the forms for which were destroyed there and then—and, by 80 votes to 20, to reject the new pay offer.

NUJ rejects offer

Provincial journalists have voted three to one to throw out a 14.5% offer from the Newspaper Society.

The vote came in the same week that the Law Lords reversed a decision of Lord Denning and declared secondary blacking used in last year's strike legal.

Workers should be under no illusions that this represents the 'fairness' of the legal system. By pointing to what the law says now the Lords are inviting Prior to include clear changes in his anti-union legislation.

For the Provincial journalists however, the decision highlights the way in which the state directly intervened in last year's strike. The only way to take on the Newspaper Society and force a victory on the 30% wage claim this year is through all-out strike action with blacking as a prime means of support.

LCDTU Conference called

Such is the scale of the mass movement against the Tory government that the Stalinist-run Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions has felt obliged to call a conference in London on January 26.

If the Communist Party have their own way, the conference will centre exclusively on abstract protest against the Tory anti-union laws.

This would amount to a cynical re-run of the LCDTU's

role under the Heath government, when, with the slogan "Kill the Bill", it provided a harmless 'left' diversion from the treachery of the TUC leaders, who stood by and allowed the Industrial Relations Act onto the Statue books.

Like the TUC, the LCDTU vigorously opposed any demand for action to bring down the Heath government: and is certain to oppose any concrete demand for action to bring down Thatcher.

But for all its record of betrayal, the present vacuum of leadership within the working class makes it likely that the LCDTU conference will attract layers of militant workers seeking a way forward against the Tories.

Fight for action

With this in view Socialist Press urges readers to get delegated to the conference from their union branches or shop stewards committees, to fight alongside members of the Workers Socialist League for fighting policies of strike action to bring down the Tories.

In this way the militant facade of the LCDTU can be exposed for the sham it is, and the best elements at the conference can be offered a policy independent of the Stalinists.

Credentials for the conference are available from 137 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.



PHOTO: Laurie Sparham, IFL

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YES LEN, OF COURSE I CAN MAKE THIS SECRET PARTY OF YOURS: BUT IT'S NOT ANOTHER ONE OF JIM'S FIGHTBACK MEETINGS, IS IT?... OH GOOD... REMEMBER THE EMBARRASSMENT LAST TIME?



WILL THERE BE MANY OF THE LADS THERE? AND WHAT ABOUT WOMEN—OR SHOULD I BRING THE WIFE?



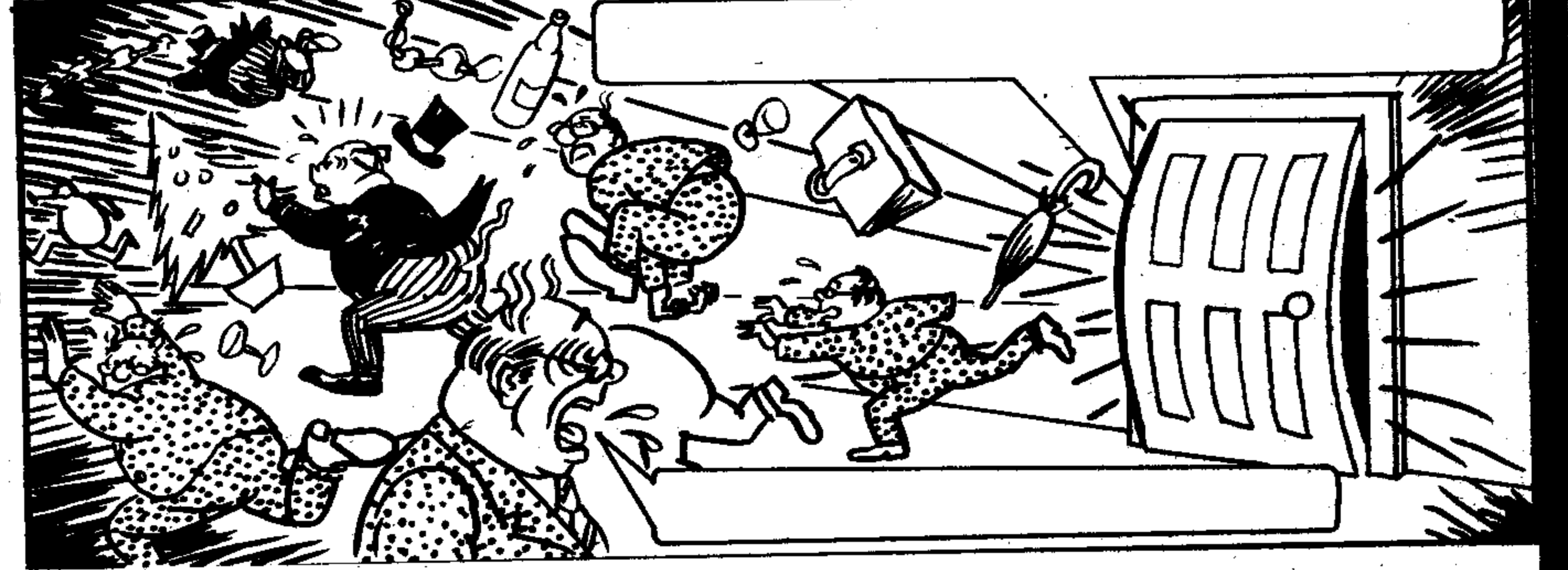
WELL WE'VE MANAGED TO SAVE CALLAGHAN'S NECK AND MAINTAIN TALKS WITH THE TORIES—A DIFFICULT YEAR!



