

The 'Red Letter' Witchunt

NOW IT'S TREASON TO FIGHT THE PAY CURBS...

'RED LETTER PLOT TO SMASH PAY CURBS', screamed a sensationalist headline all across the front page of the Sunday Express of August 3rd. "The Labour Party is in turmoil", began a story in the Sun the next day. Plot? Treason? Over what?

The Sunday Express and the News of the World had somehow got hold of and printed a model resolution on fighting the pay freeze which had been circulated among certain members of the Labour Party.

DUTY

The Times carried the story on Monday and Tuesday. The LPYS leadership sent a deputation to Syd Bidwell, chairman of the Tribune group of MPs, to assure him they weren't responsible for the circular. But Bidwell, on behalf of the Tribune group, had beaten them to the punch by himself rushing to deny responsibility. The Morning Star faithfully reproduced Bidwell's dark mutterings about possible "Trotskyist ploys".

Neither the Young Socialists leadership (dominated by the ostensibly Marxist grouping, the mis-named 'Militant') nor the Tribune group, nor the Morning Star, appears to have considered that they might have a duty to defend the right of free speech and a process of democratic decision making inside the Labour Party, by members of the Labour Party.

The circulation of a model resolution among co-thinkers to get maximum coordination and effect is certainly part of such a process. But the Star, Bidwell, and the LPYS leadership all agreed that an entirely legitimate model resolution circulated with complete legality by members of the Labour Party was a "plot". None denounced the anti-socialist witchhunting by the Press.

In fact the model resolution was sent out by the Editorial Boards of **Workers Fight** and **Young Socialist** to supporters of our policies in the Labour Party. It was addressed to active supporters of our policies as opposed to passive or casual supporters; thus the title. It was neither "secret" nor "anonymous". It was part of a mailing whose recipients received other communications concerning the circulation of our weekly paper **Workers Fight**. To present it as a sinister underground plot is both ludicrous, and proof that the ruling class and their press has the jitters about the ability of the Labour Government to control the working class on their behalf.

Our views are expressed

publicly in the pages of our papers, which are freely on sale inside and outside the Labour Party. The 'Paul Prys' of the Sunday Express found, so to speak, the middle section of a private communication and launched a great hue and cry — "it's an underground plot! information is being withheld!". If the editor of the Sunday Express were likely to move the resolution at his local Labour Party (!), we would have sent him a copy too!

Hopefully, many who didn't get it through the post will, through the good offices of the Sunday Express, which reproduced the resolution in full, now move it and fight for it in their local parties and trade unions.

POWER

Workers Fight and **Young Socialist** are published by an association of Labour Party members who make no secret of our views or what we stand for. On the contrary.

We are for an immediate takeover by the working class of power in Britain. We defend the material interests of the working class at every point, on wages, conditions, etc.

We are in the Labour Party because it is the political arm of the bedrock organisations of our class, the Trade Unions, and is support, actively or passively, by the vast majority of the militants of the working class. We want the Labour Party to serve the working class. Unfortunately, the Labour Party leadership has always served and is now yet again serving the ruling class. They abuse the confidence of the workers who elected them. The scandalous £6 maximum will mean at least a 15% cut in the living standards of our class in the coming months.

It is the bosses who run this system. They — not we — should bear the burden of the crisis, and if they can't, they should get off the backs of the workers and allow our class to organise a better system. The working class should, can and will throw them off our backs, and set up our own socialist system, with full ownership, power and control of the wealth of society in the hands of democratically elected and self-regulating councils of workers.

The Labour Party is our party, because it is the party of the trade

unions and the working class. It needs to become a party of class war to fight the battles which the crisis is facing workers with. Taken as a whole, now, it is a party which will not fight for the working class, so long as it is tied to its present leadership and the politics they represent. All the great struggles against the last Tory government have resulted in rank and file militants now facing a Labour government — elected to office as a consequence of direct industrial action forcing Heath out — but carrying out blatant Tory policies.

PRENTICE

In fact, the Tories wouldn't get away with these policies. They know it and so does the ruling class, which is why they support and uphold the Labour government.

In Ireland the government continues the criminal policy of the Tories — internment without trial, army terror, setting the scene for sectarian civil war. It blandly ignores the growing demand for the withdrawal of British troops and for recognition of Ireland's right to determine its own affairs.

The press has linked the 'Red Letter' with the dismissal of Reg Prentice in Newham North East by his constituency party. Supporters



FOR

Leading Tribunite Michael Foot, 'life-long opponent' of statutory pay curbs, now Wilson's best salesman of £6 limit laws

FACING ALL WAYS: TRIBUNE AND THE PAY CURBS

ANYONE reading the Morning Star headline "LEFT MPs READY FOR COMMONS BATTLE" in the week before the debate on the Healey plan could be excused for thinking that there was going to be a massive rebellion of Tribunite and other left wing MPs voting against the wage curbs. Unfortunately, it was obvious to those looking beyond the blinkered dream world of the Communist Party that this was a long way from reality.

Just for a start Michael Foot, that great champion of the Tribune left, wholeheartedly supported Healey's policies at the Labour Party NEC, saying that it is essential for the £6 to be upheld. Foot, like every other good Left, has continually expressed his hostility to statutory pay curbs, and the present Bill is a compromise deal to ensure Foot's support. In fact, it is Foot himself who is compromised — a fact best shown by Wilson's Press Conference remark that the question of whether the pay curbs are statutory or voluntary is "largely semantic".

Cop-out

But the "semantic" confusion (which will never so much as register on workers' wage slips) was sufficient to provide a cop-out for other 'lefts', with Stan Orme, Albert Booth and Robert Hughes — all Ministers and all Tribunites — advising other members of the Tribune group against all-out opposition, because ... the real crunch will come when the Cabinet is forced back onto statutory powers!

Benn, though not a member of the Tribune group, has done his bit to smooth the way of the £6 policy,

letting left MPs know that he was on their side 'really' in rejecting the White Paper, and was only staying in the Government "to play a role when Healey's policies are shown not to work." Benn's inside (the Cabinet) left stance is best shown up by his behaviour over the resolution presented to Labour's NEC opposing any Incomes Policy backed by statutory regulations. He left the meeting (with others) when it became clear that a vote was imminent, so that attendance fell below the quorum of 15 and the motion was lost.

The weekend before the crucial Commons vote on the White Paper, Benn was doing his now customary 'champion of the workers' show at the Institute of Workers Control's annual conference. Only this time he had some explaining to do, replying to criticisms for not resigning from the Government by saying that "the best way to influence Government policies is from within ... to bring about the implementation of the policies promised in the 1974 Manifesto as soon as possible". And he went on to defend the Government's record, asserting that it had inherited problems 'much bigger than foreseen' when the Manifesto was drawn up in 1973.

Also in the "left MPs" stable is Neil Kinnock. Writing in Tribune (July 18th) under the headline "Thus Far, No Further", he claimed that the White Paper is a "distasteful alternative to a statutory incomes policy and public expenditure cuts".

Still keeping within the boundaries of the Tribune group one can find such as Les Huckfield. Writing in the 'Opinion' column of the Sunday Times before the debate, Huckfield glibly points out that he wouldn't be an MP today if the previous MP for Nuneaton,

Frank Cousins, hadn't resigned over the 1966 Labour Government's introduction of statutory restraints on wages — and then goes on to say that he will be supporting the White Paper on "inflation".

For him, the situation is changed today "with the TUC and my own union, the T&G, acquiescing in the White Paper". This makes "a refreshing [some would, of course, describe it as a nauseating] change from the conflict over In Place of Strife and the Industrial Relations Act".

For the likes of Huckfield, the argument which provides the cop-out is the very one which is embarrassing to the Tribune 'Lefts': "much of the Chancellor's policy has been put forward at the behest of the Trade Unions". Huckfield

says he has great difficulty in accepting the alternatives put forward by the Tribune group, and that "the way in which the Tribune Group and the Parliamentary Left reacts to this crunch will form an acid test of its whole credibility." Yes, indeed!

Show

To cover up the deep divisions between those wanting to vote for, those intending to abstain and those pushing for voting against the White Paper, the left MPs made a show of putting up their own amendment to the Healey plan. This amendment, signed by 64 Labour MPs (not all Tribunites), 'declined' to give support to the White Paper and pointed out that the measures "will

reduce the living standards of working people and cause mass unemployment" and says that "other measures are necessary to deal with the crisis, namely a price freeze on basic commodities and more effective control over other price increases, the use of selective import controls, the marshalling of overseas assets to defend the pound, guarantees to overseas holders of sterling, stringent control over the outflow of capital, the control of banks and insurance companies and the directing of their funds into productive capital investment via the NEB, real cuts in arms spending, and the extension of public ownership and public accountability as a necessary step towards a planned economy". It urges the Government to introduce a wealth tax "to

How the 'Left MPs' voted

'Left MPs' voting against the White Paper (Bold type: Tribune MPs; those marked with an asterisk signed the Tribune amendment).

Allaun* (Salford E.), Atkins* (Preston N.), Atkinson* (Tottenham), Bennett* (Stockport N.), Bidwell* (Southall), Buchan* (W. Renfrewshire), Callaghan* (Middleton & Prestwich), Canavan* (W. Stirlingshire), Cryer* (Keighley), Flannery* (Sheffield Hillsborough), Hart (Lanark), Heffer* (Liverpool, Walton), Hoyle* (Nelson & Colne), Robert Hughes (Aberdeen N.), R.J. Hughes* (Newport), Kerr* (Hounslow), Leef (B'ham, Handsworth), Litterick* (B'ham, Selly Oak), Loyden* (L'pool Garston), Madden* (Sowerby), Maynard* (Sheffield Brightside), Mikardo* (Tower Hamlets), Newens* (Harlow), Parry* (L'pool, Scotland Exchange), Richardson* (Barking), Rodgers* (Chorley), Sedgemore* (Luton W.), Selby* (Glasgow Govan), Skinner* (Bolsover),

Swain* (N.E. Derbyshire), Thomas* (Bristol NW), Thorne* (Preston N.), Wise* (Coventry SW), Lambie* (Ayrshire Central), Lewis* (Newham NW), Miller* (Ilford N.).

'Left MPs' abstaining in White Paper vote (Tribune MPs: bold type; asterisk: those signing Tribune amendment):

Ashton* (Bassetlow), Barnett (Greenwich), Colquhoun (Northampton N.), Cook* (Edinburgh Central), Edge* (Aldridge Brownhills), Evans (Caerphilly), Fletcher* (Darlington), Garrett (Norwich S.), Kelly* (Don Valley), Kinnock* (Bedwelly), Lamond* (Oldham E.), Latham* (Melton), Maurice Miller* (E. Kilbride), Prescott* (Hull E.), Roderick* (Brecon & Radnor), Short* (Wolverhampton NE), Sillars* (S. Ayrshire), Snape* (W. Bromwich E.), Torney (Bradford S.), F. Evans*.

