
INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 5: APRIL 1982

National Committee February 1982: short minutes

National Committee March 1982: short minutes

TILC Resolution on the Falklands

Merseyside Branch resolution on the Falklands

Why the General Strike is not on the Agenda

..... Evington

EC resolution on Democratic Rights and the Armed Forces

A number of other articles have been submitted for the IB and will be produced in a separate bulletin soon.

Further IB contributions to Kinnell c/o the centre, typed A4 on Roneo stencils if possible.



Previous Internal Bulletins

No.1: National Committee August 1981; 'The Mole and the Bear' (on the FI(IC)) - Parsons; The General Strike (document for December 1981 NC) - Kinnell; The General Strike - Morrow; Sixteen Questions on the General Strike - Kinnell; Trotsky on the General Strike; Towards an Understanding of Solidarnosc - Evington; Poland, a proposal for solidarity - McVicar and Sinclair.

No.2: The EEC - Scott; Letter from the RCP on fighting fascism and reply - James; Problems in fighting fascism - McInnes; Letter on Ireland - Sinclair; Ireland and the bombings - Neil J.; An interview on the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.

No.3: National Committee October 1981; National Committee December 1981.

No.4: Trotsky on the Ukraine (reprints).

TILC Internal Bulletin: Democratic centralism and the international tendency; Debate on the slogan 'free all political prisoners' for Turkey; RWL resolution on cop strikes and cop 'unions'; RWL resolution on the Iran/Iraq war; RWL resolution on busing; Voting in US elections; Letter from LOB-Chile and reply.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE. 21 FEBRUARY 1982

Apologies: Harding (ill), McVicar (family), Todd, Connolly (resigned from NC), Booth (local meeting), Levy (TSC), Oliver (local meeting), Brown (resigned).

ATTENDANCE

Todd had explained she was not attending because of problems in the women's commission. Jones moved explanation not be accepted. Carolyn moved it be accepted. Daly moved we note the explanation and take no further action. Daly's proposal agreed.

REPORT FROM EC

Hill presented a joint report from himself and Noonan, commissioned by the EC, on the problems in the EC and OC and the reasons for postponing the NC.

Parsons moved that a summer school/conference be organised on British perspectives. Defeated, 14 votes for, 21 against, 3 abst.

Carolyn moved that NC meetings be more frequent, about 6-weekly. Carried, with 3 votes against.

OC proposal for Extended NC on EEC & general strike on April 25; on Afghanistan in early June. Carried overwhelmingly.

EC report (Hill/Noonan) endorsed with 4 votes against and 9 abst.

MINUTES

Eliot moved that her proposal for an inquiry into the women's commission be discussed.

Agreed by 19 votes to 15 to have an immediate vote.

Eliot's notion lost by 10 votes to 22.

B.L. WORK

Smith reported on Cowley and Levy on Leyland Vehicles.

WF T.U. CONF:

Khan reported briefly.

POLAND

Jones and Carolyn made brief statements of their positions on the self-determination slogan.

SINCLAIR

Hill for the EC moved that EC deal with the allegations against Sinclair at its next meeting.

Hunt moved Sinclair be expelled forthwith.

Armstrong moved the NC . suspend Sinclair.

Parsons moved the Control Commission be seized of the matter.

EC recommendation carried, 4 votes against.

Parsons motion lost , with 11 votes for.

Armstrong said he would feel obliged to resign as W. Midlands area organiser.

ZERO

Lewis, for the Cardiff branch, moved Zero's expulsion on grounds of disloyalty. Agreed.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING: 13 MARCH 1982

Apologies: Smith (TU commitment), Harrison (ill), Grassac (TU work), Eliot (moving house), Todd (TU commitment), Gable (work), Oliver (LP commitment), Riel (ditto), Armstrong (TU commitment), Stevenson (Palestine work commitment).

POLAND

Jones presented his document, arguing that we should not raise self-determination as a slogan.

There was a discussion. Evington argued that we should propose neither 'self-determination' nor 'independent socialist Poland', but concentrate on the international extension of the revolution.

Morrow motion: to endorse "SL TILC delegation's addition of 'independent socialist Poland' to our demands. Carried overwhelmingly.

Carolyn motion: to alter 'independent socialist Poland' to 'independent workers' Poland'. Defeated overwhelmingly.

There was no motion to delete 'self-determination' from our slogans, but the issue was left for later debate.

POLISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Parsons motion:

- That we affiliate to PSC and see it as our central focus for solidarity work;
- That we maintain the labour movement solidarity campaign as a loose association of groups and individuals to fight against any tendencies to turn the PSC towards non labour movement forces, e.g. SDP, Liberals, and Tories;
- That we seek at local level to base PSC groups firmly within the organisations of the labour movement while recognising that other forces such as the Polish community and the Church have a right to be involved;
- That within our solidarity work a certain amount of sensitivity is required and therefore that our intervention into the PSC AGM will consist of a delegation made up of comrades who can justifiably claim to have been involved in solidarity work.

Gardiner amendment: To delete all from "while recognising...." in point 3. Defeated.

Whetling amendment: To replace "our central" by "a major". Carried.

Resolution as amended: Carried.

LEICESTER NHS BRANCH RESOLUTION

condemning the Organising Committee for the short notice on which the Polish demo was organised and the preparation of the extended

NC. After explanations and some discussion, it was moved by Morrow that the NC note the resolution. Agreed.

TEBBIT CAMPAIGN

Carolán introduced. After some discussion Cunliffe moved from the chair that we campaign for:

- + A one-day general strike against the Tebbit Bill as preparation for all-out action,
- + an action committee in defence of trade union rights,
- + an intervention in the LCDTU,
- + a higher profile for the Tebbit issue in the April 3 conference,
- + a lobby of the TUC on April 5.

Agreed unanimously.

Jones moved that we approach all left groups for collaboration. Parsons moved that we approach Militant before the rest.

Jones' motion carried, with 1 against (Parsons).

FINANCE

Kinnell introduced and proposed an increase in dues as circulated separately. Parsons proposed a special fund as circulated separately.

Parsons proposal: no increase in the minimum rate of dues, but all comrades instructed to increase their dues payments. Defeated.

Johnson proposal: dues to be at a uniform rate of 10% of income. Defeated.

OC proposals: carried.

TILC RESOLUTION ON THE FALKLANDS DISPUTE

1. The Falkland Islands are a relic of British imperialism to the sovereignty of which the British ruling class has no legitimate claim, and which in the recent past it has even tried to relinquish to Argentina. Since that point it has become clear that the islands themselves and the adjacent area of Antarctica seem certain to be rich in oil and minerals, offering a substantial material incentive for the British imperialists to maintain their territorial claims - or at least to exchange them only for a guaranteed share of the possible mineral pickings.

2. We repudiate any legitimacy of British territorial claims in the Falklands or any legitimacy in related British claims to resources in Antarctica.

3. We call for the immediate recall of the British battle fleet, and campaign against any military action or war over the Falklands, which can only be designed to preserve a relic of empire and shore up the prestige of British imperialism. Any such war could have only reactionary consequences in the form of loss of life and a chauvinistic fervour in both the Argentine and British working classes.

4. But the pretext on which the Argentine junta has embarked upon the invasion of the Falklands is equally contrived. In taking its action, the junta has acted not against imperialism, but in a populist ploy designed to divert and unite the Argentine masses behind the Generals' own repressive rule.

5. In doing so the Argentine dictators have trampled upon the rights of the Falkland inhabitants, who in themselves oppress and threaten no-one and should have the right to decide their own future. Such action does nothing to build anti-imperialist consciousness in the Argentine working class, but rather seeks to generate chauvinism and 'national unity'. We do not support this action, and call for the withdrawal of Argentine troops.

6. We condemn the jingoism of most British Labour leaders, and call for labour movement action against the war through public agitation and through blacking military supplies.

7. While recognising that the present conflict is restricted to the Falklands issue, in the event of a full-scale war between Britain and Argentina we would be unequivocally for the defence of Argentina. Despite the leftist rhetoric of the Labour leaders about the 'fascist' nature of the junta - with whom they traded happily while in government - such a war would not be a war for democracy but a war for imperialist authority.

8. In any event we call upon the British and international working class to render all possible assistance to the Argentine workers in their struggle against the Galtieri dictatorship, for the establishment of a genuinely anti-imperialist workers' government in Argentina. Instead of assisting the Tories in their crisis by 'patriotic' support for the government, the British labour movement should be using the crisis to hasten Thatcher's overthrow in the interests of the working class, and giving all material and political support to the Argentine workers in the fight for democratic and trade union rights.

12.4.82.

For: WSL, TAF. Against: LOR, RWL. Abst: Turkish group.
(The Australian comrades were unable to attend the TILC meeting).

MERSEYSIDE BRANCH RESOLUTION

Whilst endorsing the general line of full opposition to the imperialist adventure in the South Atlantic, as carried in paper no. 80, this Merseyside branch of the WSL expresses grave concern about the final demand in the editorial and also the final demand in the article by comrade Garcia. [i.e. the demand for the right of the Falklanders to decide their own future]

In the context of the British situation such calls can only act to blunt the anti-imperialist edge of our stance. Calls for Falklands/Malvinas self-determination and the withdrawal of Argentine troops should in all future statements be replaced by demands for the following:

1. British recognition of Argentine sovereignty (to be discussed within TILC),
2. Britain to allow free entry to all those wishing to leave either Argentina or the Falklands, in line with our general demand for an end to immigration controls.

WHY THE GENERAL STRIKE IS NOT ON THE AGENDA

FOR TODAY'S CLASS STRUGGLE !

INTRODUCTION

The hegemony of Bourgeois ideology, in Britain, is probably greater now than at any other time, that is the total permeation of society with the ideas and concepts of the Bourgeoisie, and to the exclusion of any other class's independant ideology, is greater in 1982, than at any other time, previously.

The decline of classes such as the aristocracy and the peasantry, after the Bourgeois Revolutions of 1640 and 1688, and the associated decline of the ideology of those classes, is of course, classic marxism. But what isn't classic marxism, and has been ignored, until the Communist Party started the debate around "The Forward March of Labour Halted?", is the decline in the ideology of the Working Class. The C.P. debate is notable amongst other things for the fact that no Trotskyist (if the S.W.P. are correctly excluded) contribution was made, and also the similarity of the preconceptions of many debaters to those of the S.P.D. majority in the period up to 1914. However to deal in the shortcomings of that debate is not the purpose of this document, suffice to say that it does raise the question of what has happened to the working class.

From the Chartists, through the Paris Commune, the Second International, the Russian Revolution etc., the Spanish Civil War, even to the Liberation of Eastern Europe by the Red Army, the working class has had a banner to which they could relate to, broadly speaking it was socialism or communism, whatever, it did express an alternative to Bourgeois Capitalist rule. It survived the attacks of the bourgeoisie, even when accompanied by betrayals, the General Strike of '26, the rise of Naziism in Germany and the betrayal by the Comintern, (Trotsky may have been right that this was the first class betrayal of the Comintern, but the working class didn't see it as such.) It survived Ramsey MacDonald and the Moscow Trials. But it could not survive the post war period. The 1945 Labour Government using troops against workers, the C.P.G.B. stopping wildcat strikes (Eric Heffer in his younger days, was expelled from the C.P. as a Trotskyist, for leading wild cat strikes in this period), 1956, the putting down of the Hungarian Revolution by Soviet troops, the '64 to '70 Labour Government, '68 the crushing of the Prague Spring, and then the 74 - 79 Labour Government which was in many ways the last straw. To whom should the workers look to as an expression of their class consciousness? To the Labour Party, led by Foot and Healey (after what they did last time?); to the unions (with Duffy and Chapple who needs enemies!); To the Communist Party (after what has just happened in Poland!); to the Trots (all 57 varieties) - or do they just pack their bags and support "something old, somethin new, something borrowed and something blue" like the S.D.P/Liberal Alliance?

But against this runs the age old argument, that workers learn through struggle, that the dispute on the shopfloor will actually make workers aware of the strength of the class. An argument that is in part true and in part very simplistic, since workers are now tied up by union rules and regulations, such that strikes need the backing of the "Union" to be made "Official" so that strike pay can be paid. Shop stewards, who were predominantly unofficial till the mid sixties, are now the local union leadership on the shopfloor (and sometimes, in the case of convenors, no longer on the shop floor) and have to present union policy to the members, as well as being tied up on X number of committees and Health and Safety and the need to know the law on all sorts of things. This may all improve conditions of work etc, but it doesn't do much for the "revolutionary shop stewards movement" type image.

So what has happened? Rosa Luxemburg, in 1899 argued that the choice between reformism and revolutionary socialism, was not the choice between two roads leading to the same goal but two roads leading to two very different goals. In Britain, the working class have been travelling down the reformist road, and things have changed along the way, notably the bureaucratisation of the movement and the decline

of the Labour Movement as a living vitality.

Reformism succeeded in improving the living conditions of the working class in Western Europe (c.f. Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*), because Western Europe was the industrial heartland. The Bourgeoisie, after 1917, were aware of the consequences that a successful proletarian revolution posed for them, and were therefore prepared to buy off the workers in Western Europe. Because the reformists succeeded in the short run, their influence and strength grew and they came to play more and more the role of the Labour Lieutenants of Capital, and with the working class organised sectionally behind their Union leaders, and the Capitalists prepared to deal with them, it became less and less important for the workers to be directly involved. The reformist leadership became the entrenched labour movement bureaucracy, absorbing all levels of the labour movement, and those areas, such as Branch meetings, which required the membership to turn up to and be involved, declined in importance as fewer workers turned up, and fewer workers turned up as they declined in importance. The effect on the self activity of the class, has been disastrous - wildcat strikes are, at the moment, a thing of the past - strikes are organised when negotiations break down - to show that the union bureaucrat is speaking on behalf of the workers and not bluffing.

The situation is no longer, as Trotsky put it "a crisis of leadership", it is much more than that, it is a crisis of consciousness.

REFORMIST AND REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL STRIKES, AND THE DEBATE IN THE W.S.L.

It is against the background of a crisis of consciousness in the class, that the debate on the general strike should be being taken. However there are a number of points that first have to be sorted out on the overall understanding of the general strike.

Rosa Luxemburg's work "The Mass Strike, The Political Party, and The Trade Unions" opens with a criticism of the abandonment of the general strike to the anarchist theorists, and the rejection, for good reason, of the anarchist conception. But that the debate prior to 1905 was not around a marxist understanding of the general strike, and her pamphlet was aimed at providing that analysis.

Strange as it may seem, the anarchist conception of the general strike seems to have reemerged in the debate in the W.S.L.

Luxemburg rejected the idea that the general strike can be organised from above, and that one fine day the workers will all stop work (the anarchist conception). The British General Strike of 1926, was to prove her factually wrong, but also to point out a major distinction in the nature of strikes, so that her rejection of this type of strike points to a further position.

Luxemburg argued that the general strike is not something which is at the beck and call of even the largest workers party, but that it arises out of a series of interrelating factors, most of which are different each time. Basically the general strike is a result of a high level of consciousness, political class consciousness, in the class as a whole.

The General Strike of 1926, was called by the Triple Alliance for specific economic reasons. As such it had little or nothing in common with Luxemburg's conception and was fundamentally a different thing. One is the response of the class, the other, the response of the leaders. One is the spontaneous revolutionary general strike, the other, the bureaucratic reformist general strike. Ironically the latter is also the anarchist conception.

Now Cde Morrow has already quoted Trotsky as saying "Whatever may be the slogans and motives for which the general strike is initiated if it included the genuine masses, and if the masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: Who will be the master?". So no doubt some comrades will turn round and argue that however the general strike is arrived at, once it has started, we are onto a 'good thing'.

Cde Trotsky does however have two qualifying 'if's, and although I'm not sure what the 'ungenuine masses' are! I assume that Cde Trotsky was pointing to the same distinction that is laid out above, between the revolutionary spontaneous strike and the bureaucratically called strike. Between the general strike from below, which because it involves the workers in every aspect of the running of the strike, has huge revolutionary potential, and on the other hand the general strike from above, which the bureaucracy call and control, and should the control of it start to slip then, to maintain their position as the Labour Lieutenants of Capital then they will call off the general strike.

Is the attempt to show a qualitative distinction between the strike waves that Cde Luxemburg studied in her pamphlet and the General Strike of '26, just formalism? Didn't the Winter of Discontent, and specifically the Low Pay Dispute show the way forward. The rank and file ran the Lorry Drivers Dispute, but although the rules of the bureaucracy were badly hammered, the workers in U.R.T.U. went back to work (even if not crossing T&G picket lines across their depot gates) when U.R.T.U. refused to make the strike official. The Low Pay Dispute went from heckling the T.U. bureaucrats off the stage at Central Hall, Westminster, to being divided and defeated by the bureaucracy, who remained the leadership throughout. Since then we've seen the low paid workers hammered as the union bureaucracy do nothing. Why? Because they (the workers) still look to the bureaucracy for leadership and not to themselves. This is the central problem facing the working class at this moment in time, the problem of not knowing how to defend itself against the very vicious attacks that are hitting it now, because its traditional defense; negotiators; union officials; the trade unions; are, in the face of the Capitalist Crisis, largely useless!

This raises the whole question of the debate around the two formulations - a general strike to kick out the Tories or a general strike around a specific demand such as smashing the 4%. Both demands, whether intentionally or not, are aimed at the bureaucracy, since only a general strike called by the bureaucracy could be around such specific demands. A revolutionary spontaneous general strike, which is not on the order of the day, is not called around any one demand, neither is it called, but is rather the response of the class to a situation, when their consciousness is such that they perceive their own strength, or an inclining of their own ability to fight. In the recent period, comrades have probably followed the events in Poland. The strikes on the Baltic seaboard in August 1980, managed eventually to produce the 21 Demands, some of which happened to accord to demands in the Transitional Programme, but the 21 Demands represented an attempt to formulate something in line with the general consciousness of the Polish Working Class. If the demands were met, formally, that was not the point, the point was something called Solidarnosc - it was vague, it was general, it was the class's conception of its own ability to act in its own interest - that which distinguishes the proletariat as a revolutionary class.

No doubt some comrades will argue that we need to raise the call for a general strike so as to show the way forward for the class. This would be wrong, because the British Working Class is not in itself prepared for a general strike, and the workers are themselves aware of that. Such a call has no real resonance in the class and as such would merely lead to our comrades being looked at as being out of touch, however much individually the workers agree with the call. Cde Luxemburg herself cautioned against such a tactic, and although I am wary of quoting dead comrades to back up present day arguments, I will finish this document with Cde Luxemburg's own words.

"The social democrats (the marxists) are the most enlightened, most class conscious vanguard of the proletariat. They cannot and dare not wait, in a fatalist fashion, with folded arms for the advent of the "revolutionary situation", On the contrary, they must now, as always, hasten the development of things and endeavor to accelerate events. This they cannot do, however, by suddenly issuing the "slogan" for a mass strike at random at any odd moment, but first and foremost, by making clear to the widest layers of the proletariat the inevitable advent of this revolutionary period, the inner social factors making for it and the political consequences of it." (The Mass Strike.. Rosa Luxemburg Speaks .p200)

Evington. March '82.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND THE ARMED FORCES

Resolution from EC 18.2.82

We favour:

1. Democratic rights in the armed forces and the police, including trade union rights and the rights to form rank and file organisations - i.e. the repeal of all laws forbidding members to form and join unions and to strike, etc. This, not as a measure to gradually reform these forces, but to disrupt their hierarchies.

2. Normally, however, an attitude of hostility to the immediate economic demands of the armed forces and the police, since these are not just workers in uniform but armed agents of the bourgeois state. Exceptions will be conscripts' demands, situations of massive ferment in the armed forces, etc.

We therefore do not regard normal, 'stable cops' (or army) unions, based on improving their standards, as part of the labour movement, though we defend against the state their right to exist.

3. Campaigns to persuade youth not to join the armed forces, and support for youth who refuse to obey orders or desert.

4. Formation of a workers' militia and disbandment of the standing army and police.

Carried with Jones, Morrow, Hill, Smith,
Cunliffe, Khan, Levy, Gardiner voting for,
Kinnell abstaining.

Amendments.

(by Kinnell)

The original draft/contained as clause 2: "Trade unions organising in the army and police, with an anti-militarist policy". This was deleted by 5 votes to 2 (Khan, Kinnell).

The original draft read "hostility or at best non-support to the immediate economic demands...". "Or at best non-support" was deleted by 5 votes to 2 (Hill, Kinnell).

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Hunt (who was present for/discussion) moved deletion of "trade union rights" in point 1 - this was defeated unanimously.

Hunt also moved deletion of the phrase "not just workers in uniform". This was defeated by 6 votes to 1.