

LEN MURRAY went to speak on picketing last Tuesday, 22nd.

Rallying trade unionists to defend our rights? Not a bit of it. He was speaking at Hendon Police College.

And he told the police cadets: "We are not one of your big problems, and you are not one of ours".

"Mr Murray, however", reports the *Financial Times*, "admitted that picketing was a problem". A common problem for trade union bureaucrats and the police?

The Tory government has promised a whole range of reactionary measures, including sweeping attacks on trade union organisation. The legal right to 'peaceful picketing in furtherance of a trade dispute' is to be restricted to workers picketing their own workplace in a dispute with their own employer, thus taking the law on this point back into the nineteenth century.

And the trade union leaders are still no more ready for struggle than they were under the Labour Government.

They are not organising for struggle. They are chatting with the Tories.

After the Tories announced their plans on May 15th, TUC general secretary Len Murray met Tory minister James Prior the next day for informal talks on changing trade union law. Murray's attitude paralleled Jim Callaghan's speech in Parliament on the 15th, which did not oppose the Tories' plans on union law in principle but just criticised them as 'cosmetic' and ineffective.

## Plans

Trade union leaders have said they oppose the Tory plans. But there is no sign of a campaign against the plans. Meanwhile the *Financial Times* reports (21st): "Mr Len Murray will probably meet Mrs Thatcher soon to discuss pay and industrial relations reform".

The trade union leaders were sluggish enough in fighting Heath's Industrial Relations Act, but they were a hundred times more vigorous than now. Why the contrast? Because the Tories are consulting the union leaders; and, for the union leaders, being consulted is all-important. As long as they are still given leeway for their job as brokers between the working class and

the bosses, they are quite happy to see the rank and file curbed.

They fought against the Industrial Relations Act because it reduced their leeway. But they already had ideas on picketing not very different from the Tories' in their Concordat with the Labour Government.

The union leaders hope to persuade the Tories to keep legal changes to a minimum, and rely on 'voluntary co-operation from the union leaders. It is unlikely the Tories will agree. Probably the union leaders will be pushed into some fight against the Tories' plans eventually.

A feeble eleventh-hour campaign by sell-out leaders will be no use. We must call the leaders to account, demanding immediate campaigns to defend both union rights and the rights of black people, tenants, the unemployed, and others threatened by the Tories.

## Curb

Trade union and Labour leaders should be touring round rallying workers for struggle, not consulting with the Tories on how best to curb working class militancy.

But we should not wait for the leaders. At rank and file level we should start campaigning now, with our own socialist policies:

- Hands off the unions
- Defend the picket lines
- No immigration controls. Labour movement support for the self-defence of the black communities.
- A national minimum wage — which should also be a minimum for pensions, benefits, and grants. Automatic cost of living protection for wages, pensions and grants and benefits.
- No sale of council houses. Freeze rents.

IAN SHAW

# DON'T PLAY THE TORIES' GAME

## CIVIL SERVICE: First bite of the Tory axe

WITHIN DAYS of its annual conference, which adopted strong left wing policies, CPSA [along with the other civil service unions] has been plunged into the first big battle between the Tories and the trade unions.

The Government wants to freeze recruitment, promotion and transfers in the civil service for three months. In London, where there is a 30% annual turnover rate in civil service jobs, this could mean a 5% to 10% cut in staffing levels. A 3% cut is expected overall.

Before long, it is clear, the Tories want even bigger cuts than that. They want to cut public spending. Having paid out big wage rises to the army and the police, they need to cut even harder elsewhere. Civil servants have just won a sizeable pay rise. The only way the Tory government can keep the civil

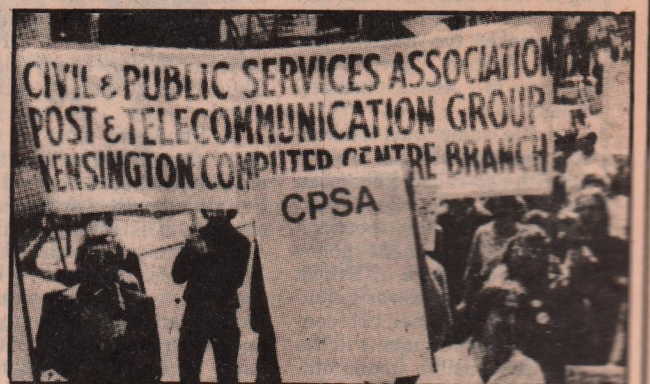
service wages bill down is by slashing jobs.

They will hope to get public sympathy by claiming they are out to cut bureaucracy.

But the Tory plans will add thousands more to the already long dole queues — and push the decay of the welfare state still further. They must be stopped.

Already CPSA members in Customs and Excise are threatening to refuse to cooperate on implementing the Government's plans to increase the Value Added Tax rate. This non-cooperation policy must be spread throughout the civil service. The union must take up policies of no cover for unfilled vacancies and no job flexibility to offset staff shortages.

Similar policies should be taken up in other civil service and local government unions, with a view to united action.



ONE THOUSAND post office staff demonstrated in Brighton on May 14, at the start of the CPSA conference, as part of their pay campaign.

The Post Office is losing money hand over fist as no telephone bills go out. And major telecommunications manufacturers are also losing millions because work has been halted on the new 'System X' exchange equipment.

Selective strike action is being organised by the Society of Civil & Public Servants (SCPS) and the Civil & Public Servants' Association [CPSA] in order to win their pay claims. At the very least they want parity with the increases won by SCPS and CPSA members in the civil service, averaging around 25%.

The Post Office has offered nine per cent.

## ACTION HITS PHONE BILLS

CPSA conference report: see page 6

## FUND DRIVE

Our fund appeal for £500 to help finance our expansion to 12 pages is still moving very slowly. £30 from Birmingham this week, but that still leaves the total at only £60.

The 12 page paper costs us proportionately more to produce than eight pages, and the increased revenue from raising the price to 15p does not balance the increased cost. Like most papers with no advertising revenue, *Workers' Action* runs at a loss. The gap is filled by contributions from our supporters.

Please send contributions to Fund, *Workers' Action*, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

## Callaghan rats on NHS workers

SPEAKING at the Labour Party National Executive Committee on Wednesday 23rd, James Callaghan declared that the Labour Party would not support any industrial action aimed at blocking Tory Government policy. The Tories have a majority, said Callaghan, and should be allowed to rule.

Callaghan was reckoned to be aiming his stab in the back at Health Service workers who say they won't work on additional 'pay beds' in the NHS.

Constituency Labour Parties and trade union branches should flood Transport House with resolutions declaring that they will back the NHS workers — and all other workers — against the Tories, and demanding the NEC publicly disavow Callaghan's statement.



# South African troops drive into Namibia

THE WHITE supremacist rulers of South Africa have taken the offensive against SWAPO guerillas in northern Namibia, with an enormous mobilisation of military reservists for combat duty.

Already massive, mile-long convoys of troop-carriers, supply trucks, artillery and armour have moved north through Windhoek in one of the biggest operations ever mounted against SWAPO. This mobilisation has doubled the number of South African troops in Namibia to over 20,000.

The South Africans want to saturate the northern Ovambo, Kavango and Caprivi Strip areas bordering

Angola and Zambia and drive out several hundred SWAPO guerillas active in these areas. Also, and perhaps more importantly, the South Africans want to drive out a force of only a few hundred which has managed to penetrate south from these northern 'homelands' into white farm areas.

## Martial

Last week too, the Pretoria-appointed Administrator-General, Mr Justice Steyn, declared a form of martial law in all the major areas of white settlement as far south as Windhoek.

The South Africans need a 'peaceful' atmosphere in which to install their puppet National Assembly, to be opened on Monday 21st.

In December 1978, after two years of negotiations with the Western powers over United Nations proposals for an internationally supervised ceasefire, elections for this National Assembly were held without UN approval and under the guns of the South African army. The South African backed Democratic Turnhalle Alliance won a majority.

The DTA has attempted to draw other non-SWAPO groups into an alliance. So far it has been unsuccessful.

The Namibian National Front and other non-SWAPO forces boycotted the December election and oppose any moves which would spoil the chance of getting an internationally agreed settlement.

## Fake

In March the South African government finally gave up efforts to reach agreement with the UN. The Army stepped up its operations against SWAPO, and now South Africa has decided to give the fake Assembly legislative powers as a step towards 'independence'.

The result of the March raids against SWAPO was slight. The freedom fighters had increased cover in the bush after the rains. They are now better armed and trained.

Although the South African government may be attempting to bluff its way to a more favourable international agreement (the Western powers consider that it is only a question of time before such an agreement is made, given that SWAPO has managed to carry on fighting), the mobilisation of reserve forces is an important indication of their determination to grant nothing

easily.

This year the South African army had its largest intake of national servicemen since 1945, boosting it to a strength of 50,000. Only 10,000 are regulars; most of the conscripts are not fully trained for combat, and are only expected to do three month tours of duty in Namibia.

## Force

Pretoria has been forced to fall back on the 28,000 strong Citizens' Force (army reserve), who are fully trained and have combat experience.

NEIL COBBETT

# Zimbabwe: the money behind the Tory policies

BARCLAYS Bank are leading financiers for the South African government. Rio Tinto Zinc own the uranium mine in Rössing, Namibia. Thatcher's appointment as Foreign Secretary of Lord Carrington, who is a director of both these companies, cuts down on the unnecessary expense of sending messages between the Cabinet and the directors' offices, and makes the motives behind British government policy in Africa brutally clear.

In the same way, Thatcher's nominee as chief observer of the so-called Rhodesian elections, Lord Boyd, expresses the link between present Government policy and the traditions of British colonialism. Boyd was Colonial Secretary under two conservative governments in the '50s, responsible among other things for imprisoning Malawi's arch-conservative Dr Hastings Banda without trial and claiming that Banda was plotting to kill all the whites in the country.

Now, on Boyd's recommendation, the Tories are talking about recognising the Rhodesian government created by Ian Smith's 'internal settlement'.

The Tories' description of the Rhodesian elections as democratic is an obscenity. 90% of the country is under martial law. Tens of thousands of Africans are herded into concentration camps.

The Patriotic Front is banned. There was physical intimidation of Africans refusing to vote. Two relatives of a Zimbabwean exile presently resident here in Coventry were shot for refusing to supervise polling booths. Employers have threatened to fire African workers who failed to vote, and factories were closed on polling day

for employees to be filed out to mobile election booths. In two of the eight constituencies, polls of over 100% were recorded.

The constitution guarantees white political privilege by reserving 28 seats for whites in Parliament. It is a constitution ratified by whites only, and never put to the African people.

A big section of the British capitalist class has a direct interest in the sham black Government being recognised.

In Rhodesia, most of the more than £1200 million foreign investment is owned by Britain, South Africa, and the US. It is estimated that during the period since UDI British investment has doubled, with the expansion in particular of Lonrho's agricultural and textile interests and RTZ's mining interests.

Other large British interests include Barclays, GEC, Dunlop, BL subsidiaries, and a joint BP-Shell company. BP-Shell recently put an ad in the Rhodesian Sunday Mail thanking those who 'offered their assistance and support' after their refineries were blown up by the Patriotic Front, and declared that 'we are in business as usual'.

But neither these capitalist interests, nor the Tory government, are willing to line up 100% with Rhodesia's white colonial farmers, state employees, and managerial staff. There is unlikely to be a sharp and sudden break between Labour Government policy on southern Africa and Tory policy.

It would be a great mistake to think that with Carrington

and the Tories the ruling class is back in power. The protection of British capitalist interests in Southern Africa was the guiding light of Labour as well as Tory policy.

The dominant imperialist strategy of the past, embodied in the now defunct Anglo-American proposals, was to seek a neo-colonial solution based coming to agreement with the Patriotic Front and a programme guaranteeing maintenance of private property and most of the existing army and state bureaucracy.

Fear of increasing influence for the USSR in Africa; fear of the instability of Muzorewa's puppet government; fear of disrupting relations with black African states and losing out in inter-imperialist rivalry — all these fears push Britain and the US to come to terms with the Patriotic Front.

However, in the US the Senate has voted overwhelmingly for recognition and for lifting sanctions. Moves to a coordinated and gradual recognition of the puppet government are possible — though they will mean a stepping up of the war between that government and Zimbabwean nationalist forces.

Another factor — though sadly not the most important one — in holding imperialism back from conciliation with the Rhodesian white minority has been pressure from the labour movement in Britain and elsewhere. Now our task is clear: to oppose any form of recognition, to use our strength to block the escalation of an imperialist war against Zimbabwe's people, and to give full but critical support to the Patriotic Front.

BOB FINE



Cannery workers in Walvis Bay, Namibia

## 18 on trial

THE TRIAL of 18 men under the Terrorism Act [carrying the maximum penalty of death] is due to resume soon in South Africa.

The 18 are accused of activities between 1963 and 1977 for the banned Pan African Congress, including recruiting people for military training outside the country and setting up cells and holding lectures on Robben Island, south Africa's maximum security prison off Cape Town.

The accused have nearly all served notice of legal action against the State, alleging assault and torture, including electric shock treatment, while in detention.

The trial has already taken 150 days in court [making it one of the longest trials in South African history]. It was adjourned in mid-April after the defence had called its witnesses. All the accused have refused to enter a plea because they do not recognise the right of the court to try them.

# workers' ACTION

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## Socialist Organiser

'SO', published during the run-up to the general election as the paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, is being continued as a paper aiming to organise the left for the struggle against the Tories and to renovate the labour movement. And 'Socialist Organiser' groups are being set up in every area where the paper has active supporters.

For more information, or for details of your local 'Socialist Organiser' group, send this form to Socialist Organiser, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16. For a copy of the May issue of Socialist Organiser, send two 9p stamps.

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# The first casualty

by  
**MIKE FOLEY**

*"IF YOU don't know what is happening in Northern Ireland, you must have been watching British TV, listening to British radio, and reading the British press".* And, as a new pamphlet [★] shows, there are plenty of people working hard to make sure you don't know.

In 1976 the Army had more than 40 press officers operating in Northern Ireland, with a back-up staff of over 100. Most journalists are completely dependent on the army information service.

