

# Workers' fight

5p

No.91 — March 22nd to 28th, 1975

INSIDE:

Portugal: Workers could take over — pages 2 & 3.

What happened to Portugal's Colonies? p.4

PUBLIC MEETING

PORTUGAL — which way now?

Speaker: Alvaro Miranda

(Portuguese Workers' Coordinating Committee)

Sunday 23rd March, at the 'George', Liverpool Road, London N.1 (Angel Tube).

## ANGER GROWS AS TROOPS DO THE DIRTY WORK

FIVE hundreds soldiers have been sent to Glasgow to break the nine week old strike of Corporation dustcart drivers. They have moved in past the pickets and started to burn the 75,000 tons of rubbish.

It's been estimated it could take them three months. That is, if they are not stopped. They may, in lighting the incinerators, have lit the fuse to a much bigger fire.

For in response to this state organised blacklegging, mass meetings have been called all over Glasgow and in the west of Scotland. 90,000 Glasgow trade unionists are prepared to stop work in protest at the use of troops against the strike — if the dustcart drivers' union, the T&GWU, calls all its members out.

Already, maintenance engineers at two incineration depots that the troops haven't yet started on, Govan and Polmadie, have walked out. And a deputation from the Rolls Royce factory at Hillington joined the pickets at the Dawsholm dump as the Highland Fusilliers started their dirty work, and said the factory could soon be at a standstill if the troops weren't withdrawn. And the senior steward at Rolls Royce, East Kilbride, stated that "I hope the trade union movement in Scotland takes the appropriate action. As far as I am concerned, that must mean mass strike action on a wide scale." And George Kelly, convenor of Glasgow Corporation electricians, called for mass pickets and a meeting of West of Scotland shop stewards to coordinate action.

### WAITING

But many other trade unionists are waiting for the T&GWU to give them the word. As the local Confed. secretary, John Sherriff, remarked, "We will tell the T&GWU to withdraw all their members and we will give them full support. We would instruct our members to cease work immediately. But we are not doing any tuppenceha'penny things. First of all the T&GWU has to do the job. If they stop the buses and all their members in Glasgow we will do the rest. I'll request my members to stop work. But I'm not going to have them walking down Renfield Street in some demonstration and being passed by T&G members driving buses."

But the T&GWU seem to be afraid to escalate the strike, and if anything have tried to damp down moves for direct solidarity action. Alex Kitson of the T&G has called on the Conciliation and Arbitration Service to "mediate", in the hope that they will be able to stop the strike spreading as the road haulage drivers' strike did last October.

### TROOPS OUT NOW! DEMONSTRATION



ALL OUT ON 6 APRIL!

Assemble at Clerkenwell Green, London EC1 (nearest Tube, Farringdon) 1.30pm, Sunday 6 April.

# Labour sends in its scab army

But the bringing in of troops to break a strike is not just an issue for that union. It concerns every worker, in every union. When the state, quite literally, brings its big guns in (even if only in overalls) it is an attack on the whole of the working class. Any and every worker can and must take the initiative against the use of troops.

In Glasgow, many workers must be feeling that the troops are there to raise a siege — a siege by militant workers up against the Social Contract. Already in the city,

soldiers were brought in during the Firemen's strike against Phase 3. Over the past year, thousands of other public service workers have come into struggle — busmen, ambulance men, sewage workers, teachers and corporation dustmen and electricians.

Last October, there was also an important strike by private sector haulage drivers. The strike spread and won £40 for 40 hours. And now the dustcart drivers, together with men driving lighting lorries and school buses, are demanding "parity with the private sector".

The strike has lasted 10 weeks, with the employers holding out over a few pennies and complaining about the "health hazard" — as if they ever treated the health hazard of rat infested, damp slums with such urgency.

Trade unionists cannot let them get away with using troops. The deterrent of massive, spreading strikes and mass pickets must be automatically applied. With troops frequently putting up roadblocks at Heathrow and holding 'exercises' around working class streets in a town such as Hull (and of course standing on alert during the last miners' strike), it would be quite self destructive for the labour movement to treat this strike breaking casually.

The army, like the police force, is basically there to protect the existing order of exploitation, oppression and chaotic profit seeking — against its victims, the working class. The ruling class claim that any confrontation with the army is an attack on their order.

True! So be it! The sooner the better. The bigger the better.



## NOT MUCH LEFT OF THIEU'S VIETNAM

IT TOOK United States marines more than a month to reconquer the Vietnamese city of Hue from the National Liberation Front. That was in 1968, after the Tet offensive in which the NLF boldly struck at dozens of major towns including Saigon itself.

Soon, the flag of the NLF will be flying over Hue again. The American forces are gone, and despite billions of dollars in aid to the puppet Thieu dictatorship, despite his almost unlimited air power for use against the ground forces of the NLF, they are about to take the city with hardly a fight. This time, they will keep it.

Hue is the third largest city in South Vietnam — after Saigon and Da Nang — with a population of some 300,000. Its fall will be a major blow to Thieu. Only a few days ago his troops had to abandon Kontum and Pleiku in the Central Highlands, and the NLF have taken most of the northern province of Quang Tri.

Now Thieu has his back to the wall. He has withdrawn most of his army south to defend Saigon itself and the rice growing area of the Mekong Delta: without that, Saigon would be reduced to the same feeble reliance on U.S. 'meals on wheels' that we have seen in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in the last few weeks before its inevitable fall.

US Intelligence projections had forecast a possible major NLF offensive some time in 1976. They didn't expect it so soon — and nor did they expect the retreat to Thieu's only safe positions to happen so swiftly. The victories already credited to the NLF have shown how much the US ringmasters under estimated the fighting strength and will of the popular army, and the deep demoralisation of Thieu's troops.

But the ringmaster himself has lost the will to win. Many

quite conservative Americans regard the devastation of Vietnam and Cambodia as one of the ugliest episodes in US history, and the ultimate defeat of their army, backed by every weapon and convenience science could devise, at the hands of the barefooted volunteers of the NLF, as richly deserved.

The withdrawal, when it came, had to be done in such a way as not to serve notice to every liberation movement throughout the world that the road would now be open to it. Thieu was left armed to the teeth, and with enough money to fill the pockets of his corrupt officials and also fight the war. The Pentagon helped him conscript and train an army of a million men.

But now, increasingly, the US Senate and Congress are unwilling to keep topping up Thieu's allowance. In Cambodia and Vietnam, they can see that it's only a matter of time before their puppets fall. And they want to cut the strings now and have done with it.

President Ford is still unsure whether the money he wants, or any of it, will be approved. So far his requests have received a firm NO from every authoritative committee, and the Democratic caucus in the Congress has already decided to vote down any more aid.

Meanwhile, the responses of the individual governments is everything but heartening for Ford. In Cambodia, troops vital for the defense of the perimeter line around Phnom Penh mutinied in protest at not getting their pay or their rice rations — both, it is thought, have been pocketed by the generals.

And now there is news that both Thailand and the Philippines are "reexamining" their relations with the United States. The despondency in the camp of imperialism and its stooges is running deep.

## LIVERPOOL NEXT?

AN emergency meeting of Liverpool's Highways and Environment Committee has been called which could decide to call in troops to break the strike of dustcart drivers.

This was announced after contractors had failed to turn up to shift the eight foot high piles of rubbish at the Wellington Road tip. The Council had made it known that contractors would take over the drivers' work, but when the 14 lorries that had been promised did not materialise, speculations about a second Glasgow situation developed.