GENTLEMEN: A TOAST TO MODERATION AND COOPERATION!



HEY! SOMEONE'S KNOCKING—WHO IS IT?



SOCIALIST PRESS



NEW NATO WAR THREAT

In a week when 20,000 Soviet troops and 1,000 tanks were withdrawn from East Germany by Kremlin leaders, imperialist chiefs decided last Wednesday to press ahead with an aggressive £2,000 million missiles plan that dramatically increases the danger of nuclear war.

Cutting through the wafer thin veneer of seasonal bourgeois claptrap about "peace on earth", the anti-Soviet NATO alliance is to instal 600 US-controlled Cruise and Pershing II missiles on sites in Western Europe.

Prime targets

The missiles, with a range of 1,500 miles, are the first in Europe to have the capacity to strike the Soviet Union.

But their most immediate effect will of course be to transform the "host" countries into prime targets for Soviet retaliation or preventative strikes in the event of war.

And since the missiles are controlled not by the European governments but directly by the US warmongers Carter is in reality not so much offering "defence", but rather gaining a new device for forcing European imperialists into the front line of a possible catastrophic US war against the deformed



Pym

workers states.

At the forefront of the fight to secure European acceptance of this potentially suicidal plan has been the fanatically anti-Soviet Thatcher government, and in particular Defence Secretary Pym.

But another eager sponsor of the scheme has been West German "socialist" Premier Helmut Schmidt.

Belgium's "socialist" Foreign Minister Henri Simonet also played a leading role in winning conditional Belgian backing for the missiles.

Only in Holland was a coalition government—that of Andreas van Agt—forced into opposing the plan, which involved the stationing of 48 missiles on Dutch soil.

Encouraged by this NATO move, and determined to increase the striking power of US imperialism, Carter went on last Wednesday to announce a massive 5%, \$9 billion, increase in arms spending.

The extra money is necessary, Carter argued, in order to give the US a "more flexible

strategic and tactical military posture".

Central to his new plans is a rapid deployment strike force, requiring a new fleet of "maritime pre-positioning ships", each carrying up to three brigades of marines.

"We must understand", asserted Carter "that not every instance of the firm application of power is a potential Vietnam.