As former *Times* correspondent Robert Fish writes: "The Army ran its own 'black propaganda' operations, forging posters and documents and leaking sometimes untruthful information to journalists about politicians or extremist leaders whom they disliked".

The Government's Northern Ireland Office also takes a hand in managing the press. It was on the NIO's initiative that the press stopped printing the religion of the victims of sectarian assassinations. This move helped to strengthen the picture of the violence in Ireland being purely random and mindless.

Another example of successful NIO manipulation came with the publication of the 1976 European Commission report concluding that Britain had been guilty of torture in Northern Ireland. The day before, Merlyn Rees (then Northern Ireland secretary) called several newspaper and TV editors into his Whitehall offices for drinks and a chat about what was likely to come out in the report.

As a result almost every British newspaper carried headlines like the *Express's* "Rees lashes Dublin over torture report". "Just as the NIO wished, such head-

lines gave the impression not that Britain was in the dock, but that Ireland was the guilty party".

In television, the coverage of the North has been put into a special category where checking with superiors before a programme is produced is obligatory. Since 1970 28 programmes on Ireland have been banned, censored or delayed. What the British public do see and hear is usually the official army version.

In 1977 Richard Francis, then BBC Controller for Northern Ireland, said that in the first three months of the Peace Movement (which was heavily backed by the British Government), its leaders had been interviewed 18 times. But in the whole year October 1975 to '76, there

were only 18 interviews with leaders of paramilitary groups.

Francis commented: "Maybe we have been guilty of under-representing the forces which had the most profound effect on everyday life in the province". The constant reports of violence without any context or historical analysis reinforce the view that the present troubles are irrational and incomprehensible. 'Terrorism' is seen as

a cause of the conflict, rather than one of its symptoms. This subtle distortion is coupled with downright suppression — and not only on television. In 1973 Penguin Books published an American social psychologist's study of Northern Ireland, which included a strong condemnation of British interrogation methods. As a result of what author Rona Fields calls "a massive effort on the part of the governments involved to suppress my findings", the book was first censored, then withdrawn from the British market. 10,000 copies were shredded.

The situation has been summarised aptly by Jonathan Dimbleby: "My fear, my belief is, that when our successors in thirty or forty



years' time look back on the coverage of events in Northern Ireland by the British media, they will look back with the same kind of dismay that we now look back on the way the cinema covered events in the 'thirties in Germany'.

★ *The British Media and Ireland. Truth: the first casualty.* Published by Information on Ireland, 1 North End Rd, London W14. Single copies 50p plus 15p p&p; 10 copies £3.40 plus 60p p&p

# THE LEFT DEBATES BAHRO

"RUDOLF Bahro is charged by the East German government with espionage because he gives the facts about the bureaucracy. That it itself is a crime to a government which spends so much time producing 'news' without a single fact". Hungarian marxist writer Istvan Meszaros, speaking at a meeting of the Bahro Defence Committee in London on May 18th, called for socialists in Britain to defend Bahro. Platform speakers from the SWP, the IMG and the Communist Party agreed.

Tariq Ali, from the IMG, stressed that Bahro was only one of the many socialist oppositionists imprisoned in Eastern Europe whom the defenders of 'democratic rights' in the west prefer to ignore. But Bahro can't be brushed under the carpet, because his attempt to produce a scientific assessment of the eastern regimes has gained an international hearing.

## Static

The speakers varied in their evaluations of Bahro's analysis.

Meszaros was the only one to grasp Bahro's ideas as a whole, rather than just checking off a list of ideas with ticks and crosses as appropriate. He argued that Bahro's view of Eastern Europe as a totally new form of society, outside traditional marxist categories, is wrong, and pointed out that Bahro's view of Eastern Europe is a static one, without any class dynamic. Bahro's denial that the working class is the agency for change leaves him with a utopian socialist stress on the 'surplus consciousness' of intellectuals and technicians as the way forward.

Bahro's ideas about surplus consciousness are simply a myth, which shows how his political isolation colours his conclusions. Thus, Meszaros argued, his work has no global dimensions, though it is a close and perceptive view of the internal character of the

East European states.

Workers' Action supporter Nik Barstow argued that the fact of Bahro's isolation as an individual within the bureaucracy who genuinely wants communism proves the weakness of his own theory. Bahro's importance is that there have been so few members of the bureaucracy trav-



Rudolf Bahro

elling the same the same road, and none protesting at the treatment meted out to him.

The workers' role is still the key one (as Tariq Ali and Chris Harman of the SWP also argued from the platform). In both the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and the events in Poland in 1970 it was workers who took action and developed politically at a rapid rate, with the bureaucracy standing on the sidelines, fragmenting but mostly trying to reimpose its control. In Hungary, Soviet military intervention subdued the revolt; in Poland, a 'palace coup' presented the newly-installed CP leader Edward Gierak as the champion of the workers' grievances, in order to head off their action. Even this attempt only resulted in

the Polish bureaucracy facing the re-emergence of workers' strength in the strike movement of 1976.

In the West, as Harman pointed out, Bahro's ideas are likely to be used by the 'step-children of 1968' to justify their own retreat from revolutionary marxism. His point was amply illustrated in the person of another platform speaker, David Fernbach (who translated Bahro's book into English). Fernbach thought that Bahro's views could be used to justify a belief that class and property relations under capitalism were not of any central importance.

## Gradual

He argued that 'the transition to socialism appears far more as a gradual long term process by various paths, not a sudden cataclysm'.

Monty Johnstone of the CP had some agreement with Fernbach, but tried to argue that 'Eurocommunism' did not ignore the working class. His attitude to Eastern Europe, however, showed his real viewpoint. He saw everything in the bureaucrats' terms, talking about the 'advances of education' in East Germany as a result of their planning, and how Bahro's book would lead to a 'process of discussion' among leading circles.

Johnstone then went on to make a thoroughly dishonest attack on Bahro for advocating a new 'League of Communists' that would 'set out to be the sole leadership in the East European countries'.

Barstow attacked this 'defence of democracy' from someone who claimed that it unnecessary to remove the bureaucracy at all. While Bahro does argue for a one-party state, the very dynamic of trying to establish a new 'League of Communists' would be to undermine the bureaucratic dictatorship. Such a league would be forced to organise among the workers — or go under.

by  
**RHODRI EVANS**

# EURO-ELECTIONS: FIGHTING FOR A WORKERS' EUROPE

JUNE's elections for the EEC Parliament will be in the image of the Market itself.

Common Market politicians speak fine words about European unity, but in practice they conduct all their international affairs as matters of haggling over competing national interests. The European Parliament has very little control even over that haggling.

Thus everywhere the Euro-election candidates are mostly people attracted by the Euro-MPs' fat salary and easy job. And their election campaigns are based on the most narrow, backward chauvinism.

Even the most 'pro-Europe' bourgeois politicians insist that they will stick up for national interests, and indeed that they are pro-EEC only because the EEC advances national interests. That is to be expected. But the same nationalism is rampant in the workers' movement.

In Britain large sections of the left have become suddenly and astonishingly anti-electoralist at the approach of the Euro-elections. The same people whose devotion to parliamentarism has always overridden their commitment to the working class now prove that their nationalist fervour overrides both!

Some Labour Party wards have flatly refused to do any work for the Euro-elections. The Communist Party recommends a vote for Labour candidates only if they are anti-Market.

In France it is worse. The French Communist Party is running a big 'buy French' campaign. It has furiously attacked the town of Brest for ordering German buses for its municipal transport. It has campaigned against the entry of Greece, Spain and Portugal into the Common Market on the grounds that their produce will compete with French industry and agriculture.

And it has plastered Paris with posters saying 'No to a German Europe'.

But in France also there is a powerful socialist and internationalist voice in opposition to this sickening narrow-mindedness. Two Trotskyist organisations, Lutte Ouvriere and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, are backing a joint slate, with candidates for all the 81 seats to be filled by proportional representation.

The common slate is something of a surprise. The LCR, like its British sister-organisation the International Marx-

ist Group, is against the Common Market, and believes workers in Portugal, Greece and Spain should campaign against their countries entering the Market. Lutte Ouvriere, like

Workers Action (though on the basis of a slightly different economic analysis of the EEC) argues that:

*"We are neither for nor against the Common Market, for we believe that it makes*

*no sense for the workers to take a stand for or against the agreements and commercial contracts which capitalists make between them... [And] to take a stand against lowering barriers between*

**VIVE  
L'EUROPE  
OUVRIERE  
SANS  
PATRIES  
NI  
FRONTIERES**



French socialist Euro-candidates say: Long live workers' Europe, without fatherlands or frontiers!

countries when the bourgeoisie itself is forced to move towards lowering them is willy-nilly to take a nationalist line'.

In any case, the joint platform largely reflects LO's position. There is no 'down with the EEC' slogan, nor any call for France to withdraw from the EEC. (Four years ago, at the time of the referendum, the IMG in Britain campaigned loudly for withdrawal).

The platform, entitled 'For the Socialist United States of Europe', calls for the unity of all Europe, east and west. There should be no frontiers blocking the movement of people, of ideas, and of goods. There should be rational economic planning on a European scale.

The platform explains that this can be achieved only by an internationally united working class.

Socialists and internationalists in Britain will have to make up for the lack of a similar revolutionary campaign in our country by increased efforts to argue within the labour movement against nationalist muddle. The fuss about the size of Britain's contribution to the EEC budget is simply a diversion: the problem is not the EEC exploiting Britain, but bosses exploiting workers throughout capitalist Europe. The working class has nothing to gain from defending Britain against Brussels.

# Coventry Council: Fighting the council house sales

COVENTRY Labour Council has banned the sale of council houses. One day after taking control of Coventry City Council from the Tories, Labour councillors called a special meeting to stop the scheme introduced by their Tory predecessors. They dismissed the threat from Tory Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine that councils would be forced by law to sell their houses.



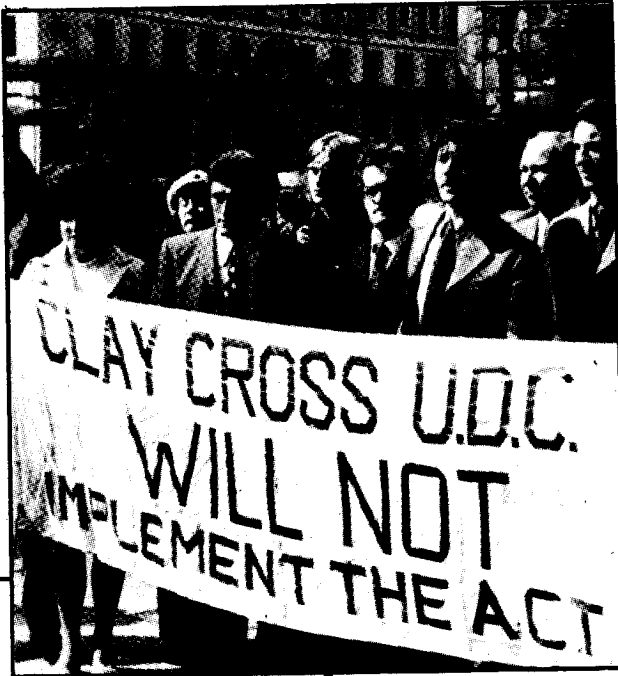
Councillor David Cairns, Coventry's new housing chairman, said: "We will not be bullied by a government who are going against the working class. The Tories regard council tenants as third class citizens. We want to restore the dignity of being a tenant". He also said that the waiting list for council houses in Coventry stands at 7,720.

Two Coventry Labour

councillors who have bought their own council houses — John Hughes and Pat Tynan — are to sell them back to the council. Others are still to make a decision.

Meanwhile, in Henley Green, Coventry, about 1000

people are to be moved out of their council houses into caravans, because blue asbestos has been discovered in the heating systems — 15 years after installation. Blue asbestos fibres can be a major cause of cancer.



The Tory response was venomous. Some right-wing Labour councillors were not much better. One, in fact, proposed Sawdon as an ASTMS delegate to Coventry Trades Council. Sawdon has flaunted this position in the local press and used it to attack the Trades Council as "a bunch of Marxists, Trotskyists, and layabouts".

He has not however as yet attended a Trades Council delegate meeting or bothered to send his apologies.

Councillor John Hughes, chairman of Coventry City Labour Party, has stated that the Labour Party should commit itself to a programme of 'full-blooded socialism' in the wake of the general election defeat. He predicted that Coventry Labour Party would support the reform proposals drawn up by the Labour Coordinating Committee.

But the "third part accommodation" policy was started by the council when previously under Labour control. Resolutions have gone from the Trades Council to the local Labour GMCs demanding an end to this policy.

Tenants and trade unionists will be pushing for the present fight shown by Labour councillors on the sale of council houses to be kept up and extended to the question of temporary tenants.

DAVE SPENCER

The chairman of Henley Green Residents' Association, Mr John Waddingham, said: "Someone in the council must have known this stuff was in our houses when the asbestos scare was on. Why weren't we checked out then?"

He demanded that the council call a special meeting of the tenants with a doctor present to explain the dangers of blue asbestos.



The last full Coventry Council meeting with the Tories in charge was picketed by Coventry Temporary Council Tenants' Association and Coventry Trades Council, demanding an end to "third part accommodation" in the city. This is a policy of punishment for any tenant in arrears.

The "third part" accommodation is old, unhealthy and hazardous, often with no basic amenities like elec-



## EVELYN REED

EVELYN REED, a well known member of the American Socialist Workers' Party, died of cancer on 22nd March, aged 73.

She was one of the foremost Marxist writers on women's liberation, author of two major books, *Problems of Women's Liberation* and *Women's Evolution*. To fully appreciate her contribution to an understanding of women's oppression we need to look back to the time between the early 1930s, and the '60s.

By 1933 the women's movement had been smashed by Stalinism, reformism, and the rise of fascism. From then up to the early '60s, there was practically no women's movement.

In the '60s a new women's movement emerged. Only a small number of women were schooled in Marxism and able to develop a Marxist analysis other than in the most general terms. It took a long process of searching and discussion for the new women's movement to define its ideas.

The major analysis of women's oppression published in the 1950s was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Despite its importance, de Beauvoir's book was (as she later conceded) in part idealist, seeing the pre-historical roots of women's oppression not in material conditions but in the very nature of human consciousness, in the fact that women were always seen as the Other, as object rather than subject.

Reed's work was important in directing women back towards a materialist analysis of their oppression. In the USA as in no other country, a substantial number of experienced Trotskyist militants had kept an organisational continuity from the '30s through to the '60s.

Evelyn Reed was one of those militants, and during the '50s she was probably the only person in the world doing sustained anthropological research on the women's question from a militant Marxist perspective. Her major book *Women's Evolution*, published in 1975, incorporated over 20 years of detailed research.

Following Engels, Reed strongly defended the thesis that primitive societies were matriarchal. Women's oppression arose only with private property: 'women, who had once lived and worked together as a community of sisters and raised their children in common, now became dispersed as wives of individual men, serving their lords and masters in individual households... giving way to a family division of labour in which the woman was more and more removed from social production to serve as a household drudge for husband, home and family'.

Even among militants accepting the fundamentals of the traditional materialist analysis of women's oppression, developed by Engels and Bebel, much of the detail of Reed's work was highly controversial. She was criticised as weaving together disparate pieces of anthropological evidence into preconceived theories.

Her political attitude to the current women's movement — that is, the US SWP's attitude — has also been criticised by many (including *Workers Action*) for blurring over class issues with the notion that 'the best feminist is the best socialist'.

The analysis in *Women's Evolution* may indeed be shown inadequate and surpassed by later writers. But the tremendous work summed in that book will be a permanent contribution to the women's movement.

FRAN BRODIE



Dozens of Labour councils promised to fight the Housing Finance Act, but only Clay Cross stood firm. Will councils really fight Tory laws on selling council houses?

IN TUESDAY night's programme *The Secret Hospital*, the Yorkshire TV team gave extracts from interviews with 115 ex-patients, 41 staff, and many relatives and friends of patients at Rampton Hospital in Nottinghamshire. They collected a total of 801 allegations of ill-treatment, in which 146 of a total of 600 staff were named.

All ex-patients alleged brutality. Many described being beaten on admission, or being half-throttled with a wet towel, a practice which the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) denied had ever been used at Rampton. Ex-patients and ex-staff described severe and frequent beatings of patients, and the practice of isolating women in small bare cells with no clothes, no bedding, and no toilet facilities.

The parents of a girl diagnosed as schizophrenic who was found dead sitting in a cell were told by the duty

doctor she had strangled herself.

Rampton is a maximum security hospital with 880 patients, just under half of whom are mentally subnormal but have no criminal history. Seven out of ten of the women there have committed no offence. There is no limit to the length of stay.

Nursing staff belong to the Prison Officers' Association and are bound by the Official Secrets Act; patients often referred to them as 'screws'. The Elliot report on Rampton

stated that the majority acted as 'security officers' by choice.

Brutality has also been alleged, though never so systematic or on so wide a scale, in non-security psychiatric and subnormal hospitals, where staff conditions are characterised by low pay, chronic staff shortage, and a poor staff to patient ratio. At Rampton, however, there is competition for staff places: staff are much better paid than in non-secure hospitals, a charge nurse

can earn up to £8,000 a year, and the staff-patient ratio is over 2:3. The brutality seems to stem from the contempt inherent in the system for the patients and their rights, like brutality in prisons.

Rampton is an enclosed and isolated institution, managed directly by the DHSS in London, not by the local Area Health Authority as is usual. Many staff live in the grounds and have worked there for 20 to 30 years. In 1972 they were in

dispute over the proposed ending of their system of working alternate-day 14-hour shifts. This system, according to the Elliot report, enabled many to have second jobs or a business of their own.

Formal complaints by patients or their relatives are investigated only by senior Rampton staff.

This documentary did little more than report the statements of ex-patients, staff and relatives. Although it drew attention to crucial issues, it asked no direct

questions, and proposed no answers.

The danger now is that since Rampton is covered by the Official Secrets Act — hardly for the patients' benefit — a full-scale public enquiry can be avoided. The Social Services Secretary, Patrick Jenkin, has ordered a police investigation, and this has been welcomed by representatives of the Prison Officers' Association. Such an investigation could well result, like the one into the allegations of brutality against prison officers at Hull, in suspended sentences for a few scapegoats.

As several ex-patients pointed out, the system does not change. Those responsible for creating and perpetuating this brutal regime will remain in office, their absolute powers and inhuman practice unquestioned.

LAWRENCE WELCH  
MANDY WILLIAMS

# Secret hospital in a secret state



# THE UNIONS

Last October the civil service workers' union CPSA had its National Executive sacked. President Len Lever declared that irregularities in the vice presidential voting also invalidated the NEC election. A new right wing NEC was elected — which allowed the full time officials to keep a close rein on the pay campaign. At CPSA conference last week the membership hit back. Newly-elected NEC member **STEPHEN CORBISHLEY** [writing in a personal capacity] reports.

## CPSA CONFERENCE Rank and file get their own back

### Democracy campaign wins workplace voting

THE BIGGEST upset of the week came when the CPSA threw out its traditional 'block vote' system of electing the President, Vice-Presidents, and National Executive.

According to that system, in operation since the union was founded in the early 1920s, each branch casts a block vote according to the total number of its members. The way that block vote goes depends on the members who turn up to the branch AGMs or mandating meetings — and it is very rare for more than half of the branch membership to turn up.

The conference decided to replace the block vote system by individual voting at workplace meetings held in work time. Only the votes of those actually at the meetings will be counted.

This will end the system of thousands of votes being cast one way or the other over the heads of the members whose votes are meant to represent, and give an unfalsified picture of the actual support for candidates in the union.

The change was pushed by the Campaign for Union Democracy — a left-wing coalition backed by supporters of the Communist Party, the SWP, Redder Tape, Socialist Challenge and Workers' Action, and by many unaffiliated CPSA members active as lay officers.

The Campaign had attracted the support of over 150 experienced and committed union

activists. But few expected the change to go through. The right wing opposed it. The outgoing NEC was trying to push through a combination of postal balloting and block voting, and denounced what they described as Soviet-style democracy.

Yet, as the right wing saw their grip on the Conference declining, they dropped their own proposals, and swung behind the motion of the Campaign for Union Democracy.

They probably reckoned that they could do better from individual workplace voting than from branch block voting (though not as well as from postal balloting). They may be right in the short term: some of the biggest block votes, with the biggest block votes, are left wing.

But in the longer run the workplace voting system must mean more active involvement by the membership in union affairs, and will thus undercut the right wing much more seriously than left-wing victories won on the basis of a bureaucratic voting system ever can.

With the right wing's last-minute shift, the left-Labour Militant tendency were left as the only defenders of block voting. They had produced a pamphlet calling the supporters of the Campaign for Union Democracy 'enemies of trade unionism', and hailing the block vote as an example of trade union collective solidarity.

At best, this meant that the Militant were shutting their eyes to the often withered and bureaucratic nature of trade union branch life; at worst, that they were defending an undemocratic system because they judged (perhaps accurately) that they would do worse under a more democratic system.

The motion to change the voting system was, however, passed in a highly bureaucratic manner, with president Len Lever denying Militant supporters the chance to speak against it. Supporters of the Campaign for Union Democracy tried to oppose this rail-roading.

But for their part the Militant tried to prevent the rule-

change bureaucratically, by demanding an unnecessary card vote on an earlier motion in order to get the vote-system motion pushed off the agenda for lack of time.

The Tory press has hailed the change of voting system as a victory. But none of them understand that this will mean more, not less, control in the hands of the rank and file members. It means the CPSA is the first union in the country to have workplace voting in work time for its national elections.

This is a step forwards to militancy and political awareness in the union, away from the position-grabbing politics which characterised the supporters of the block vote.

## WHAT CONFERENCE DECIDED

WITH union members bitter about the outgoing leadership's mismanagement of this year's pay fight, the conference last week of the major civil service union, CPSA, swung strongly to the left.

Early on in the conference, an emergency motion was carried overwhelmingly, censuring the outgoing Civil Service Executive Committee for its role in blocking action on pay. A motion to withdraw from the *Pay Research Unit* comparability system, which has been in force for civil service pay since 1955, was defeated by a tiny margin, 440 to 444.

Conference then went on to pass a series of left wing policy motions.

- For a 35 hour week. A stronger motion from the British Library branch, London, calling for a 30-hour working week, was not debated because of a technicality.
- For six weeks' annual leave, to be won by industrial action if necessary.
- That the benefits of new technology be translated into the shorter working week with no loss of pay, and better conditions for all staff. The motion insisted on no sackings or job loss, full re-training programmes, opposition to mechanical work measurements, and rigorous safety standards for all new machinery.
- For a campaign to win maternity leave provisions on a par with those of Camden Nalgo: 16 weeks on almost full pay, plus 24 weeks on half pay.
- To refuse to cooperate in policing of immigrants through passport checks at Social Security and Employment Office counters.

- To demand that new reports going onto the employers' files on workers — an eight page report is prepared on every employee every year — should be open to inspection.
- For workplace creches.
- For a campaign among the membership on the closed shop.
- On the proposed 'fortnightly attendance payments' system for the unemployed, the union insists on no cut in staffing levels. While not opposing fortnightly signing in principle, it calls for a cut in the workload to be matched by a cut in hours.

This certainly means that the union is now committed to a major struggle against the Tories if the new Government tries to cut staff in the Unemployment Benefit Offices.

ONE APPARENTLY militant motion which went through CPSA conference was not in fact as good as it seemed. The motion gave the go-ahead for special 'departmental allowances' to be claimed in several areas. At present counter staff in the Department of Health and Social Security get a bonus of £110 a year for 'work pressure'. CPSA members in the DHSS want to increase this bonus and extend it to all DHSS employees.

Ministry of Defence employees also want a bonus, for the sake of their differentials over industrial civil servants.

The motion was moved by a member of the Socialist Workers' Party. But its victory represented an 'unholy alliance' with the Ministry of Defence right wingers.

The sectional claims can only tend to break up any national pay fight. And they lead almost irresistibly to productivity bargaining.

## CONFERENCE LASHES FULL TIME OFFICIALS

IT IS often a union bureaucrat's boast that he controls the union for 51 weeks out of the year. Only at Conference is he really challenged.

For the CPSA it has certainly been true. But so sharply were the full-time officials challenged at this year's conference that General Secretary Ken Thomas, rattled, replied with a stream of red-baiting invective and abuse against the Conference delegates.

When the motion to censure him and the NEC for its conduct of the pay campaign was debated, he attacked its supporters as those who favour 'self-appointed shop stewards from the SWP and the Communist Party' running the union. He then gave an interview to the London *Evening Standard* describing CPSA members and delegates as 'loony leftists'.

After that he was criticised by union president Len Lever for making such remarks to the press in his official capacity.

Thomas took no notice of this censure. After the Conference ended he said that the left had 'stopped the Conference getting down to

work' (though all the key policy motions debated and carried came from left wing branches). Most despicably, he addressed a press conference as General Secretary of the CPSA, declaring that the SWP were disruptive and the left-Labour Militant tendency were 'blackshirts', 'Goebbels-like with their propaganda'.

Thomas clearly intends to declare war on his elected NEC, and maybe hopes that someone will find an excuse for overturning the results.

Cornered by rank and file criticism, Thomas resorted to the sort of brutal gangsterism pioneered by EETPU boss Frank Chapple, whose most recent outrage was to describe the low-pay strikers as 'terrorists'. The real blackshirts, in the 1930s, were fought by the left wing of the labour movement, while people of Thomas's stripe wrung their hands and condemned the anti-fascist militants as ... loony leftists!

Only two things protect Thomas from the anger of the rank and file: his contract as an employee of the CPSA, and his fund of support from other parasites in a similar situation on the TUC General Council.

## PRESIDENCY KEEPS ITS POWER

Despite a lot of anger at the full-time officials' handling of this year's pay campaign, the CPSA conference failed to adopt policies decisively curbing the full-timers' power.

The conference did censure General Secretary Ken Thomas for signing the TUC right wing's document A Better Way, which favours incomes policy. The document, it declared, was in 'diametric opposition to CPSA policy'.

There was another motion seeking to remove Thomas from his seat on the TUC General Council, but it was guillotined from the agenda for lack of time. Thomas has said he would resign as general secretary if the motion was carried.

But a constitutional amendment to remove the decisive voting influence of the full-time officials on the National Disputes Committee and on the Selection Committee for full-time officials failed. It got a majority, but not the necessary two-thirds majority.

Another constitutional amendment to limit the power of the President also failed, though that also probably got a simple majority. The amendment would have

made the President's decisions subject to ratification by either the NEC or Conference, and would give the NEC rather than the President authority to interpret the rules.

Under the present set-up, outgoing President Len Lever was able to 'sack' the whole of last year's National Executive Committee on the grounds of a voting irregularity in the vice-presidential elections — and to declare that there was no appeal against his decision. A motion censuring that 'sacking' was narrowly lost.



In a 3-cornered battle right wing Kate Losinska won the presidency — with its semi-dictatorial powers intact despite attempts at conference to curb them.

Red-baiting general secretary Ken Thomas



## The NEC swings left

TWENTY Broad Left candidates were elected to the new National Executive Committee, together with six from the right wing 'Moderate' group and two independents.

The poll was topped by Geoff Barker, a Broad Left candidate backed by Redder Tape, a grouping led by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). Barker got 120,000 votes. The second of the Broad Left candidates backed by Redder Tape, Norman Jacobs, came fifth with just under 100,000 votes.

Four supporters of the Militant tendency were elected to the NEC, and one supporter of *Workers' Action*, who stood on a platform arguing clearly that 'the fight to win improvements in CPSA members' conditions is only part of the fight to overthrow capitalism and establish workers' power'.

Three Communist Party members were elected, despite the fact that none of the CP candidates revealed their

political affiliation in their election addresses. The rest of the Broad Left members on the NEC are mostly grouped round a left-Labour/Tribunite axis. Mike Duggan, an ex-member of the SWP, was also elected.

This swing reflects the anger at the pay sell-out and the weakness and incompetence of the 'Moderates'. But it does not represent the culmination of a successful campaign to win the majority of the rank and file clearly to the policies and perspectives of the Broad Left.

The Broad Left risks degenerating into nothing more than an electoral machine, with no real campaigning base except where revolutionary socialists have taken the initiative. If the left-wing policies passed at the Conference are to be won, rank and file organisation will have to be stepped up, and activists cannot afford to rely passively on the left-wing NEC.

THE TORY government is planning to bring in new laws against picketing. The legal details have not been announced, but the intention is to allow legal picketing only in a trade dispute with your employer and at your own workplace. Employment Minister James Prior has said that new laws will be brought in by the autumn.

Flying pickets to spread a strike, joining pickets at a neighbouring factory, or picketing your employer's other factories, his suppliers or his customers, could all land you a spell in jail if the Tories get their way. The legal protection against being prosecuted for causing a 'breach of contract' will be removed in all these cases. A firm can get a court injunction against pickets, and then, if the action continues, get the pickets arrested.

All laws of the sort the Tories want to bring in depend more on scaring people than anything else. Police and judges have always been able to find some law or other to use when they set their minds to nailing pickets. And they have always been powerless when the picket lines are sufficiently strong and well-supported. They can jail ones and twos, but not thousands.



Scabs herded into work during 1972 docks dispute

But the laws do make a big difference. And the Tories' plans are the biggest squeeze on picketing since the 19th century.

In the early days of trade unionism, the mere fact of organising a strike or a picket line was criminal 'molestation' or 'obstruction', and also criminal conspiracy.

As unions established themselves on a stable and permanent basis among skilled workers in the mid-19th century, the law was revised by the 1859 Molestation of Workmen Act. Peacefully persuading workers to quit work was now not automatically illegal. But judges would still convict pickets on the slightest excuse.

In 1867 striking London tailors were prosecuted for picketing because they took action "calculated to have a deterring effect on the minds of ordinary persons, but exposing them to have their actions watched and to encounter black looks".

The modern attempts to put forward a legal code of picketing dressed up in the language of impartiality began in 1875 with the 'Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act'. The bosses decided it was better to try to contain trade unions within the law, rather than making the most minimal trade union action a challenge to law and state.

Trade union action was given legal protection against charges of criminal conspiracy. And pickets were entitled to 'attend at or near a place to obtain or communicate information'.

But the judges seized on this formula to take away the right of 'peaceful persuasion' given by the 1859 law. In 1896 picketing that aimed to persuade other workers not to enter a factory was declared a 'nuisance' under common law. So you could picket... as long as you didn't persuade anyone to respect your picket line!

The 1906 Trades Disputes Act, passed by a Liberal government under working class pressure, rolled back judge-made anti-union law on picketing as on other issues. Picketing was said to 'be lawful... in furtherance of a trade dispute... merely for the purpose of communicating information or of peacefully persuading



Vic Turner, one of the 'Pentonville 5' jailed in 1972 for picketing an East London cold storage depot.

any person to work or abstain from working'. Trade unions were protected against prosecution for causing breach of contracts of employment.

But in due course the judges began to whittle down trade union rights once again.

In 1960 the 'right' of the police to control pickets was established in a judgment

where a worker was convicted for trying to join two others picketing a factory gate after a police constable had decided two pickets were 'enough'.

In 1966 Lord Widgery ruled in the Tynan case that it was a 'nuisance' under common law for pickets to try to 'seal off the highway' in order to talk to drivers going into a workplace.

Yet by the late 1960s the British ruling class had decided that, with capitalism drifting into crisis and stagnation, they would have to curb the trade union strength developed during the post-war boom.

In 1971 the Industrial Relations Act was passed. Many forms of industrial action and picketing became unlawful as 'unfair practices'. Yet others became unlawful because most trade unions refused to register under the Act, and their disputes were thus legally not trade disputes.

Judge-made law also went against the unions. In the Broome case (1974) the House of Lords ruled that it was unlawful for pickets to stop a lorry to talk to the driver. And the ancient catch-all conspiracy law was revived to deal with building workers' flying pickets in the Shrewsbury case (1973-4).

Despite all the fussing and fuming of the Tories, pickets have always been as subject to the laws on violence and intimidation as anyone else (and more so than the bosses' chief picket-busters, the police!) By the use of conspiracy law, any charge of intimidation or damage can be backed up with a charge of conspiring to intimidate, cause damage, etc, which requires less evidence and often carries heavier penalties.

But class struggle does not always go according to the law books. And between 1970 and 1974 the scope of picketing in practice was greatly extended. Flying pickets, mass pickets, and secondary pickets were used on a large scale for the first time in decades.

The Industrial Relations Act became unworkable. And with the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 and an amending Act in 1976 the Labour Government brought the law more into line with reality.

by NIK BARSTOW

The Industrial Relations Act restrictions were repealed. Unions were once again protected against prosecution for breach of contracts of employment. From 1976 they were protected in relation to the law of commercial contracts.

But the courts continued to twist the law to the most anti-union interpretation possible. In 1975 a court judgment against protestors who had picketed Prebbles Estate Agents in Islington established that there was no right to picket outside of industrial disputes.

And judges continued the practice of granting temporary injunctions against pick-

ets when firms claimed the pickets were not acting in 'furtherance of a trade dispute'. No matter how thin the firm's case, pickets could be told to lay off until the courts held a full hearing. Of course firms were quite satisfied to have action stopped on the spot and didn't much mind about the later court case.

In 1975 the Labour Government instructed judges not to grant injunctions against pickets unless they thought the firm had a good case. But the judges quickly developed new interpretations of the law on the issue of what constituted 'furtherance of a trade dispute'.

In February 1979 lorry drivers' shop steward Reg Fall was forbidden to picket a firm in Purfleet that supplied United Biscuits with edible oil. (James Prior was on the board of United Biscuits, who brought the case). The judge decided that the picket was not 'in furtherance of' the lorry drivers' struggle against their employers, only 'in consequence' of it.

The judgment was so ridiculous that it is not easy to see its exact implications: the judge had to rely on the argument that the law could not mean what it said, otherwise 'Parliament would be legislating its own destruction' by allowing pickets here, there and every-

where. But the hole had been the protection legislated by Government.

The Tories take those judgments far further. They make it unlawful for to any other inform other dispute and persuade them to

Whatever their planned thing to do violence. The right to picket been recognised right of giving and peaceful. The Tories were right away.

The Tories just a matter of the balance. The state being referee in the is a joke.

Capitalism that the 'balance' tipped toward by their class the police, the all the apparatus. The Tories were more.

Strikers were bidden to struggle to





Scabs at Pilkingtons came on foot...



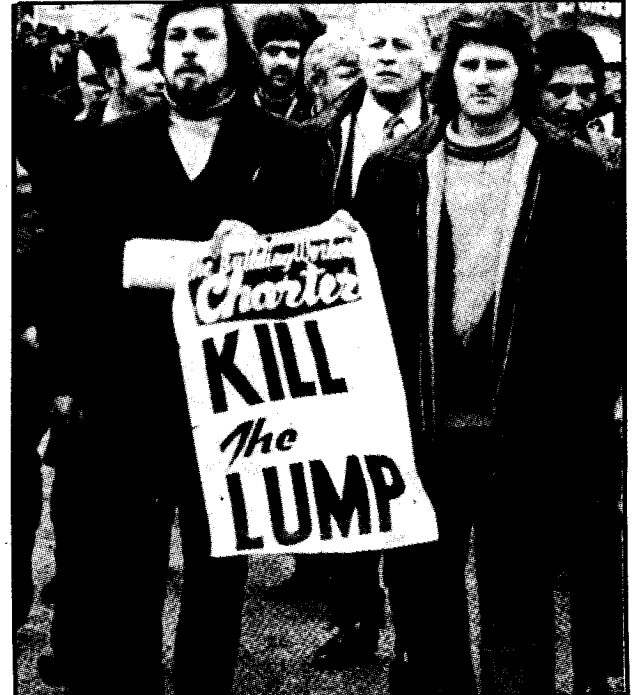
... In the building workers' strike they were flown in...



... At St Thomas's Hospital they came in coaches...



... At Grunwick, in double decker buses.



Shrewsbury pickets demonstrate outside the court. Centre: Ricky Tomlinson and Des Warren, who were jailed for 18 months and three years.

# From workers' plans to socialism

**SOCIALIST Challenge** has called a conference for trade unionists this Saturday, May 26th. The theme has been announced as *Workers' Control and Workers' Plans*. Here 'workers' plans' apparently means the sort of alternative plans of production proposed by shop stewards in Lucas Aerospace and in Vickers.

Unfortunately, *Socialist Challenge* has carried no discussion on this theme in the run-up to the conference. And so it seems probable that the conference will just be a general discussion on the perspectives of *Socialist Challenge* for work in the unions.

It is a pity. For the recent collapse of the fight to save jobs at Vickers Scotswood works makes a discussion on "workers' plans of production" urgent.

The Vickers Scotswood stewards centred their fight against the closure of the works round the aim of forcing the company to accept proposals for alternative production based on a Workers' Plan being prepared by stewards and sympathetic economists. When Vickers just kept on saying no, the stewards' campaign crumpled with hardly any fight.

At Vickers, as at Lucas, the stewards have not campaigned for nationalisation of the firm. Their ideas of a workers' plan have been closely linked to the Labour Party's notion of 'planning agreements', a notion which is obviously a substitute for nationalisation.

At Lucas, the stewards record that "the idea of preparing an overall Corporate Plan for Lucas Aerospace arose in the first instance at a meeting in November 1974 with Tony Benn, the then Minister of Industry... Mr Benn suggested that there was the distinct possibility of further cut-backs in certain aerospace and military projects... He felt that the Combine Committee would be well advised to consider alternative products".

At Vickers, the stewards demanded: "Government aid must be backed by strong guarantees of continued production, built around discussions of alternative products, and the Workers' Plan for Vickers on Tyne-side".

## Steel

Looking at coal, steel and other nationalised industries, the stewards had no faith in nationalisation as a policy in the fight to save jobs. The 'workers' plan' strategy was developed as a substitute.

Thus the question of workers' control was separated from (or even counterposed to) nationalisation — but both were still understood in rather bureaucratic terms. Meanwhile, some of the most militant direct-action struggles on jobs have had no socialist political aim at all: they have ended up just trying to get another capitalist to take over the works threatened with closure.

The reasons for this disintegration of socialist politics go back a long way. Experience of successive Labour governments has bred cynicism about nationalisation.

It has also bred the belief that all governments are rotten, therefore nothing much can be gained from politics and workers' interests can only be advanced by workplace direct action.

The relative boom of the '50s and early '60s, when more or less steady gains in living standards could be won through local shop floor action, strengthened this workplace-focused reformism. The crises and stagnation of the '70s have led to a new search for political solutions — but it has also become a search for solutions different from the old recipe of nationalisation as more or less the be-all and end-all of socialism.

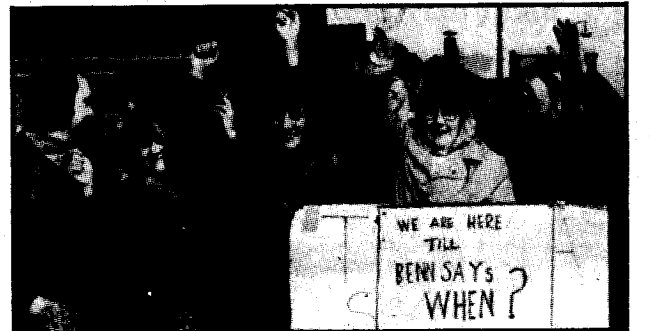
In isolation, there is nothing socialist about nationalisation, nor 'alternative

alternative production plans) and workers' plans in the sense of an overall workers' answer to the crisis. As if linking struggles in reality were just a matter of giving the same name to two different things!

The Lucas stewards propose a shift from making military equipment to producing kidney machines, new power packs, and a whole range of remote-control equipment. The shift is both worthwhile for its own sake and a means to save jobs.

They are aware that the usual collective bargaining struggle does not have sufficient scope to win these demands. So they pressed the Labour Government to help.

As Lucas steward Mike



Hull Imperial Typewriters workers put their faith in Benn's schemes for planning agreements.

plans of production', nor direct action. Pulled together into an integrated strategy, they define the gist of socialist revolution. The 'disintegration' of socialist politics means that questions are being posed — under the pressure of capitalist crises — which only revolutionary socialism can answer.

Unfortunately, many on the left have been content just to stress one 'fragment' of socialist politics. The *Militant* tendency pushes nationalisation, the Socialist Workers' Party pushes direct action, and the IMG and *Socialist Challenge* push workers' plans. In each case the 'fragment' is blown up and given mystical extra significance, almost equating it with the totality of socialist politics.

Thus *Socialist Challenge* responded to the TUC-Labour Government Concordat by calling for: 'No Concordat, but a Workers' Plan'.

Jonathan Silberman wrote (15th February): "Initiatives from rank and file workers are pointing the way to an alternative to Callaghan's schemes. Cutting unemployment is suggested [??] by the fight for the 35 hour week, and by workers' plans at Lucas and Vickers for the production of socially useful products..."

"Similarly, the call by building workers for a programme of direct public works would both cut unemployment and be socially useful."

"Such actions and proposals are the start of, not a concordat, but a workers' plan to beat the crisis".

By sloppy journalism and vague terms like 'socially useful', a direct link is made between workers' plans in the sense of Lucas and Vickers (where radical notions of workers' control are muddled together with class-collaborationist notions of finding capitalistically 'viable

Cooley reports, the Labour Government gave "every sympathy short of actual help". So the stewards are left with a dilemma — the sort of dilemma that pushed the Scotswood stewards into just giving up, and has pushed the Lucas stewards into filling out the Alternative Plan with proposals to the bosses for more profitable production and better marketing.

Silberman just skates over this dilemma.

To give real bite to the radical working class aspirations expressed in these plans, they must be linked to the question of power: specifically, to demands to abolish business secrecy, to nationalise without compensation, and to share work under workers' control with no loss of pay.

## Pot

Equally, if nationalisation is to be more than a state-capitalist formula, it must be linked to workers' control demands. Direct action — factory occupations, combine wide strikes — is necessary to win those demands (just as the demands are necessary to make direct action effective).

With Labour in opposition, the whole 'workers' plan' notion will be thrown into the melting pot along with the rest of the policy of the labour movement. Its socialist core must be saved from cynicism, as must the socialist core of nationalisation. The way to do that is to make both nationalisation and workers' control of production integral parts of an action programme which takes today's problems as its starting point and sketches out a chain of escalating struggles leading towards the mobilisation of the whole working class for socialism.

COLIN FOSTER

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Next week: the Industrial Relations Act and how it was fought

# From Kautsky to Eurocommunism:



Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg

## INTRODUCTION

IN WESTERN Europe the last few years have seen a blooming of all sorts of new 'Marxist strategies' and 'roads to socialism'. The development of Eurocommunism, the collapse of many of the organisations and conceptions born from the optimism of the period after 1968, the political weakness of many of those laying claim to a revolutionary tradition — all these factors have led to the development of 'new' strategies which aim to replace 'outdated' Marxist ideas, particularly the idea that the state must be smashed before the working class can take power. They claim that in a modern, complex society a different, more sophisticated strategy is needed.

But most of the 'Eurocommunist' ideas are anything but new: they are simply new glosses on the debates between reformists and revolutionaries that have been going on for the last 100 years. Where they are new, there is no improvement. The experience of Stalinism means that for Eurocommunism, with Gulag phobia as a driving impulse, facile pessimism replaces the facile optimism of Karl Kautsky. Worse: Karl Kautsky could proclaim and sincerely believe in a thorough democratisation of the bourgeois state, including the destruction of militarism and monarchies. Eurocommunists such as Carrillo in Spain accept militarism and pledge themselves to foster its interests. Reaction to Stalinism leads to reconciliation with the most reactionary bourgeois forces.

But the 1910 debate on the mass strike between Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg shows how little the basic issues have changed: the creative mass action of the working class against everyday parliamentary and trade union action; a strategy which ties immediate issues to the struggle for socialism against one which, while proclaiming socialism as a final aim, is content to postpone any direct action for it to the distant future; a party which responds to working class needs and struggles and tries to give them a conscious direction against one which — consciously or not — holds back those struggles and which must therefore have a bureaucratic attitude towards them; whether the labour movement can have a policy of coexistence with the bourgeois state or whether it must always aspire to its overthrow.

Yet the contemporary relevance of the mass strike discussion is not the only reason why it should be available to socialists in Britain. It took place at a turning point in the history of the European socialist movement and represented a clear indication of the different paths which would be followed by the revolutionary and reformist wings of social democracy after the outbreak of World War 1.

In 1910 the German socialist party (the SPD) had been growing almost continuously in size and influence for a quarter of a century. It was the leading party of the Second International and was seen as the embodiment of Marxist orthodoxy. It could win 3½ million votes in 1907 and had nearly two million workers in its trade unions.

Yet the mass strike discussion was to show that there were serious differences about the basic direction of the SPD. Dispute over strategy was not in itself new. In the 1890s Bernstein and others had advocated an abandonment of Marxism and alliances with bourgeois parties, as a peaceful evolution into socialism was possible — and the only thing possible. But after Karl Kautsky (the embodiment of SPD 'orthodoxy' and its leading theoretician) and Rosa Luxemburg had repudiated Bernstein's attack, the party was able to content itself with routine denunciations of revisionism.

The mass strike discussion was very different. For the first time the 'orthodox' centre led by Kautsky was under serious attack from the left, from people who did not want to abandon Marxism, but who (as gradually became clear) had a different conception of it, who did not want to change the aims of the party but felt it was seriously deficient in its attempts to realise them.

From 1905, and particularly from 1907 onwards, a clearly identifiable 'left' tendency developed in the SPD. By this time the SPD had developed a routine activity, which, combined with certain theoretical conceptions and certain concessions to the power of the state, produced a deeply conservative attitude amongst its leadership. The party contested elections, had its fraction in the Reichstag (Parliament), recruited members for the party and unions, made political propaganda, and sometimes led political campaigns, carried out the economic

# how reformists try to wear down capitalism

struggle and celebrated May Day. In practice, parliamentarism was the party's main activity. The left began to realise that this activity was becoming increasingly hollow and resulting in all sorts of concessions to bourgeois parties because it was passive and was not regulated by the dynamics of the class struggle.

A major reason for this lay in the conception of Marxism which Kautsky, above all others, had made the common property of the SPD. He held that the tendencies of capitalist development would of themselves inevitably produce socialism; all socialists had to do was to organise the working class forces to wait on the inevitable day when they were the majority and capitalism collapsed. It was this collapse — not a conscious seizure of power — which he had in mind when he talked of 'revolution'. In 1909 he wrote: 'We are a revolutionary, not a revolution-making party'. As a last resort, violent overthrow of the state might be necessary if the bourgeoisie resisted (and Kautsky argued it would), but this was so far off (and would be so simple) that it should not determine the tactics of social democracy. In Kautsky's conception this collapse and the establishment of socialism was only related to the present-day class struggle in so far as the growth of the SPD, the SPD's vote, and the unions, were indicators and elements in the inevitable development of socialism.

Rosa Luxemburg, who came to lead the SPD left and to oppose Kautsky in the 1910 mass strike debate, had always, as a Pole and a woman, been an outsider in the SPD. She had gained respect as a theoretician for her refutation of Bernstein but was never really integrated into the party leadership. For her, the event which was to throw a sharp light on the SPD and its conservatism was the Russian Revolution of 1905. She took part in the Revolution in Poland and drew far-reaching conclusions from the general strikes that had played a decisive role in the revolution. She saw how economic and political issues were fused in an elemental struggle of the working class, a large part of which in Russia was not even organised in trade unions.

She returned to Germany just as the SPD and the trade unions were disputing whether the general strike was ever allowable or not. She wrote: "Since my return from Russia... I feel the irresolution and the pettiness of our whole party more glaringly and more painfully than ever

## by Bruce Robinson

before... The situation is simply this: August [Bebel], and still more so the others, have completely spent themselves on behalf of parliamentarism and in parliamentary struggles. Whenever anything happens which transcends the limits of parliamentarism, they are completely hopeless...

In her pamphlet 'The Mass Strike, the Party and the Trade Unions' she developed the position which was to be re-stated in the 1910 mass strike debate:

"Instead of the rigid and hollow schema of an arid political 'action' carried out at the behest of the highest party authorities according to a cautious plan, we see a bit of life pulsing with flesh and blood which cannot be cut out of the great framework of the revolution, because it is connected to all the odds-and-ends of the revolution by a thousand veins".

Both Luxemburg and Kautsky had thus developed their views long before the mass strike debate of 1910. It was however only then that their full implications became clear. The reason for this was that, in order not to offend the trade union leadership's jealous guarding of their independence from the SPD, there had been a semi official ban on public discussion of the mass strike or of propaganda for it. By 1910 however events were moving in such a way that Luxemburg felt the question could no longer be kept under the table.

In Prussia the electoral system was organised so as to give voting privileges to those who had high incomes. This was known as the "three class voting system". The electorate was divided into three classes dependant

on the amount paid in tax. In 1908 demonstrations had prodded the Emperor Wilhelm II into making a speech announcing electoral reform, which — when it was finally announced two years later — consisted in moving higher civil servants, academics and retired officers into a higher class.

There was an immediate response to this from the Prussian working class. Throughout the spring of 1910 there were massive demonstrations for equal, universal suffrage, which often took place despite police bans and police violence. In some areas there were half day strikes against police brutality and in favour of the full suffrage. In April, there was a national struggle against a lockout in the building industry. The proposed electoral reform was eventually withdrawn.

Rosa Luxemburg saw that there was a new determined mood in the working class and that without a clear lead from the SPD it would be dissipated. She saw the need to extend the action by calling a mass strike, which would allow the workers to stay on the offensive. Throughout this period she was travelling the country, speaking at meetings and getting the mood of the masses. She also saw the need to raise the slogan of the democratic republic as a link between the suffrage agitation and the eventual aim of socialism.

Both these ideas met with determined opposition from the SPD leadership, for whom they were taboo subjects. (The mass strike, out of fear of annoying the union leaders; the republic slogan, out of fear of provoking repression against the party). Rosa Luxemburg's article "Was Weiter?" ("What Next?") was not published by either the SPD paper 'Vorwärts' or its theoretical journal 'Die Neue Zeit', where she was deputy editor to Kautsky. Eventually it was published in the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung', and once the question was in the open the party leaders had to reply.

The article printed here is Kautsky's initial reply to Rosa Luxemburg, which was published in 'Die Neue Zeit' of 8th and 15th April 1910. It enables us to contrast the way they deal with the question. Rosa Luxemburg was driven to raise the issue by the fact that there was a vital development in the class struggle, which the party was in danger of letting slip by. As a result she approaches the question very concretely, pointing to the dynamics of the suffrage struggle and seeking historical parallels. Kautsky's article, on the other hand, is abstract and speculative, looking forward to Reichstag elections due to take place nearly two years later and backwards to the Romans' military tactics.



Women revolutionaries being sent into exile after the Russian Revolution of 1905. Kautsky argued: "The conception which Comrade Luxemburg presents corresponds very well to the conditions of the Russian Revolution. It is however in complete contradiction to the experiences on which our strategy of attrition rests".

When we examine what Kautsky says, we are brought back to 1979 with a thud. Kautsky's reply uses precisely the same sort of arguments that the Eurocommunists and their ideological hangers-on use today in order to justify their reformism. Indeed, Kautsky's position is markedly to the left of his descendants, as he could be said to have maintained the independence of the SPD from the bourgeois state (up until the outbreak of war, of course). He also saw revolution as inevitable, though as we have seen he had an entirely mechanical conception of what it was.

Kautsky's reply to Luxemburg largely relies on the argument that there are two possible strategies for Marxists: the strategy of overthrow and the strategy of attrition. Kautsky argues that the strategy of overthrow, which consists of a short, sharp campaign aimed at dealing sudden and heavy blows to the enemy, is no longer an applicable politico-military strategy. He argues that it was adequate for earlier revolutions, which were the revolutions of minorities and which faced only limited military technology. Kautsky equates the strategy of overthrow with street fighting, and leans on Engels' Introduction to the 1895 edition of Marx's 'The Class Struggles in France' to show why the strategy of attrition is preferable.





Kautsky argues that the mass strike corresponds to a strategy of overthrow and that it would lead to unnecessary risks when the use of the strategy of attrition could guarantee success. Kautsky does not rule out its use altogether: he concedes that the reaction of the bourgeoisie when faced with its imminent downfall would most probably force the SPD to alter its strategy in order to win the final victory.

The strategy of attrition, so Kautsky argues, corresponds to a situation in which the revolutionary class is a majority and an approximation to democracy exists which enables it to collect its forces and to weaken the enemy gradually. The tactics of the SPD referred to in this context are almost exclusively parliamentary.

Kautsky's duality between strategy of overthrow and strategy of attrition corresponds very closely to the conceptions of war of manoeuvre and war of position in the distorted version of Gramsci which has become the stock in trade of Eurocommunism and particularly the Italian CP. (See Perry Anderson's article, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', in *New Left Review* 100 for a precise description of their divergences and similarities, and for differing statements of Gramsci's position).

Between Antonio Gramsci and the Eurocommunists who attempt to appropriate his political heritage to reformism, there stretches the same gulf that yawned between the Communist Third International which was set up after the bitter lessons of the collapse of Kautsky's International and the Second International itself. Gramsci's discussions of 'war of position' and 'war of manoeuvre' were in the context of his adherence to the basic ideas of the renovated Marxism of Lenin and Trotsky, on the state, on mass action, on transitional demands. The Eurocommunists, rejecting the communist position on these questions and holding to their opposite, are guilty of fraud when they invoke Gramsci. But they might with more justice claim Kautsky as a political forerunner.

There are some more factors in common between Kautsky's conception and the Eurocommunists'.

- The belief that a long-term strategy is less likely to provoke the state to retaliate against the workers' movement, and that therefore it is necessary to hold the workers back from adventurist actions which would needlessly endanger their organisations.

- A belief that using the tools of (bourgeois) democracy will enable a socialist party to undermine the state gradually and that any clash can be postponed to the distant future.

- An argument that different strategies correspond to different national situations and histories. Both Kautsky and the Eurocommunists use this in order to argue that the experiences of the Russian Revolutions (of 1905 and 1917 respectively) cannot be applied to other more advanced countries. Kautsky (particularly in the later articles in the 1910 debate) points to the low level of organisation of the Russian workers as grounds for adopting the mass strike and the strategy of overthrow; the Eurocommunists point to the supposedly different nature of the state and the different methods by which the state maintains its rule.

- A mechanical division of political and economic struggles. There is an eerie correspondence between Kautsky's argument and the excuses that the French Communist Party used in 1968.

The most characteristic feature of Kautsky, however, is the way he weaves a scholastic argument to reconcile revolutionary principles with opportunist practice. Reading the second and third parts of his article, one can well understand why right up to 1914 Lenin continued to regard Kautsky as an unflinchingly orthodox revolutionary Marxist.

Kautsky lashes the revisionists. He insists that violent revolution is inevitable. He even stresses that bold, violent tactics are not only last-resort methods of defence, but may be called for in an offensive to take advantage of crises within the bourgeoisie. He appears to argue against Luxemburg only on the rational, tactical grounds that it is not yet the time to launch a decisive attack.

But (as becomes clear in the fourth part of the article) the revolutionary principles are always stated in the most general terms, and only the tactical arguments for caution are allowed to have any grip on concrete circumstances.

Implicit in Kautsky's military analogy, and in the very word 'attrition' ('wearing-down'), there is an idea that the mere continuation of SPD rallies and street demonstrations, and mere growth of SPD votes, will somehow decisively enfeeble the capitalist order. Thus he brings his general revolutionary formulas into practical agreement with the politics of the SPD right wing, for whom the parliament and trade union routine became an end in itself.



Eurocommunist leaders Carrillo and Berlinguer

Another example of Kautsky's method is when he speaks of the war danger and develops a revolutionary position based on the fact that "the nation is not threatened". But come 1914, of course, he was to explain that the nation was threatened, and abandon the revolutionary position.

Such combinations of verbal radicalism and reformist practice can also be found in many Stalinist parties. For example, the 'British Road to Socialism' discusses at some length how it may prove necessary to use violence in coming to power. This is however postponed to an indefinite future, and plays no role in the day-to-day concepts of the CP.

Kautsky also has a bureaucratic approach to the working class: the workers are seen, as Rosa Luxemburg points out, as potential SPD voters or members, but not as an active, self-propelling revolutionary subject, the only social force that can overthrow capitalism. This is why Kautsky cannot appreciate that working class consciousness does not just reflect an inexorable, mechanical progress of capitalism towards collapse: that it can make great leaps forward as well as fall back. He sees consciousness as something that will develop predictably as long as social democracy keeps up its routine activity.

As well as paralleling Eurocommunism, Kautsky's views also bear a considerable resemblance to the ideas of the 'Militant' tendency. There is a similar idea of history inexorably rolling towards certain predetermined ends, of victories sure to come soon as long as they are not endangered by adventurism. The 'Militant' also see the 'Marxist tendency' as just having to pursue its routine and wait for the fruits of history to fall into its lap. They are perhaps the 'best' British example today of a tendency with Kautsky's mechanical materialist conception of an inevitable historical development towards socialism.

The mass strike debate of 1910 is full of lessons for Marxists today, just as it also illuminates a turning point in the history of the Marxist movement.

## Karl Kautsky: WHAT NOW?

### I

IN OUR Dortmund party organ, Comrade Luxemburg has raised the question of the mass strike.

There are many reasons why such a discussion is not fruitful at present. I have avoided it for as long as possible. But it would be wrongly interpreted if I were to try to avoid it any longer, especially after the attack which a supporter of Comrade Luxemburg's position has made in the "Bremer Bürgerzeitung" against Mehring, with whom I am in complete agreement on this question. Since Mehring is not in the country at the moment and cannot himself reply, I seem all the more to be obliged to reply in his place.

Whether a discussion of the question of the mass strike is useful depends on the context in which it is held. Here it cannot be a question of discussing whether the mass strike can be considered as a weapon by us at all. This question has been decided since the Jena party congress. (1)

Should we however enter a discussion about whether the mass strike can be successful at the present time or not? Such a discussion would mean not just showing those factors which favour it, but also those which speak against it; it would mean weighing them up against one another. If that were to take place publicly, it would be the same as conveying to the enemy the weak points of one's own position. The whole discussion would be as useful as if one wanted a council of war to discuss whether to give battle to the enemy within his hearing. When the comrades discuss this question among themselves then it can only be useful.

However I would very much regret it if Comrade Luxemburg's article has the effect of opening a discussion in the party press in which one side was to put forward reasons as to why a mass strike would be hopeless at present. They may be correct or incorrect; such a discussion can under no circumstances be a stimulus to action.

Therefore I shall not discuss this side of the question. But one can look at yet another aspect of the question and public discussion of this will under no circumstances have a damaging effect. Comrade Luxemburg claims that we must either choose to adopt the mass strike as the immediate means of action by the party, or let the party completely collapse. According to this, it would therefore be a dictate of self-preservation for the party to strive for all means possible for the mass strike in the immediate future.

If we were to share this opinion, then we would certainly not need to discuss whether the mass strike was likely to be successful at a given point in time; instead we would have to provoke it at any price because even defeat would be better than passive capitulation to the enemy.

This is the question which we will examine here. But first of all a few opening remarks. Above all we must be clear about what we understand by a mass strike. Comrade Luxemburg writes:

"The mass strike, that is as a short, one-off protest strike, is certainly not the be-all and end-all of the campaign which is in progress."

When considering our tactics, we must sharply differentiate between the mass strike as a means of protest and the mass strike as a means of compulsion, for each presupposes different conditions and demands different tactics. The difference between the two is just as great as that between a manoeuvre and a real decisive battle. The political mass strike as a means of exercising compulsion is undertaken in order to compel the holders of political power, for example the government or parliament, to do something or to refrain from doing something. It fails, it leads to a defeat, when it does not succeed in achieving this. It is carried out with all possible forces until such time as it

either achieves its goal or the masses collapse in a state of exhaustion.

A protest strike is from the outset of limited duration without consideration as to whether it achieves any practical result or not. After its conclusion the masses are withdrawn from the action in as good an order as that in which they entered it.

A protest strike can be held locally, as a protest against a local event such as police brutality. We have already had such protest strikes in the present movement for suffrage. If police brutality increases in scale or violence, then we will see further protest strikes on that issue.

A political mass strike as a means of exerting compulsion on a central political institution, such as a government or parliament, must, on the other hand, be of a general nature; it must involve as many as possible of the working class from the entire country, and as many sections as possible of the working class. It will succeed only when its impetus is so violent that it pulls in other sections of workers who would not take part in a protest strike, such as the railway workers.

*'We must sharply differentiate between the mass strike as a means of protest and the mass strike as a means of compulsion'*

Does Comrade Luxemburg want to make propaganda just for protest strikes or does she want to see the present movement driven on to the all-out strike of compulsion? It is difficult to conclude from her article, and yet it is important to be clear about it. Many people who would reject the thought of a strike of compulsion as a criminal stupidity, certainly consider local protest strikes desirable in the present situation. On the other hand, if we make propaganda for the idea of the mass strike without making any distinctions, although we only consider protest strikes to be necessary, then it can come about that against our will we nourish the idea of a mass strike in the minds of people with a more excitable nature and call forth actions which we do not intend, which correspond neither to the situation or to the relationship of forces, and which lead to defeat.

Let us not forget that the mass strike as a strike of compulsion is the ultimate weapon which we can employ.

Writing on the mass strike, Comrade Luxemburg refers to "a short one-off protest strike" as a particular example. Thus she also has different forms of the mass strike in mind. That also follows from the fact that she connects the political mass strike with economic strikes, and thus develops the view that one promotes the other.

"Looking at it more closely, the simultaneous occurrence of an extensive mass strike in coal mining and a political strike movement can only be of use to both. In every great mass movement of the proletariat numerous political and economic factors act together and to want to direct them artificially and to separate them pedantically would be a useless and damaging undertaking. A healthy movement which is capable of life, such as the present Prussian campaign, must and should draw nourishment from all the accumulated explosive social material. On the other hand, it can only help the success of the miners' more limited cause if it inflicts more fear on the enemy — the coal magnates and the government — by becoming part of a wider, political cause. They would find themselves forced even more quickly to satisfy the miners by making concessions and attempting to isolate them from the political mass struggle".

An economic strike is from the outset a strike of compulsion, no mere protest strike. An economic strike is hardly compatible with such a strike. But the political strike of compulsion and the economic strike are also two very different things.

*'The political strike of compulsion and the economic strike are two very different things... they succeed under totally different conditions'*

I must however openly admit that I am "pedantic" enough to risk the "useless and damaging undertaking" of wanting to separate the two types of struggle. Until now, life has in fact been pedantic enough to do this as well, for the simple reason that each of the two types of strikes succeed under totally different conditions.

Comrade Luxemburg will perhaps refer me to the Russia of 1905. At that time the revolution held sway there. In such a situation where the totality of social life is being transformed, political and economic demands do of course unite in a simultaneous strike movement. But meanwhile, to start with, we do not yet have the revolution in Prussia.

In the suffrage struggles of Western Europe the economic and political elements have however been sharply separated until now.

In the struggle for suffrage in Austria, trade unionists, in fact the miners, once tried to unite a movement for the eight hour day with the movement for universal suffrage. The majority of our Austrian comrades were pedantic enough to see in this not an advance in the struggle for suffrage, but rather an obstacle (cf. the discussions of the Vienna party congress, 1894). Nor have I heard of the fusion of a suffrage struggle and economic demands from any other country in Western Europe. And that such a fusion did not take place here is not difficult to understand.

Let us suppose that the miners went on strike in order to exercise pressure on the government and the State assembly for the right to vote, and at the same time on the mine-owners for the shortening of the working day.

In what way could one of the movements promote the







other? The mine owners could, if the strike created problems for them, give in only in order to get the miners back to work. If however the miners wanted to carry on the strike until the suffrage was reformed, then what purpose would it have to grant their economic demands?

Or alternatively, the mineowners would give in and concede the economic demands of the workers on the condition that they immediately begin working again. That is the case Comrade Luxemburg has in mind: the coal magnates would see themselves forced to "satisfy the miners by making concessions and to isolate them from the political mass struggle."

To enmesh the political goal of the struggle which is common to all workers with those goals which are specific to individual sectors of the labour movement would thus offer a means of isolating sections of the working class. How the mass strike is thus to be strengthened as a means of struggle for suffrage is not completely clear to me.

When we discuss the question we must therefore sharply differentiate between the protest strike and the strike of compulsion, and likewise between political and economic strikes.

On the other hand, it is not possible to refer to the example of other countries to strengthen one's own case about the present situation in Prussia.

Comrade Luxemburg writes:

"It is a matter of deciding whether German social democracy, which is based on the strongest trade union organisations and the greatest army of voters in the world, can carry out a mass action which has been carried out in little Belgium, in Italy, in Austria-Hungary, in Sweden (2) — to say nothing of Russia — at various times with great success."

I do not know what Austria has to do with it. There was no mass strike there in the struggle for suffrage.

It is probably true that the street demonstrations which took place there would not in the final analysis have decided the struggle; without the unrest in Hungary and the Russian Revolution, the mass strike would probably also have become indispensable in Austria. I am the last person to deny that. But under no circumstances does the Austrian example prove that the rapid advance of the movement from the street demonstration to the mass strike within a few months, even weeks, is in all cases a law of dynamics of a modern mass action of the proletariat.

As far as the Russian example is concerned, as has already been mentioned, the first successful mass strike there was carried out in conditions such as do not today exist in Prussia: a war that had been wretchedly lost; the army disorganised, all classes of the population full of hatred and contempt for the government. There the mass strike was the last shove which brought down a shaky regime. At the present time, this example is of no relevance for us.

The other examples of mass strikes resulted from economic struggles, not from a struggle for the right to vote, besides that of "little Belgium". Why Comrade Luxemburg particularly stresses the smallness of Belgium is not really clear. Is it perhaps more difficult to carry out a strike in a small territory than in a large one, perhaps more easy in the whole of Germany than in one district alone? I would have thought the opposite was the case. On the other hand, however, Belgium still has today not yet achieved equal suffrage. We therefore do not advance much with this example.

The study of countries abroad is therefore of no use to us. We must develop our tactics according to the present situation in Prussia itself.

## II

The modern science of war distinguishes between two types of strategy: *the strategy of overthrow* and *the strategy of attrition*.

The former quickly draws together its fighting forces in order to face the enemy and deliver decisive blows, by which the enemy is made incapable of struggle and defeated. In the strategy of attrition on the other hand the general first avoids a decisive battle; he attempts to keep the opposing army busy by all kinds of manoeuvres without giving him the opportunity to boost the morale of his troops through victories; he attempts to continually wear them down by eternally exhausting and threatening them, and to increasingly reduce and paralyse their power to resist.

The usual strategy of war is that of overthrow. From the outset it must have greater appeal for any fighter; it is simpler, clearer, more morale-boosting. A general will only turn to the strategy of attrition when he has no prospect of achieving his goal through the strategy of overthrow. But even then the strategy of attrition is not always a possibility open to him. It presupposes fighters who have not been drawn into the army by the prospect of victory and booty; who, under all circumstances, come what may, adhere to their cause with body and soul. It further presupposes that the sources from which the army draws its sustenance are inaccessible to the enemy. The strategy of attrition must end whenever the enemy succeeds in occupying the territories from which one's own army draws its recruits, food and weapons.

In the struggle of Hannibal against Rome the strategy of overthrow was imposed upon Hannibal because he stood at the head of an army of mercenaries which was only fired by successes, and was held together by pay and booty. In the event of a more lengthy war it could only lose military efficiency through weariness and illness.

For the Romans it was different. Their soldiers were a peasant militia who at first were not equal to Hannibal's experienced mercenaries in open battle. The longer the war lasted, the more they became the equal of the enemy. They had no cause to fear that delaying tactics would make them weary of fighting. Their existence, their own homes were at stake in the struggle. Nonetheless Fabius Cunctator (3) would not have been able to carry out his apparent tactic of temporisation against Hannibal if he had not been certain that the latter did not possess forces which could conquer

Rome or even merely besiege it.

A comparison of the strategy of the revolutionary classes in the first and last decades of the previous century offers a difference of a similar kind. Through a coincidence of favourable circumstances, the French revolutionaries were successful between 1789 and 1793 in using a bold attack to overthrow the old regime by means of a few decisive blows. This strategy of overthrow was at that time — in the absolute police state which excluded any possibility of forming parties or of the popular masses legally influencing the government — the only means possible for a revolutionary class. Any strategy of attrition would have failed in that the government always had the possibility of cutting off all means of organisation and coordination.

This strategy of overthrow was still in full bloom when our party was founded. The successes of Garibaldi in Southern Italy, the outstanding though eventually unsuccessful struggles of the Polish insurrection, immediately preceded the agitation of Lassalle and the foundation of the International. The Paris Commune followed then soon afterwards. But this very event showed clearly that the days of the tactic of overthrow are provisionally over. It had been suitable for political conditions in which one large town was dominant, where the means of transport were inadequate, making impossible the rapid concentration of large masses of troops from the countryside; suitable in the case of a type of street architecture and weaponry which offered many possibilities for street fighting.

At that very time however, the basis was laid for the new strategy of the revolutionary class, a strategy which Engels sharply opposed to the revolutionary strategy in his foreword to Marx's "Class Struggles in France" (4), and which can very well be described as the strategy of attrition. Until now it has brought us the most outstanding results; from year to year it has provided the proletariat with growing strength and has pushed it more and more into the centre of European politics.

One cannot however believe that the introduction of the new strategy was simply the product of a deeper insight. We have already pointed to the fact that the strategy of attrition was not possible earlier for a revolutionary class. For this the ground had first to be prepared by universal suffrage,

***'The new strategy of the revolutionary class, which Engels sharply opposed to the revolutionary strategy in his foreword to The Class Struggles in France, can be described as the strategy of attrition'***

freedom of association, freedom of the press, freedom to hold meetings.

On the other hand, one can just as little believe that the strategy of attrition makes all battles superfluous. That could hardly be so. The strategy of attrition distinguishes itself from the strategy of overthrow only by the fact that, unlike the latter, it does not directly home in on the deciding battle, but rather it prepares it for a long time and exposes itself to such a battle only when it knows the opponent to be adequately weakened. But the latter would have to already be unusually demoralised for one to be successful in tearing from him the sources of his means of power without a great, decisive struggle. The strategy of attrition of the Romans against Hannibal did not free them from the necessity of finally staging the decisive battle of Zama against the general of the Carthaginians. But even before the final decisive battle, the strategy of attrition cannot avoid every battle which the enemy tries to bring about.

Thus, to maintain the metaphor, Friedrich Engels was also not at all of the opinion that the strategy of attrition was enough and that it would spare the proletariat the great, final battle for political power. If the revisionist elements present his "Political Testament" in this way, they do him a great injustice.

The strategy of attrition as formulated by Engels in his "Testament" is also distinguished from the tactics of revisionism by the fact that the former proceeds from the irreconcilability and constant sharpening of the class contradiction between proletariat and ruling classes, whilst the latter expects the class contradictions to become milder. To maintain the metaphor: the latter doubt the strength of their own army, its own ability to achieve its goal without the alliance of another army; it believes that it will find an ally in a wing of the hostile forces and then with its help will manage to outmanoeuvre the enemy without a deciding battle.

The strategy of attrition in Engels' sense maintains on the other hand the strongest trust in the strength and reliability of one's own army as soon as it is purposefully used. Only with such trust as a prerequisite is this strategy possible. On the other hand, it is full of the strongest distrust of all bourgeois parties. It certainly does not fail to recognise their differences and contradictions and where possible it attempts to exploit them. But it regards each of these parties as an enemy, attempts to disorganise and weaken all of them, to undermine their self-confidence and their respect amongst the masses, whilst at the same time pushing forward untriflingly the strengthening of its own organisation as well as the trust of the masses in us, and thus prepares the collapse of the opponent and our own victory.

Engels would have considered any policy which wanted to strengthen our party and thereby its power by encouraging the masses to trust a bourgeois party and by taking responsibility for that party in public, as stupidity or treachery. The kind of advantage this infamous tactic brings can be seen in France (5) where it could be tested in a very fruitful way. The participation in political power had the edifying result that the Socialist Party handed over the time-servers, who now as ministers defend the theft of state funds, and that the Socialist Party is regarded in wide sections of the French proletariat as the breeding-ground for similar

treachery and corruption.

It is certainly not easy to employ the strategy of attrition as Engels meant it. And yet German Social Democracy managed to do so brilliantly under the Anti-Socialist Laws (6) when it succeeded in employing this strategy against both the demand of the Mostians (8) that the strategy of overthrow should be employed, and also against the revisionists of that period, from Hochberg and Schramm to Viereck (8), who wanted to win bourgeois sympathy by weakening the fighting character of our movement.

Engels' "Testament" did however have one inadequacy, insofar as it did not say anything about which means of struggle should be used by the proletariat in the event — which he saw as certain — that our opponents, brought to the point of despair by the unstoppable effect of our strategy of attrition, would one fine day carry out an act of violence in order to cut us off from the basis of that strategy. The answer had already been given by the events in Belgium at the time when Engels was writing his "Testament". A decade later it gained the assent of German social democracy after a series of further practical experiences. In certain circumstances the mass strike can become a means of transforming the strategy of attrition in the political struggle of the proletariat into the strategy of overthrow, whenever the former becomes inadequate or impossible. Here the words mass strike are to be taken in the sense of strike of compulsion. We would not need such a long discussion about protest strikes. Such strikes have been accepted by our party without any fuss since 1890, when we declared that the best way to celebrate May 1st was by stopping work.

When the question is raised today as to whether it is our task to work for the outbreak of a mass strike, then it is no different from raising the question of whether the continuation of the strategy of attrition practised by our party has now become impossible, or severely threatens our party.

Note that we are not concerned with the perspectives of a mass strike which is unleashed quite spontaneously, without our intervention, by a sudden event like a blood-bath after a street demonstration. There is no purpose in wracking our brains about this, for we know nothing about the circumstances of such an event, nor can we influence them.

What is being discussed here is the question of whether our strategy of attrition is no longer suitable: whether the situation has changed so much that the strategy of overthrow offers better prospects of success, or even whether our previous strategy is becoming impossible, whether it must lead to the demoralisation of our own ranks if carried on any longer; whether, in order to hold together our ranks and fill them with confidence and fighting spirit we have to introduce a new tactic which — transferring a military concept into the sphere of politics — we have called the tactic of overthrow: the tactic of overthrowing the resistance of the opponents of equal suffrage through one violent blow.

The first question which we have to discuss here is: Is our situation really such that the choice between a mass strike and the collapse of mass action is all that remains for us?

## III

Like any strategy, the strategy of attrition is linked to certain conditions. Only in those conditions is it possible and meaningful. It would be stupid to want to pursue it under all circumstances, and the fact that we have been carrying it out for decades with the most outstanding success is in itself no reason to continue to adhere to it. Changed circumstances can very well demand a departure from it.

In war, the strategy of attrition becomes impossible or pointless whenever the enemy threatens to cut us off from the basis of that strategy or to take it away. Then it becomes a demand of self-preservation to overthrow him before he succeeds in doing that. Likewise the strategy of attrition must be given up whenever it demoralises and discourages our own troops, whenever it threatens to lead to cowardice and desertion and only a bold stroke can consolidate the army and keep it together.

Seizing the offensive for such a bold action also becomes unavoidable whenever we are stuck in a cul-de-sac where we only have the choice between overthrowing the enemy and miserable capitulation.

Finally, a transition to the strategy of overthrow is called for when the enemy himself is in dire straits, opening up a favourable situation where we can (if we use the opportunity speedily and energetically) deliver a violent and perhaps deadly blow.

No lengthy discussion is necessary to translate these descriptions from the military realm to the political.

When the Jena party congress recognised the mass strike (in the sense of the strike of compulsion) as one of our means of struggle, and declared it possible that we might one day go over from the strategy of attrition to the strategy of overthrow, then it had immediately in mind only the first of the examples described above: i.e., when the enemy threatens our base, and makes it impossible to continue the struggle as before, by attacking the Reichstag suffrage or the other conditions of proletarian organisation and propaganda.

That is not the case at present.

Does the mass strike therefore perhaps become necessary because at present we can keep the masses round our banners only by constantly and rapidly stepping up our

***'Our opponents, brought to despair, would one fine day carry out an act of violence... [then] the mass strike can become a means of transforming the strategy of attrition into the strategy of overthrow'***





action? Would they otherwise leave us and go to other parties, or turn their backs on politics, discouraged and disappointed since they have gained nothing from it?

Comrade Luxemburg seems to believe that when she speaks of the "dilemma" facing the "three-million-strong party": "Either we go forwards at all costs, or the mass action under way will collapse in defeat".

This dilemma is supposedly the consequence of the inner logic of any mass movement. Comrade Luxemburg explains that:

"The mass movement has its own logic and psychology, and it is a pressing demand on politicians who want to lead it that they take these factors into account. The expressions of the mass will in the political struggle cannot in fact be maintained artificially at one and the same level for any length of time, they cannot be encapsulated in one and the same form. *They must be intensified and stepped up, taking on new and more effective forms.* The mass action, once unleashed, must move forwards. And if at a given moment the leading party loses its will to give the masses the necessary slogans, then a certain disappointment unavoidably sets in, the élan disappears, and the action collapses".

Thus it is not from the conditions of the given situation that Comrade Luxemburg draws the necessity of the mass strike, but from general psychological considerations which would be valid for any mass action, wherever and whenever it takes place. It must always become sharper, take on new and more effective forms. Once a mass action has been started, then it must rapidly go forwards, from street demonstrations to protest strikes, from protest strikes to strikes of compulsion — and what then? What "sharpening" of the struggle remains for us then?

The conception which Comrade Luxemburg presents corresponded very well to the conditions of the Russian Revolution, i.e. circumstances in which the strategy of overthrow was suitable. It is however in complete contradiction to the experiences on which our party's strategy of attrition rests. It rests on the understanding that the proletariat is a tenacious fighter, superior in tenacity and perseverance to other classes. It can pursue mass actions for many years without taking into account, when choosing its means of action, anything other than their efficacy and appropriateness for the particular circumstances. In order to employ its ultimate weapons, it must have different and more weighty reasons than the need to go beyond those previously used.

On several occasions Comrade Luxemburg has chosen to quote the Austrian example. The struggle for the suffrage lasted over a dozen years there. The use of the mass strike was considered by the Austrian comrades as early as 1894, and yet they were able to keep their outstanding mass movement going until 1905 without the escalation and sharper struggle which for Comrade Luxemburg is the "inner logic" of any mass movement. In their struggle for the suffrage the Austrian comrades never went beyond street demonstrations, and yet their élan did not disappear and their action did not collapse.

And the proletarians of Germany can certainly stand comparison with the Austrians as regards tenacity.

If the "inner logic" of any mass action is the only reason for going beyond street demonstrations and local protest strikes in the suffrage campaign, replacing the strategy of attrition with the strategy of overthrow, and advancing to the mass strike, then the argument is rather thin.

From its beginnings social democracy accepted the strategy of attrition and fully developed it. This was not just because the then existing political rights offered a basis for it. It was also because the Marxist theory of class struggle gave it a guarantee that it could count on the support of the class conscious proletariat as long as it energetically represented the class's interests, whether or not it kindled the masses' enthusiasm with successes or new sensations.

The proletariat certainly strives wholeheartedly for the quickest possible overthrow of the existing order of society which mistreats him so terribly. When the possibility of destroying this social order opens up to him, then no-one will be able to hold him back, and if social democracy were to try then he would scornfully push it aside.

But that is not the situation today. Today there is only one party which is the enemy of bourgeois society: social democracy. The proletariat finds no other party which could lead it to victory quicker. It finds no other which would lead it to victory at all. It finds no other party which represents its class interests in opposition to the interests of the bourgeoisie, even if only within the framework of the present mode of production.

Proletarians can be led to a bourgeois party only through lack of consciousness, not through revolutionary impatience.

Cannot this impatience, however, turn into its opposite, into indifference and despondency, if it is disappointed and social democracy does not meet its promises? That is certainly possible. But when will it happen? When our party arouses expectations which it cannot fulfill or promises more than it can achieve.

Is that the case today?

If social democracy had promised the masses that within a few months it would at all costs achieve equal suffrage in Prussia, then certainly it would disappoint the masses severely if it did not now do everything in its power to quickly step up the action and spur the masses on to the application of their ultimate and sharpest means of struggle. Then it would certainly be confronted with the dilemma of risking all, come what may, or suffering a considerable moral collapse which could paralyse its powers of attraction for a long time (9)

But the social democracy of Prussia has never promised anything of the sort. On the contrary. We may point to the fact that it was the Marxists who always stressed that the right to vote was more difficult to obtain in Prussia than elsewhere, because here it is not a matter of a simple voting reform leading to a few changes of mandate, but the overthrow of the rule of the Junkers (landlords). Their rule will lose its basis when the present Prussian voting system falls. They will defend it tooth and nail. Acquiring free voting rights means something completely different in Prussia than, for example, in Bavaria or Austria or Baden. It is linked with the overthrow of the Junkers' rule.

Here I might recall that I developed these ideas (among



French police fight revolutionary students in 1968. In 1910 Kautsky argued that the day of the barricades was almost past. In 1979 the Eurocommunists pour scorn on 'insurrectionism' [and give their support to the strengthening of the police and army].

others) in polemic against Comrades Eisner and Stampfer in the years 1905 and 1906 (10). They were in favour of the most energetic tactics, and denounced me because I argued against an agitation which would commit us to a political mass strike. In German conditions that could make sense only in a revolutionary situation. How I was criticised by Eisner and Stampfer because I took the standpoint of an "opportunist shopkeeper", betraying the Russian Revolution on the question of the mass strike!

I advocated the same conception then as I do now. It would have been highly irresponsible of our party to promise to cope within a few months with such powerful opponents as the Junkers and the Prussian Government. We have never made such promises. German social democracy has never put forward the slogan: overthrow of the present regime within a few months by rapidly escalating action, but only the slogan: *No peace in Prussia as long as equal, secret and direct suffrage is not won.*

That is what we have promised. That is the promise we are obliged to keep. But that means that we only have to further develop the tactics, above all street demonstrations, which our comrades have already used with great success. We must not slacken, on the contrary we must organise

more and more energetically. But we do not have the least obligation to go "forwards at any price" and to regard "the street demonstration even now as a method which will soon be overtaken by events" and must be replaced by sharper methods.

The dilemma of which Comrade Luxemburg speaks only arises if we develop propaganda for the mass strike, if we explain that street demonstrations will not be adequate for us and that a rapid and constant escalation of mass action is necessary.

If we spread such propaganda and arouse the expectation in the masses that it is now a case of going forward with jubilant cries to the overthrow of the enemy through the sharpest methods that the proletariat disposes of, then certainly within a very short time we will face the dilemma: either deeply disappoint the masses, or pounce at the throat of the Junker regime with a powerful leap, in order to overthrow it or be overthrown by it.

Today this dilemma does not yet exist. Today we are still free in the choice of our methods of action.

Translated from the German by Stan Crooke.  
NEXT WEEK: Part IV of Kautsky's article.

## NOTES

1. The Jena Congress of the SPD took place in September 1905. The main discussion was on the question of the mass strike, the use of which had been rejected by the trade unions at their congress in May. Bebel successfully moved a resolution which advocated use of the mass strike, though it was restricted to a defence of existing electoral rights and the right of union organisation, and was only to be used as a last resort. Luxemburg wrote: "As on several previous occasions, we 'extreme leftists' found ourselves being forced to fight not against Bebel (in spite of important differences with him) but together with him against the opportunists".  
In practice the congress only made a verbal commitment to the mass strike, and by the time of the Mannheim Congress in September 1906 the SPD leaders had, in secret negotiations, come to a compromise with the union leaders which made use of the mass strike dependent on the unions' agreement.
2. In Belgium a number of general strikes for equal suffrage (one man, one vote: the demand for votes for women was shelved by the opportunist leadership at the Belgian Socialists' 1902 Congress) were held in 1891, 1893 and 1902. Luxemburg describes these events in her reply to Kautsky. In a series of articles written in 1902-3 she explained the failure of the 1902 strike by the fact that it had not been properly prepared and that the Socialists conducted the struggle through Parliamentary manoeuvres with the Liberals. (These articles were published in English in *Permanent Revolution* nos. 1 and 2, available from the I-CL, 98 Gifford St, London N1 0DF).  
In Austria-Hungary there were mass movements for suffrage reform in 1894-7 and, finally and successfully, in 1905. Luxemburg draws the lessons of this struggle below.  
In Italy there was a wave of very violent strikes in 1904, and a general strike was called to protest at the massacre of strikers.  
In Sweden, there was in 1902 a demonstration strike against a bill continuing with a limited franchise. There was also an unsuccessful general strike in 1909, following threats by the employers to lock out all unionists.
3. Fabius Cunctator, 'the Delayer', was a Roman General whom Kautsky takes as the embodiment of the military strategy of attrition. He gave his name to the Fabian Society.
4. Engels' introduction to Marx's 'The Class Struggles in France' was written and published in 1895. The position that Kautsky gives as the basis of the strategy of attrition can be summed up in the following words of Engels:  
"With this successful utilisation of universal suffrage, however, an entirely new method of proletarian struggle came into operation, and this method quickly developed further. It was found that the state institutions, in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organised, offer the working class still further opportunities to fight those very state institutions... And so it happened that the bourgeoisie and the government came to be more afraid of the legal than of the illegal actions of the workers' party, of the results of elections than those of rebellions."  
"For here too, the conditions of the struggle had essentially changed. Rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades, which decided the issue everywhere up to 1848, was to a

considerable extent obsolete".

When the introduction was published by the SPD, certain passages mentioning the violent overthrow of the state were omitted (to be discovered and published only in 1930), despite Engels' strong objections at the attempt to portray him as "an advocate of legality at all costs". One of the deleted passages, for example, read:

"Does that mean that in the future street fighting will no longer play any role? Certainly not. It only means that the conditions since 1848 have become far more unfavourable for civilian fighters and far more favourable for the military. In future, street fighting can therefore be victorious only if the disadvantageous situation is compensated by other factors. Accordingly, it will occur more seldom in the beginning of a great revolution than in its further progress, and will have to be undertaken with greater forces..."

5. In June 1899 the French socialist Millerand entered the bourgeois government of Waldeck-Rousseau, which also contained General Gallifet, the butcher of the Commune. This led to considerable debate in the Second International, which however failed to condemn Millerand at its Congress in 1900, mainly because of the 'neutrality' of the German SPD.

6. The Anti-Socialist Laws, in force from 1879 to 1890, made all Social Democratic organisations and publications illegal. For Kautsky and the SPD leadership a fear of the reintroduction of such laws and a belief in the mechanical inevitability of socialism were grounds for remaining on the basis of strict legality and not doing anything (such as calling a mass strike) which would endanger the Party's existence.

7. Johann Most was an anarchist who advocated in the period of the Anti-Socialist Laws that the SPD should organise an uprising to overthrow the state. He was expelled from the SPD eventually.

8. Hochberg, Schramm, and Viereck were attacked by Marx and Engels in the 1870s for wanting to transform Social Democracy into a party of social reform. (See the 'Circular Letter' in the Penguin Marx collection, 'The First International and After').

9. In the Prussian state elections (as opposed to the all-German Reichstag elections), voting was conducted according to the three-class suffrage, where the population was divided into three parts according to the amount of tax paid, and where the top two classes were disproportionately represented. As long as the three-class suffrage system existed, there was no possibility of the social democracy winning a majority. Abolition of the three-class suffrage thus became a major demand of the SPD.

10. In 1905 Kautsky had argued against Friedrich Stampfer and Kurt Eisner, who were then on the right wing of the SPD but who supported the use of the political mass strike because it appeared as a peaceful weapon which could take the place of fighting on the barricades.



## Drivers step up campaign against 'spy in cab'

LAST WEEK Alan Law, the TGWU's outgoing lorry drivers' official in Birmingham, claimed that the national leaders of the union had decided to accept the tachograph in British lorries. This was despite the recently reaffirmed policy of the TGWU's Road Transport Committee to oppose the device.

Law's statement has been officially denied by Moss Evans and by the road haulage officials Alex Kitson and Jack Ashwell. And as part of the campaign against the tachograph, the 5/35 branch in Birmingham has just published two leaflets explaining the case against it. One is specifically for lorry drivers, the other for workers in other industries.

They point out that: "The tachometer makes it possible to monitor and plan a driver's work minute by minute, day in day out.

"Research into human physiology backs our case for driver control, as only drivers themselves can know how alert they are feeling, how much stress they are under, and how tired they are feeling at particular times of day. In addition, only drivers are in the position to understand the varying road, traffic and weather conditions, or the performance qualities of their vehicle."

The union's reply to the government's plan to bring tachos in is:

"First. No tachographs! Driving heavy goods vehicles has become a more skilled and more satisfying job in recent years. We want it to stay that way.

"The eight hour day is welcome: but we want a basic weekly wage that we can live on. Given this, all hours regulations would be unnecessary. It's for the union to deal with the 'cowboys'.

"Large amounts of money would be better spent on real safety improvements to the vehicles, such as: noise control engineering to reduce the impact of noise on both communities and drivers; anti-jackknife devices; exhaust-engine brakes, to make heavy vehicles much safer on long downhill stretches; more effective rear and front end crash bars; and better overnight rest facilities for drivers. Legislation is needed here, not on tachos."

The leaflet for general distribution finishes up: "Would you consent to a TV camera in your office, your factory or your home? The tachometer records more information about a driver's work than a camera can."

Copies of either leaflet can be obtained free from: TGWU 5/35 branch, Transport House, 211 Broad Street, Birmingham 15.

# WORKERS' ACTION

## South Wales NUM: Weak on pay, strong on jobs

AT THE annual area meeting of South Wales miners last week, militant wages resolutions were voted down with the argument that defence of jobs under threat by pit closures must take priority.

The conference, following Area Executive recommendations, passed a resolution calling for £10 on the rate from April 1980, while a res-

olution instructing the Executive to support a fight against pit closures in South Wales by any means possible. The pit first in line is Deep Duffryn. A closure announcement is expected soon. The NUM has stated that huge investments are needed to open up reserve seams to make the pit productive for at least another seven years.

In the Cynon valley several pits have already taken one-day strike action to lobby the National Executive in London. Five coachloads of miners went up three weeks ago.

They have also held public meetings on the closures. Mike Griffin, branch secretary of Penrhiwceibr Lodge, told *Workers' Action* that the 'whole community is involved, because of the loss of jobs in the area'. He also said: 'the issue of wages should not be counterposed to the defence of pits under threat of closure. Both must be fought for'.

More public meetings will be organised in the area, with the hope of spreading action. A call has also gone out for a ballot on strike action against the closure. The lodges in the Cynon valley are adamant that these closures will not go through. They will stop them by any means necessary.

The NUM Area Executive is supporting the fight fully so far. But Deep Duffryn will be the test case.

GEOFF WILLIAMS



Resolution from Maerdy lodge calling for £120 minimum for face workers fell. The vote was 350 to 211.

The South Wales NUM executive argued at the conference that last year's pay claim had been 'ridiculous'. In other words, don't fight! Dai Coity Davies, a well-known miners' leader, said that 'we miners must now talk to the Thatcher government'.

However, the more militant lodges in the Cynon valley forced through a resolu-

## Police arrest the victims

TAFARA Musikavanhu and Harold Ndlovu are two black teachers. On 24th February this year they went into the Apollo Steak House in Stratford, East London, after an evening spent at a lecture in the University of London.

The restaurant was crowded and they were obliged to take seats opposite two white men. Before they could sit down one of the white men punched Tafara several times in the face, causing his lip to bleed and cutting his tongue and upper lip.

After failing to placate the men, Tafara and Harold made their way to the door to avoid further attack. They found themselves escorted outside by two ' heavies '. After protesting about being attacked and prevented from ordering, they were told by one of the heavies that "Blacks are not allowed here".

On hearing this, the two teachers demanded that the police be called. When the police arrived, rather than enter the Steak House and investigate the teachers' story they arrested the teachers and took them to the police station!

The police case was that the teachers were drunk and at no time complained of assault — although Tafara had blood streaming down his face as he talked to the police, and an independent doctor's report the next day stated that Tafara was a victim of assault.

In the court, the 'drunk and disorderly' charges against the teachers were dropped for lack of evidence.

But the story does not end there. Newham Anti-Nazi League and other local anti-racist groups will be taking a very close look at the Apollo Steak House, with a view to mounting a campaign against it if evidence of systematic racism is found.

IH

## Teachers call off action

THE NATIONAL Union of Teachers Executive have accepted a marginally improved pay offer of 9.3% plus £6 a month 'on account'. The rest of the claim is being submitted to the Comparability Commission, who will award two payments phased over one and a half years. All industrial action has been called off.

Militants already sensed a sell-out on Friday 18th when a similar, slightly worse, offer was made. NUT General Secretary Fred Jarvis is then wanted more money 'on account', and phasing over one year instead of two years.

However, he accepted the revised terms of reference for the Commission, which remain in the final offer. These terms, including reference to teachers' 'terms and conditions of employment', had earlier been rejected by the NUT. Teachers' long holidays and short hours at school will be used to justify lower pay, despite the many hours of extra work in marking and preparation.

The teachers' claim was based on a joint management/union working party which worked out that rises averaging 36.5% were needed to restore the real value of the last major settlement,

the 1974 Houghton Award. In other words, management had already agreed that teachers needed 36.5% to catch up. They just weren't going to pay us! To agree to the matter being reconsidered by the Comparability Commission, and on adverse terms of reference, was a double retreat.

The other main teachers' union, the NAS-UWT, fumed against the NUT but gave no alternative lead.

When the claim was first submitted, the NUT was attacked for being 'irresponsible' and NAS-UWT secretary Casey volunteered to accept phasing over three years... until the civil service unions took industrial action and won settlements phased over one year.

Then when the employers' offer was only 9%, Casey demanded that the claim go to arbitration. Under the Teachers' Remuneration Act, arbitration can be imposed if talks are deadlocked, and the results are binding. The Government appoints the chairman of the arbitration panel.

The NUT leadership had no nerve for a struggle. The claim was a bad one from the start. It divided the membership because it sought to increase differentials, while

socialists argued for a flat rate increase.

The NUT action of 'withdrawing goodwill' was too weak and lost effect after a few days. The popular and logical step of imposing 'no cover' for absences was simply not tried, despite requests from over 50 branches in a period of two weeks to step up the action.

Instead, the Executive right wingers faked left by calling for a ballot of members in selected areas for strike action. Ballots take four or five weeks and require a two-thirds majority. The summer term is simply too short, especially when the leaders have already pledged not to disrupt examinations.

Although the claim has yet to be ratified by a special NUT salary conference on June 16th, with only four weeks of term left by then the result is fairly predictable.

We have been sold out because the leadership is more concerned with keeping control of militants than conducting a real fight. What was needed was an across the board claim, much earlier industrial action, and unity with other workers in struggle.

CHEUNG SIU MING

## British Leyland: £100 target needed this year

THE UNION leaders in BL Cars have finally given up any pretence of opposition to the company's parity proposals. At a meeting of 400 senior stewards on Friday 18th, the vote was two to one to accept the company's productivity criteria for plant-by-plant implementation of parity.

Until that meeting, the unions had been formally opposed to the company's productivity requirements, and had been calling for the first stage of parity to be paid to all plants.

So far just over 42,000 workers in 14 factories (about half the BL Cars workforce) have qualified for Stage 1 payments. But the senior stewards' climbdown does not mean the money will be paid out immediately. Before any plant can receive its payments, it must accept the new five-grade pay structure, which increases differentials by pushing the lower-paid downwards. The vast majority of production workers are downgraded to grade 3, and most semi-directs to grade 4, cutting pay by about £2 a week, and thus halv-

ing the value of the parity increase, which in Longbridge is about £4.

Until the grading structure is accepted, all parity money that is earned will be banked. The company obviously hopes that the carrot of the banked money will be sufficient to overcome the considerable hostility that exists to regrading, and the union side of the negotiating committee is now committed to forcing the regrading through as fast as possible.

The company's other main proposal — an incentive scheme — is now much closer to realisation. Already workers at Cowley have been told that they are eligible for incentive bonuses, and the company plan to bring the incentive scheme in at other plants 'in tandem' with the implementation of parity.

To get out of this productivity wheeling and dealing once and for all, a clear claim for £100 minimum plus an escalator clause protecting pay against inflation is needed in this year's pay round.

JIM DENHAM



A LARGE demonstration is being planned for June 7th outside the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. It will be demanding the release of the Virk brothers, three Asian men who have been in jail for almost a year now as a result of defending themselves against racist attack.

The attack took place while the Virks were repairing their car outside their own front door in Newham, London. Five or six white youths, some of them drunk, first abused them with racial insults and then attacked them. The brothers defended themselves. A couple of white racist attackers were injured in the fight.

For daring to fight back, the Virks have been sentenced to seven, three and two years' imprisonment.

Set against the five years for murder recently meted out to the white slayer of black teenager Michael Ferrelra, the Virk case clearly indicates the racism of the courts.

In response to this racism the black community organised and financed the appeal due to be heard as from June 7th. The demonstration is being organised by the Steering Committee of Asian Organisations and supported by Newham Anti-Nazi League and the Newham Defence Committee.

The demonstration will run from 9.30am to 2pm, after that there will be a continuous picket for the duration of the appeal, with supporters of the Virk brothers inside the court throughout.

IH

## Virk brothers appeal opens June 7

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Saturday 23 June. 'Defend Our Unions' rank and file conference. New Century Hall, Manchester. Credentials for trade union delegates, £1 from 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

Saturday-Monday 2-4 June. Lutte Ouvrière fete, near Paris. For more details contact WA, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

'No revolution without women's liberation'. Pamphlet from the Campaign for Solidarity with Iran. 20p plus postage from CSI, c/o 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

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