'Left MPs' voting FOR the wage curb White Paper (Bold type: Tribune group; asterisk: signed Tribune amendment):

Booth (Barrow in Furness), Carmichael (Glasgow Kelvingrove), Davidson (Acrington), Davies (Enfield N.), Dean* (Leeds W.), I. Evans* (Aberdare), Foot (Ebbw Vale), Fraser (Lambeth Norwood), George (Walsall S.), Huckfield (Nuneaton), Jackson (Lincoln), Jenkins (Putney), Jones (Rhonda), McNamara (Hull Central), Marshall (Goole), Mendelson (Penkstone), Noble* (Rossendale), O'Malley (Rotherham), Orme (Salford W.), Ovenden (Gravesend), Roberts* (Cannock), Rooker (B'ham Perry Barr), Silkin (Deptford), Silverman (B'ham Erdington), Walker (Kingswood), Wilson* (Hamilton), Wilson* (Coventry S.E.), Young (Bolton E.), Benn, Bob Edwards*, Fernyhough*, Kilroy-Silk*, Jeger*, McCartney*, Orbach*, Park*, Robertson*, Stallard*, Spriggs*.

of Workers Fight and Young Socialist had no part in this — though we enthusiastically support it and congratulate those responsible. The rank and file militants must fight to control the Labour Party and drive out the pestilent swarm of such as Prentice, who are an anti-working class Tory fifth column in the Labour Party.

It is not a matter for personalisation. Prentice is a pugnacious, refreshingly outspoken and frank, indeed a courageous and in some ways an admirable man (so is Edward Heath!), if you admire such qualities. As it happens we do, and we wish there were many left wing Prentices.

The problem is that these qualities are deployed against the working class interest. Prentice combines them with being a ruling class toady made all the more arrogant by the cowardice and the evasiveness of the official Labour Party left. When five dockers were jailed for defying the Industrial Relations Act in 1972, this man made a vicious attack on the victims of Tory class law. In a healthy working class movement, that foul-mouthed attack would have been the last speech that man made from a Labour platform. Instead he has lived to disgrace our movement again, as an outspoken advocate of keeping the Shrewsbury pickets in jail; but then he is a minister in the government responsible for keeping them there...

The rank and file must fight back against the wage freeze, the Wilsons and the Prentices. We must turn local Labour Parties into weapons in the class struggle.

It is this policy our resolution advocates: "...we further call upon the Constituency Labour Party to publish a leaflet — to be given out at trade union branches and at the factories — denouncing the wage curb and pledging the practical support of the CLP to those workers who fight to smash the £6 limit."

For it to become effective, the militant rank and file must organise to transform local Labour Parties into organs of working class struggle.

We must, in parallel, for the same goal, organise the rank and file in the trade unions to fight the bureaucrats, without whose collaboration the £6 norm could not be imposed on the working class. We must link militant trade union rank and file bodies with militant Labour Parties.

In short, the Labour Party must serve the working class. The working class must not allow itself to be sold over the counter by Labour Party careerists running the capitalist system at the expense of working class living conditions.

SILENT

Proposals to organise the left are denounced as conspiracy. But what about the right? What about the Social Democratic Alliance? What about the perpetual interference — such as that by the Sunday Express — in the affairs of the labour movement, particularly the campaign in support of Prentice, and of policies such as the £6 norm? What about the now-known fact that the CIA itself, at least in the early '60s, actually financed the right wing in the

Labour Party? When the right — Liberals and Tories hiding under a pale pink flag to con the working class — when they organise it is the 'silent majority' standing up to be counted, not a conspiracy.

We stand for full rights of democratic organisation within the Labour Party — together with full accountability of representatives to the working class movement.

The problems we face should not be underestimated. The reaction of the left — the official Tribune left and the licensed, house-trained 'Militant' section of the Young Socialists — show them to be weak-kneed indeed. Both the LPYS leadership and the Tribune group are pledged to fight the £6 norm. Both are falling over themselves to dissociate from the letter lest anyone suspect they might actually go ahead and organise the rank and file. The discussion in the letter columns of Tribune about setting up rank and file groups has led to little so far. The leaders of Tribune and of the 'Militant' make it plain that they may have opinions, but they will not fight for them.

The rank and file should fight, and it needs to organise now to fight. Groups of the left, including Tribune supporters, should be set up in every area.

The panic-stricken witchhunting of the press shows how fearful they are of any initiative, of any action. It shows how well they know that their system is vulnerable and fragile, and will crumble if the working class and militant socialists organise and fight back.

We must proceed to organise the fight-back now.

Price control snarl-up in the mechanics of capitalism

Demands for strict price controls were a major part of the TUC's proposals for 'Social Contract Mark II'. Some trade union leaders have expressed doubt or opposition to Healey's economic package on the grounds that it does not include such controls — as if pay curbs would be acceptable if accompanied by price controls. Price control is also, together with import controls and measures to increase investment, at the heart of the economic programme put forward by the Tribune MPs. But is the call for government price controls a realistic policy for the working class?

Such controls can be implemented in two ways. On food prices, the government has already given subsidies to firms losing (or appearing to lose) profits as a result of the government holding prices level. If this is done at more than a token level, it is almost certain to affect other items of public spending, or alternatively lead to an increase in taxation.

If the government held both other public spending and taxation constant while paying out subsidies, it would be injecting spending power into the economy at precisely that moment when all the pressure is on it to do exactly the opposite. If it did so in a recession, the effects would be themselves inflationary. Thus in practice, as prices rise and the burden of subsidies grows, other forms of spending will be cut, particularly the social services — directly to the benefit of capitalist profits.

Freeze

Alternatively, it is theoretically possible that the government could directly freeze prices. Such a freeze could exist only very temporarily or under a regime of exceptionally far reaching state-capitalist control of the economy; for prices under capitalism are not arbitrarily fixed, but are related (though indirectly) to value relations in terms of the relative amounts of labour time spent in producing different commodities. Given constantly changing technology these value relations are always shifting, and their price expression can only be frozen at the expense of gross distortion of the basic regulators which keep the capitalist market economy from falling into total chaos.

Under such a freeze, the basic capitalist drive to extract profit would express itself in sharper attempts to enforce speed-up and to impose redundancies. When Healey states that the Cabinet "does not intend to intensify the price code to the point where it would endanger employment and investment", he is not just being nasty or acting in bad faith, as many people believe, he is quite correctly stating the choice as it exists in a capitalist economy: either inflation or unemployment or both, but not neither.

Choice?

Those who believe that one can expect a capitalist government to remove both unemployment and inflation do not understand that "capitalism or socialism" is not a choice between economic policies in a given system, but a question of two totally different economic systems. Price controls would certainly lead to widespread bankruptcies and redundancies. The union leaders and Labour 'lefts' either pretend that this is not the case, and thus do nothing to prepare a working class counter strategy, or are caught in a cleft stick, like Lord Allen

of USDAW who opposed tighter price controls because he saw that it would mean many of his members would lose their jobs.

Price control has on some occasions been introduced with some success under capitalism: but under what conditions? The Nazi government in Germany introduced as part of its "command economy", price controls from 1936 onwards. Though not completely successful, they were aimed to ensure that the new full employment situation did not lead to inflation by creating a demand for goods that were not available because of the requirements of rearmament. Price controls were also introduced in other economies during the second world war.

Risk

Such an economy requires some preconditions: the independent activity of the working class must be smashed or reduced to a minimal level, so that labour costs can be predicted with accuracy and there is little risk of big strikes. The capitalist class must be willing to sacrifice its immediate economic interests to its long term collective interests, and hand some of its independent power to the state, which appears sharply demarcated from it. (The capitalist class of course will not do this unless the first condition is fulfilled and the state can exert a tight control over the labour movement).

Simply to pose the question in this way shows how far from such a situation permitting tight price controls we are in Britain today (and how undesirable it would be to aim for such a situation!). Instead we have a social democratic government, whose whole political existence is based on attempts to create a consensus between the trade union bureaucracy and the capitalist class as a means to regiment the working class. The working class movement has not suffered a major defeat in decades and is able to threaten seriously and directly the interests of the capitalists.

In such a situation, government price controls will inevitably be marginal, token affairs designed to sweeten anti working class economic packages.

Sugar

Nothing could be more subject or inadequate than the TUC's and the Tribunes' pleading for the government to give them the sugar of price controls. Some practical measures towards price control are possible; as in the case of the Clay Cross councillors refusing to raise rents, or the Italian workers who organised mass refusal to pay increased public transport fares and thus forced the fares back to their previous levels. These actions, however, are a million miles removed from the Tribune schemes, and even so are not the magic cure-all which the Tribunes present price control as being.

The basic struggle for higher wages remains the necessary centre of the working class fight against inflation. Instead of trying to tinker with the mechanics of capitalism, we should face realities and fight for a sliding scale of wages (automatic cost of living increases with a 'zero threshold'). That demand, again, will not solve all the problems by itself; but it points in the direction of increased working class combativity and consciousness, and therefore towards smashing the mechanics of capitalism.

BRUCE ROBINSON



AGAINST

clockwise: Atkinson, Allain, Bidwell, Swain, Heffer, Hart, Richardson, Selby, Newens.

create a more egalitarian society", asserting that such policies are essential to bring about a 'fundamental and irreversible shift of wealth and power [!] in favour of working people and their families as per the election manifesto.

This ridiculous amendment ended by calling upon the Government "to enter into urgent discussions with the TUC in order to reach a genuine voluntary agreement on all aspects of income and wealth which, coupled with the radical measures proposed above, is essential if Great Britain is to have a planned economy so that it can deal on a longer term basis with its economic problems."

Capital

This wishy washy mixture of proposals shows up all the numerous faults in Tribune's policies (and here at least one must agree with Huckfield — if from a different viewpoint — that these alternatives are difficult to accept). Their starting point is 'the crisis' and 'the economic problems of Great Britain', without stating whose crisis and problems. They want to control the banks only to put funds into 'productive capital investment' (i.e. to expand capital). Their concern for the living standards of the working class seems to be added as an afterthought, and not very well thought out at that: voluntary incomes policy instead of the Healey Plan, import controls to pass the buck of unemployment onto foreign workers. In short, the talk of a planned economy merely means a somehow improved capitalism "in one country", with greater productivity and more state regulation — a bureaucratic utopia which has nothing whatsoever to do with socialism.

Even so, only 50 of the 80 Tribune MPs signed it, thus

exposing the myth of the Tribune group as a closely-knit group of 'extremist' MPs. Presumably after this fiasco it will be less 'closely knit' than ever before...

For some of the Tribunes, there was more at stake anyway than workers' living standards — there was their own living standards, ensured by cushy jobs as junior ministers. While Robert Hughes made a last-minute change and resigned as Junior Scottish Minister the night before the vote in order to go through the No lobby, ten others stayed put and voted for the pay curbs. (Wilson had taken the precaution of circulating all his ministers before the vote telling them to sack any of their juniors who didn't toe the government line; the unfortunate Maurice Millar, PPS to Edward Short, who thought to play both ends by abstaining was promptly kicked out "to make way for someone prepared to devote more time to the job.")