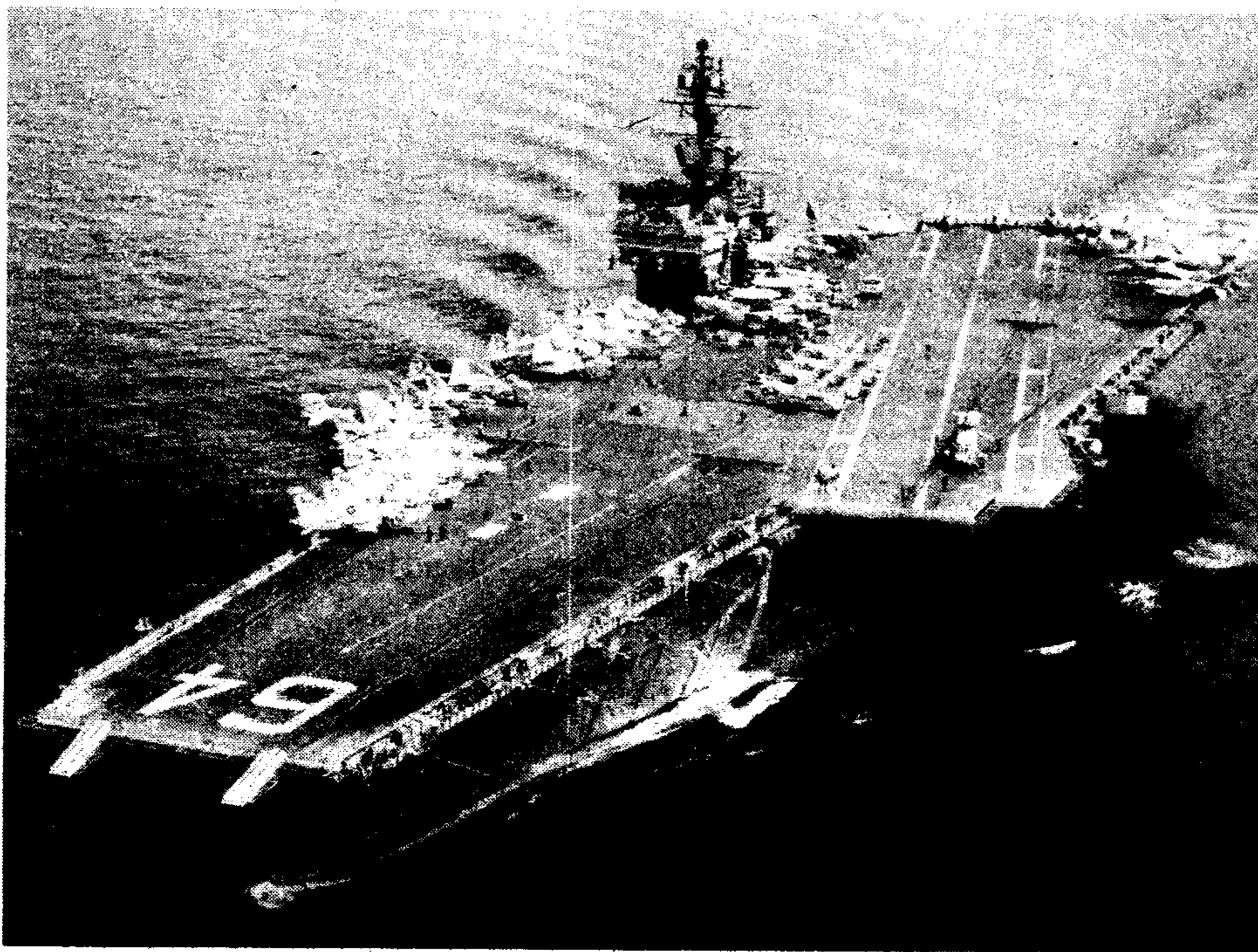
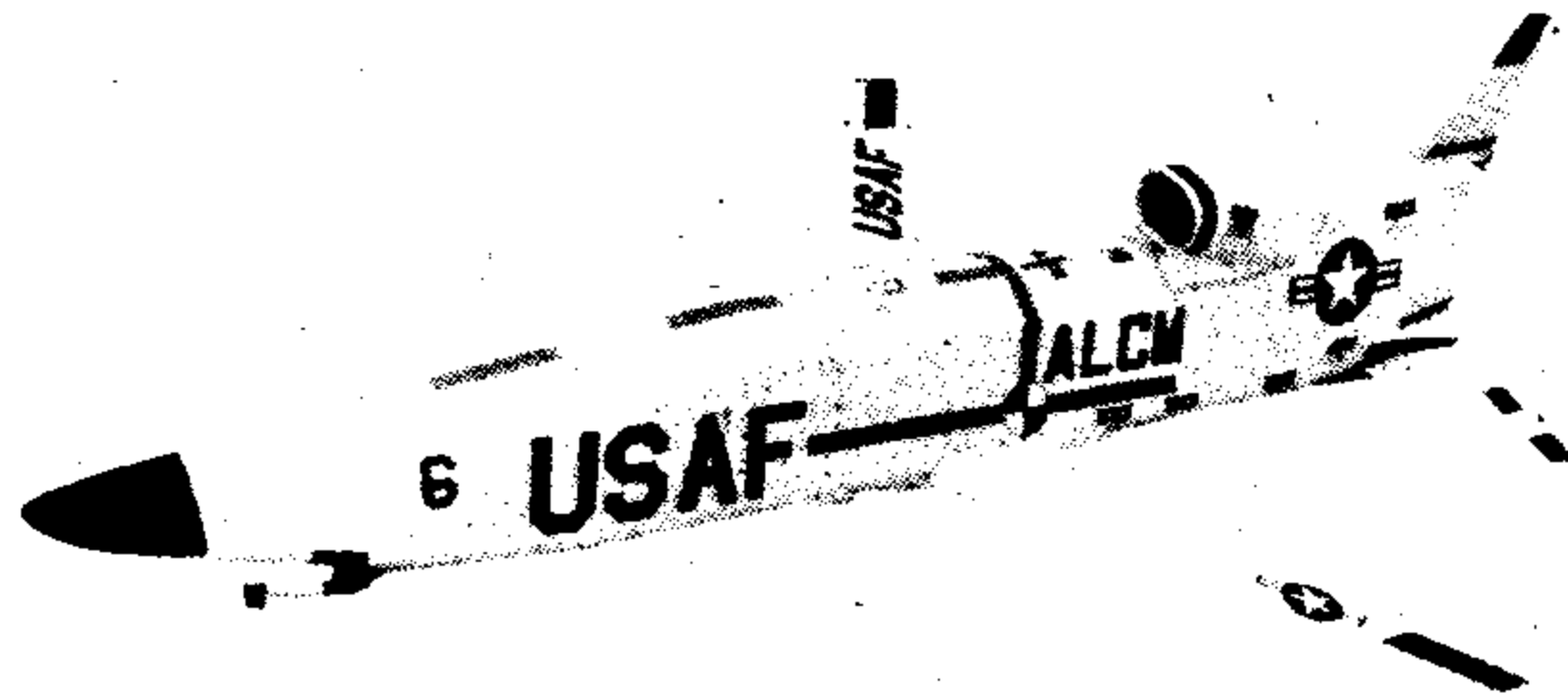
"The consensus for national strength and international involvement, although shaken and threatened, survived that divisive and tragic war".