The Liverpool men are striking over the same issue — more pay for their Heavy Goods Vehicle licences, in line with drivers in private road haulage.

The drivers' leaders have declared that any contractors who do undertake the work will be picketed, and the Trades Council will be asked to discuss ways of supporting the drivers.



Left to right: Alvaro Cunhal, CP leader; Prime Minister Goncalves of the AFM; SP leader Mrio Soares; and Copcon head Brigadier Carvalho

**AFTER THE** falledcoup of 11th March, Portuguese television showed a conversation between the commander of the rebel parachute regiment and the officer at the Sacavem barracks which he had attacked.

"I have orders to occupy this unit", declared the Para captain. The barracks commander expressed doubt. The rebel officer said, in justification, "There is a conspiracy against the programme of the Armed Forces Movement".

Even an attempt at coup d'etat justified itself in the name of the "programme of the Armed Forces Movement". But the strangest twist is that no-one, least of all the leaders of the AFM, knows what the "programme of the AFM" really is.

Last 25th April, the AFM elevated General Spinoza as head of state. This 12th March, that same General Spinoza flees from the regime of that same AFM, into exile in Brazil.

Last month the AFM controlled government put out a detailed Economic Plan, to last three years. One measure specifically excluded by that Plan was the nationalisation of the banks and insurance companies. Since March 11th, both banks and insurance companies have been nationalised.

**SOLDIERS REFUSED TO INTERVENE IN STREETS**

It's not just when it comes to working out programmes of government measures that there is confusion. The instability of the state in Portugal is equally visible on the streets. Time and again in the past eleven months, troops sent in to deal with strikes and demonstrations have refused to intervene. Early last month, troops equipped with armoured cars and all the paraphernalia of confrontation were supposed to stop a demonstration of 60,000 workers from marching past the US embassy. The leaders of the demo spoke to the soldiers. And the marchers went through.

At other times, different units come together during some incident and do intervene, but at cross purposes with each other. When in August some former DGS (secret police) agents imprisoned at Caxias jail broke out of their cells and staged an occupation, an angry crowd gathered. Units of the PSP riot police, a force of the Salazarist state left intact after the revolution of 25th April, appeared and attacked the crowd. But when, later, forces from COPCON — the new unit set up under Carvalho by the AFM to maintain internal security — turned up, separated the PSP from the crowd, and dealt with the DGS men.

**ONLY AS A PHRASE, ONLY IN WORDS**

Writing about the February 1848 revolution in France which overthrew the restored monarchy, and about the workers' uprising which followed in June but was bloodily suppressed by the bourgeoisie, Karl Marx said:

"The February revolution was the beautiful revolution, the revolution of universal sympathy, because the conflicts which erupted in the revolution against the monarchy slumbered harmoniously side by side, as yet undeveloped, because the social struggle which formed its background had only assumed an airy existence — it existed only as a phrase, only in words. The June revolution is the ugly revolution, the repulsive revolution, because realities have taken the place of words, because the republic has uncovered the head of the monster itself by striking aside the protective, concealing crown."

In Portugal, 25th April was undoubtedly the "beautiful revolution". Everyone, from the most oppressed workers to the most wealthy capitalists, rejoiced at the fall of Caetano. The capitalists hoped to cut the

costs of Portugal's hopeless and ruinous wars in Africa, to replace the Caetano regime which was still living in a dream world boosted by myths of Portuguese imperial grandeur, by a more rational, modern and flexible regime, and to secure better conditions for economic relations with Western Europe. That was what they hoped.

They did not reckon with the explosive working class militancy which spread and flowered as soon as the dead weight of the 48-year old jackboot regime was removed. The Portuguese working class — industrial workers make up over one third of the workforce — is by no means so easily put down as were the French workers in 1848.

The last 11 months have seen several major strike waves and occupations, with workers effectively sacking managers and foremen in a general movement to purge their workplaces of those who had acted as the spies and agents of the Salazar police state. The Workers' Committees, which before the April revolution had (like the Workers' Commissions in Spain) acted clandestinely as the only genuine leaders of the working class struggle, spread and grew overnight. These Committees are the most democratic and responsive organs imaginable.

**ELECTED BY WORKERS IN EVERY SECTION**

They represent every worker in a plant, whether in a union or not, and in every department — production workers, cleaners, canteen staff, office staff, etc. The members of the Committee are directly elected by the workers in their sections, all decisions are referred back for discussion and decision, and new elections can take place in any department at any time, so that all the representatives are recallable. And these Committees have not only led wages struggles and the fight against redundancies, but have organised demonstrations and acted to put up roadblocks and stop the two attempts at right wing coups in September and March.

The junior officers of the Armed Forces Movement were a lot less clear than the big capitalists on what they wanted last April. And end to the wars in Africa, a measure of democracy at home — that was about as far as it went. With their vagueness, they were ideally designed to be the representatives of the "beautiful revolution" of April 1974.

But now, with burgeoning economic crisis, the "ugly" realities are beginning to shake up the AFM.

Inflation and the international recession (aggravated by factors associated with the 13-year African wars and with the overthrow of the Caetano regime: tourist income, remittances from emigrant workers, and foreign investment, have all declined dramatically) have meant that a combative and politically aggressive working class has come into headlong conflict with a capitalist class looking for cutbacks in production and eager to safeguard shrinking profit margins.

Plesseys and Applied Magnetics, for example, have moved operations out of Portugal.

At present, unemployment is reckoned to be around 10%; among the industrial workforce it was already 20% in December 1974. Settlers returning from Africa and troops being demobilised are swelling the numbers out of work.

This, in the months before the

**IF...**

by **Martin Thomas**

March coup, meant a vicious downward spiral for the Portuguese capitalist economy, with money increasingly invested in safer areas abroad or just salted away, leading to an aggravation of the economic crisis, which led in turn to sharper class struggle and more capitalist panic. These were the factors acting on the AFM.

The AFM organises only 400 or so of the 5,000 officers in the army. To its right, it still relies on many

later the AFM sent representatives into newspaper and television departments to ensure 'fair treatment' for the openly capitalist parties.

At government level, most of the moves over the 11 months have been aimed at the same sort of neutralising, stabilising effect. For a start, the inclusion of the best organised workers' party, the Communist Party, was meant to give workers a "political stake" in the regime. The PCP was able to dampen and partially de-fuse the massive strike wave that took place in the early summer of last year, telling workers that wage rises were a capitalist plot to beggar "their" economy! The Trade Union law setting up one single trade union federation and passed to the accompaniment of a great deal of demagoguery about "unity", was intended to help the creation of a permanent and powerful centralised trade union bureau-

resembles the Social Contract: it envisages 51% state holdings in mining and the buying out of some large landowners; encouragement of foreign investors, fiscal reform, a prices and incomes policy and social reforms including the payment of unemployment benefit.

It gave a clear indication to anyone not hysterically screaming about "Communist takeovers" that the Provisional Government had charted a firm course to a "mixed economy" — that is, the continuation of capitalism with state help.

But most of the capitalists weren't paying attention. Their worries were focussed on the street disturbances, the failure of their parties to exist and function without suffering the violent hatred of workers determined not to let their old oppressors re-organise under the guise of centre liberals. Led by revolutionaries, thousands of workers turned out to wreck



senior officers from the old regime, and the PSP riot police and the elite "National Republican Guard" are still largely intact. The AFM fears those forces, but it does not know how to replace them. The more clear-headed members of the AFM must be well aware that a sharp turn in developments, either to left or right, could rapidly destroy their present position of imposing influence and leave them stranded.

**CHARTING A COURSE TOWARDS A MIXED ECONOMY**

The long awaited Economic Plan published at the end of last month was no doubt intended as the linchpin for the peaceful transition to stable bourgeois democracy. As it stood, it was a serious attempt to bind workers to the economic system, aiming to give workers the illusion of having an "economic stake" in capitalist Portugal. Already workers are bombarded with appeals to work for the "good of the democratic nation" and to support the "national economy"; they've even been asked to donate days of unpaid labour (to which they responded by coming into work ... and spending the day in political discussion).

The British capitalist press generally compared the Economic Plan with the politics of British Labour. Indeed, it almost

every rally of the bourgeois parties and ransack their offices — while soldiers seemed always to turn a blind eye. Finally, rather than trust to the gradual plans and manoeuvres of the increasingly dominant moderate element of the AFM, and to their own expected electoral gains, the Right organised in a vain attempt to snatch back the reins.

Now the AFM has swung abruptly to the left, apparently abandoning the careful Economic Plan; 45 or so leading capitalists are in jail (figures with the sort of industrial power held in this country by people like Weinstock, Stokes and Bateman); and workers, many armed, are helping rank and file soldiers to hunt down other bosses on the 'wanted' list.

Nevertheless, Portugal has still got a capitalist social order. But the political structure rests increasingly heavily on the "workers' parties" — the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. And if either of these parties had the will to organise and mobilise the working class for workers' power, the road would be open and clear.

Instead, the CP and the SP are acting as the most solid props of the capitalist order. The CP is directly opposed to workers' revolution in Portugal, because it would prejudice the 'detente' between the USSR and the USA. ▶▶

Independence can now be taken for granted in Portugal's former African colonies. By June, FRELIMO will have assumed full governmental control in Mozambique. Angola is expected to have a nationalist government by November, according to the agreement reached between the three liberation movements and the Portuguese government last January.

The various proposals for some kind of 'equal' federation linking Portugal and these two African countries, which were put forward by the Portuguese ruling classes after the April coup, evaporated long their major proponent, General Spínola, was forced to relinquish the Presidency last September. Today it is clear when talking of 'Portugal and the Future' (as Spínola's influential book was called) that that future is not to be found in Africa.

The coming of independence has predictably had quite an impact on the bastions of white supremacy in Southern Africa. Already, ruling circles in South Africa are of the opinion that Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) is certain to "go black" in a short space of time. Vorster has even expressed in secret conversation with African leaders his regime's desire "to get South West Africa (Namibia) off our back". At a glance it would seem that with the defeat of Portugal a number of other white dominions in the set are ready to fall one by one.

Yet although the positions already won mark an important advance in the struggle for the liberation of Southern Africa, those concerned with pushing this through to the final victory should avoid making too much applause. For just as there are possibilities at present for further nationalist triumphs, so too there are dangers that the Apartheid state, in alliance with the African capitalist regimes, will subvert the movement for national liberation from within.

## EXPLOIT

The developments of the last few months would suggest a pessimistic outcome for the African masses in the immediate future, as South African capitalism and western imperialism attempt to stabilise the situation on the sub-continent for their benefit.

In pursuit of this 'stability' imperialism has sought first of all to establish 'responsible' regimes in Angola and Mozambique, with the intention of ensuring that the inevitable political transformations do not upset too much the domination of these countries' economies by international monopoly capital.

Portugal was very much of a middle man between imperialism and the colonial economy. It held a monopoly of the colonial import-export trade, but didn't have sufficient capital to exploit the colonies by itself, and was in turn exploited by larger powers. South Africa and the West hope that with the departure of the Portuguese, the nationalist governments, as representatives of the emerging national bourgeoisie, will also fulfill an intermediary role. The best possible outcome for imperialism is therefore seen as a substitution of 'go-betweens'.

## RADICAL

There are obvious signs that this process is already under way in Angola, where the dangers of a neo-colonial solution are already being suspected by the masses. When dockers at the port of Lobito struck for higher wages last year, an official of one liberation movement reported: "We were finding ourselves during December in the invidious position of restraining the workers to moderate their wage demands in the interests of Angola. But the question the workers asked was 'Whose Angola?'"

When making an examination of the way decolonisation is being carried out, it is easy to see why such scepticism is growing. In Angola at present there exists a "transitional government" — a coalition of the Portuguese and the three liberation organisations, with twelve ministerial posts



## Southern Africa at Crossroads

# CHANGING THE MEN IN THE MIDDLE

a 2-part article by  
**BAS HARDY**

distributed equally between the four parties.

The coming together of the different Angolan nationalist organisations (on the basis of governmental and military 'parity', despite enormous disparities in their previous size and influence) does not primarily signify a desire to present a common front against imperialism. It is, rather, an attempt to crush the most radical of the liberation movements — namely the MPLA.

The other major guerilla grouping, FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, is the puppet of the pro-United States Mobutu regime of Zaire.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Angolan nationalists'

alliance is the emergence of UNITA, which was regarded until a few months ago as a comparatively insignificant political force. It was UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, who secured the unity accords between his own organisation and MPLA and FNLA. For this, UNITA has received an equal representation in the government with the other groups, far in excess of its own numerical weight.

Savimbi, described by the western press as "an extremely able politician who will not shrink from the opportunities that come his way", has succeeded in carving out for himself a niche in African politics. On November 15th last year he obtained recognition for his movement from the

Organisation of African Unity after ten years of trying, and from that date on, acted as their agent in bringing the other two movements together. In the past, the OAU had dropped their support for the discredited Roberto and been forced to support MPLA because it was the group actually engaged in the fighting. But MPLA's connections with the Soviet Union and its verbal commitment to socialism were a source of worry for the African establishment.

The presence of UNITA has enabled the OAU to overcome this difficulty. In the interests of 'unity', MPLA has been pressurised into complying with OAU designs. As of now, the MPLA is bound by the 'collective responsibility of the government it is part of.

## HOODWINK

With only one sixth of the army under MPLA control (half is still Portuguese, and two sixths controlled by FNLA and UNITA) any moves by MPLA in opposition to government policy will certainly lead to armed action being taken against it.

However, unless the MPLA moves against the neo-colonialist forces, its leaders will eventually be eliminated and its armed groups 'integrated' into the army or else forcibly disbanded.

Although MPLA leader Agostino Neto is in a weak position militarily and politically at the moment, it is quite possible, given his following in Angola, that he will be elected President after the Constituent Assembly elections due to take place before independence. This would depend on how far Savimbi can hoodwink the masses by posing as the 'mediator who alone can save the country from civil war'.

## FAMINE

The OAU would naturally want a Savimbi victory. A win for Neto could easily lead to a Congo-type situation, with Neto the Angolan equivalent to Patrice Lumumba. Since all three groups have their separate followings among different tribes, Angola would be torn to shreds. But if imperialism cannot get the 'unity' it wants, it will be satisfied with a dismembered Angola, with Mobutu's protegee Holden Roberto given help to pick up the pieces in the aftermath.

In Mozambique, there aren't such factions within the liberation movement with which imperialism can juggle. FRELIMO displays no outward signs of internal division and is in a strong position militarily. This does not, however, prevent the imperialists and South Africa from applying the economic serees in order to keep Mozambique within their grasp.

Mozambique is at present facing economic collapse as a consequence of decades of crude economic exploitation at the hands of the Portuguese. In the north of the country, in the province of Cabo Delgado in particular, thousands live in fear of famine after the 'scorched earth' policy employed by Portugal during the war. Since most

business and technical skills have been the property of the Portuguese, the country is being drained of these with the flight of some 30,000 settlers into South Africa or back to Portugal. Added to this, the Portuguese have saddled Mozambique with a foreign debt of £400 million, on which Portugal had delayed payment for over three years.

Of course, the blame for the foreign debt cannot be put on the Mozambicans. It in fact masks the super-exploitation of the country by Portugal and the vast multi-national companies. The first act of a revolutionary government would be to repudiate this debt. Frelimo's declaration of intent to assume responsibility for the debt is the first worrying thing about the new government. Frelimo leaders might reply to such criticism by saying that the OAU has promised financial aid to assist with the debt, but in any case the OAU have coughed up a mere £800,000, and given the state of the African economies (themselves bagged by imperialism) they are hardly likely to multiply this 500-fold. The debt should be paid by imperialism, not Mozambique or the OAU. The fact that the OAU has made such an offer indicates that they are determined to make Mozambique as 'responsible' as they are to the western masters.

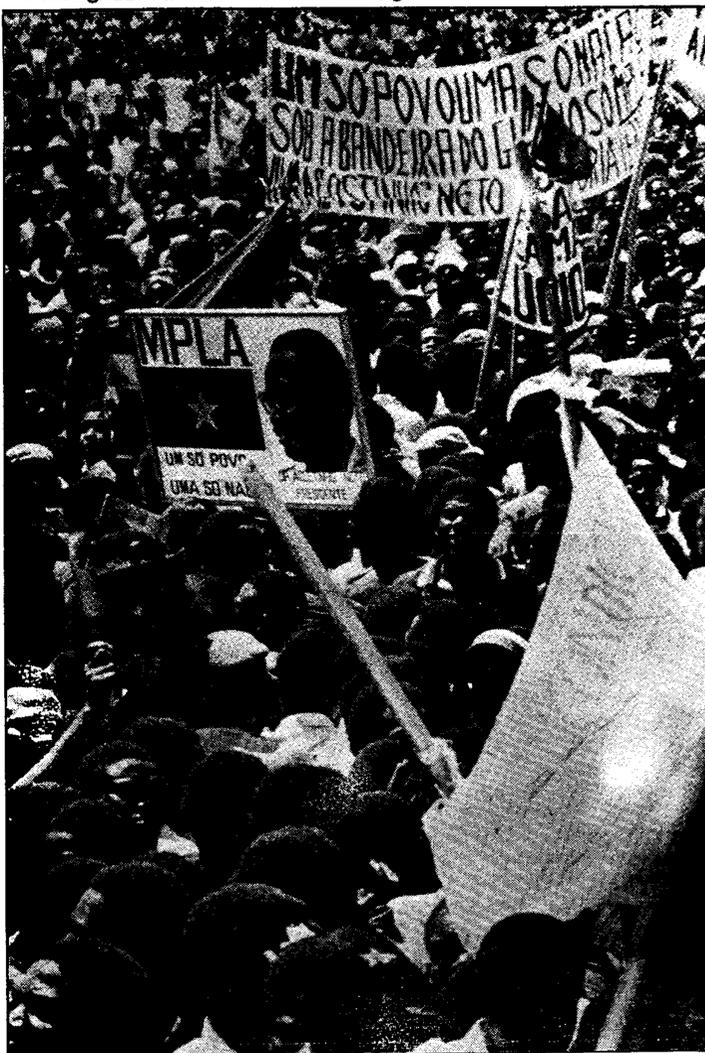
## LOCKED

Unfortunately, it seems the Frelimo leaders will choose to give in to moves like this. Mozambique's future relations with South Africa look like they will conform to the pattern which exists at present between, for example, Zambia and the Vorster regime.

The Cabora Bassa dam, from which the first electricity is due to flow from this month, is locked into the South African grid, and is a key part of South Africa's energy plan for the next five years. Frelimo might raise the price of electricity, but it won't cut off the supply.

Similarly, despite South Africa's reliance of Mozambique labour for its gold mines, (the mines have only 78% of their total labour needs) Frelimo still intends to allow 82,000 of its workers to go to South Africa in the hope that the gold they receive as 60% of their wages will "help the economy". The maintenance of port facilities for South Africa at Lourenco Marques is another indication that Frelimo doesn't intend to break the South African connection. And there are even doubts about whether the Frelimo government will implement sanctions against Rhodesia in the foreseeable future (again for 'economic reasons' which Britain and the OAU have told the new government "would be understood"). And Frelimo leader Samora Machel has helped to give credibility to the moves the OAU leaders are making for an accommodation with Vorster over the question of Rhodesia's future.

NEXT WEEK: Vorster's detente and the Zimbabwe struggle



TOP: Samora Machel, Frelimo president, addresses Italian solidarity meeting. BELOW: mass demonstration greets MPLA in Luanda, Angola

They certainly want "democracy" (capitalist democracy) in Portugal — but the main "lesson" the CP have learned from Chile is the idea that the way to avoid right wing coups is never, never to offend the army. Thus the first principle of the CP's strategy is to stick closely with the AFM, or whoever seems to have most control in the armed forces.

The SP is not so well organised and determined and thus not such a strong counter-revolutionary force as the CP. The mainstream of the SP, led by Mario Soares, are simply opportunist bourgeois politicians with a smattering of "socialism", Wilson-style. The left wing of the SP, however, including many of its working class members, split away after the SP Congress last December. This left wing is led by Manuel Serra, a 'Catholic socialist'.

Without a doubt, the number of workers dissatisfied with the SP and CP and moving to the left of them is growing. In the Setenave shipyard, for example, although the CP have a cell of 200 people, they got only 400 votes in the elections for the workers' committee, with 1300 voting against them. In the bank employees' union in Oporto, the CP has lost control, despite 10% of the workforce being CP members. While the workers'

organised in militant groups and cells, and have links with workers in the rural areas who have taken part in land takeovers.

What is needed is the bringing together of these actions into a framework of solidarity and cooperation, decision-making and strength, constituting an alternative source of power and authority. Much of this can and will happen spontaneously, following the logic of events. But to fuse and lead this amorphous movement in a clear revolutionary direction, overcoming the professional confusionists of the SP and CP, what is urgently needed is a revolutionary party.

Such a party could grow at mushroom pace in the present conditions. The revolutionary action of the working class, led by such a party, is in fact the only way forward in Portugal. The middle class forces — middle ranking officers, union and party bureaucrats — who at present dominate the Portuguese political scene, are quite incapable of providing any solution to the pressing problems of unemployment, poverty and an archaic land-holding system. The forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly will only sharpen the crisis.



The President and the ex-President: Costa Gomes (left) with Spínola.

committee movement is growing, the CP plays it down and counterposes to it the official trade union structures.

However, the forces to the left of the major parties are mostly, like the Serra socialists, extremely confused. The largest is the MES, which emerged before the coup from a CP-influenced electoral front. The MES has led militant trade union struggles, but it vacillates between giving critical support to the government and advocating workers' revolution against it.

There are, too, a number of revolutionary groupings, some with questionable tactics, muddled ideas and empty slogans (such as the MRPP's "Death to Revisionism" and "Long Live Stalin"), and an avowed Trotskyist group, the LCI, a section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The biggest success chalked up so far has been the organisation of a revolutionary fraction linking the workers' committees of some 40 plants; it was this which called the huge demonstration against NATO early last month.

This sort of action points the way forward. With the arrest, exile or disappearance of many of the controllers of industry, it could be a very short time indeed before workers' committees try to take over the running of certain plants. Many have links with other plants in a combine. Those that have engaged in actions against the attempted right wing coups have links with rank and file soldiers — many of whom are themselves

If the opportunities for revolutionary working class action are not taken, and taken decisively, the future could be grim. Just as in the aftermath to the March 11th coup, in September the capitalists appeared to have suffered serious body blows: the list of those arrested then read like a "Who's Who" of the Portuguese ruling class. Yet in the months afterwards, they gained enough confidence to try to mount another coup. They still have very direct links with important parts of the armed forces.

If a repeat of the Chile experience seems unlikely, there are still other variants for counter-revolution. An even partially successful coup, leading to a small land base being held by the right wing, could be used as an excuse for a NATO intervention "to prevent a bloodbath". Whether neighbouring Spain could withstand the ensuing civil war on its doorstep in its present fragile state would have to be taken into account in the imperialists' calculations; but they may reckon the risk worth taking.

Already, the New York Times has suggested that a NATO intervention may be needed. And there is a story circulating in London that three brigades of Royal Greenjackets on leave from Northern Ireland, and supposed to be resting from their labours there, are to be sent to Portugal on a NATO exercise.

The Right has engulfed Chile. British workers must make sure in any way they can that the British Government is not a party to counter revolution in Portugal.



Armed workers put up road blocks to stop the Right.

## WHAT IS THE EEC ANYWAY?

# AND WHY IT ISN'T OUR BUSINESS

**FREE TRADE and the breakdown of national frontiers have generally been supported by socialists in the past, as helping to develop the productive forces. This is what the Common Market claims to stand for. So why not support it?**

The problem was outlined in last week's article: capitalism is no longer able to do this to any real extent, and the EEC will not help unite the working class as did, for example, the unification of Germany in the 1870s.

Indeed, although the world economy has become far more integrated over the last hundred years, nationalism has been strengthened rather than weakened. The basic reason for this has been the ability of the capitalists in the advanced states to buy off their workers, with the proceeds of the ruthless exploitation of the rest of the world. They made it appear that, say, British workers had a common interest with British bosses against the people of Africa — and also against the people of France, as a whole, lest they should threaten Britain's share of the loot.

### Abstain

This process long ago affected large sections of the British left. Since the anti-Market campaign got going, it has come to the surface and infected not only the Labour left around Tribune and the Communist Party, but also revolutionary groups such as the International Marxist Group.

But before dealing with them, it is perhaps best to restate Workers Fight's position.

We say that it will mean no fundamental advantage to the working class whether Britain is in or out of the Common Market. The choice between the Little England of the bosses and their attempt at unity is not a real one. We believe that workers should abstain in the referendum.

Many of those who advocate voting 'No', say that they are for a United Socialist Europe. But this isn't what we are being asked in the referendum: it isn't asking what sort of Europe we want, but what British capitalism should do in relation to a capitalist European organisation.

The only way to fight for a United Socialist States of Europe is to abstain in the referendum and to fight against the effects on the working class of economic crisis and capitalist rationalisation, whether they happen within the EEC or out of it. The key to this is the building of stronger links between workers throughout Europe (inside and outside the Common Market), through international combine committees, aid for strikes of workers in other countries and the calling of a European Congress of Labour.

### Divert

The real problems, for us, which surround EEC entry must be answered with real, living solutions. Thus, to rising prices we reply with the demand for a rising scale of wages tied to a working class cost of living index. Where possible, we must fight for parity on a European scale, demanding, for instance, German wages, Italian holidays and French family allowances. However internationalist the intentions of the campaigners for withdrawal may be, the whole logic of their campaign is to divert from that class struggle.

What, then, are the arguments of the anti-marketters? The campaign of the Communist Party, together with the 'left' in the Labour Party and in the trade

by SIMON TEMPLE

union leadership, is based on two main arguments. Firstly, that the Common Market has led to a massive growth of imports from Europe, and a decline in investment in Britain. This is not even accurate — it ignores all the other factors controlling investment and the fact that an isolated Britain would be even less attractive to capitalists. More importantly, this argument is based on the illusion that there is a national interest above all classes, linking workers and bosses — all of us sharing an interest in increasing investment and reducing imports!

The other argument is that the growth of Community institutions will weaken the 'National Sovereignty' of the British parliament. Indeed they argue that "what is at stake is nothing less than the right and possibility of the British working people to control the country's affairs". (Morning Star 25th February, emphasis in original).

But we will never be able to control society through Parliament. The real power lies with the civil service, the banks and big business — and the bosses are certainly not going to stand by and watch themselves being legislated out of existence by parliament. If it were to try, it would face bigger and more violent obstacles nearer home than Brussels!

In any case, the material basis does not exist to construct socialism in one country in a



Clive Jenkins — this month shared a platform with Enoch Powell, at a Get Britain Out Campaign meeting stewarded by the National Front.

hostile capitalist world. Ultimately, we can only succeed as part of an international movement. To campaign for British withdrawal is to turn one's back on such a movement.

Of course, opposition to the EEC is very useful to trade union bureaucrats and to Labour lefts in and out of the government. If all our troubles are due to the Common Market, then a successful campaign to get out will solve them. This is a perfect excuse to dodge a fight against unemployment and falling living standards. The Get Out campaign has also allowed people actually involved in making workers' problems worse (by championing the Social Contract, for instance) to pose as militants.

Despite a dense 'revolutionary' smokescreen, the position of the International Marxist Group (IMG) bears some remarkable similarities to that of the reformists. They argue that the Community will help impose a 'strong state', which will weaken the working class and that it must, therefore, be opposed.

### Private

Certainly, increased co-ordination among the capitalists will create rather different problems for the working class, though not necessarily worse ones.

Surely our answer must be to join with European workers in strengthening ourselves, both politically and organisationally. It is certainly no answer to get back to our own private hell and fight it out with 'our own' capitalists.

In fact, all this has deeply reactionary implications, including the pernicious one that the workers of Europe are badly organised and reactionary, while the British working class is strongly organised and politically advanced. This would be a viciously nationalistic view, even were it true. In fact, of course, we have as much, or more, to learn from continental workers as they have from us.

The IMG also oppose the Common Market as part of the network of imperialist alliances aimed at the Soviet Union.

### Play-acting

Fundamentally, the approach of the IMG on this question can be described as "Stalinism without the Soviet Union". The IMG leadership, sitting in a dusty back room in Caledonian Road, set themselves to "defending the Soviet Union" by forging new diplomatic/trade alliances on a world scale, Britain allying with Comecon rather than the EEC. To their "super-power politics" they sacrifice internationalist propaganda and politics. In the case of Stalinism, this sort of diplomatic politicking at least had some real basis, in the role of the Soviet Union as a real factor in world politics; in the case of the IMG, it is all ridiculous play acting.

Its reactionary essence is however only too clearly the same in both cases — subordination of the fight for international socialist consciousness in the working class to the foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union either as directed by its rulers or, with the IMG, as conceived from the towering heights of Marxist theory and world grand strategy atop which sit the denizens of Caledonian Road.

While the International Socialists (IS) avoid the more bizarre aspects of the IMG's position, they have a lot in common with them. They too oppose the Common Market as anti-working class conspiracy, and argue that workers should oppose capitalist rationalisation. They think that since British withdrawal would weaken capitalism, it must strengthen the working class.

But surely, the effect would be more intensive attacks at a time when our forces, far from being strengthened, would be confused and divided as a result of the, inevitably, nationalist campaign for withdrawal. In any event, we do not oppose rationalisation, the development of capitalism, as such, since it contains within itself the basis for a better life for all — given the overthrow of capitalism itself. What we do oppose is the capitalists' attempts to carry through rationalisation at our expense, through speed-up, redundancies, attacks on work-practices, etc, rather than to our advantage. This again is better fought with European workers.

Perhaps the strangest position is that of the 'Militant'. Yes, say 'Militant' supporters, a capitalist Britain outside the EEC is no better than a capitalist Britain inside the EEC. Nevertheless we should vote for withdrawal. Why? To go along with the feelings of the mass of the labour movement... So much for the idea that it is the first duty of Marxists to say what is, bluntly and honestly.

It was a defeat for the working class ever to have got involved in the 'great debate' over British entry into the Common Market. Workers should abstain in the referendum and fight instead for the political and organisational unity of the working class throughout Europe against capitalism's attempts to solve its problems at our expense, and for a United Socialist Europe.

# Triumph Motorcycle co-operative — TRYING TO CHEAT THE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM

ON THURSDAY March 6th the Triumph Motorcycle factory at Meriden near Coventry legally passed into the hands of a workers cooperative. Up till then, Meriden had been part of NVT, a subsidiary of Manganese Bronze.

The cooperative, formed originally after the workers occupied the Coventry factory in September 1973, went into production again for the first time since then four days after its legal send-off.

Existing on unemployment pay, 280 of the original workforce of 1,750 have been continuously picketing the occupied factory during the last eighteen months. In that period, unpaid labour has been spent on improvements to the Triumph Bonneville 750. A new modified frame, rear wheel disc brakes, the development of a shorter stroke engine and modification of the gear shift to the left hand side of the bike to comply with US regulations, form the bulk of the work done.

## MODEST

The legality of the Meriden Cooperative has only now been made possible by a government grant of £750,000 and by a loan of £4.2 millions to buy the land, plant, trade marks etc from NVT. In 1979 the workers will start to repay the £4.2 millions to the state and until then they will be paying an annual interest of £42,000.

Production and finance will both, from now on, fall into the hands of a supervisory board of trade unionists, government nominees and others, and a Management Board for the daily running of the cooperative. Two management posts have been advertised, and filled, at salaries of £8,000 per year each.

The workers on the other hand will be taking home a more modest pay packet based on a common wage rate for all of them, £50 a week. Compared with other engineering wage rates in the Midlands this is well below par. But as the workers themselves are now the 'owners' they will also be the beneficiaries of any profits. But this is a very remote possibility given the financial position of the cooperative itself.

As with other industries it is easier to understand the current situation if we understand the developments behind it. In the case of bike production all the old established firms — Ariel, AJS, BSA, James, Norton, Matchless and Triumph — had been amalgamated into two large groups, BSA and AMC, by 1965.

In 1966 AMC went into liquidation and the Manganese Bronze company bought the Norton name and merged it with Villiers.

by Russell Davis

From then on Norton Villiers produced 15000 bikes a year. BSA on the other hand failed to rationalise production with existing capital — some work, for example, was still being done on antiquated belt-driven machinery. Profits fell to minus £8 million in 1972, and the company failed to raise sufficient capital for a new range and re-tooling.

Instead of being allowed to go bankrupt, BSA was taken over by Norton Villiers with a government grant of £4.8 millions in 1973. The attempted closure of Meriden followed soon after — but was halted by the occupation.

Although the Meriden Co-op is now 'independent', NVT is the sole selling agent for its products in the major market of the USA. And a couple of weeks ago NVT had to ask the government for a further £8 millions for the purpose of obtaining export credit guarantees for the US market.

There is perhaps a hint here of the poor potential for British bikes in the US market, with the intense competition from the Japanese and American manufacturers. The

future bodes ill for the Meriden Co-op — both in terms of the necessity to rationalise production to put it on a competitive basis; and in terms of the general anarchy of the capitalist market.

Capitalism is above all else much more than a system of relations of authority or some such thing with each factory. It is a system of production. So a factory remains a capitalist one in its nature and logic whoever's hands it's in, it the system as a whole is still capitalist. A firm may be owned by a family, by a few big institutional investors, or by a government, but if the system is capitalist, then that firm will be driven to operate according to the same laws and according to the same logic as blind, profit-hungry capitalism.

That means that workers will be no less exploited because of the way a single factory is organised, or managed.

## CONTROL

The Meriden Co-op still has to buy its power and its components on the market and it still has to sell its finished products on the market as commodities. It appears that a blind faith in the US market for 'Superbikes' has clouded any discussion on this question.

Any struggle that ended up with a company cutting its labour force from 1,750 to 280, reducing wages to below average, abolishing wage differentials and job demarcation and removing all independent trade union representation, would be overwhelmingly seen as a defeat.

This is something which the Meriden workers have not yet faced up to. The fight for workers' control or co-operation is of itself no solution and must be placed within a programme of struggle for socialism. By itself, it is no such programme.



Bikes stored during Meriden occupation



Pickets at the gates of the Meriden Works

Wedgwood Benn

## Labour puts Aircraft/Shipbuilding Nationalisation Bill before Parliament

THE LABOUR Government, pledged to an "extension of public ownership", is setting up the National Enterprise Board as its chief agent in carrying out this 'pledge'. But what the NEB is designed to do is to take share-holdings in companies and thereby exercise some options for control, in exchange for pumping in funds. This policy was adopted not as an approach to nationalisation but as an evasion of it.

Nevertheless along with this proposal went a much more

unequivocal plan to nationalise the shipbuilding and aircraft and aerospace industries. And the Bill enabling that went through its first parliamentary stage last week.

The main shock in store for the capitalists came with the lowering of the bottom limit for compulsory nationalisation, from firms with a turnover of £20 millions to those with a turnover of seven and a half million. This means that a small number of companies that thought they would escape the nationalisation net will in fact be included.

Another shock was the way the compensation qualifications are to be worked out. A number of companies saw their share values rise with the "threat" of being bought out by the state, and therefore hoped that compensation would be on the basis of these inflated values (see last week's WF). But the Bill before parliament will judge compensation according to the average value of securities for the six months ending February 28th 1974.

So some of the smiles have turned sour on the faces of the wide boys of industry. But that doesn't improve matters much. They shouldn't be getting compensation at all — it is the workers in the industry that have made its wealth, not the parasite shareholders.

## Losses

We have a situation where the state takes full responsibility for any losses the exploiting class suffers — yet refuses to take responsibility for a worker's standard of living if a job is lost. For the princes of profit there's

recompense to the full and more: remember, we are still paying out interest to the once near-bankrupt coal-owners whose pits were taken over in 1948! But for the redundant worker, there's a few months on an earnings related benefit, and then it's just dole money.

The chief aim of the nationalisation is to bail out a few big loss makers and — above all — to streamline the industry as a whole, making it competitive on the world market. Or, to quote the Industry Bill, "promoting industrial efficiency and internat-

ional competitiveness".

In this we can see Labour's special ability (as distinct from the Tories) to rationalise a whole industry, necessarily including some perhaps profitable smaller operators. And to do this in the interests of British capitalism as a whole.

## Force

The interests of the working class lie neither with a healthy nor with a lame British economy, but with smashing capitalism. The last few months have seen a spontaneous half formed move by many sections of workers in that direction. There has been factory occupation after factory occupation, in most cases demanding full nationalisation, and in most cases aiming these demands specifically at Anthony Wedgwood Benn. The present moves in Parliament will for the moment satisfy some of these demands, though the force of the as yet young movement behind these demands reveals increasingly clearly the capacity of the working class simply to take the factories without any parliamentary or Labour Party by-your-leave.

Labour now finds itself in the situation of being unable to satisfy the needs of the capitalists as a whole (by such nationalisation as that of the aircraft industry) without at the same time giving hope and heart to the much more important fight by workers themselves for control over their factories.



Benn and UCS stewards

## COUNCIL'S FAVOURS FOR TORY LEADER

YOUNG families and pensioners are living in appalling conditions in private tenements in a London Borough.

While 78% of the property in the Borough is owned either by the Greater London Council or by Tower Hamlets Council, a small percentage of the property is in the grip of Keyser Ullmann, the merchant bankers who have a reputation of being one of the most unscrupulous property speculators in London.

The chairman of Keyser Ullmann is that ost prominent figure in the Tory Party and arch privateer Edward du Cann.

The two tenements in Tower Hamlets, Cressey and Dunstan, are in a terrible state of disrepair; facilities are primitive. The Tenants Association complains of faulty wiring, dampness and fungi, bad drainage, rats, and crumbling deteriorating outer structure. The flats lack such basic facilities as bathrooms, kitchens and inside toilets.

Tower Hamlets has, as Workers Fight reported last week, ('And the

homeless are still there') a huge housing list and a very slow rate of rehousing. But over the past few months, the Keyser Ullmann properties seem to have been top of their list, with tenants of the two blocks being rehoused in priority to, say, bed & breakfast accommodation homeless.

If the properties were left tenanted, their value on the market would be a fraction of their value vacant, and Tower Hamlets council could acquire them pretty cheaply by a compulsory purchase order and make them decent.

Instead, they appear to be doing a big service to Keyser Ullmann, and a big disservice to the people of Tower Hamlets. By rehousing the tenants, the market price of the blocks will shoot up — way beyond what the Council is willing or able to pay. Keyser Ullmann are sitting pretty. And the Council is doing itself out of two blocks of flats which could be done up much cheaper than building from scratch.

Why are they doing the property speculators' dirty work for them? J.W.



## STOP PRIVATE PRACTICE

# C.A.S. threat to pay-bed battle

THE BATTLE against pay beds in the Health Service has once again exploded into the headlines. From Midnight, March 16th, ancillary workers at the sleek, modern Westminster Hospital, which serves the wealthy and privileged of Kensington and

Chelsea, have blacked services and food going to the private patients on the 6th floor.

The ancillaries' action is their reply to the blank refusal of the health authorities to consider turning over 10 private beds to be used by the NHS patients for 3 weeks over Easter.

The local hospital management, after announcing their intention to close 38 NHS beds, nearly reached agreement with local NUPE officials to turn over 5 private beds for NHS use, when the Area Health Authority stepped in. The Authority stated that on a matter of principle, no compromise would be agreed. And when the NUPE stewards accused the Area Health Committee of bowing to pressure from the Consultants who would stand to lose their fees, one member, a Labour MP, denied it vigorously, but still insisted that any deal over the beds was off.

Against the 400 NUPE members, the press have poured a stream of venom, lies, insults. Against those who are making a principle of the pay beds, at a time when the Government is supposed to be phasing them out, the press has said nothing. In response the ancillary workers have stepped up their action, especially after shameful scabbing by non union cooks and porters, aided by doctors and hospital administrators.

On Tuesday, two days after the start of the action, NUPE workers started a work to rule, and followed this by a lightning hour stoppage on Wednesday. To organise these stoppages an action committee has been set up, based on ancillary workers including domestics working

in the wards.

Labour ministers, and particularly Barbara Castle, are embarrassed by this action on their 'parliamentary doorstep'. Castle is worried that the action against private beds will continue to spread, and thus upset Labour's talk about a phased withdrawal of pay beds. The direct actions of workers sickened by the situation is threatening to turn the vague promises of Labour's election manifesto into reality.

And this action is also threatening to upset the delicate negotiations Castle is having with the BMA to end the Consultants' 10week work to contract for a 119% pay increase. This action is weakening very fast, and they want to get some sort of deal from Labour about keeping pay beds, before the hospital workers' battle to scrap them is won conclusively.

The intervention of the Conciliation and Arbitration Service in the Westminster dispute is significant. It could, said a NUPE official, lay down guidelines as to union action against private patients in hospitals throughout the country.

Hospital workers should, therefore, be warned by the CAS report on Newsham Hospital, Liverpool. Not a private beds dispute, but one over a clear case of victimisation when two NUPE stewards were sacked. The CAS thought that for the sake of peace the management should take them back, but that it had every right to sack them.

It is this sort of advice that no doubt will issue forth over private beds, in an attempt to stem the rash of actions that can break out in any hospital at any time.

Stephen Corbishley

## NEWS BRIEF

Over 4,000 demonstrators marched through Liverpool to the Pier Head last Saturday (15th) on the national Chile Solidarity Campaign demonstration. There were banners from as far as London and Scotland, including Rolls Royce and Fords Shop Stewards. Several Labour Party organisations were represented. And the National Union of Seamen had a contingent.

Chilean speakers (who included Carmen Castillo and Rene Plaza of the Chilean TUC in exile) renewed the call for international solidarity action, including economic boycott and the blacking of Chilean trade by the labour movement in support of the Chilean workers and political prisoners and of victimised Chilean sailors and dockers.

Martin Flannery MP, Chairman of the Labour Parliamentary Committee on Chile stressed the importance of the Labour government's recent refusal to renegotiate the Chilean Junta's overseas debts; and he brought greetings to the demonstration from Des Warrin in prison.

J.S.

ABOUT 250 men at Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead have been staging a sit-in for three weeks now in protest at management's decision to order contractors Peter Lind and Simon Build, who employ the men, off the site.

Lind and Build took out a court injunction against Cammell Laird to keep the contract (worth £20 million) and meanwhile the original deadline of 5th December 1974 has passed. But when they failed to pursue the injunction, thus jeopardising the jobs of their employees, the 250 men (members of UCATT and T&GWU) took immediate action.

They say that in fact it is immaterial to them whether Lind and Build are brought back or whether they work for another contractor, provided their jobs are safeguarded.

The men took over, calling on operatives to bring £1 million worth of plant into the compound, and began a sit in.

At midnight of the first day, the electricity was cut off. But the Shop Stewards committee said "this will not deter us. We have made it known to Cammell Lairds that we're willing to work for any contractor as long as the existing labour force is employed by them."

Ten and a half thousand building workers are unemployed in Liverpool. Support is urgently needed for this unofficial sit-in. Messages and donations to Transport House, Islington, Liverpool, co Tony Abbott.

B.W.