When it came to the debate itself, the "Commons battle" heralded by the Morning Star, the 'Lefts' looked even sillier. Foot, for instance, appealed to the 'left wingers' to accept the pay policy, said he was not interested whether it be called voluntary or statutory, but that he would resign if the Government brought in legal controls, only, he insisted, there was no need for the Reserve Powers Bill as the present policy would work.

The Lefts had no answer when Wilson reminded them "don't pretend that you are safeguarding TUC interests. You are flying in the face of their decisions". What could they answer, as long as they see the trade union bureaucrats as the leaders of the working class, as long as they refuse to recognise that workers' interests can be sold out as readily by the TUC as by the Healeys and Prentices of the Labour Government.

Meanwhile, Heffer's main line of argument was that wages policies didn't work because "all they do is to make people increasingly wage conscious" and cause a great rush for wages at the end of the period! And Norman Atkinson, pointing out that there would be a drop in living standards for wage earners, said that the policy was not to be tolerated and was not necessary.

But the whole point is that it is necessary for the capitalist class, and that the government, as always, is acting in the interests of that class.

Rebel

The vote on the White Paper finally underlined how few 'left' MPs are prepared to rebel against the government when workers' living standards are at stake, and it is certain that if the Tories had voted against the Government rather than abstained, the 'Lefts' would have flocked to defend the Government. In Heffer's cringing words, "we are not saboteurs against the national interest holding up the proceedings of the House; [God forbid...] we are not unpatriotic, we are just doing our job as MPs".

What we must do now is to get Labour MPs to hold report back meetings on the Wage curbs such as that held by Eddie Loyden in Liverpool, and to show those MPs who did vote against the wage curbs that there is another world beyond the dark corridors of Westminster — the real world of workers' struggles to defend living standards. We have to commit them to supporting these struggles rather than indulging in their purely verbal rebellion. TO FIGHT RATHER THAN JUST TALK!

Pete Firmin



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REPORT FROM LISBON



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THE NEXT MONTH WILL BE CRUCIAL

Governing trika, Goncalves, Costa Gomes and Carvalho: papering over the cracks in the MFA



THE DECISION made by the last Armed Forces Movement Assembly to establish a three military government represents an attempt to paper over the cracks within the Movement. However, as the events of the last week have shown, these cracks are rapidly developing into chasms and the much cherished 'unity' of the MFA has its days well and truly numbered.

The political polarisation taking place within the army was recently illustrated by two significant happenings. The first was the action taken by rank and file soldiers in a commando unit stationed at Amadora outside Lisbon, who secured the removal of their commander, leading right-winger Jaime Neves, together with 8 of his fellow officers. [Neves has since been reinstated at a full meeting of the regime with General Carvalho present after claiming that his ouster followed false reports put about by CP officers that he was planning a coup; Neves also threatened to mobilise his own supporters throughout the Army including units in Angola, in defence.]

In another incident, the right-wing General Fabiao dismissed a captain from his post because he had been participating in the Revolutionary Councils. This move is extremely important, would not have occurred a month ago, yet today, following the MFA mobilisations in northern Portugal, the right in the MFA are testing their strength.

Officers once considered 'progressive' are wavering between the different camps, and pro-Socialist Party officers like Antunes or Crespo are no longer willing to participate in a future MFA government.

Right wing terror

In the North itself, 16 local headquarters of working class organisations have been blown up. Responsibility for these probably be put down to the so-called ELP ("Portuguese Liberation Army") which operates terror attacks from across the Spanish border. Sellers of a newspaper 'Republica', now under the control of its workers' committee, were beaten up in Northern town two days ago, which fits in with the general pattern of physical attacks on those of the left in that part of the country.

The SP leadership have now called a halt to the mass mobilisations they started in mid-July. This has probably been motivated by a feeling on their part that the right were taking advantage of them. But the consequences of SP activity have been to create two dangers. They have divided the working class and driven the petit bourgeoisie and the peasantry into the arms of the reaction.

Of course, the SP is not solely at fault on this score. The CP faction which dominates the MFA government must take its share of the blame. It has failed abysmally to solve the problems of the peasantry, since it has provided them with easy credit

Marcolino Abrantes, Portuguese textile workers' leader, talked to Bas Hardy during his visit to London last month -

BH: You have arrived in Britain in the week when the British government has imposed import controls on Portuguese textile goods. The EEC as a whole intends to take the same measures. The fact that this move is taken only against Portugal and not other textile producing countries (eg those of Comecon and the Far East) makes it a clear act of political discrimination. What effect will these controls have on Portuguese textile workers?

MA: I think the measure is not economic but political. It is connected to the support given by capitalist Europe to Mario Soares in the context of an economic blockade on Portugal aimed at putting pressure on the forces that are today carrying the revolutionary process in Portugal.

This measure is also a cover operation for the resignation of the social democratic parties (PS or PPD) from the Provisional Government. The effects in the textile industry in Portugal will be very serious, as Britain is one of the largest importers of our produce.

I would also like to mention that the import controls were imposed at a time when a new national wage agreement is being negotiated for the workers in the clothing industry in Portugal. Once again the alliances of Portuguese and European bosses have come into effect to attack us and to stop our economic and political struggle.

I call on the British working class to answer with all its strength this manoeuvre of international capitalism. This measure is a savage attack on every worker in our industry.

Active voice

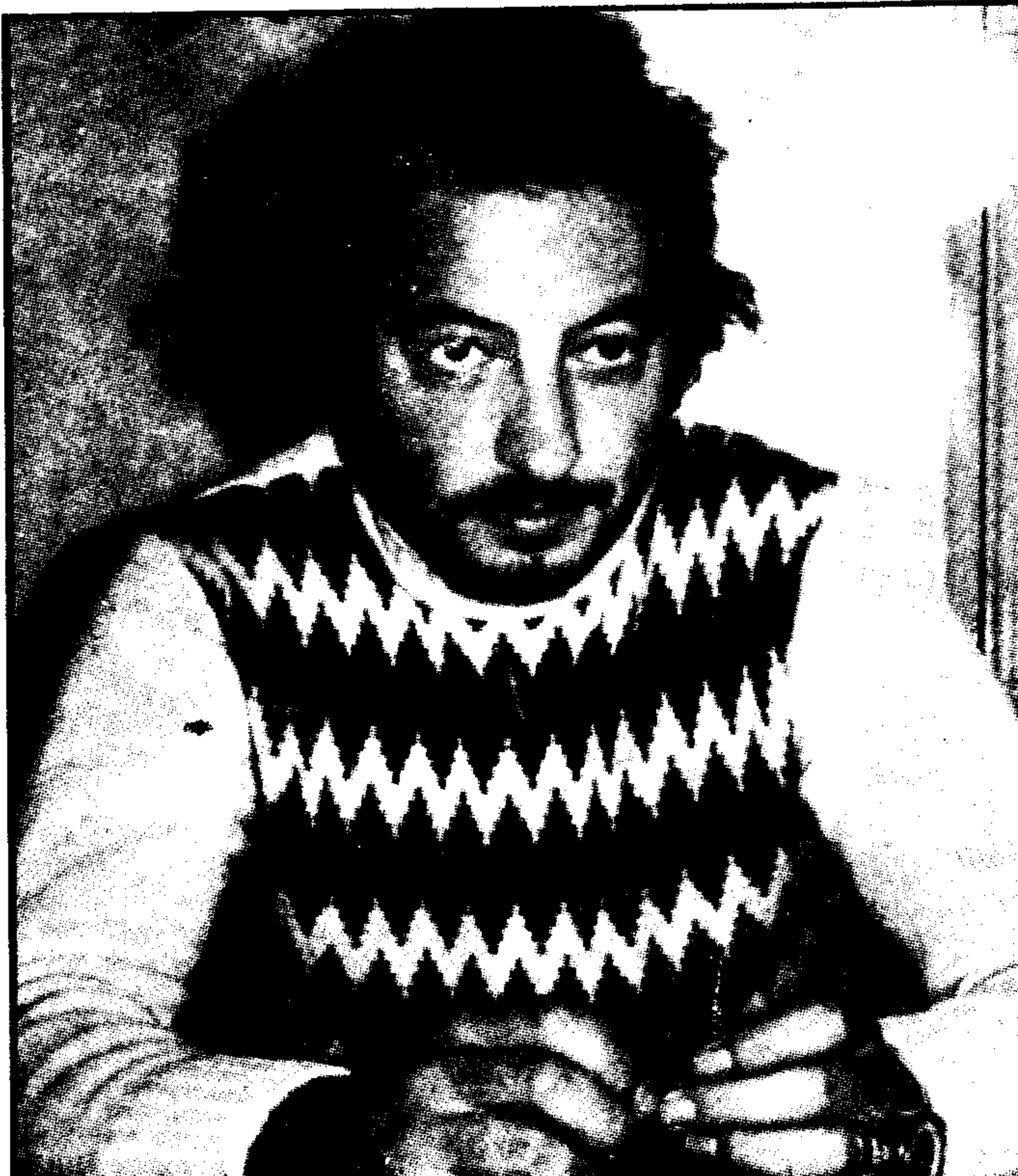
BH: Import controls are very popular with the Labour left and the Communist Party here at the moment. How will you be arguing against these particular controls when you talk to labour and trade union representatives?

MA: The import controls on Portuguese goods cannot help to solve the crisis of the British textile industry. The quota of Portuguese imports to this country is very small compared with other countries'. I am appealing to the labour movement to demand from the British government measures that will not interfere with the revolutionary process in Portugal.

If it is in the interest of the textile workers in Britain to control imports, they must have an active voice on how to carry out this control, and not leave it to the anti-democratic policies of the Government.

BH: What have been the major changes in the textile industry since 25th April 1974?

MA: Since the 25th April 1974 the fundamental struggle against the reactionary employers (a struggle



that started well before the 25th April) has been a struggle for better living and working conditions. It has also been a struggle to strengthen our trade union organisation and amalgamate the different trades into a single textile workers' union. This has already been accomplished in the south of the country. At the factory level, in hundreds of work places where fascism had made any organisation impossible by the brutal repression of any trade union delegate, we have ensured the full and democratic representation of workers in Trade Union Committees and Workers' Committees. It has been this organisation at factory level and the unifying of the Union at national level that has enabled us to fight closures, to fight against the transfer of capital, of machinery, of raw materials abroad, to fight unemployment, to occupy plants when the management left the country, and also to control production, to form cooperatives, to control orders, prices and the movement of raw materials.

In a word, it has enabled us to lift our struggle from an economic level to an anti-capitalist struggle.

Committees

BH: How do the workers' committees operate in your industry?

MA: The Workers' Committees are elected by show of hands in factory mass meetings. Normally the workers elected are the elements in the different sections that have proved by their practice to represent better the interests of workers, both before and after the 25th April. In addition, each

section in the factory elects a worker for a Workers Council, which is delegated to the Workers Committee for reporting on the problems of each section in the factory. The Workers Committee can be dismissed at any time by a mass meeting of the workers if they so wish.