Once again, therefore, the American imperialists are contemplating massive military adventures, in which hundreds of thousands are slaughtered.

The US war budget now totals a massive \$157 billion, and the growing importance attached to such spending at a time of acute economic crisis for imperialism indicates the desperate lengths to which capitalism is prepared to go to defend its rule.

Such actions are not only a threat to the deformed workers' states: they run directly counter to the interests of the working class in every country of the world.

Yet the imperialist threat can only be defeated through the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class in the struggle for the overthrow of



Carter ordering new warships

capitalism.

Such a political answer is anathema to the Kremlin Stalinists, whose privileged bureaucratic power (like that of their fellows in the deformed workers' states) rests on the preservation of an uneasy "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism on a world scale.

Threat to privileges

The Stalinist leaders recognise in the revolutionary struggles of the working class a threat to their own parasitic positions.

Instead, they seek merely to use tame protest movements and diplomatic means in a bid to pressurise imperialist leaders into abandoning imperialist policies.

This is why the struggle today against the war threat and for the defence of the workers' states against imperialism requires the construction in every country of Trotskyist parties capable of leading the overthrow of capitalism and the necessary political revolution to remove the Stalinist bureaucracies.



Price 75p including postage from: WSL, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR.

WORKERS SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Public meeting
"Support the Steel pay strike!
Fight the redundancies"
Room 2 YMCA
Brandon St., Motherwell
Monday 14 January
7.00 p.m.



Ireland: a new year of struggle

Within one week of Parliament nodding through its six monthly renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 18 people had been picked up in Britain in a major police sweep.

Although police are claiming that they have netted one man on their suspect list—Gerry Tuite—the round up is clearly an annual propaganda drive.

This time last year Metropolitan Police mounted Operation Santa—flooding London's West End with uniformed and plain clothes police in an attempt to heighten the political atmosphere surrounding Christmas shopping.

Among those arrested is Patrick Prendiville, aged 33, an industrial reporter with the *Hibernian Weekly Review*.

Prendiville, whose arrest brought protests from the National Union of Journalists, applied with two others for a writ of habeas corpus to secure their release.

But the Home Secretary had already signed an order agreeing to their being held for five extra days without charge, and the court—which is nominally supposed to ensure that no one is held without evidence—granted the police an adjournment to prepare evidence!

Nine of those held have now been released.

The round up came ten days after two NUS delegates had been arrested under the PTA as they were travelling from Northern Ireland to the student annual conference.

The Act is unashamedly used as a means of harassing those known to have republican views; yet this year's 'debate' in the House of Commons brought fewer protests than ever from Labour MPs.

But such propaganda public displays do little to demonstrate that the British government is winning its war with Irish republicans.

Reduced confidence

The blowing up of four soldiers in County Tyrone and the killing of a fifth in South Armagh brought the number of British troops killed by the Provisional IRA this year to 38—three times the total figure for 1978.

The security forces in the North are at sixes and sevens. A number of stunning blows this year have reduced confidence amongst the Loyalist population in the North.

They are beginning to doubt whether the army can win a war against a Provisional movement which is now operating guerrilla warfare at maximum efficiency.

SDLP attempts to present a left face to Northern Catholics came to an ignominious end this week with the new leader John Hume agreeing to talks with the British government.

The talks will be doomed to failure (and are being boycotted by the Official Unionists) but Hume's about-turn will assist Thatcher in her visit to America.

She will demand that US collections and help for republicans in the north are cut off.

Splits among the Unionists increase.

Jim Kilfedder, from North Down, who was expelled from the Official Unionists three years ago, is to form a progressive unionist party which will seek to ignore the national question as best it can and make timid proposals for social reform.

If the year ends with the British Army on the defensive there is little for the working class in the six counties to look forward to in 1980.

The Provisionals have abandoned predictions of early success but remain ever locked in guerrillaism.

A spokesman for the Provos Council told the Sunday press: "We have conditioned our people to think in terms of a long-term struggle. We don't speculate on how long it will take".

The Workers Socialist League unconditionally defends the Provisional IRA against the British Army.



The Provos have lost 180 people killed in the last ten years and 1,000 of their number have been jailed.

Those inside and outside the ranks of the Provisionals who have been killed, injured or jailed are victims of British imperialism in Ireland.

But the Provisionals are no substitute for a party of the working class which makes no concessions to imperialism or Loyalism and seeks to unite the working class around a revolutionary programme.

Such a party—which only Trotskyists are capable of building—would link a struggle in the North to an unremitting struggle against the Catholic state in the South where Haughey's nationalist reputation is a thin cover for his Tory politics.

*British troops out of Ireland now!

*Smash the PTA!

*Release political prisoners!

*For an Irish workers' republic!

FUND

£338.35. That's the amount still outstanding on the December Fund. We are very keen to have all this money in before the Christmas holiday begins so that means a major effort on the part of our readers and supporters in the next few days to get their donations to us.

Our thanks once more to comrades in Denmark who sent us a further £15.

All donations should be sent to:

Socialist Press Monthly Fund
31, Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR