

## LABOUR'S IRISH PLAN

## IN RUINS

The monster of protestant sectarianism holds Belfast in its grip, and Ireland is in the throes of a bloody, violent convulsion which is the inevitable result of the attempts of successive British Governments to impose a solution to the Irish crisis.

There are grave dangers of vicious, sectarian attacks against the catholic areas. There is also the danger that the Labour Government will crack under the loyalists' pressure, and make concessions which will postpone the demolition of the protestant ascendancy in the North of Ireland. This might solve the present crisis, but will make the next all the fiercer.

Most British workers will find it difficult to accept that the correct response of the British labour movement to the present situation would be to demand the withdrawal of the British Army and to support the armed self defence by the IRA of the

catholic areas.

But if the mass of the British working class were to make such a demand, and link it to the demand for the right of the Irish people to self-determination, it would bring home to loyalist workers that they cannot stem the tide of history. They must be told that their future lies with the rest of the Irish

working class in building a free and united Ireland.

This crisis confirms what centuries have taught—no British Government can solve the Irish problem. The Labour Government must be forced to act in the interests of the British and Irish working class, and, instead of making concessions to reactionary, loyalist forces, get out of Ireland once and for all.



### SUNNINGDALE TOTTERS

THE LOYALIST STRIKE in the North of Ireland could be the last crushing blow to the Sunningdale agreement. It certainly represents the most formidable expression so far of loyalist opposition to the British Government's strategy.

It is unlikely that, as in previous loyalist confrontations, this strike will simply peter out in confusion. Things have changed in the North of Ireland.

#### SCENT OF VICTORY

The general election result has given the loyalists the scent of victory; and the success of the latest IRA campaign, along with the growing mood for troop withdrawals in Britain, has made them fear a

British pull-out, which would make a united Ireland inevitable.

Over the last year the 'hard men' centred mainly in the formerly illegal Ulster Volunteer Force have asserted their domination over the broader and looser Ulster Defence Association, and the other paramilitary groups.

Ruthless and cynical, they have decisively asserted their independence from the loyalist 'politicians' (Craig West, Paisley, etc.). They express the interests of the Orange aristocracy of labour—determined to maintain the relative privileges of the loyalist industrial workers, which they see as bound up with maintenance of the sectarian Northern state.

continued on p.3

### 18 months for Pat Arrowsmith

The eighteen month sentence imposed on militant pacifist Pat Arrowsmith, is a measure of the desperation of a British ruling class faced with an increasingly effective movement for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

Pat was charged with distribution, and possession of a leaflet which gave information about their rights to British soldiers who did not want to serve in Ireland. The court decided

that this was contrary to the Incitement to Disaffection Act.

The heavy sentence was also a response to Pat's speech in court. She brought out clearly the political reasons for her actions, and the political motives behind the charges.

Pat Arrowsmith won wide respect in the working class movement for her record of opposition to nuclear weapons. The labour movement must demand that the Labour Government quash this vicious sentence, and guarantee the right to free speech about the British Army.

## Coventry workers say - DEFEND ALL WAGES AGAINST INFLATION

Some 5 million workers will find their next paypacket a little bigger.

This will result from the payouts under the 'threshold agreements' which the Tories offered last October as a 'sugar coating' to the bitter pill of Phase 3. The Tories obviously hoped that inflation would not go far above the 7% level in the following year. But now, within seven months, the cost-of-living index has shot clear across the threshold.

There will now be squeals of indignation from all those capitalists who embraced the threshold scheme as an easy way of buying off their workers. A big campaign will be mounted to get the Government to cancel all threshold agreements, in the 'national interest,' of course.

Any such move will be fought by the workers' movement tooth-and-nail. But a defensive struggle is not enough. The Phase 3 threshold scheme is totally inadequate. A massive campaign must be launched by the trade unions to extend the threshold into a genuine sliding scale of wages.

\*All workers' wages must be protected by threshold agreements.

\*All future agreements must be based on a 'nil norm'—workers should receive an immediate payout as soon as prices go up

by any amount.

\*The amount of the payout must be enough to maintain the full, real value of workers' wages, allowing for increased taxes and loss of social benefits—the present 40p per one per cent rise is totally insufficient.

\*The trade union movement should compile its own index, based on the real needs of working class families, as a basis for threshold payouts.

The workers at the Wickman machine tool plant in Coventry have already launched a struggle along these lines.

A seven week strike of workers in the machine shop forced the company to concede wage rises of £1 to £6, but they refused to budge on the demand for a threshold agreement. The machine shop workers returned to work—but only to

convince the other workers that this was a struggle affecting them all. A mass meeting of the entire factory voted for all-out strike action to back up the demand for a threshold agreement covering all workers.

The workers want immediate protection for their wages against rising prices. The AUEW Convenor at Wickman's, Dick Burdett, told *Red Weekly*, 'As far as we're concerned we want the 40p immediately the next index is published and 40p every time the index goes up by one per cent after that. So really we won't be waiting at all for the first payment.'

There is considerable pressure on Wickman's to take a hard stand from other engineering employers in Coventry and the West Midlands, who face similar demands from their own workers. The strike is therefore shaping up into a major battle in which all the workers in the area have a very direct interest.

Contributions and messages of support should be sent to: Dick Burdett, 19 Robert Crown Avenue, Tile Hill South, Coventry.



Some of the militants who took part in a mass picket of the Chilean junta's Naval Day reception in Pall Mall on Tuesday

# ISLINGTON NALGO CHALLENGE LEADERSHIP SABOTAGE

ALAN BENNETT

The bureaucrats of NALGO, the local government workers' union, are attempting to stab in the back the only major force fighting for the London Weighting claim.

Last week's meeting of the Emergency Committee—called to review the 'strategy' of the struggle—decided that Islington, the only large local government branch out on total strike, should go back to work. This is the reality behind the bureaucrats' mealy-mouthed promises to 'escalate' action.

Instead of developing and extending the strike to include more of the London branches, the union leadership have adopted a policy which will isolate and split up those in struggle. This means asking all branches if they have one or two key sections which can be pulled out—while at the same time sending Islington back to work.

## PLEAS REJECTED

However, Islington indicated at its branch meeting on Monday that it wasn't prepared to walk tamely back to work. The branch membership rejected pleas from the union's general secretary, Geof-

frey Drain, to return and instead voted to stay out until action was hitting effectively all over London.

This is a considerable setback for the union executive's plans, and provides a basis for taking the campaign forward again.

## ORGANISING FOCUS

It is quite clear why the bureaucrats have adopted this policy. While Islington is out on strike it can act as an organising focus for the struggle. With other forces gathered around it this could start to really challenge the 'official' leadership of the campaign.

The fact that the marches and pickets organised by Islington Strike Committee have gathered together local government and electricity workers from all over London bears this out. It is the unwillingness and inability to lead of this existing 'official' leadership that lies behind the latest moves, and their claim that Islington branch is costing too much to keep out must be seen in that light.

The urgency for widespread and decisive action in London can be seen from the employers' decision not to negotiate on NALGO's 20% national pay claim while action is going ahead in London. By this means they hope to split the union and bring pressure to bear against the London campaign from the branches outside London.

## TRIGGER

The only way to defeat this manoeuvre is to develop action in London tied directly to demands not just for the London Allowance but also for the national claim. This could not only trigger off a much wider national struggle over local government and other services pay, but could also provide the basis for links nationally throughout the public sector, and pose an effective challenge to any statutory or 'voluntary' incomes policy and attempts to cut social spending.

Islington Strike Committee is organising a picket of NALGO House on Friday 24 May. Ring 226 3441 for details.



Mass meeting called by Islington branch a few weeks ago—these strikers have acted as an organising focus for the struggle as a whole

## Computer staff dig in against scabs

Four Universities in Scotland—Strathclyde, Glasgow, Stirling and Aberdeen—are digging in for a confrontation with the white-collar union ASTMS in a dispute over computer staffs grading.

Now in its third week, this dispute has led to occupations in two of the Universities.

The computer staff are trying to get re-graded as technical staff. This would strengthen their future bargaining position, by linking them with the strongly organised ASTMS membership amongst University technical staff. They are also claiming a substantial sum in back pay.

A court order has been used to eject Aberdeen operators who were occupying the plant room, after scab operators worked the machines. Strathclyde operators faced an attempt to starve them out when the University refused to allow in relief shifts. However, the Janitors' union has agreed not to implement this order and the weekend shift has been strengthened and additional food supplies laid on.

Two discoveries made last week show that the Universities have consciously planned this confrontation.

When the unions met with the Depart-

ment of Employment Conciliation Officer, representatives of the Universities announced that the University body which had been discussing with the unions for seven months had 'no power to negotiate'.

The second discovery came in the form of an internal circular from the University Committee for Non-Teaching Staff, referring to a recent settlement at Bristol. This circular advised Universities confronted by claims relating to computer staff to resist 're-structuring via the manual', (ie re-grading as technical staff), and not to allow identification of local computer staff scales with the technicians' salary scales.

An important initiative has been taken by students at Strathclyde and Glasgow who are assisting on picket lines and organising support. More of the same is needed to boost this strike.

JOHN BALL

## Tech teachers helter skelter into 'social contract' trap

The Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, a traditionally 'Left' trade union, will decide at its conference in Solihull this weekend how to ride the helter-skelter of the 'Social Contract'.

The past few years have seen an unprecedented attack on further and higher education. First came the imposition of unrealistic 'economic' criteria for the size of classes, then a formula for a major overall reduction in the ratio of teachers to students. The union put up no determined opposition—convinced that there could be no cut in the total level of spending.

But last autumn, with a net reduction in spending of £182m, it became clear that the ATT 'faced not just a worsening of conditions but a major redundancy threat. Many colleges are facing:

- \* a total stop on building work, including modernisation programmes
- \* a stop on the growth of any new courses
- \* cuts ranging from 10-15% on such basic items of current expenditure as paper and library books.

These cuts were announced as part of a package 'to beat inflation' in which the

main item was Phase 3 and the Pay Board. And teachers have suffered under that—with a net reduction already this year of about 7% in their standard of living, and the continued freezing of London allowance increases.

Almost every resolution to be discussed at the conference is couched in language tailored to the social contract. The cuts are to be 'regretted', the Government is asked to 'prepare' greater opportunities for day-release. The Union is meekly to ask again for the wage rise it failed to get last time. All the 'left' executive can find to balance against the social contract is a 'welcome' for the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act!

The alternative is clear—the conference should demand that the Labour Government implement the demands of successful Labour Party and TUC resolutions on the right to day-release. The phoney threshold agreement should be replaced by a sliding scale which would escalate wages and pensions with every increase in the cost of living. And there must be an interim pay claim to restore living standards. But the lead for this will come from the floor, not from the 'lefts' on the platform.

J. JAMESON



Teachers in over 100 private language schools all across Britain have decided to unionise, and to struggle against low pay and unsatisfactory conditions.

The first action was taken at Berlitz, where working conditions are atrocious: 64p per lesson (the students pay £4 or more!), no guaranteed wage, no sick pay and holidays based on the number of hours of teaching.

Their initial confrontation with the management was quite unsuccessful, but after discussion with the Working Women's Charter Group in London, they decided to approach MATSA (the white-collar section of G&MWU). The four Berlitz schools in London, with a total of about 150 teachers, are now almost

completely unionised and negotiations with the management begin next week.

On the Saturday following the Berlitz meeting about 140 teachers from 25 schools in London, Oxford, Cambridge and several South Coast towns voted to join MATSA, in a wave of enthusiasm for the new movement.

At the moment unionisation is going on at a large number of schools and on 8 June there is to be a conference of representatives at which a charter of demands will be drawn up.

At Berlitz there is now strong support for strike action if their demands are not met. The Berlitz struggle will be a test-case and must receive the support of all teachers.

## REPLY TO WORKERS' PRESS SCANDAL-MONGERING:

# IMG & THE COWLEY STRUGGLE - THE REAL STORY

Workers' Press, paper of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP), carried an editorial on Monday 13 May which tried to discredit the IMG's interventions in recent disputes at the Cowley Assembly Plant.

This article consists of slanders and lies. Its principle slander is that the IMG is responsible for Alan Thornett's victimisation:

'The only arguments that the management have been delighted to seize on to attack Thornett's shop-stewardship are those provided by the IMG.

'In alleging "undemocratic and manipulative methods" by WRP stewards [the IMG] is echoing the line of others in the factory... the right wing.

'When the company withdrew Thornett's recognition rights on April 10 it was the provocative activities of the IMG more than anything else that had paved the way.'

This is nonsense. The victimisation of Thornett followed a defeat of the Assembly workers in face of a determined assault on the trade union movement in Cowley. Throughout this struggle the IMG fought for demands and tactics which were agreed by the stewards and the union branch, and endorsed by mass meetings.

The company felt able to move against Thornett because of the isolation of the Senior Stewards from most Assembly workers, which results largely from the misleadership of the WRP. The management do not need the IMG's criticisms to give them arguments. The ears of their shop-floor spies are ringing with complaints

about the leadership, which are not limited to lies spread by the right wing.

The tragic irony of Cowley is that the WRP has allowed demands for trade union democracy, which should be the key-note of revolutionary work in the trade unions, to become the property of right-wing opportunists who pervert legitimate complaints for their own ends. In fighting for fuller trade union democracy at Cowley the IMG has always attacked the manoeuvres of the right-wing and actively defended WRP members against the right.

The only example the Workers' Press gives of the IMG's 'provocative activities' is a lie:

'Following an angry demonstration outside the administration office it was the IMG leaflet calling for more "direct action" which gave management the pretext for launching its witch-hunt in the factory against "disruptive" and "political minorities".'

The IMG's factory bulletin, the *Organiser*, discussed the two demonstrations in four of the eighteen issues produced during the dispute in defence of the Industrial Engineering agreement. The management's letter attacking 'disrupters' was put out to the night-shift of 26 March before any of these four issues had appeared.

The *Organiser* never called for 'more direct action'. The demonstrations were not instigated by the IMG but decided by overwhelming votes at mass meetings.

The *Organiser* did say that the demonstrations proved an effective way of forcing the management to negotiate (something also

pointed out by WRP members).

Workers' Press claims union support for their slanders, but again they totally distort the facts:

'Nor has the role played by the IMG in the factory been lost on active trade unionists. The 5/55 branch of the T&GWU has instructed the IMG to desist from putting out their leaflets and an investigation of their contents is pending.'

Following the victimisation of Thornett the 5/55 branch committee, not the branch, requested, not instructed, the IMG to refrain from putting out leaflets on the issue of the victimisation, at that time. The IMG complied.

The 5/55 branch has not agreed to an investigation, as proposed by WRP members, who have yet to produce any grounds for one.

Workers' Press also slanders the women who organised to counter the anti-union marches of Cowley wives:

'[Women trade unionists from Cowley] were also disregarded by the women's liberation groups who saw the emergence of the housewives as an opportunity to plead "the case of women in industrial disputes" and to attack the WRP.'

Far from disregarding Cowley women trade unionists, a section of the Oxford women's liberation group made contact with many of them, as well as wives of workers, and helped to organise the successful rout of Carol Miller & Co. at Oxford Town Hall. The women's liberationists correctly saw the emergence of Miller's mob as a threat to the rights and organisation of the working-class, as their leaflets

clearly stated.

The WRP still cannot understand the threat posed to the workers' movement by the mobilisation of the wives of laid-off workers against the union. Workers' Press was the only daily paper not to even mention the march of 250 women and children at the factory on 22 April.

Workers' Press accuses the IMG of exaggerating the impact of such events. But the 'wives revolt' helped the management to open the factory and run it for three days (on reduced production) with scab labour. This was a severe threat to the drivers' strike in defence of Thornett.

Workers' Press describes the organisation of women trade unionists and wives of workers in defence of the union as a 'bogus and reactionary campaign to answer the housewives' demonstrations by counter marches by women workers.'

What is the WRP's solution? Trade union business as usual: 'To have turned it into a women versus women issue would have side-tracked the struggle for basic trade union rights and removed it from the trade union movement.'

This ignores the fact that although the wives of workers are mostly not members of the union, they are vitally affected by trade union struggles. But they experience struggles as individuals at home, and not in a united body at the factory. So they are especially exposed to ruling class propaganda against the trade unions. This danger, which the WRP ignores by pretending that Miller and Co. got no support, can only be overcome by taking conscious steps to get the families of workers actively involved in the factory struggles.

Thornett's victimisation is a threat, not just to his position, or to the WRP, or even to the left, but to the very existence of an effective union in the factory. For that reason, the IMG will not be deterred by the WRP's slanders: we will continue to work, with all our energies, to advance the fight to defend Alan Thornett.

COWLEY IMG

## STOP PRESS:

While T&GWU national officials continue to hedge on calling an official strike of the Transport Department to defend Thornett, the real reasons for his victimisation and the urgent need to defeat it have been underlined by the latest company moves.

'After recent cutbacks in Marina production, the 1100 model is now to cease production altogether, while the night shift is to be abolished on the Maxi line. Further cuts in Maxi production are also planned. As a result about 1000 men will become surplus, and will be put in the job pool on reduced pay. The threat of outright redundancy hangs over them.

Each reorganisation of production will also give the company a new chance to speed-up the remaining trucks.

## 'COWLEY - Reaction Organises'

A lesson for all male trade unionists. IMG pamphlet price 10p plus postage (10% discount on 10 or more copies). Available from RED BOOKS, 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1.

# 1,100 march through Leicester in support of Asian workers' strike

Undeterred by opposition which ranges from the National Front through the local press, to the trade union bureaucracy: the district, the strikers at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester are fighting on.

Management sacked 370 of the mainly Asian strikers last Thursday after they refused to return to work. The strikers are demanding higher bonus payments, a move towards equal pay for women, an end to discrimination in promotion, and the right to elect their own shop stewards.

More than 1,100 strikers and their supporters marched through Leicester last Sunday. They were addressed by Des Bailey, President of Leicester Trades Council; Tariq Ali; Julian Atkinson of Nottingham IMG; Dick Skiers; George Powe of the Black People's Freedom Movement; Darshana Tomkinson of IS; two members of the strike committee; and Benny Bunsee, who chaired the rally.

## RIGHT TO STRUGGLE

Tariq Ali told the strikers that they were right not to wait for the white workers before starting to struggle, and that the fight against racism had to include a struggle against the 1971 Immigration Act.

Darshana Tomkinson was not well received when she attacked 'outsiders' who tried to tell the strikers what to do; this was clearly directed at Benny Bunsee, who has a great deal of prestige from the Mansfield Hosiery strike, and is now assisting the Imperial strikers.

The previous Monday (13 May), 800 strikers demonstrated outside the T&GWU offices, demanding that the strike be made official. The District Secretary George Bromley flatly refused. He told the press that he was terrified that the strike could lead to a 'racial backlash', and did not intend to hold a branch meeting 'until the atmosphere is cooler.'

The other half of the bureaucratic double-act in Leicester is Reg Weaver, the 'convenor' at Imperial. He has made a name for himself by appointing virtually all the other shop stewards. He insists that he will talk to any of the workers—except those who are not employees of Imperial. This means the 370 who have been locked out, and includes the entire strike committee.

## CONFRONTATION

The lockout started last Thursday, when the firm announced that all those who did not return that morning would be sacked. The inevitable result was a confrontation between

pickets and scabs on Wednesday evening. Six pickets were arrested and fined a total of £315. Although 80 strikers did go back, half of these came out again on Friday.

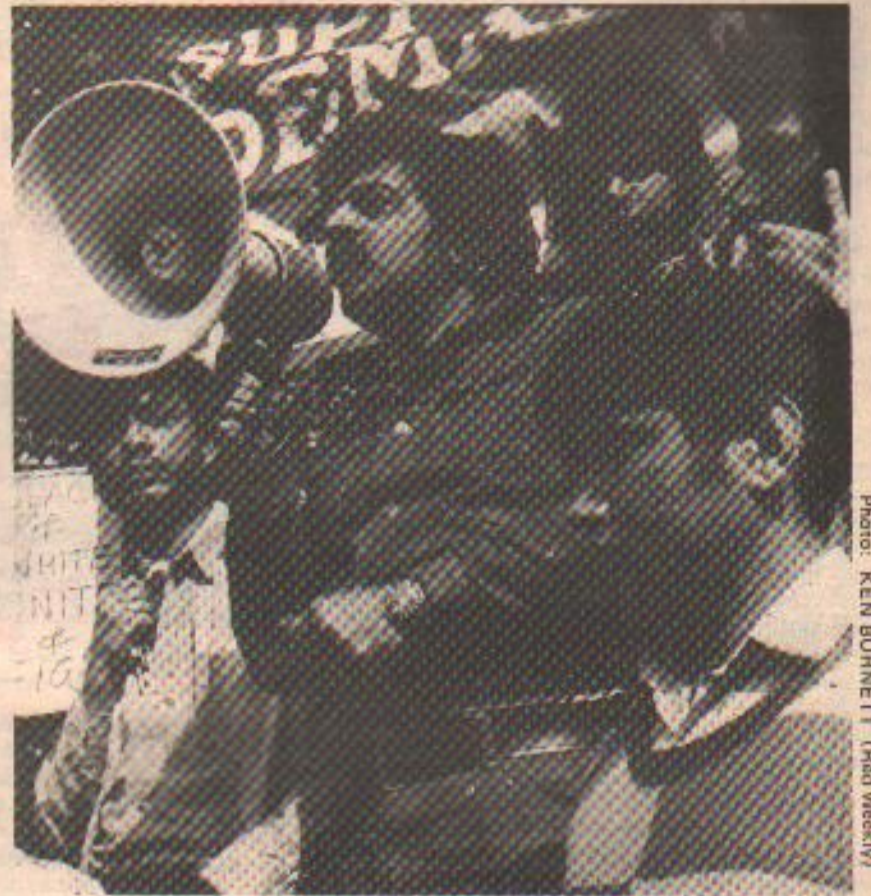
There has been a disgraceful response to the strike by the majority of the Leicester labour movement. However, Asian shop stewards at six factories have promised overtime bans in solidarity.

The strike committee announced on Friday 17 May that they would return to work if they were guaranteed the right to elect their own shop stewards, no victimisations, and full re-employment. This would allow further negotiations over their other demands. But as we go to press the management has not responded.

## RALLY TO DEFENCE

All sections of the labour movement must rally to the defence of the Imperial workers. These workers are fighting in a town which gave 9,000 votes to the National Front at the last election. The local newspaper has done nothing but slander them, and has suggested that their strike is part of a 'Trotskyite plot.'

The local officials of the T&G have refused to support the workers; but the 'left' leadership of the Union must recognise the strike as official, and give full support to these militant workers.



Tariq Ali addresses the demonstration on Sunday

## Mass picket planned in Jepson struggle

Hull trade unionists are preparing for a mass picket of the Armstrong Patents factory, in an escalation of the campaign in solidarity with Jean Jepson, the sacked T&GWU convenor of the factory.

This was one of the decisions taken by a meeting of 120 militants on Wednesday 15 May. It was organised by the Armstrong's Defence Committee, and sponsored by a number of local trade union bodies.

## ALMOST ALONE

Jean told the meeting that she was now almost alone on the picket line, thanks to the failure of the T&G Region 10 and 10/41d branch officials to support her fight for reinstatement.

However, more and more workers at the plant, mainly women, could now see that the victimisation was a prelude to speed-up and redundancies.

A speaker from York University outlined the political background to the dispute. The ruling class had been dealt a shattering blow by the miners' strike, but the economic situation did not permit a let-up in their efforts to cut back working class living standards.

The escalation of attacks on weakly organised sections of the class, and on other oppressed groups, was a preparation for a struggle with the big battalions in the winter. This could be seen at Armstrong's, and in the police attacks on pickets at Essex University. Essex was 'a preview of the full-length movie we will all have a chance to see this winter.'

The Defence Committee is still calling for financial support, and for an extension of the blacking of Armstrong components in the motor industry. T&GWU branches are being asked to demand an enquiry at Executive level.

Donations and messages of support to: Armstrong's Defence Committee, 39 St. Hilda's St., Bridlington, E. Yorks.

## 'THE CASE OF JEAN JEPSON'

Victimisation, bureaucracy, and mass struggle

Hull IMG pamphlet, price 10p plus postage from D. Booth, 7 Parkside Close, Park Avenue, Hull (10% discount on 10 or more copies)

## 500 sign up for Clay Cross meeting as ex-councillors face new attack

THE FORMER CLAY CROSS councillors are being threatened with court action to collect the £7,000 'surcharge' levied against them because of their heroic resistance to the Tories' Housing Finance Act.

One of the former councillors, Charlie Bunting, has suggested that the Labour Government might like to approach the 'Mr. Xs' who bailed them out during the Engineers' clash with the NIRC to give a hand here.

The opportunity to organise the sort of mass response that will bring the 'Mr. Xs' out of the woodwork will come on 8 June when the conference of the labour movement called by Clay Cross Labour Party meets in London.

The conference is receiving wide-

spread support. Over 500 delegates credentials have already been issued, and the national executive of the engineering white-collar union, TASS, has circulated all its branches informing them of the conference and urging them to send delegates.

While the defence of the Clay Cross councillors is top of the agenda, the conference will also take up other key questions facing the workers' movement: Chile, the Shrewsbury 6, and the AUEW's fight against the NIRC.

This conference will be an important opportunity to study and apply the lessons of the Clay Cross fight—the effectiveness of militant, direct action, and the uselessness of relying on the leadership of the Labour Party for solutions to workers' problems.

Today the Labour Government is serving as an instrument of the capitalist class in their offensive against workers' living standards, and doing almost nothing to block the capitalist attack on workers' ability to organise in their own defence. The union leaders have trussed themselves up in the bonds of the 'social contract.'

Just as at Clay Cross, workers' interests can only be defended by those prepared to carry on the struggle independently of the existing, bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement. The success of the 8 June Conference will depend on its readiness to take the first steps towards organising a workers' counter-offensive, regardless of what the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats are prepared to do about the situation.

A picket outside Durham Prison last Saturday was held to call for the repatriation of the Price sisters to Ireland and oppose their suggested transfer to 'E' wing of the prison. A successful public meeting on the same theme was also organised in Newcastle the next day.



## SUNNINGDALE — continued from page 1.

Roy Bradford, Unionist member of the 'power-sharing' Ulster Executive, is pressing Labour's Northern Ireland Secretary Merlyn Rees to give the loyalists some hope of early elections. This would open up a 'constitutional' channel for overturning Sunningdale, and would marginalise the 'hard men,' while pushing the 'politicians' into centre stage.

But this would mean abandoning Sunningdale. Any Unionist who stayed in the power-sharing Executive would effectively be abandoning any hope of re-election. The Executive would probably split, and we would be back to Direct Rule.

At Sunningdale Whitelaw pulled off a confidence trick. Its purpose was to bail out the Tory Government, and prevent the Irish crisis from combining with the crisis in Britain. He fooled everyone except the majority of the people in the North of Ireland. Above all he duped Merlyn Rees and Stan Orme, who

now have to extricate the Labour Government from an impossible situation.

The crisis will get worse before it gets better. The loyalist strike will inevitably be accompanied by violent sectarian attacks. In preparing their defence, the catholic ghettos will be drawn more closely behind the IRA. The catholics will be more than ever determined to smash the remnants of the Northern state, and force a British withdrawal.

British imperialism wants to stay, because it cannot accept the implications of a military and political defeat so near to home. The Southern Irish capitalists oppose a British withdrawal because they would be swept aside in the revolutionary changes which would result.

But the choice in the North of Ireland is stark—and has been for fifty years. Either partition and the sectarian protestant ascendancy, or a British withdrawal, and self-determination for the whole people of Ireland. There are no other alternatives.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the chosen representative of big business, has been elected President of France.

This is a set-back for the working class. Big hopes had been put in a victory for Mitterrand and the Union of the Left.

But Giscard has won by no more than a hair's breadth. The country is split almost exactly down the middle, and the next presidential elections are not due until 1981.

### IMMEDIATE PERSPECTIVE

The working class will therefore be looking for a more immediate perspective than a possible victory for the Union of the Left in seven years' time. In this it will be encouraged by the experience of rapidly mounting class confrontation in the past few months.

It is also unlikely to forget the words of Communist Party trade union leader Georges Seguy, who before the second round promised a vast social and industrial upheaval if Giscard were to win.

Seguy's intentions, of course, were simply to panic a section of the bourgeoisie into voting for Mitterrand in order to avert such a prospect. He has no intention of leading such an upsurge now that the electoral game has been lost.

But the effect on his followers may well be different, and a renewed upsurge of workers' militancy can thus be expected after only a very short down-turn.

### NO TRUCE, NO COMPROMISE

The period leading up to the elections was one of intense working class activity. Many strikes continued throughout the election campaign, with hundreds of thousands of workers refusing to agree to any kind of 'social truce'.

The most pressing advocates of such a truce were the leaders of the Communist Party and its trade union federation, the CGT. As Seguy put it: 'The CGT considers that it is in the interests of the workers that the presidential elections take place in an atmosphere of calm, so that every citizen can make his democratic choice with full awareness of the importance of his vote for the future of the country'.

Despite such pleas, however, every day of the election campaign saw new strikes being declared.

Security guards at Brinks refused to recognise the truce and occupied their place of work; workers at the Atlantic Naval Dockyards responded with a threatened occupation to prospects of a lockout; while printworkers at the Darbois works not only occupied the place but started to print material for other workers in struggle. Even the Paris postal workers went on strike for two days against undermanning of the postal service.

### MILITANCY

But just as important as the number of strikes is the militancy that has been displayed. Ever since the struggle at the Lip watch factory things in France have taken on quite a different hue.



It is now becoming almost second nature for workers to occupy in pursuit of their demands, despite the readiness of the police to intervene. Even the CP/CGT has taken up this method of struggle at the Rateau factory, a small electronics firm on the outskirts of Paris threatened with closures.

Democratically elected strike committees and mass assemblies of workers have also been springing up in the most surprising places. Mobilisations in active solidarity with hard fought and long standing struggles have begun to find a mass response.

There is undoubtedly a growing awareness by workers in struggle of the close ties which bind their own struggle to those of other sections of the class. Moreover, nearly all currents in the workers' movement now accept the need to prepare workers' self-defence against the police and the fascists.

All these developments have been generalised in the most difficult conditions for struggle. For the workers have had to deal not only with the bosses and the police, but also with sabotage and hostility from the trade union bureaucracy.

These new methods of struggle were pioneered by the Lip workers. But Lip was quite peripheral to the French economy. It is only in the last few months that Lip has been transferred to the major sections of the French economy.

### BANK WORKERS

The most remarkable struggle in this respect has been that of the bank workers. Their struggle started in the nationalised Credit Lyonnais bank in Paris, but during two months of

struggle grew to embrace several hundred thousand bank workers throughout the whole of the banking system. Significantly, the bank workers had hardly been affected by the May '68 events.

But Lip had taught the bankworkers a number of things. From the very beginning the Credit Lyonnais workers met in general assemblies to decide amongst the mass of workers the course of the strike. Strike committees were elected from such meetings, which linked up first on an area basis and then nationally to lead the strike in a unified way.

The strike committees had the task of preparing the assembly meetings, organising demonstrations, winning support for the struggle from other bank workers, organising occupations, and so on. They represented both unionised and non-unionised workers—which in a situation of low-level unionisation in France (the trade unions are political) is a tremendous step forward.

From the strike committees were set up a whole series of commissions modelled on Lip which drew the vast majority of workers into the active running of the strikes. These commissions had many functions.

At Credit Lyonnais there was one which was set up to investigate the whole role of the banking system under capitalism; another studied the role of banks in inflation; a third took up the investigation of a number of rumoured scandals; whilst yet others took up the more obvious tasks of developing solidarity, publicity, posters and so on.

Control was also exercised over what went to the media. All in all, the workers did their best to ensure that the running of the strike was firmly in their own hands rather than in those of the trade union bureaucracy.

### WORKERS' POWER

These developments in the democratic organisation of strikes have implications going far beyond these immediate struggles. The understanding of the need for workers' democracy as a condition for victory brings up the far wider question of the means of developing the struggle against the bourgeoisie as a whole—the formation of alternative organs of workers' power to the institutions of the bourgeoisie.

This takes on added importance in the context of other forms of struggle sparked off by Lip. The Lip workers occupied their plant and sold the watches they produced to finance the strike. When the police ejected them from the factory, they took essential parts of the machinery with them.

The bank workers followed suit. They occupied their banks intending to close down the whole of the banking system. When they in turn were ejected, they took with them the computer tapes needed by the French administration to channel funds to essential sectors of the economy.

Through a combination of such actions they

# FRANCE SPLITS DOWN THE MIDDLE

## - AND THE STORM CLOUDS GATHER

### Can you describe the development of the struggle for a contract at the Fiat plant?

After the mobilisations of the first week of February, the bosses had made some concessions. They had offered an overall increase of 30,000 lire on the basic wage. After these concessions the trade union leaderships and the management engaged in very intensive discussions. Once agreement had been reached with the union leadership on the issues of investments in the South and investments in social products, the Fiat management again proposed the wage offer of 30,000 lire (£20/month).

For the union leaders, it was clear that while this offer represented an enormous step forward on management's part, it was still unacceptable to the ranks. Consequently it was very difficult for the bureaucrats to accept the proposal. In fact, during these discussions, the workers had continued to engage in hard-fought struggles in the corporation's various factories. The union leaderships therefore demanded more significant concessions on the wages issue, but Fiat management refused, and negotiations were broken off.

On the same day, that is Wednesday, 20 February, the Government announced a new increase in the prices of consumer goods, first of all gasoline, which was increased by 30 per cent, and then a whole series of food products.

These two elements—the breaking off of negotiations with Fiat, and the Government's price increase decree—served to transform Thursday 4 February into a day of very militant struggles throughout the whole of Italy, not only in Fiat, but in a whole series of firms. On Thursday morning, when the workers learned of the breaking off of negotiations and read about the Government measures in the newspapers, there was an explosion of spontaneous strikes.

There was no 'official' strike at Fiat, but several hours after work began, the two main Fiat factories, Mirafiori and Rivalta, were blockaded. Rivalta was completely blockaded; in fact, it was the beginning of an occupation. And the same kind of action was proposed at Mirafiori. But there the trade-union bureaucracy immediately intervened, trying to prevent that. The bureaucrats called a big meeting of all departments at Fiat, in which two of the main leaders of the trade-union 'left' participated.

They wanted to discuss the forms of struggle and the kind of action to take. Two processions formed up, blocking the operation of the whole factory, and they made their way to the meeting. The majority of the workers called for the occupation of the factory to force management to give in, and even demanded that the date of the general strike set for the following week be advanced.

More than 10,000 workers participated in the meeting. The bureaucrats had a lot of difficulty presenting their position, for there was great distrust toward them. When the union leaders came out against the occupation, the workers reacted very violently, booing them and preventing them from continuing. Many workers spoke up, but they made no concrete proposals for the occupation.

After this meeting, the strike continued until the next shift. The afternoon shift also went on strike and tried to organise an occupation. But the bureaucrats were very energetic, and they succeeded in preventing the occupation from spreading at Mirafiori, while at Rivalta the occupation continued throughout the day.

You said that the strikes didn't develop only at Fiat. Could you explain the situation in the rest of the country?

In fact, on Thursday 21 February, which was later called 'Red Thursday', there were strikes in the main Italian factories. The workers

at Alfa Romeo held a march that blocked the express highway between Milan and the Swiss border. The workers from all the Olivetti factories held a big march in the city. At Italsider there was an occupation.

The workers were expressing their revolt against the Government's attack on their living standards. They were expressing their desire to set off a general strike. But the bureaucracy was trying to control and demobilise the struggles.

### What happened after Thursday?

After Thursday the unions called three-hour strikes at Mirafiori and Rivalta during the day. The workers immediately went beyond these union directives. From the beginning of the day, Rivalta was blockaded, as well as the majority of departments in Mirafiori. The strike lasted eight hours, and in all the factories the workers tried to organise an occupation. But once more, the bureaucracy succeeded in preventing this from happening, with the support of the most backward sectors of the Fiat workers. For example, the members of the Italian Communist Party openly boycotted the struggle.

But even if we didn't succeed in carrying out an occupation, the bureaucracy was largely outflanked, and the meetings voted for a strike lasting a whole day and not three hours. Workers marched through the factory calling out those who were working and the foremen. The delegates' council met the following Saturday. The bureaucrats violently attacked the delegates who had not followed the union's instructions but had followed the mass movement or even placed themselves at its head.

We defended the following position: it was necessary to carry out this kind of struggle and to organise the occupation before the general strike scheduled for 27 February, and above

## Italy: Fiat shows rising

The recent referendum on divorce in Italy was a big political event. Political lines were drawn very sharply in the Christian Democrats—taking a hard anti-divorce stance the right despite the open intervention of the Catholic Church. Italy's Christian Democratic Prime Minister, Rumor, rules with a Government that was split down the middle by a party whose position was massively rejected. Italy is thus facing a big political crisis at a time of faction and readiness to struggle on the part of its workers. The following interview with an Italian Trotskyist at the Fiat car plants, confirms this fact in a first-hand way. Italian workers have waged in recent months.

all it was necessary to go beyond the union's list of demands and to develop a generalised struggle of all the workers in Italy against the incomes and employment policy of the Government and the bosses. In that framework the occupation of Fiat could be taken as the starting point to develop a general strike, which imposes a different relationship of forces between management and the working class.

On the following Monday, there was a repetition of what had happened in the preceding week, with strikes, meetings, etc. That kind of struggle continued until the day of the general strike. Later, the unions managed to regain control of the situation, systematically boycotting these struggles; they even used blacklegs and the most backward elements in

did indeed almost bring the banking system to a halt, eventually. In particular, the servicing of exports was greatly hampered. Operations were only kept going by foreign banks—which slapped on inflated interest rates—and a number of smaller French banks, which settled for the full demands of the strikers in order to make a quick killing at the expense of the bigger banks.

These types of radical action are not simply more effective ways of pressuring the employers. In a situation where they are decided upon by the mass of workers, they qualitatively transform the struggle—from one about an increase in wages and the bettering of conditions, to a direct challenge to the power of the employers.

The employers are very conscious of the challenge. Hence their readiness to call on the help of the Government and the police.

But such a line of action has in its turn produced a response from the workers. When the Government sent in the police to the central agencies of the National Bank of Paris, the workers responded immediately with a demonstration by the national strike committee in which 50,000 marched through the streets of Paris.

Such actions and experiences cut completely across the intentions of the Union of the Left's 'Common Programme'. For the Communist Party, especially, the Common Programme is a way of uniting all struggles of the working class around elections.

Accordingly, while the programme includes proposals on wages, it is also intended to be used to intervene against strikes—to limit their scope and tone down their militancy. This is precisely what the call for a 'truce' during the election was about.

The growing 'Lip consciousness' of broad sections of the workers' vanguard cuts across the reformist project. The rapid transformation of struggles from economic and defensive demands to a confrontation with the employers and their repressive forces has led to a very definite politicisation.

The conduct of the struggles—the democratically elected committees and commissions—began to breed a consciousness of self-organisation and the need for independent class-organisations which is hostile to parliamentary solutions. It is for this reason that the opposition elected strike committees and commissions. The last thing that the leaders of the Union of the Left want is to get into power on the crest of a working class upsurge.

As Seguy put it recently: 'It is absurd to say we would flood the left in power with a flood of demands and unrealistic requirements, which would threaten to jeopardise this experi-

ence. The bank workers were among the first to do what this meant. Against the almost unanimous decisions of the general assemblies, above the heads of the strike committees, the CGT (meekly followed by the other unions) initiated a settlement well below their full demands. After much discussion, and in order



to avoid a split return to work, the strike committees decided to recommend a return on these terms for all the workers.

**BREAK WITH THE CP**

In order to get the bank workers back, the CP had to pull out all the stops, using lies and slanders in much the same way as the bourgeois press. There is a qualitative change in this respect from 1968.

Then we also saw radical forms of struggle—occupations of factories, and even workers' control of production in some places. But at that time the hold of the Communist Party was almost total. They could order a return to work without much opposition. And in general, the CP was able for a whole period after that to seal off any militant struggle that might break out.

The France of Lip is no longer like this. Now it is becoming possible to develop struggles even if they bring about a direct conflict with the CP/CGT. It was against the sabotage of the CP, for instance, that the strike at Credit Lyonnais was generalised to the whole banking system.

This has resulted from the failure of the CP to isolate the Lip struggle. Faced with official hostility, the Lip workers took the question of solidarity into their own hands, and replied to a pathetic demonstration of 5,000 people called in Paris by the trade union leadership with a demo of almost 100,000 just a month later in Besancon.

Now awareness of the need for this type of response has penetrated to much broader layers. The bank workers were able to call a whole series of solidarity demonstrations in Paris, which were supported by tens of thousands of people.

Broad sections of workers, in other words, are now beginning to break in action from the influence of the Stalinist and reformist leaderships. This also has other implications, as shown

in the huge vote for the far left in the first round of the presidential elections.

**FOR A UNITED RESPONSE**

During last year the emergence of the high school students' movement rapidly displaced the students in terms of their mobilisations and militancy. The campaign against the Debre laws on conscription rapidly turned into a campaign against the existence of the bourgeois army itself. Hundreds of thousands of school students were mobilised, forcing a united front on the trade unions.

In the last three months we have seen a similar mobilisation against the Royer and Fontanet laws, which are attempts to rationalise the French educational system in line with the needs of decaying French capitalism.

Over the last few months a women's movement has also developed—around the questions of free abortion on demand and state-financed nurseries. A whole series of mobilisations have taken place—one of the largest came right in the middle of the election campaign, showing what these women thought about the 'truce'.

Both the school students and the women are seeking ways of linking up with the workers' movement. Significantly, the school students mobilised in large numbers for the solidarity demos called by the bank workers. It is through uniting in such ways the struggles of the militant workers, the youth, and the women's movement that a reply will be found to the electoral victory of the bourgeoisie.

**A POLICY OF CONFRONTATION**

Giscard got the backing of the French bourgeoisie because—unlike Chaban-Delmas—he understood that the conditions for the continuation of Gaullism were no longer present. Giscard realised the need to transform the Gaullist 'bonapartist' regime into a more

normal, presidential-type regime. Now he proposes to form a conservative parliamentary party—his 'new majority'—capable of giving support to the policies which he will be forced to adopt.

These policies—in contrast to the proposals made by Chaban—steer well clear of any attempt to integrate the working class organisations. The economic situation is too serious for that. Indeed, the economic situation is likely to prevent Giscard from implementing even his paltry election promises on prices, inflation and wages.

Inevitably he will have to confront the power of the working class. But in order to do that he will have to construct his new majority. The only steps he has taken so far have been to fudge up an electoral alliance. Much more than that needs to be done.

The workers have felt their strength during this election campaign. The Common Programme is going to be seen as less and less relevant as the prospects for its implementation are put off to the next decade. Already the Lip experience is sinking into the consciousness of broader layers of the working class as an example of how to take the struggle forward now.

What is necessary is to draw all these forces—students, school students, women, and vanguard workers—together into an assault on the régime based on their own extra-parliamentary methods of struggle, before Giscard can sew together his new alliance. Such is the condition for a decisive victory.

**JIM CLYNES**

*The epic struggle at Lip was reported extensively in a number of issues of Red Weekly. Copies of these are still available for readers who missed this series of articles but would like to know more about how the struggle developed. Please send 30p to: Red Weekly (Lip), 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.*

**at strike militancy**

defeat for the political parties of the right. Campaign, with the main bourgeois party—the Christian Democrats. Yet the referendum went decisively against the Church, including the Pope himself. Giscard, now faces the thorny task of trying to reach an agreement during the divorce referendum, and is being pushed by the Italian people. There are clear signs of growing dissatisfaction among workers. A militant, a delegate (shop steward) in one of the meetings, on account of one of the most important struggles



the meetings to make them vote against more militant workers, etc.

**Could you explain how the general strike developed on 27 February?**

The 27 February general strike had mass participation, certainly the biggest participation of any strike in recent years. Between twelve and thirteen million workers can be said to have participated. In a number of cities, a large portion of the strikers were service-sector salaried and wage workers. This strike demonstrated the militant readiness for struggle of broad sectors of the workers. But the union bureaucracy failed to respond to this combativity. It advanced only very general demands, and no concrete demand. At a time when such a desire to struggle exists, this policy is extremely

negative. Following this strike, the Rumor government fell.

The bureaucracy and the bosses took advantage of this crisis to move quickly toward reaching an agreement at Fiat. Trentin [a leading bureaucrat] told us on 21 February that we should not occupy the factory but prepare for a very long, hard struggle. Two weeks later, he signed an agreement with the management! Strikes developed throughout the week before the agreement was signed, and the very day of the signing there was a total strike in all departments of Fiat with very militant, powerful demonstrations.

**What are the terms of the agreement?**

On investments in the South there is a promise that if the market situation is not unfavourable, Fiat will invest in the automobile

industry in the South? If the Government makes proposals for developing public transport and railways, Fiat will build factories in the South for these sectors. Similarly, on the question of the organisation of work assignments, there are only promises, as in the case of 'social measures' (on public transport, etc). On the central issue, wages, the agreement is the following: an 18,000 lire increase is granted, but it is not a direct wage increase and it is not an across-the-board raise. In effect, part of this 18,000 lire will be paid in the form of a yearly bonus, which means, for example, that my basic wage increase is only 14,000 lire. Finally, there is a 200-lire decrease in the price of meals in the cafeteria, from 550 to 350 lire.

**What do you think of this agreement?**

It is a bad agreement. It is inadequate com-

pared to the workers' real requirements today, and also compared to the type of struggle that has developed and the militancy that has been demonstrated. But we don't reject this agreement because we wanted 'to get all our demands'. The demands themselves were unfavourable and the agreement is the result of this kind of demand.

In the meetings to come, we will intervene to show that the agreement must be rejected, in order to struggle essentially around three objectives: (1) major wage increases (40,000 lire); (2) a real sliding scale of wages; (3) no taxes on working people.

These demands affect all Italian workers and the struggle must therefore be extended toward a general strike, which is the only way to get these demands.

# 'No Platform' policy must continue

## Students split on anti-racist campaign

The Executive of the National Union of Students has begun to wobble under the pressure of the massive campaign in the media against the anti-racist policy adopted by the last NUS Conference.

They have decided to submit an amendment to the NUS conference in June, restricting the implementation of the resolution passed at the last conference to 'non-violent' means.

This well-publicised decision will be used in an attempt to weaken the current campaign to put NUS policy into effect.

Even before this decision the Students Union at Warwick University voted, by 180 votes to 120, not to support the 'no platform' policy, and the press is crowing over the success of the Monday Club chairman, John Biggs-Davison, who spoke, (but was not heard) at Essex University last Friday (17 May).

At a Students Union meeting called an hour before Biggs-Davison's arrival at Essex, the Communist Party argued that the Monday Club meeting was a deliberate provocation. An attempt to disrupt it might be used to push the University Senate into accepting the ultra-repressive disciplinary procedures which it is to discuss next week, they said.

### TEST CASE

Essex IMG militants argued that the meeting was a test case for the NUS policy, and if Biggs-Davison spoke it would be claimed as a big victory by the press, who would in any case distort action by students. The way to defeat repression by University authorities, was to make it clear, through militant action, that they would not get away with it.

The 400 students who crowded the foyer, chanting and singing in an attempt to drown out Biggs-Davison, could easily have stopped the meeting, if they had been given resolute leadership.



Above: students and engineering workers break up meeting for Chilean junta spokesmen at Hatfield Polytechnic last week—an action which was conveniently not mentioned by the Communist Party and their allies on the NUS Executive in their tirade against the 'ultra left'. Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Right: campaigners have been mobilising against racism on all fronts. Photo shows members of the North West London Committee Against Racism picketing North London Blood Transfusion Centre to protest at the refusal of the Director, Dr Tom Cleghorn, to take blood from black donors. It is reported that Dr Cleghorn, having justified the ban on alleged 'scientific' grounds, has now found new 'scientific' reasons for backing down and dropping the ban. Photo: PETER HARRAP (Report)



These two set-backs show that many students have fallen for the old argument that free speech is sacred, even for the thugs who wish to smash the labour movement.

It was because of this that the IMG approached other socialists following the defeat at Warwick and a Committee Against Racism and Fascism was set up. It will begin a programme of education aimed at reversing the vote at a future Union meeting. Preparations for a big teach-in on 'Racism—What It Is And How To Fight It', are already underway.

The committee will also try to get student support for anti-fascist and anti-racist activities. Already it has persuaded a Union General Meeting to support the strike by Asian workers at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester, and the rally against the National Front in Birmingham.

### PORTSMOUTH

When Jonathan Guinness of the Monday Club turned up to speak at Portsmouth Polytechnic on the same day as the Essex meeting he met a different situation. A united left caucus, including the IMG, IS, LPYS, and Communist Party, had decided to implement the NUS policy. Two hundred students and staff stopped Guinness from entering the building, and stopped his supporters from getting out. The Student Union supported the action.

Following this success, the united left caucus decided to send out a letter to the local labour movement, explaining their actions, and to organise a teach-in on fascism and racism in the near future.

There was success also for anti-fascists in Cambridge where a united front of trade unionists and socialists held a big public meeting in the Market Place. This was to oppose the sale of NF literature, which had taken place there recently. The fascists did not dare to show their faces.

### BIRMINGHAM VICTORY

But the biggest victory was in Birmingham, where the NF had called a demonstration for Friday 17 May. They were protesting at the decision by the Council to cancel their booking at the Digbeth Civic Hall. The Birmingham Campaign Against Racism, which had campaigned to get the NF banned from the hall, called a counter-demonstration.

While only 100 dragged themselves behind the NF, 500 turned out for the counter-demonstration. They came from diverse organisations, and

included members of the Labour Party, the Indian and Bangla-Desh Workers Associations, IMG, IS, CP, Women's and Gay Lib., Sinn Fein, Clann na hEireann and the trade union movement.

Only the drafting in of 500 police with horses prevented the rout of the fascists, and NF chairman John ('Hitler Was Right') Tyndall had to address his 'mass rally' from behind four or five lines of police and horses.

This victory shows the way to defeat the fascists—militant united opposition around the slogan: 'No Platform For Fascists'. And it is on the basis of this experience that NUS militants must fight for the rejection of the Executive's weak-kneed amendment.

## Why NUS leaders want to back down

ACCORDING TO STEVE PARRY, a Communist Party member and secretary of the National Union of Students, the NUS Conference resolution on 'no platform' for racists and fascists is 'being used by Trotskyists and the ultra left to justify individual acts of violence which merely save their political purity rather than for mass action involving the mass of students.'

Parry seems to be looking for an opportunity to save his political purity and get rid of the NUS's 'embarrassing' policy. He will get his chance with the calling of an Extraordinary Conference of the NUS for 15 June, which will also discuss the response of students to the recent increase in student grants.

### ACTION

The 'no platform' policy of the NUS has been taken up in action by students from the word go. Actions by students in Oxford against Harold

Soref, second in command of the Monday Club, were part of a campaign launched in both the colleges and the local labour movement against the growing threat of the far right. Instead of supporting the Oxford students' actions, the NUS Executive declared themselves 'horrified' and joined in the attack on those who took part launched by the *Daily Telegraph* and the rest of the capitalist press.

The NUS policy is getting increasing support inside the trade union movement. The actions of students and engineering workers at Hatfield Poly against a representative of the Chilean junta were not mentioned by the Communist Party and their allies on the NUS Executive in their tirade against the 'ultra left', nor was the mobilisation by students and workers in Birmingham last Friday against a National Front demonstration.

No, the CP is far more interested in the reaction of the Association of University Teachers, the Council of Vice Chancellors and Principals, Labour ministers and all the people who, in their eyes, constitute the really powerful 'alikes' as far as students' interests are concerned.

The NUS Executive, instead of launching a clear political campaign, explaining the necessity of joint student-worker actions to drive the fascists and racists out of the colleges and work places, have apologised for the 'unclear wording' of the resolution (which is, of course, crystal clear). They have even used reactionary arguments to justify the NUS position like 'there are some freedoms more fundamental than others in our society' (precisely the argument used to intern republicans in the north of Ireland).

## Fascists allowed to attack LPYS

Some 1500 trade unionists and socialists assembled in Bradford on Saturday to demonstrate against racism and fascism.

The demonstration was called by the Labour Party Young Socialists for February, but was postponed after pressure from the national Labour Party, so as not to 'rock the boat' during the election.

The LPYS were out to compel the

Party to fulfil the pledge in the Election Manifesto to 'eliminate discrimination on the ground of colour'. The main slogan of the demonstration was 'Black and White, Unite and Fight'. But the LPYS, spearheaded by the 'Militant' current, showed that they had no line on how to forge this unity in practice.

The National Democratic Freedom Movement, a Leeds-based fascist organisation committed to 'white supremacy', had pledged themselves to disrupt the demonstration.

But the LPYS insisted that the demonstration must at all costs be 'orderly'. At a stewards meeting before the demonstration, everyone was warned 'Do not be provoked! Stay in your ranks! The stewards will cool down any incidents! IMG members who protested against this and argued that only action by the mass of the demonstrators could drive the fascists off the streets were answered succinctly: 'We don't want troublemakers on this demonstration!'

The stupidity of this position took its inevitable toll. Thugs organised by the fascists attacked members of one Trades Council and ripped up their banner on their way to the assembly point. Expecting that the fascists would try to push home their advantage on the march itself, delegates from the Todmorden Trades Council in Lancashire decided to march with the IMG.

Mick Blair, vice-president, told *Red Weekly*, 'In the interests and safety of our delegation we decided to march with the IMG contingent. We regret the line taken by the official Labour leadership, which can only be described as spineless. As the economic crisis deteriorates and the ugly face of fascism raises its head the whole trade union movement will have to organise workers defence guards.'

The truth of this was borne out only minutes later. Just in front of the IMG contingent, the fascists pounced on an individual militant. When we tried to protect this comrade, the stewards moved in... to attack the IMG! Mick Blair was actually punched by an LPYS steward as he tried to help.

To add insult to injury, no action was taken by the organisers to prevent the absurd situation of the demonstration being led for some distance by an election campaign car for Merrick, an openly racist candidate.

The LPYS's policy only serves to give credibility to those forces who are in favour of allowing the fascists to organise and grow. (The NDFM, who organised the attack on the Bradford march, claims, after only months in existence, a membership of more than 200 in Leeds alone!)

'Militant' must make its position clear. In the past they have stated that they are in favour of not allowing the fascists to organise. Do they support the LPYS stewards? Do they think that this is the way to forge unity against the far right in the labour movement?

## Reading on fascism from RED BOOKS

### Fascism and Racism—Free Speech Will Not Stop Them

The NUS resolution and how to fight for it. IMG student pamphlet, 5p plus 3p p&p.

### Fascism—Smash It Now!

Deals with growth of fascism and the case for 'no platform'. IMG pamphlet, 10p plus 5p p&p.

### Fascism—What It is and How To Fight It

Trotsky's famous pamphlet, 20p plus 5p p&p.

### Fascism & Big Business

Deniel Guerin's comprehensive study of fascism as it evolved in Germany and Italy. £1.40 plus 14p p&p.

### The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany

Trotsky's famous classic, with introduction by Ernest Mandel. £1.55 plus 20p p&p.

All obtainable from RED BOOKS, 97 Caledonian Road, N1. (01-278-9526)—5 minutes from Kings X tube. Open Mon-Fri 10 am to 8 pm; Sat 10 am to 4 pm.

## What's On

**S.E. ESSEX RED CIRCLE:** 'The Chinese Cultural Revolution'—speaker Upali Cooray. Wednesday 29 May at 8pm in 38 Kennel Lane, Billericay, Essex.

**LONDON RED FORUMS:** New series dealing with basic questions of Marxist theory. Every Tuesday at 8 pm in 'General Picton', Caledonian Road (5 mins Kings X tube).

**BENGALI FRIENDS** in Europe and elsewhere, for Bengali books and *Lara* (Fourth International paper), contact: Bengali, Mullvadon, Box 3274, 10065 Stockholm, Sweden.

**LIVERPOOL RED BOOKS:** Revolutionary literature—Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Eastern Europe, Third World, Ireland, Women's Liberation. 81a Renshaw Street, Liverpool. Tues-Fri: 12.30-3. Sat: 11-3.

**NOTTINGHAM RED CIRCLES:** Wide-ranging series of discussions based on the politics of the Fourth International. Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday in the month at 8 pm in the Lion Hotel, Clumber Street.

**IMG GAY GROUP:** Contact J. Mills, 153 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds for further information.

**LONDON WORKERS' FIGHT Forum:** Address Homing on 'The Second International, Revisionism, and the Mass Strike Debate' Sunday 9 June, 7.30 pm, 'Golden Lion', Britannia St., near Kings Cross.

# PORTUGUESE WORKERS WIN FIRST ROUND

FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS a massive wave of strikes and factory occupations has swept Portugal.

Almost every conceivable sector of the working class (including car salesmen!) have gone into struggle around demands for better wages and conditions, the purging of those managers and officials most closely associated with the fascist regime, and for measures of control over management policy.

## MONOPOLIES

Among the hardest hit have been the firms owned by the big Portuguese and foreign monopolies. The giant Lisnave shipyards in Lisbon, the shipyards in the town of Setubal British Leyland's car factories, the Timex watch factory in Lisbon, Fire-

stone tyre factories in three cities, and factories in the largely British-owned woolen industry have all been occupied by workers.

Latest news indicates that the vast majority of struggles have now ended, with the management agreeing to meet all of the workers' demands. But the problems of the Portuguese economy, and its rocketing rate of inflation, are bound to persist. A new round of struggles cannot, therefore, be far away.

The new Provisional Government's attempt to sort out the problems of the African colonies goes on. Despite the participation in the Government of the Socialist and Communist Parties, who were firmly committed while in exile to meeting the demands of the African liberation move-

ments, the Government continues to beat around the bush.

## INDEPENDENCE

But the resolution of the guerrillas coupled with the internal upheavals in Portugal itself are forcing the Government every day further along the road to accepting total independence.

Just last Tuesday (14 May) a mass meeting of deserters who had returned to Portugal under the junta's amnesty issued a call to all military units now fighting in the colonies or about to be sent overseas to immediately desert.

During the big May Day demonstration a revolutionary contingent organised by the International Communist League (Portuguese sympathising organisation of the Fourth International) and two Maoist groups, the Revolutionary Union and the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat, drew some 10,000 workers, students and soldiers behind banners calling for an immediate end to the wars and independence for the colonies.

Under these pressures the Government is opening negotiations with the liberation Government set up by the liberation group PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau. These will open in London on 25 May. At the same time, all Portuguese military operations in Angola have been halted.

## SOCIALISM

The combination of a victory for the liberation forces in the colonies and the growing combativity and organisation of the Portuguese working class opens up great prospects for developing the struggle for socialism in Portugal.

It is precisely this threat which has led the Portuguese ruling class to accept the Communist Party in the new Government. There they will carry out the job of holding back the mass struggle, as they did in Chile, while the reactionary forces regroup and reorganise.

But the Communist Party may find it difficult to carry out this job. Already the Communist Minister of Labour (who is President of the bankworkers' union), Avelino Goncalves, has publicly stated that he is in the Government 'in a personal capacity' and not as a representative of his union. This may suggest a certain discomfort among union mili-



The enthusiasm which greeted Communist leader Cunha's return is already beginning to fade as it becomes clearer that his role in Government will be to hold the struggle back.

tants about their President's new job.

The decisive factor in the coming months will be the ability of the revolutionary forces to develop an alternate leadership for the mass struggle. To fulfil this task they must promote and extend the forms of organisation already thrown up in

struggle (mass assemblies, workers councils, factory occupations), and, most importantly, take full advantage of the politicisation of the armed forces to win over the widest layers possible among the rank-and-file and junior officers to the cause of the working class and socialism  
Carl Owen

## Trade union demands

The following declaration was issued by the Union of Technical Designers, and was signed by the following unions: Shop Assistants; Insurance Employees; Lisbon Steel Workers; Lisbon Chemical Workers; Radio and Telecommunications Workers; Administrative Services of the Merchant Marine; Airline Services and Fishing Industry; Lisbon Transport Workers; Lisbon Bank Employees; Salesmen of medical products; Journalists; Lisbon Wool Workers; Santarem Clerical Workers; Lisbon Public Service Workers; and the Electricians.

The trade unions which have signed this communique are informed of the proclamation published today by the Movement of the Armed Forces announcing the end of the regime of fascist oppression. This regime always identified itself, exclusively and in a criminal manner, with the monopoly economic powers, imposing a really miserable standard of living on the country. It was the workers' movement, in struggle for the last 50 years despite violent repression, that created the necessary conditions for the success of the movement of the armed forces. We consider that effective economic and political liberation of the working class, in the face of all reactionary forces, can only be realised by the conscious and immediate participation of all workers in the process now underway.

Apart from this, the desired, urgent and full debate about the future of trade unionism in our country must take place in forthcoming general assemblies. The following are the immediate, fundamental and intransigent demands of all workers:

1. May Day to be a national holiday
2. Total trade union freedom;

ratification of Convention No. 87 of the International Labour Organisation

3. Civil Rights must be returned to the Portuguese people
  4. An end to rising prices
  5. Immediate increase in wages and prices, and establishment of a national minimum wage
  6. Reduction of the working week to 40 hours and 5 days
  7. Reinstatement of all workers arbitrarily sacked as a result of their trade union activity
  8. Freedom of assembly and association
  9. Completely free press. Responsibility for the orientation of publications must be in the hands of those who write them.
  10. The workers must have exclusive responsibility for the administration of social security
  11. The right to federate in international trade union bodies
  12. The right to strike
  13. Total abolition of PIDE/DGS [political police] and public trial of their members
  14. Immediate release of all political prisoners.
- Long Live the Working Class!  
Long Live Portugal!

## Steel workers' call

The following statement was issued by the Workers' Committee elected by a 4,000 strong, general assembly of workers in the steel industry.

### IMMEDIATE DEMANDS:

1. Immediate implementation of the Labour Collective Agreement, with the exception of the clause referring to working hours, which must be implemented within 60 days;
2. immediate dismissal of Prof. Estacio Marques, member of the administrative board, and of departmental head Marguida Maria Matos;
3. Division of the Product of Work (previously called division of profits): the amount corresponding to the salaries and wages earned in a month by the whole work force will be equally distributed among these same workers, that is to say, in equal amounts;
4. abolition of the psycho-technical tests used for promotion of workers;
5. creation and recognition of a workers' committee in order to discuss all current and future issues

related to the interests of the workers; 6. immediate reinstatement of all workers unjustifiably sacked since 1 January 1974, and review of all cases of dismissal prior to that date; 7. if these demands are not met by 12 p.m. Monday, 6 May, all production, administrative services and other operations will immediately stop.

In relation to furnaces and other installations which could suffer damage if stopped suddenly, the measures necessary for a gradual stoppage will be taken.

In spite of the stoppage of the plant and administrative services, all workers are urged to come to their working places!

All matters discussed in the general assembly and before our own meeting must be dealt with by the Workers' Committee.

## VIETNAM

# Thieu breaks off talks with PRG

All discussions between the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG) and the Thieu regime in Saigon have been brought to an end by the latter.

On 16 April the negotiations at La Celle St Cloud in France were cancelled after instructions from Saigon. The liaison flights for the PRG from Saigon to Loc Ninh were also halted, and the following day the ban was extended to cover telephone links, press conferences, and even shopping expeditions for the PRG delegates.

This left the Joint Military Commission meetings as the only point of contact between the two sides. But on 10 May these were cancelled after Thieu's representatives had not only refused to allow any discussions involving the PRG, but had even prevented them from attending the meetings.

The attack on these contacts is the result of three processes which have developed since the signing of the Paris Accords in January 1973.

First of all, they reflect Thieu's complete inability to damage the National Liberation Front militarily, economically, or politically. This leaves the diplomatic route as the only effective outlet for any offensive action.

Secondly, the Thieu regime is faced with mounting domestic problems. The rapid opposition movements developing in Saigon and the other cities make his position increasingly fragile. Several commentators have noted the parallel between these developments—particularly the organised Buddhist demonstrations, including self-burnings—and the events which led up to the fall of Diem in 1963.

Thieu's position is further worsened by the increasing demoralisation of his armed forces (ARVN) in the face of their complete inability—despite massive ground

and air attacks against the liberated zones—to make any headway against the NLF.

This contrasts with the NLF's continued success in overrunning one ARVN base after another within the liberated areas. The elimination of these bases make cities such as Kontum and An Loc very isolated from Saigon, and could have important strategic consequences if open civil war were to erupt again.

## UNITED STATES

Finally, the strategy of the United States must be taken into account. Once it was clear that the US could not hope to smash the liberation struggle through direct intervention, a policy of 'Asialisation' was adopted. This was backed up by the use of American air power, but it also relied on the efforts of the Moscow and

Peking bureaucracies to hold back the resistance.

The high point of this new strategy was the signing of the Paris Accords. However, this policy is now coming under great strains. Asialisation has failed, and the US Congress is now vacillating wildly on the question.

The detente between the US and the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies is also getting a bit shaky, with the continued flare-ups in the Middle East and the failure of projects such as SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks).

Hence the US is having to reconsider its strategy. One result is that US involvement in Indochina has become more blatant of late. The number of 'advisers' in Vietnam has now been increased to

24,000, and bodies such as Air America (a CIA airline) have become more obviously active.

Furthermore, US army officers have been very active in 'ensuring the best use of supplies' to the Cambodian puppets—to the point of directing artillery and tank attacks personally. It is also known that a large force of Marines have been stationed off Kontum for several months.

A watchful eye must therefore be kept on these manoeuvres. Sooner or later the imperialists will make a decisive attempt to halt the steady weakening of their hold in Indochina. At that moment a well-prepared solidarity movement on an international scale will be of vital importance in thwarting their efforts.

DAVID JOHNSON

## GRIGORENKO TO BE RELEASED?

Revolutionary socialist Pyotr Grigorenko, currently held in a mental hospital in the Soviet Union, may soon be released, according to dissident sources in Moscow.

The same sources also report that in answer to official questions about whether he has changed his views, Grigorenko replied: 'To have one's convictions changed it is necessary to have more impressive grounds than intimidation.'

If the Soviet authorities are indeed considering the release of Grigorenko while he

remains unrepentant, then that is a powerful tribute to the international defence campaign which has been mounted in the last few months.

This reached a crescendo on 7 May, the fifth anniversary of his arrest in Tashkent, when activities took place throughout the world to mark 'Grigorenko Day'. In London about 50 people attended a meeting chaired by Audrey Wise, MP, at which Robin Blackburn (IMG), Ian Birchall (IS), and Chris Farley (Bertrand

Russell Peace Foundation) were the speakers.

Support for the campaign has also come from Manchester University, where the Students' Union Council passed a motion on 7 May calling for the immediate release of Grigorenko and other oppositionists. This action was followed up a week later when IMG members and others organised a picket of Soviet psychiatrists visiting the University in order to highlight the plight of Grigorenko.