The first function of the workers committees when elected is to formulate their working statutes (rule book), which will be discussed and approved at a mass meeting. Their main function is to carry the struggle for better conditions and wages within the factory, the struggle for workers control and the political struggle.

Together with the Workers Committees there is in each factory a committee of trade union delegates whose function is to check up that the national agreements are respected and that all regulations to do with health and safety at work are kept to. Their actions are restricted by the trade union laws and regulations, and as we all know it is quite often necessary to act fast when the problems appear and even to break whatever agreements were made with the employers.

At this moment in my country the struggles for workers control and for the purging of fascist elements are the most important struggles, and the trade union delegates, busy with union meetings, with union elections, with the union laws, are often away from the factory. In these conditions it is the Workers Committees that have gone on the offensive in the struggle against capitalism.

BH: What other economic pressures have the international capitalists applied against your industry?

present crisis as they demanded the dissolution of the Provisional Government and the creation of a revolutionary government; the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the creation of a People's Assembly; workers and people's power — the way to socialism; against the reaction and against capital — and for proletarian unity.

'we need your solidarity'

MA: The French management of the French owned 'Sogental' company left the country without notice; the 'Charminha' clothing factory, owned by Austrian capital, had the experience of the management drawing a cheque to pay the wages, without funds in the bank, and then running away; Swedish owned firms have cut their output by 40 per cent; there have been restrictions on the delivery of raw materials mainly from West Germany and South Africa. Also, we have had great difficulties in ensuring the delivery of spare parts for the machinery. The normal supplies have been stopped, especially those from West Germany. There has also been an unjustified rise of prices, and credit restrictions have been applied.

Dissolution

BH: Now that the coalition government has been dissolved what will happen next? What steps do the workers' organisations need to take? How did the demands of the big demonstration of workers and soldiers in Lisbon last week, which you addressed, measure up to the needs of the working class at this time?

MA: When the Workers Committees and the Tenants' Committees organised the great demonstration of Wednesday the 16th July, with the support of many soldiers and sailors, they showed the way to solve the

present crisis as they demanded the dissolution of the Provisional Government and the creation of a revolutionary government; the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the creation of a People's Assembly; workers and people's power — the way to socialism; against the reaction and against capital — and for proletarian unity.

BH: What do you think of the AFM Assembly's proposal for People's Committees?

MA: The demonstration I spoke of was also in support of the decisions taken in the previous historic Assembly meeting of the Revolutionary Council. The decisions taken — the coming closer of the MFA and the People on the basis of the workers' Committees and the tenants' committees — was the recognition of the organs of workers' and people's power that have already been created in the struggle against the bourgeoisie and against capitalism.

BH: Is there a danger that the workers in the workers' committees will be isolated from the rest of the masses given the localisation of these committees

in the industrial centres of the country?

MA: As long as the workers' committees will be intimately linked to the Tenants' Committees in the People's Assemblies or the village Assemblies in the agricultural areas, I can see no danger of isolation from the masses.

BH: What links have you managed to build so far with the British working class, particularly those who work in the textile industry? And what forms of international solidarity can workers in this country give you?

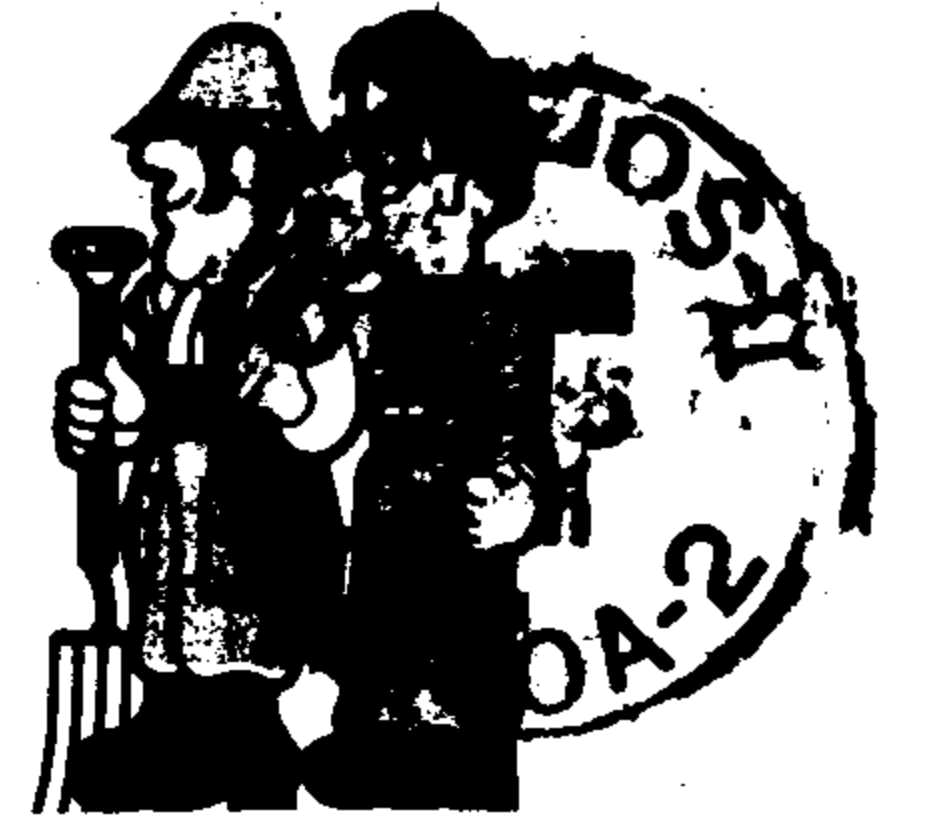
MA: I have given an example when I answered your second question. I would like to mention a very practical form of international solidarity that was shown by Swedish textile workers to the workers of their employers' subsidiary firm in Portugal.

When the Swedish owned factory ALGOT in Portugal was threatened with closure by its Swedish management, the workers of the same firm in Sweden started a strike in support of the struggle of the workers in Portugal. This struggle was a victory, not only for the workers in Portugal but for the struggle for international working class solidarity.

Up to this moment there has been very little contact with British workers in the textile industry, and I am here at the invitation of the Portuguese workers' coordinating committee, who have organised my visit to try and develop this contact.



REPORT FROM LISBON



1975 • 4\$50



MFA and the peasants: "dynamisation", but no solutions

run the danger of being isolated from the rest of the class and the peasantry. For all its talk about the 'autonomous organisation of the working class', the PRP has in fact to a great extent substituted itself for the working class, and although peasants were present at the CRTSM conference, it is perhaps significant that their name is not included with the other groups in the CRTSM title.

Military tutelage

Nevertheless, the CRTSM has found a great deal of response from within the working class. The LCI's failure to participate in the CRTSM was a mistake reflecting their own lack of base in the class, which led them to underestimate the potential of the movement for councils at the present time.

The LCI and other left groups are concentrating their activity around building up the Popular Assemblies. It is still not clear what relationship these Assemblies will have to the MFA. The MFA says they will be completely autonomous, but of course revolutionaries should not take their word for it but fight to make sure that the Popular Assemblies are free from any military tutelage, however 'left'.

Determining a precise attitude towards the MFA is very important for the Portuguese revolutionaries. Unlike other countries, the workers here do not go to the CP or SP if they want a problem solved. Instead they go to COPCON. The way revolutionaries can break their illusions in the MFA is to work for a break-up of the MFA itself.

This includes among other things the strengthening and extension of the Assembleios de Delegados de Unidade (ADU's — unit Delegates' Assemblies), the rank and file, democratically elected soldiers' committees which exist chiefly in COPCON at present, and linking them to workers' and neighbourhood committees.

This course of action may not be pursued concretely by some revolutionary groups because of their failure to adopt a critical attitude towards leftist officers in the MFA — especially Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. The PRP, although it talks a great deal about the high priority of developing an autonomous rank and file movement in the army, is particularly in danger of putting this movement in jeopardy because of its own ambiguous relationship with Carvalho.

Before his return from Havana ten days ago, de Carvalho teleaxed the PRP's Lisbon HQ to provide him with an armed escort from the airport. He could not pick a regiment of his own choosing from that distance, he claimed, so would the PRP kindly oblige? Officially, the PRP have told me that they regard 'Otelo' as 'representing the revolutionary left', because he has 'maintained faith' with the revolutionary positions he has adopted until now. But the PRP has allowed itself to be used as an element in de Carvalho's power base, and has failed to recognise his political role and limitations, and his lack of accountability either to them or to the rank and file soldiers of COPCON.

One of his fundamental limitations was shown by his acceptance of a position in the 'Troika'. The Troika has been a victory for

Goncalves, in that its establishment has put a damper on the jockeying which had threatened to oust him. The Troika is not responsible to any other body, and as such it institutionalises the administrative powers within the MFA. Its creation attests to the fact that the CP current is still ideologically dominant within the MFA.

The Troika's programme will not solve the problems of the workers and peasants facing mounting unemployment and a deepening capitalist economic crisis. The lack of a revolutionary alternative to the politics of the MFA will drive many Portuguese to the right. Civil war and NATO intervention are two distinct threats in the not too distant future.

Setback

The next month in Portugal will be crucial. Only a rapid extension of the workers and peasants' councils, combined with a revolutionary programme capable of uniting the movement and solving the economic crisis in the interest of the masses, will suffice to conclude what began on 25th April 1974. The alternative to this will in all probability be the most drastic setback the European working class has faced in decades.

LISBON
2nd August

fertiliser, agricultural instruments and so on. All they have had is talk. The SP has no alternative solution either.

The PCP on its side has attempted to exacerbate rather than heal the split in the working class. It has tried to transform the division into a straight conflict between the SP and the rest of the left. However, both COPCON (the Army's powerful internal security force) and the revolutionary groups have refused to be drawn into indiscriminate

ing it is the most heavily 'stalinised' of the modern pro-Moscow CPs, of negotiating with the Trotskyist LCI, the Maoist UDP and the PRP — although nothing came of these talks and the PRP refused discussion on the grounds that the PCP was not willing to make the discussion public.

For the past three months there has been a campaign for the establishment of revolutionary councils of workers, soldiers and sailors (CRTSM), organised

the working class of any one left group.

However, there are a number of criticisms to be made of the CRTSM and of the PRP's handling of it.

Firstly, the PRP regards the CRTSMs as soviets which can take power immediately. Secondly, it is not clear exactly how the CRTSMs are to relate to the workers' and neighbourhood committees which, according to the MFA, form the embryo of the Popular Assemblies it wants to see established throughout Portugal.

The CRTSMs have also in the past been 'vanguardist' organisations — comprising of the PRP and its periphery, in many ways imposed from above rather than being developed from the actual class struggle. They have always

mainly by the PRP — now perhaps the most important group on the revolutionary left. This weekend in Lisbon the CRTSM held its second conference, at which more than 500 representatives from factories, barracks and villages attended.

Undoubtedly the CRTSM is a most important movement at the present time. It is linking up many of the autonomous workers' and peasants' councils, and also drawing in other left groups besides the PRP. At yesterday's session, representatives from the UDP attended, including their deputy to the Constituent Assembly. The UDP has the largest number of militants in

by BAS HARDY

action against the SP. When the CP tried to stop SP supporters from entering Lisbon, they could find little support to man barricades set up for this purpose from even their own militants.

In fact at this present time the fortunes of the PCP are lower than they ever have been. CP militants refuse to follow the party line, and any one of the major revolutionary groups can call a demonstration in Lisbon which is guaranteed to be bigger than any the CP might organise. The CP seems to have recognised this state of affairs, because it hasn't called a demonstration for over a month.

What is more, it has taken the unprecedented step, consider-

IN THE past months, the French working class has been counterposing to inflation and unemployment a tide of militancy unprecedented since 1968. The newspaper Le Monde estimated recently that anything from 50 to 75 factories were under occupation. And a number of them were still producing and selling goods.

The actions have often been sparked off by threats of redundancies, sometimes accompanied by speed-ups, as French capitalism seeks to recover its profits by tightening the workers' belts.

In Paris, the offices of the newspaper Parisien Libere have been occupied and surrounded by barricades because of mass sackings. In other cases workers have been asking for wage increases to counter inflation.

The Communist Party, somewhat disillusioned with its electoral pact with the Socialist Party, and always aware since May 1968 of the danger of losing control of its supporters, has placed itself at the head of struggles, and the CGT (the CP-dominated trade union federation) has in many places provided a competent militant leadership.

SPREAD

The metal plants of Chausson, at Asnieres and Genevilliers, represent a high point of the movement with its strengths and weaknesses. The strike and occupation which spread through the three major factories of the group in the middle of May lasted for two months.

The workers, mainly immigrants, were demanding a flat rate increase to bring them up to the level of Renault workers who do the same job; full payment for the time on strike, and the dissolution of the 'Fraternity of Moroccan workers' — an organisation set up jointly by management and the Moroccan Embassy, and which was involved with the Moroccan secret police.

The occupation involved large numbers. Left wing films were shown; political discussions and socials were held; strike committees were elected by unionised and non-unionised workers which held general meetings attended by hundreds of workers every day of the strike (something achieved in only a few places even in 1968). Though the initiative for these did not come from the CGT, they

FRANCE
Red flags and the Internationale in new wave of factory occupations

participated actively, even in one factory where the chairman of the committee was a Trotskyist (a member of the Lutte Ouvriere group). The Communist Party dominated municipality provided free meals for strikers and their families.

When the CRS strike-breaking police invaded and took over the Asnieres factory early in the morning of June 5th, a mass meeting (which included many townspeople and others from outside) of over 5000 developed into a near riot, and the police were withdrawn. The private armed thugs with dogs who

replaced them didn't stay long either (and vandalised the place before they left).

The strike continued, and the other two factories remained occupied until the end of June, when a CRS contingent, heavily armed with gas and machine guns, seized them. In some of the streets through which the police passed, the residents threw bottles and plant pots down from the windows on their heads.

Though the union officials kept all negotiations in their own hands, the strike committee sent representatives as observers, who brought back daily reports to the

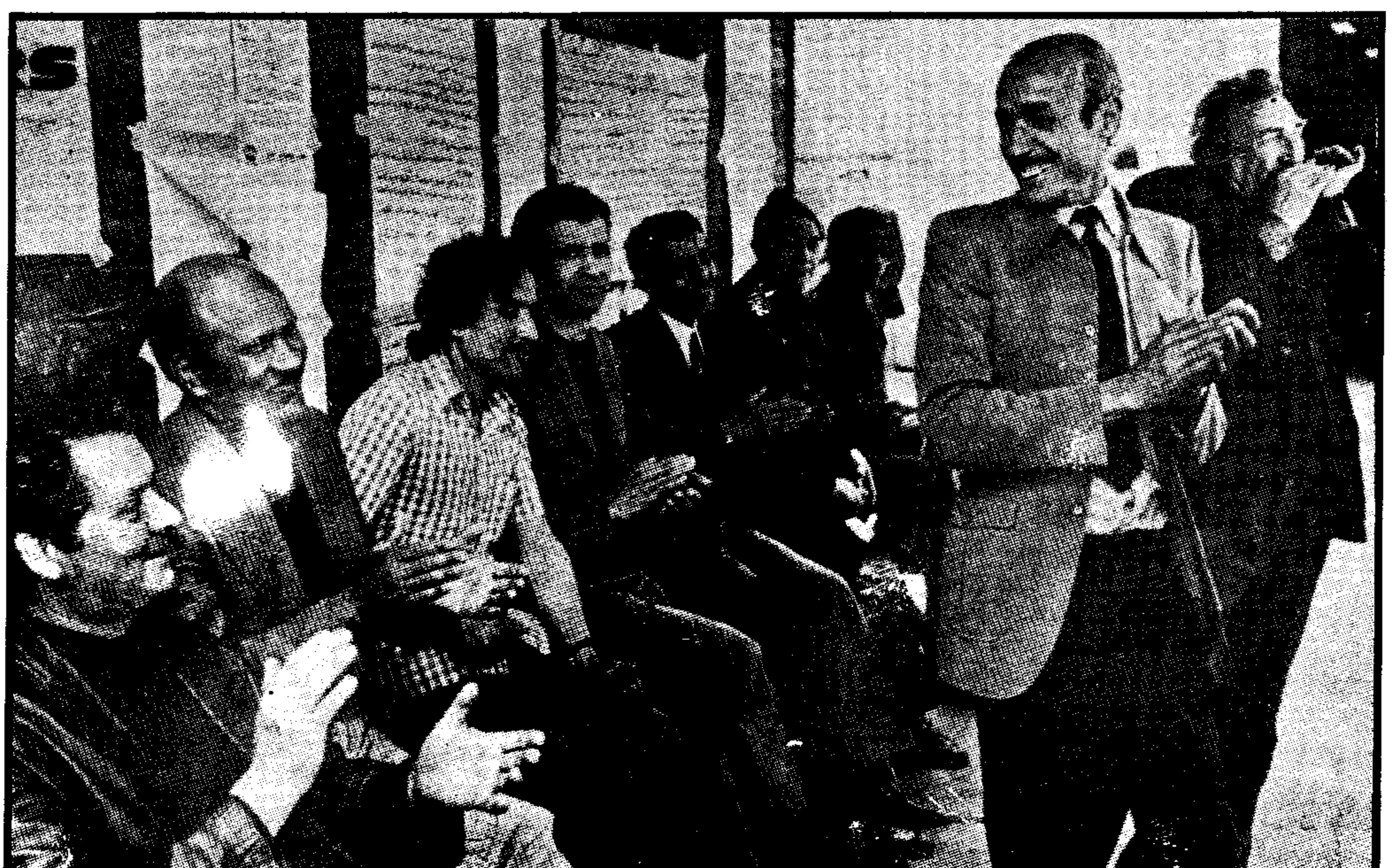
general meetings. Eleven days after the CRS took over the buildings, the meeting voted by a big majority to return to work, after a long and open discussion.

Though clearly not a victory, the return was not a defeat either. They won at least some portion of their demands (about 40 per cent pay for the strike period, for example) and their spirit remained high and united: they marched through the gates singing the Internationale, with red flags at their head which were then placed all around the canteen.

OUTFLANK

Clearly, it is not in its local militancy that the French CP has been at fault in recent months. What it has signally avoided doing is to develop any political programme, any concerted demands, any linking up or generalisation of struggles. (Those which have taken place over the period would, if concerted, have approached the dimensions of a general strike.) It was isolation, in the face of the massed forces of the state, which prevented victory at Chausson. There is as yet no body outside the CP with the breadth of influence to fill this need, or to threaten to outflank them from the left on any scale.

Wall newspapers and entertainment at Chausson sit-in



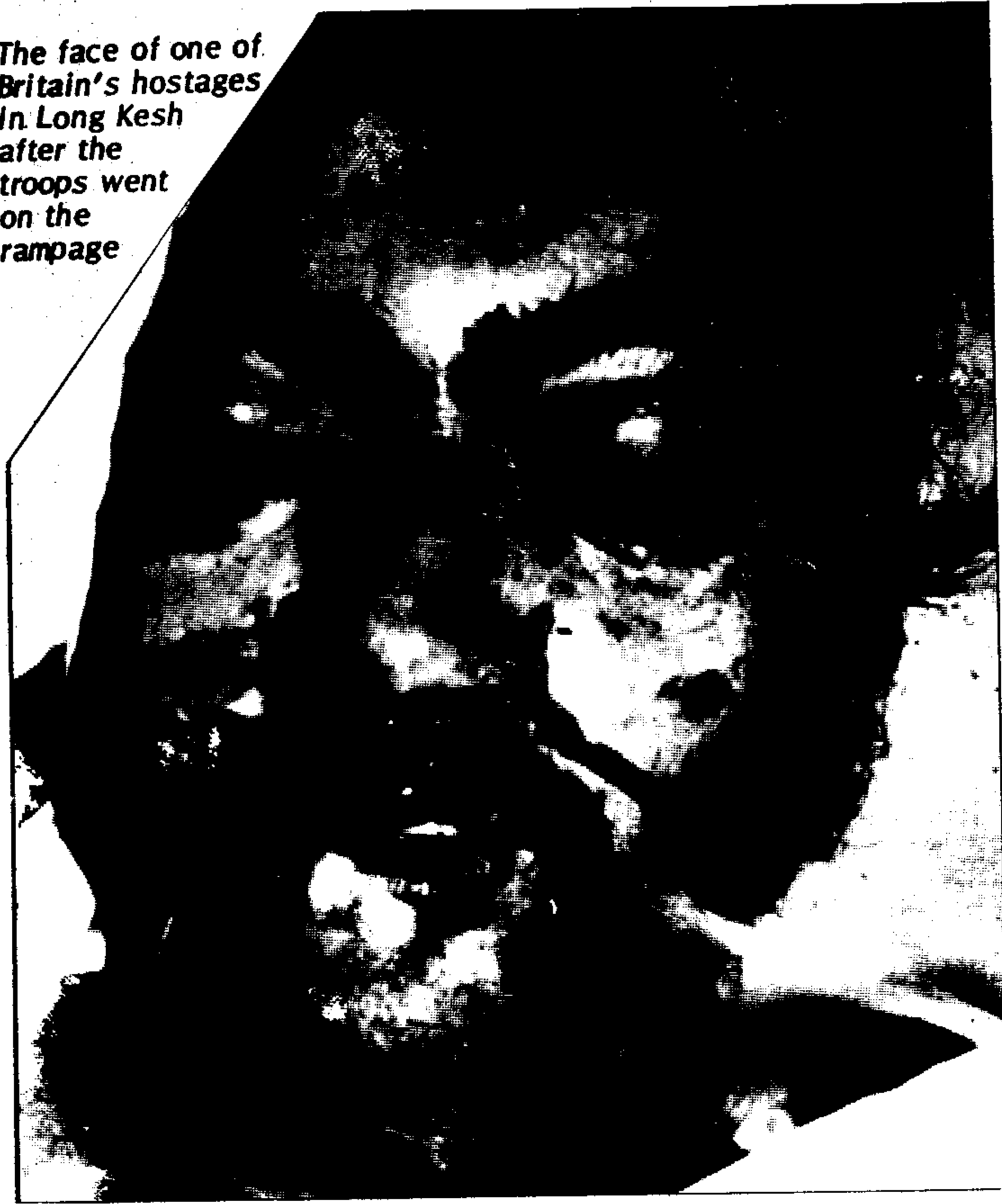
Rank and file soldiers and workers march together in July. Next step is joint councils

August 9th 1971 - 1975, AND STILL GOING STRONG **DON'T FORGET INTERNMENT!**

Despite the assurances Rees has made that all the internees will be released by Christmas, the nationalist population in the Six Counties will again be on the streets this weekend to commemorate the fourth anniversary of internment. 237 men remain held in Long Kesh; half of them have been held for more than two years. When internment was introduced in 1971 it was presented by Faulkner as a short term measure, but one man has been held continuously for 44 months.

It is now clearer than ever before that the internees are hostages for the good behaviour of the Catholics. Rees is playing the old game of 'cat and mouse' with them. One example: Tom Cahill of Belfast had completed a two year sentence in Long Kesh for attempting to escape. When his sentence finished last week, he was immediately re-detained and all that happened was that he was transferred from the compound for sentenced prisoners to that for detainees. So much for Rees' promises! If the ceasefire breaks down or Rees gives in to the increasing pressure from the Loyalists, it will not be long before internment is in full swing again. Internment must not be forgotten!

The face of one of Britain's hostages in Long Kesh after the troops went on the rampage



Rees helpless as Loyalists move in for the kill

SINCE the negotiations leading to the ceasefire with the Provisionals, Secretary of State Merlyn Rees and the British Government have been engaged in a delicate balancing act. While he makes small concessions to the Provisionals, he comes under increasing fire from the Loyalist politicians, who suspect that a far-reaching deal has already been made. This delicate balancing combines with a (totally irrational) hope that something lasting or generally acceptable will emerge from the Constitutional Convention. One example of these difficulties is the row caused by the allegation that Seamus Twomey, a prominent leader of the Provisionals, was sighted by the Army but not arrested for fear of upsetting the ceasefire. The British Government has no firm ground under its feet, and little real policy in the medium term.

The outcome of the Convention will only make things worse for Rees. This week three SDLP



Paisley & West: hardening

Northern Ireland and Britain. Even Paisley's Democratic Unionists, who previously favoured integration, have now abandoned it, feeling that it will not win any support, and also that they must be prepared to go for UDI in the event of Britain coming to some kind of deal with the Republicans — a possibility which they see as very close. However, the politicians cannot be sure what kind of support their present tactics will

happen if they do not get their way. The killings of the Miami Showband were a step towards triggering off a civil war situation, in which the Protestant political leaders would have to follow the lead of the paramilitary groupings as they did during the 1974 UWC strike.

At the same time, it seems nearly certain that the ceasefire between the British Army and the Provisionals will be over in the next few weeks. 'An Phoblacht' (paper of the Provisionals) has said that the truce is "on its last legs", while Rees, under Loyalist pressure, has said that he is not prepared to negotiate with the Provisionals. Army patrols have been stepped up again in the last weeks, and four British Army soldiers were killed by an explosion in South Armagh, in retaliation for deaths in Belfast. A number of other republican groupings, including the "People's Republican Army", have also been carrying out armed actions. Both sides now seem to feel that little more can be achieved politically by a simple extension of the ceasefire, and Rees is coming under great

NO TO A RESTORED ORANGE STATE!

representatives are meeting three from the United Ulster Unionist Council (the Loyalist 'umbrella' organisation) to see if any agreement is possible on the final report to be submitted to Westminster.

The UUUC are thought to want a two tier system. At one level there would be committees similar to US Congressional Committees, with representation based on party strength (and thus controlled by loyalists), and there would also be some kind of an executive, based on a Loyalist majority. They are unprepared to offer the SDLP the "power-sharing at the highest level" which they demand. The likely result is that the Convention will end with the Loyalists voting through their own proposals against the opposition of the SDLP. This would put the ball back in the British court.

There are already certain pointers to what will happen after the Convention. There are considerable tensions between different sections of the Loyalist bloc. Most of their 'politicos' favour seeing how much can be got through using the Convention and by putting pressure on the British Government backed up by the threat of the para-military organisations or of another stoppage like the UWC 'general strike' of May 1974. Through such threats they hope to forestall any deal between the British Government and the IRA. They are divided, however, over ultimate aims.

Only a very small minority of men like Powell are now prepared to go for complete integration of

win them from their electorate. They are trapped between their 'realistic' middle class politicians' view that they must rely on getting concessions out of the British Government, and the growing anger of their Loyalist voting base against the British Government. The opinion of West (leader of the Official Unionist Party) that the Convention should constitute itself as a Parliament without a further election reveals a fear of having to fight with people such as the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force for the support of the Protestant population.

The UVF in particular, which is not represented in the umbrella Ulster Army Council and ever which the politicians have absolutely no control, has already stepped up a campaign of sectarian assassination intended to cow the Catholics and show the British Government what is likely to

Loyalist pressure and reassuring them that no deals have been made.

Another botched 'British solution' for Ireland is nearing its end. It has only postponed most of the Labour Government's problems; and, by allowing the Loyalists to assert themselves more and more, greatly increased the terrible prospect of all-out civil war. Nothing in the Government's policy does anything to avert that prospect: Rees merely resumes harassment of nationalist areas and hopes that some solution will emerge from nowhere. We must be ready in the event of civil war to come to the aid of the nationalist population in the north, to prevent the reimposition of a sectarian state even worse than before 1969. And in the meantime we must redouble our efforts to get the British army withdrawn immediately from Ireland. Its presence there solves no problems and keeps no peace.



Campaign over militant sacked for Irish solidarity



John Bryant

MILITANT trade unionists always run the risk of victimisation by management. Countless stories could be told of shop stewards, convenors and militants sacked by the bosses — and then reinstated by the solidarity action of their workmates. At this, the shop floor level, the British trade union movement has a fine record.

Unfortunately, this record is besmirched by, among other things, the foul stench of racialism. The disgusting attitude of white trade unionists who scabbed at Imperial Typewriters, at Art Castings, at Mansfield Hosiery, at STC, is all too common.

In Birmingham, in the aftermath of last year's pub bombings, many Irish workers felt the lash of bigotry and prejudice. Totally innocent Irish workers were set upon by their fellow trade unionists in a display of everything bad and reactionary in the British working class.

APART

Few English workers suffered in this reactionary backlash. After all, how many English workers have openly supported the Irish struggle? The vast majority care little for the so-called Irish problem, and understand even less. Only a few revolutionaries have stood apart, or, as Leon Trotsky once put it, "stood against the stream". One of the few who did stand by their political convictions and didn't buckle was John Bryant, a maintenance fitter at IMI Witton, a member of the AUEW and a supporter of Workers Fight.

John Bryant started work at IMI (Imperial Metal Industries) in November 1973. As an active trade unionist and a revolutionary he soon became known in the area where he worked for his political views.

In October 1974 the AUEW members at IMI struck over a pay claim. Comrade Bryant was active in the strike but found himself up against a right wing and conservative shop stewards committee when he argued for such elementary things as pickets. Annoyed by such 'meddling' the right wingers tried to get rid of him, one steward even appealing to the management to have him dismissed.

Nevertheless, the strike was partially successful.

Meanwhile, the bombings in London and the Midlands were focussing attention on the Irish question, and there were heated discussions on Ireland, the IRA, the role of the British Army, etc. Comrade Bryant consistently argued for an immediate withdrawal of British troops, an end to internment, for a united Ireland and for the right of the IRA to fight for these aims.

But though there were many heated arguments, things didn't come to a head until the Monday after the pub bombings at the Bullring.

Coming in to work on that Monday morning, Comrade Bryant found that a meeting had been hastily called; the subject was "Brother Bryant's views on Ireland"; the outcome was that the men in John's section said they would not work with him because

he was in sympathy with the cause of the Irish Republican movement. Underlining the sheer nationalism of their stand, they commented that 'the worst thing' was that Cde. Bryant was English: he should therefore have chosen his allegiance according to his birth, and not according to what he thought was right according to his political views. And in a blatant attempt to justify this witchhunt in 'practical' terms, some said that because IMI (a small section of it) was concerned with making ammunition, Comrade Bryant may be 'used' to plant bombs or supply information to 'terrorists'.

SACKED

A declaration of the Provisional IRA repudiated the Birmingham pub bombings, and Provisional Sinn Fein leader David O'Connell stated he thought they were just murder. John Bryant at the meeting condemned the bombings as an atrocity — but stood by his earlier support for the right of the IRA to fight for a united Ireland. As a result he was sent home, and later sacked.

It is noteworthy that the people in the forefront of this witchhunt were the same shop stewards who earlier in the year had tried to get rid of him during the strike.

The matter went to arbitration, but neither reinstatement nor compensation resulted. The AUEW, while stating that no-one could or should be sacked for their political opinions, said there was little they could do as the men refused to work with John Bryant.

Comrade Bryant, after a number of months in which he could find no work, appealed to the Industrial Tribunal claiming compensation for unfair dismissal. But, in sharp contrast to such Tribunals' treatment of scabs like James Goad, the dismissal was upheld. And then the local paper, the *Evening Mail*, weighed in, with a sensationalised story about "Worker who supported IRA campaign loses unfair sacking claim". Among the lies and slanders was the statement that John Bryant said that IMI "was a legitimate military target" and that he openly supported the "terror campaign" — whereas both these statements were made by management representatives.

PROTEST

The dismissal of John Bryant has grave implications: it allows for an individual worker to be sacked for political opinions and for little else.

In response to the decision of the Tribunal and the witchhunting article in the *Evening Mail*, the Birmingham branch of the Troops Out Movement is contacting MPs and trying to mobilise support to protest the treatment of Comrade Bryant. A motion will be presented to the next meeting of the Birmingham Trades Council condemning the Tribunal decision. A petition is being drawn up, and a public meeting is planned.

Trade union militants are urged to take up this issue at their branches and trades councils, particularly in the Birmingham area.

Len Glover

'Hands off Portugal' demo in September

"AN END to the economic boycott! Big Business, NATO, CIA — Hands Off Portugal! Portugal must not become another Chile!" As the situation in Portugal becomes more and more chaotic, with right wing mobs attacking Communist Party offices, these slogans of the Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese working class become increasingly urgent. The Solidarity Campaign is calling a demonstration from Charing Cross Embankment on September 20th, starting 2.30pm. It has already been sponsored by three MPs — Joan Maynard, Stan Newens, and Audrey Wise — as well as by several prominent trade unionists, including Jack Collins and Jack Dunn of the NUM and Ernie Roberts of the AUEW. Socialists must organise now in LPYSs, Labour Parties, and trade union branches to gain support for the demonstration.

Portugal solidarity meeting hijacked

About 40 people turned up in Rochdale on Sunday July 20th to hear Marcolino Abrantes, vice president of the Portuguese Textile Workers Union. But when the meeting started, it was clear that it had been taken over by people who had other things than solidarity as their aim.

The meeting had been initiated by the Portuguese Workers Co-ordinating Committee, who contacted a member of the Rochdale Women's Liberation Group. They in turn got onto the local Labour Party. But when it came to the meeting, it was found that the local 'Militant' grouping had taken it over and billed it as a Militant readers' meeting, with two speakers — Marcolino Abrantes and ... Gerry Lerner, the local 'Militant' organiser.

Comrade Abrantes — it was new to him, too — refused to speak on a 'Militant' platform, and although it was clear that most of those present had come specifically to hear him, the 'Militant' people refused to hand the meeting over to a neutral chair-person, claiming that they had been

prepared to allow Comrade Abrantes a platform at their meeting, and that if he wasn't prepared to speak it was just too bad! The position, they said, had been explained to the PWCC several days before, with no dissent.

Whatever the dubious 'legalities' of the situation, however, most of the audience made it clear that they considered it more important to take the opportunity to discuss with the Portuguese comrade, particularly in view of the nationalist stance taken by Rochdale textile workers to Portuguese imports, than to hear Gerry Lerner's accounts of his friends' holiday experiences in Portugal.

The meeting was finally able to proceed with a general discussion of the Portuguese situation, with the PWCC comrades appealing for support for the Portuguese working class in its struggle against international capital, and against the possibility of NATO intervention.

The scandalous nature of 'Militant's so-called solidarity was

exemplified at the end when the chair-person called for a collection to help 'the fund'. Several comrades asked for clarification as to which Fund, 'Militant' or the PWCC; after some vacillation, the chair conceded that he was calling for money for 'Militant', and that if the Portuguese comrade wanted, he was free to make an appeal himself. There were cries of "call that solidarity?" and a general feeling of disgust at the derisory way the Portuguese comrades were treated.

By the end of the evening, 'Militant' had disgraced themselves both in the eyes of the workers of Rochdale and Portugal, in putting their own petty gains above the principle of solidarity with the beleaguered Portuguese workers. Hoping to gain support and credibility for themselves on the basis of an important militant speaking from their platform, they reduced the cause of international working class solidarity to a cheap horse-trading charade.

Sue Arnall
Rochdale LP & Women's Group

FREE SPEECH ON IRELAND DEFEND THE 16

SIXTEEN people are now facing serious charges — in most cases, conspiracy charges — about a leaflet for British soldiers which provides information on how to leave the Army. A circular sent out by the "Defend the 16 Campaign", and endorsed by a number of prominent labour movement figures, including Joan Maynard MP, Jo Richardson MP, and Ernie Roberts of the AUEW, calls on trade unionists to assist the defence effort in a number of ways. Delegates can be sent to the "Drop the Charges" meeting (7.30pm, Monday 15th September, at Conway Hall), speakers can be invited to trade union branches, and donations can be sent to the campaign at 84 Claverton St, London SW1V 3AX.

Sept. 1st — Now hear the real facts...

The Troops Out Movement is organising a meeting on Monday 1st September (7.45pm at NUR headquarters, Euston Rd, London) for the three expelled members of the Greater London Association of Trades Council 'fact finding' delegation to Belfast. The three — Michael Knowles, Rosemary Sales, and Gerry McMorrow — were thrown out of the delegation after they attempted to get a hearing from the delegation for some prominent figures from the Andersonstown community, and thus correct the blatant pro-CP rigging of the visit to Belfast. The CP-dominated GLATC is now trying to prevent the three from reporting back to Trades Councils. Trades Councils and Trade Union branches who wish to invite one of the three to speak should write to TOM, 1 North End Rd, London W14.



A 45-strong picket organised by Liverpool TOM GAVE OUT LEAFLETS OUTSIDE THIS YEAR'S Liverpool Show, used annually by the Army as a public relations and recruiting stunt. The leaflets pointed out that the army was trying to capitalise on Merseyside's high level of youth unemployment, and urged Liverpool Council to follow Kirkby and Skelmersdale councils in banning the army from their shows.

JON RILEY

Joanne Little — 'Fair trial' or mass support?

THE murder trial of Joanne Little in the American state of North Carolina has brought the issues of women's rights, black rights and prisoners' rights into the bourgeois press in England and the United States.

The alleged murder took place last August while Joanne Little was imprisoned in Beaufort County Jail in North Carolina awaiting trial on a housebreaking charge. Her jailor, Clarence Alligood, entered her cell armed with an ice pick and tried to rape her. Joanne fought back and managed to escape, and in the morning Alligood was found dead, stabbed by the ice-pick, naked from the waist down and with semen on his leg.

The prosecution, true to the perverted view of the white south, is accusing Joanne of having enticed Alligood into her cell and then having stabbed him in order to escape. The chief prosecutor is Lestor Chalmers, notorious as an attorney for the Ku Klux Klan in the sixties.

SLAVERY

In the most racist fashion, the prosecution has used eight of its nine challenges to prospective jurors to throw blacks off the jury. The trial has already been moved from Beaufort County to Raleigh after a judge ruled it would be impossible for Joanne to receive a fair trial in the eastern part of the state.

But there is no more likelihood of Joanne receiving a "fair trial" in Raleigh than Beaufort County, for she is a victim of a system that has exploited and degraded black women since the days of slavery. Under slavery, rape was considered a right of the slave owners. Not much has changed since then. A survey carried out by the defence before the trial showed general unanimity of opinion that it was a woman's right to defend herself against rape. But when the question was put "And if she is



One of many meetings around the USA, this one was attended by 600 people

black?", only a tiny handful of those questioned thought that self defence was allowable.

The prosecution has been using the racist stereotype, still widely held in the American south, of black women as women of "loose morals" who "ask for it".

In one notorious North Carolina case, two black boys aged 7 and 8 were indicted for attempted rape because they had kissed a little white girl of the same age!

Of the 80 prisoners on death row in North Carolina, 67 per cent are black — yet blacks form only 23

per cent of the state population. Throughout the United States, in fact, as witness the Albany Jail revolt in New York, the large black prison population bears witness to the violent repression of blacks in US society.

And within the prisons, that repression continues. Joanne Little has issued a writ against the state of North Carolina on two counts: while imprisoned in Beaufort County jail, closed circuit television was on continuously in her cell, allowing her no privacy even when washing or using the toilet; and the use of

male warders for female prisoners.

As William Kunstler, the second Defence lawyer thrown out of court by Judge Hobgood (who thought the Defence had quite enough lawyers already!) remarked: "I see the quality of justice in North Carolina has not improved." If Joanne is freed, as with Angela Davis it will not be because of a "fair trial" but through the solidarity actions of hundreds who are demonstrating outside the courtroom and in other cities in the United States.

Marian Mound

NUJ — right wing press for a scabs' charter

by Naomi Wimborne (Bury NUJ)

At the Special Delegate Meeting of the National Union of Journalists, held in London on 26th July, the right wing succeeded — by 204 votes to 190 — in obtaining a membership ballot which could reverse this year's Annual Delegate Meeting decision on 100% union membership.

The background to this dispute begins with Michael Foot's Trade Union and Labour Relations (Amendment) Bill, which provides for a closed shop in industry. In the name of 'Press Freedom' ('freedom for the newspaper proprietors') the NUJ has been singled out as an exception to this closed shop rule.

At present, editors are often not in the NUJ and "continue normal working" — that is, scabbing — during strikes. The right wing claim that having editors under NUJ discipline in industrial disputes would amount to union censorship.

Two proposals for amendments to Foot's Bill have been presented to Parliament for consideration.

The Goodman amendment proposes a hard and fast code, to be laid down by law, to prevent any restr-

iction on the dissemination of news. It would pretty well outlaw strikes by journalists, and could certainly involve legal action in the case of blacking of non-NUJ copy, as occurred during the last pay dispute between the union and the Newspaper Society, to which most provincial newspapers belong. The Houghton amendment proposes consultation with the NUJ to draw up a kind of 'Highway Code' which would not be legally binding but could be used as a yardstick to reach a decision in case of a dispute over the independence of editors.

Always willing to extend a helping hand towards the ruling class, the NUJ Executive Committee issued a declaration on March 8th which offered cooperation to the Government if the Houghton amendment were passed.

The declaration states the policy of the Union to be in favour of 100% membership, but says that when this is achieved — "the Union will not insist that persons already working in the office who

are not members shall become members". The NEC should be congratulated for inventing a new concept in trade unionism — the not-quite-closed shop! Editors can be members if they want, but not if they don't, and if they are they are not bound by a decision to take industrial action. "The NEC reaffirms the policy of the union that when its members are called out on strike editors will be free to continue their normal work, but do no more than their normal work".

But in small provincial newspaper offices, an editor doing "normal work" with the assistance of one or two scabs can easily produce a saleable paper, or at least one which will carry sufficient advertising to keep management happy. (At the SDM, one delegate recounted the experience of pickets at the current Birmingham Post and Mail dispute — "standing outside their offices while van-loads of papers are driven out morning and night — papers produced by an editor and ten non-NUJ journal-



Joanne Little

Growing fight against gag on LPYS Irish work

PLANS to oppose the Labour Party NEC's gag on campaigning by the Labour Party Young Socialists on the Irish issue were worked out at a meeting in London on 6th August, attended by members of several LPYS branches and a representative of the Troops Out Movement.

It was reported at the meeting that only LPYS representative Nick Bradley had voted on the NEC against the ban. The meeting decided to contact the MPs supporting the Troops Out Movement (one of whom, Joan Maynard, is on the NEC), the delegates from CLPs and LPYSs to the TOM Labour Movement Conference, and the Campaign for Labour Democracy (which has two prominent members on the NEC: Frank Allaun and, once again, Joan Maynard). The meeting also decided to leaflet the Spanish solidarity demonstrations of the LPYS, attacking the failure of the LPYS leadership to organise action against British army oppression in Ireland and its preference for more easy and inoffensive activity such as demonstrations in London against Franco's repression in Spain.

Resolution

The meeting formulated a model resolution for LPYSs and CLPs: This ... condemns the decision of the Labour Party NEC to ban the LPYS's Irish campaign. We see this ban as a dangerous blow to the democratic rights of the LPYS to campaign within the labour movement on Ireland. We therefore call on the NEC to immediately rescind this ban. Furthermore we reject the LPYS NC's acceptance of this decision. We call on the NC to commence an immediate fight to reverse this ban. This branch will give its full support to any such fight and also pledges support for any branch or individual victimised for continuing to actively campaign round the Irish issue. In the absence of such a fight we will organise and support any lobbies of the regional committees of the LPYS and the NC, with a view to lobbying the Labour Party NEC on the issue as well.

Meeting

Finally, the meeting decided to work for an all-London meeting on the Irish issue sponsored jointly by a number of LPYSs and by the Troops Out Movement.

It was decided to meet again on September 16th. In the meantime, information can be obtained from, or reports can be sent to, Mark Douglas (secretary, Hackney North and Stoke Newington LPYS), 103 Osbaldeston Rd, London N16, or Paul Hoggett, 15a Endlesham Rd, London SW12.

P.H.

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NVT: takeovers must demand work or full pay and nationalisation

NORTON Villiers Triumph workers at Wolverhampton last week mounted a picket on the motorcycle factory to prevent it being closed and production moved to the other NVT works at Small Heath, Birmingham. On 31st July the Government had declared that no more financial aid should be given to NVT.

NVT, they said, was not 'viable'. But why? The Government commissioned report on the motor cycle industry says: "The loss of market share by the British motorcycle industry over the last 15 years resulted from a concern for short term profitability". Instead of investing and installing new machinery, the profiteers preferred to retreat to the easier sections of the market, among high price motorcycles.

In the short term it produced profits. But (again according to the official

report) 60% of the machine tools at Wolverhampton are over 20 years old, 10% more than 10 years old. Some parts are still carried by hand from the first floor to the ground floor assembly shop! Thus, where one British worker with £1300 worth of machinery, can produce 20 bikes in a year, a Japanese worker, with £5000 of machinery, can produce 200.

The motorcycle industry is in fact quite a typical representative of the state of British capitalism.

Eventually the corner-cutting has taken its toll. And the NVT bosses are trying to offload the costs

onto the motorcycle industry workers. Their present policy is described by Peter Turner (Confed regional officer) as: "deliberate NVT management manipulation to create confusion, trying to set workers against each other".

The Meriden workers, who started a cooperative to save their jobs — foolishly paying far more than the factory is worth to NVT chairman Dennis Poore — have been blamed for the failure of Wolverhampton. In fact anyone can see that this accusation is absurd. Although Meriden have started production, they haven't started selling yet!

The NVT management have claimed the Meriden bikes aren't safe. But the fact is that the Motor Industry Research establishment in Nuneaton has checked the Meriden bikes as well up to safety standards.

The factories should be nationalised — without one penny of compensation to the NVT bosses who have made millions out of the decaying industry — and work or full pay should be guaranteed for the workers. To ensure this, united action is needed between NVT workers to seize the factories now and impose workers' control.

D.S.

Paper machinery workers moved around like pawns

BELOIT WALMSLEYS, manufacturers of paper making machinery, have announced their fourth closure in less than five years in Lancashire. In July they announced the closure of Atlas works, in Bury, which will involve 420 redundancies. Those workers who keep their jobs will have to travel from Wigan to Bolton and from Bury to Wigan. The firm's intentions are to move the machinists and fabricators from Bury to Wigan and the boiler-fabricators from Wigan to Bolton. A new building is to be put up in Bolton at the cost of £1 million.

Beloit-Walmsleys workers are being the pawns of international big business strategy. In 1972 when Beloit closed two large Bury works there were rumours that the company intended to close all the UK factories and move all work to Italy, where they had acquired a subsidiary. The company denied these allegations — but now Beloit has acquired a foundry in India, and the Italian workers will have to watch their jobs as big business moves its operations around the world to areas of low pay.

Walmsleys UK are expected to show a £1½ million loss this year. But at the same time Beloit-Walmsley International (registered in Venezuela with an office in Geneva) takes between 4 and 10% of turnover from Walmsleys UK — that is, about £1½ million!

The unions at Bury are willing to fight to the end for their jobs and at the moment are asking for nationalisation. The workers at Wigan and Bolton have promised to block any work transferred from Bury.

KATH CAULFIELD

WORKERS FIGHT

Sorry about the last two weeks' non-appearance: we took the time to get out a mammoth Permanent Revolution No.3 (order from Gifford St., 30p plus 10p post). Now we are taking a summer holiday until August 30th.

Union falls in line as BSC closes in

THREE months ago, the steelworkers' unions hailed with joy the 'reprieve' for steel jobs. British Steel Corporation chief Monty Finiston's proposal to chop 22,000 jobs had been dropped ... in favour of a plan to reduce BSC costs by £100 million in a year! We

commented at the time, in *Workers Fight* no. 98: "In short, they (the ISTC, the largest steel union) have agreed on the policy that killed the mines as a way of redemption of the steel industry".

On July 30th, the ISTC agreed to further measures

to speed up the cuts. BSC can dismiss workers with less than 12 months' employment (without redundancy pay: 6,000 are expected to go); workers over 60 will be offered voluntary redundancy; and the guaranteed working week will be suspended. Management and unions are to co-operate in drawing up a list of 'surplus jobs' at each plant. Altogether over 10,000 jobs are expected to go over 12 months.

In addition, the Government on 6th August announced 6,000 jobs would be lost through closures in Scotland, and said that a decision on possible closure at Shotton and new investment at Port Talbot would be taken later.

The 'reprieve' so eagerly welcomed three months ago, and the ISTC leadership's servile collaboration with the BSC bosses, is succeeding well in demoralising and dividing steelworkers. The most vocal opposition to redundancies has come from Shotton — but it has been put in terms of defending "their" works, even against other steelworkers. Thus they have expressed hostility to Port Talbot.

This strategy — which some steelworkers have been driven to as a result of the abject lack of fight on a national level by the ISTC leadership — cannot succeed, any more than can any other attempt to take up the cause of backward, decaying capitalist industry against capitalist modernisation. The only possible course for steelworkers is to say that we do not oppose modernisation, but we equally insist that it would not be at workers' expense. Steelworkers should reject the BSC/ISTC cost-cutting plan and demand work or full pay. Chris Reynolds

Ivan Wells

Further attempts to break Des Warren in jail

ABOUT the time that Ricky Tomlinson was being released on parole from Leicester Prison, Des Warren in Nottingham was suffering increasing harassment. Tom Litterick, MP for Selly Oak, Birmingham, reported that there was continuous petty victimisation against this last of the 'Shrewsbury 24' behind bars.

On July 19th, Nottingham Trades Council had organised a demonstration of support for Warren outside Nottingham Jail. 300 people attended. The prison authorities took this as an excuse to deprive Des Warren of some of the 'privileges' that are enjoyed by most of the prisoners as a matter of course. They took away his Saturday leave and daytime toilet facilities, and said that he would have to use his chamber pot which is normally for night time use only. When he said that in retaliation he would tip out the contents onto the floor, this was taken as a 'threat to an officer'. He was then told that he would have to change the trainer shoes that most prisoners wear for 'regulation footwear'. When he refused he was given 14 days' punishment for 'refusing an order'.

Des immediately said he would go on hunger strike for the number of days he

was punished.

This came at the end of a long line of petty discriminations at every prison Des Warren has been in.

However, what annoyed Tom Litterick most was the treatment meted out to Mrs. Elsa Warren and her five children. When he asked the prison governor if he could speak to Elsa Warren during visiting hours he was told that he could do so only outside the prison gates. But when they went outside, they were promptly locked out, and told that they could not re-enter — despite the fact that the five children were still inside!

It came as a shock for the MP who said later he felt he had been 'used' to get Mrs. Warren out of the prison gates. But it is nothing new for Elsa Warren, who has been continuously harassed and bullied by prison authorities.

Not content with the savage sentences handed down to these building workers for ordinary trade union militancy, the authorities — loyal servants of this Labour Government! — are determined to make an object lesson out of them even in jail. As Ricky Tomlinson said when he was released, "It could have been anybody."

GEC Stafford: early victims of the Pay Curbs

AN EIGHT week strike at the Stafford GEC plant ended on 25th July. It was one of the longest strikes in the history of the GEC combine.

The workers came out for £10 across the board plus renegotiated threshold payments every three months. The strike ended with the arrest of four pickets for assault and illegal picketing, and the

workers accepting an offer which gave £6 for skilled and semi-skilled now, £5 for unskilled workers now, and £2 across the board from 29th September.

The Labour Government's pay restraint coming in on 1st August was the main factor in defeating the workers' £10 claim. Union officials recommended acceptance, since other-

wise it would mean confronting the Government.

Support for Stafford came from other GEC sites, including Kidsgrove, but did not extend much beyond messages of sympathy. This underlines the necessity of building up meaningful combine committees based on the rank and file in the GEC.

ANN DUGGAN

Surrey Univ. dispute setback for ASTMS technicians

THE DISPUTE between ASTMS technicians and the authorities at the University of Surrey over an area weighting allowance is continuing. The strike has been escalated by bringing the computer staff out on a permanent strike, whilst other departments are still striking in turn for 3 days at a time.

A big setback for the strike has been the attitude of NUPE, which whilst negotiating for the same allowance, has refused to take strike action with the ASTMS members. NUPE has informed van drivers who have been told by the University authorities to collect supplies, that they will get no support from the union if they refuse to drive supplies over the picket line!

Because of this, demoralisation has started to set in, and a concerted effort will have to be made to reverse this scabbing policy — including getting other NUPE sections in the town (such as dustmen) to put pressure on the officials.

P.R.

CAV - Speed up threat

After several weeks of negotiation CAV-Lucas (Acton) have agreed to a £8 a week rise for all their employees, and equal pay for women. Although the unions demanded £10, the concession of £8 shows how the recent militancy and disputes in the firm, and the present union strength, has worried the bosses and made them avoid direct confrontation.

However, £8 hardly compensates for the ravaging effects of inflation, and there are indications that CAV-Lucas will try to grab back the rise by the "Back door" method, 'rationalising' the firm, and 'centralising' it to the Midlands. This means, basically, that a number of workers are going to be made redundant and that for the rest of the employees, work is going to be a great deal harder as one worker does the work of several. At the moment there are plans to move part of the assembly lines and connected stores to a new factory on the Acton site. Speed-ups will be attempted as part of this move, and it is vital that CAV workers are prepared to resist them.

Mark Traquair (TGWU, CAV-Lucas, Acton)

** This coming September, over 1600 new students will arrive in Nottingham, with the Polytechnic only able to give a few places in halls of residence. Yet the Nottingham Private Landlords Association (including most of the town's private landlords) has imposed a ban on student tenants.

The landlords say "the low rents set by rent officers for students are forcing them into bankruptcy". In other words, the landlords' objection to students is simply that they tend to stand up for their legal rights and appeal to the rent officer when they think their rent is too high.

JOHN PECK

** THREE Irishmen were arrested in Liverpool a couple of weeks ago on arms charges and have since been held in prison. Strong rumours are coming out however, that one of the three — Sean Kinsella, Brendan Dowd, and Stephen Nordone — is in hospital after being beaten up by the police. Labour movement activists in Liverpool should demand a clear answer from the authorities to these rumours.