Marian and Dolours Price, Irish prisoners of war sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, have finally been transferred to Armagh jail in the north of Ireland. Although, at the time when they ended their long hunger strike last June, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins indicated that they would be sent home before the end of the year, they have been held as virtual hostages against the "good behaviour" of the Provisional IRA, and even now that they have gone home, it's thought to be not a fulfilling of Jenkins' promise, but a move in the present truce negotiations.

With Marian and Dolours on hunger strike were also Hugh Feeney and Gerard Kelly, and they ended their strike at the same time and on the same terms. Obviously Jenkins has totally disregarded these undertakings, and the transfer of these two has not been mentioned.

Socialists should demand that he honour his pledge.

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## STOP PRIVATE PRACTICE

# Nose-jobs on the side at Cancer hospital

"Despite what the BMA might say, we are totally opposed to the situation where the world famous resources of Christie Hospital are being used by the consultants for their own financial gain", Christie's NUPE steward Bro. Stewart Pluck told Workers Fight this week.

The latest round in the struggle against private patients at this cancer hospital where workers have imposed a ban on all private cosmetic surgery, has been chalked up as a clear victory for the union.

In an attempt to undermine NUPE's action by splitting the workforce, the Consultants had planned to call a meeting of all Christie Hospital staff to explain their side of the case. But the meeting was called off when NUPE informed management that they would insist on the same rights as the BMA to call such meetings in any future dispute NUPE was involved in in the hospital. Faced with the prospect of 8 full staff meetings in the course of the next week, the management and consultants backed down.

The union members are delighted and feeling stronger than ever. "The consultants' retreat is a tremendous boost to our campaign against private practice", was Bro. Pluck's comment. And now the NUPE members can give the Harvey Smith to the full time officials of rival unions Cohse, Nalgo and the Royal College of Nurses, who had descended on Christie's like a horde of vultures on

the day of the planned meeting, ready to stick their beaks into what they hoped would be NUPE's surgically dismembered corpse.

At the national level the Executive Council of NUPE has written to both Harold Wilson and Labour Party Gen. Sec. Ron Hayward, expressing concern at the lack of progress made on Labour's election manifesto commitment to end private practice within NHS hospitals. NUPE want a target date to be set for the removal of all facilities for private medicine from NHS hospitals.

Another union, Cohse, which has not taken much part in the campaign so far, has now stepped in too, and given the government its own deadline. If it doesn't come up with definite proposals by May 8th, say Cohse, they will seriously consider stepping up industrial action.

Hospital workers have also noted that common waiting lists for all patients, which were supposed to have been introduced on January 1st, have still not come into operation, and hospital managements (who during the last ancillary workers' strike were waving waiting lists around like nobody's business and blaming them on the workers) are being very secretive about the lists in the name of "medical confidentiality".

The newspapers are having a field day right now about 'mindless militants' and 'brown coated dictators'. Those reporters would feel very

different if they were part of a pathetically depleted night accident team trying to cope with a really serious emergency, a man who'd fallen under a train and had to have a foot amputated, and suddenly in walks a private patient, driven up by his chauffeur, complains about the service, says the air's very stuffy and could he please have some eau de Cologne for his forehead.

Sounds exaggerated? It's true. It happened last week at Manchester Royal Infirmary. And hospital workers know it will go on happening until we get rid of the cancer of private practice in our hospitals.

JACK SUTTON,  
NUPE branch Secretary,  
United Manchester  
Hospitals.

# Anti-abortion Bill would even forbid right to know

The NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN, set up to bring together all the groups wishing to stop the new anti-abortion bill introduced by Labour MP James White, has got off the ground and is making up some of the time lost to the Festival of Light, LIFE and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child. While many people had complacently assumed that the 1967 Abortion Act, which legalised abortion (though still restricting it far more than in many European countries) was safe and here

to stay, the antiabortionists have mounted a successful campaign to take the law back towards the Dark Ages and send women back to desperate and dangerous remedies to get rid of unwanted pregnancies.

The National Abortion Campaign includes women trade unionists, politician organisations, Women's Liberation groups, Working Women's Charter campaign groups, the National Union of Students, and proabortion organisations such as 'A woman's right to choose' (an offshoot of the Abortion Law Reform Association) and the 'Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign'.

Since March 3rd when it was set up, NAC has sent its own contingent to the International Women's Day march in London on March 8th; on the day, intervened at the South East region TUC conference on women's rights, calling attention to the omission of a woman's right to abortion and contraception from the TUC Women's Charter; and on March 11th, participated in the delegation to Parliament which met the women MPs who have been exposing the ludicrously unequal representation of women on the select committee on abortion which is discussing the Bill.

A public meeting will be held on 24th March at St. Bride's Institute, Bride Lane, London EC4 at 7.30, to provide a briefing on the legal and practical implications of James White's Bill. Tess Gill will be speaking. The British Pregnancy

Advisory Board, on the occasion of the 100,000th abortion it has performed since 1968, stated that the Bill would severely limit its activities. "It amounts to a complete shutdown on the dissemination of information. We believe it would mean that every social worker would have to be licensed [to give information on abortion], that lawyers giving advice to pregnant clients from broken marriages who wanted an abortion would have to be licensed, and that 'agony column' journalists would not be able to refer pregnant girls to us. People working in family planning centres, citizens' advice bureaux and other places, if they received any kind of payment, would all have to be either doctors or be licensed."

Thus for many women, it's not just going to be a question of the right to choose, but even the right to KNOW.

At a meeting organised by ALRA, a top obstetrician at Bart's hospital said that many doctors hadn't opposed to White Bill because they were less concerned with the woman's right to choose than with their own right to decide what a patient should or shouldn't do.

The NAC campaign will continue, with meetings, rallies and petitions to mobilise people towards a massive national demonstration on June 14th. Information from NAC at 80 Raiton Road, London SE24, tel. 2748498.

CHRIS DAVEY  
MAXINE LANDIS

# CALVERTON MINERS SUPPORT WOMEN'S CHARTER

ON Sunday March 16th the Calverton branch of the Noits. NUM unanimously agreed to support the Working Women's Charter and the Charter group in Nottingham.

After two speakers from the Nottingham Charter group, Jane Brown and Sue Leigh, had described the work and aims of the Charter campaign, a good discussion followed among the 50 miners present, concentrating on the problems of working women in the area who mostly worked in the textile industry. With large numbers of threatened redundancies and a lot of short time working, the employers and the local media were switching on the propaganda about the joys of housekeeping and motherhood.

in the hope of damping down the struggle against redundancy among women in the industry. This clearly underlined the Charter's main point: the need to fight the concept of women's traditional 'feminine' role in order to get a decent deal at work, and conversely that poor working conditions for women and unequal treatment reinforce this traditional and restricting role.

Another point that came out was the backwardness of the unions in the industry, such as the Hosiery & Knitwear Union, and therefore the need for support from a strong union like the NUM in the women's coming struggles.

The branch also agreed to sponsor a meeting at the

Calverton Miners' Welfare to inaugurate a local Charter group.

At the Women's Liberation Conference due to be held in Manchester on April 4th, 5th and 6th, there will be about 250 kids. A group of men have got together this year to organise a super creche, not just what they feel is the usual token that doesn't really free the women delegates, especially in the evening. They are advertising for a hundred men to help make "a creche that sets out to give the kids a good time for the whole weekend".

Offers of help or money to John (0617941389) at 218 Upper Brook Street, Manchester 13.