

# socialist newsletter

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20p

## Axe Thatcher this winter!

1981 looks like being the second 'winter of discontent'. Already car workers, dockers, ship builders, railworkers and local government employees have taken industrial action. Three times British Shipbuilders have been hit by national strike action supporting the Robb Caledon occupation in Dundee. Liverpool docks came out on October 12th over manning levels. Strikes have hit the railways and all-out strike is being mooted.

Things are now set for all-out strike at BL. Michael Edwardes prepared his ground with a document pointing out why only 3.8% could be given and threatened to sack strikers. Now that the strike is on it must be won. To compromise on Edwardes' terms will mean attacks on the wages and jobs of BL workers. *BL workers can and must win.*

The Tories will try to buy off the stronger sections. The miners have been offered nearly 9%. But even this may prove to be inadequate to prevent strike action, especially in the context of a general push against Thatcher's pay limit.

The Tories are at their weakest for some time, unable to drastically push back the unions. Jobs have been lost and pay levels have been depressed. But these have not been anywhere enough for the ruling class. The economic crisis, reflected in the stock exchange plunge some weeks ago, is putting many sections of the ruling class more than they can handle. They are demanding of Thatcher that she really deliver the organised working class, not just hold it in check.

For its part the working class is showing, through occupational strikes and protests that it wants to fight.

Which brings us on to the real problem for trade unionists – the leaders. Terry Duffy eventually declared that Michael Edwardes had to be fought, *but Edwardes has axed 68,000 jobs in BL since he took over*, with no resistance from Duffy. Union leaders have acquiesced in the face of real pay cuts and massive job losses.

We deserve a different kind of leadership than this. Trade unionists on the job, who have to do the real fighting, must make sure that the winter of 1981 is a winter of victories against Thatcher – which lead to bringing down the Tories.

So many sections of workers are now set to fight the 4% and similar 'rises', which are really cuts when set against inflation, that the question must be put – *don't we have a common enemy – the Tory government?*

So many industries now face job losses running into tens of thousands that the question should be put – *don't we need a Labour Government in order to restore these jobs?*

So many strikes and occupations are planned that the question can be put – *why fight section by section when there is one opponent?*

The winter of 1981 has many features in common with the winter of 1978, but even more in common with that of 1973.

*The rail workers, car workers, shipyard workers, local government workers, dockers, and all those facing the 4% and redundancies should ask the union leaders – why not all out against the Tories this winter?*

Everywhere organisation must be prepared at factory floor, office and shop level for industrial action against the Tories and their management allies this winter. Thatcher said in Blackpool that the working class has to pay for the crisis. Our response must be simple and united – we cannot pay, we have had enough, we will pay no more!

# ALL OUT TO SMASH THE 4%!



BL votes for strike action

## FORCE A GENERAL ELECTION NOW!

The run-down in traditional industries in Britain continues. As well as closures the bosses are using bad trading conditions to inflict pay offers well below the rate of inflation, or no pay rises at all. It looks as if 4% will be the pay ceiling for the whole public sector and for the engineering industry as well. It's worth remembering that not so long ago 8% to 10% was being offered – and fought. The workers are trying to fight back, under extremely difficult conditions.



# CRASH!

by George White

The recent crisis on the London stock exchange highlights three things. First, the fragility of the capitalist market system. Second, the inability of capitalist governments to control state spending and inflation. Third, the unified but antagonistic nature of the world's capital markets and the way a crisis hits all major national centres.

As the *Financial Times* put it, "The leading indices of the world's half dozen most heavily capitalised stock markets, accounting between them for roughly 90 per cent of world equity (stocks and shares) values, either struck a new low for the year or came within an ace of doing so." Even the relatively strong markets, like Tokyo, slumped.

The London collapse was triggered by weakness on Wall Street, itself caused by the inability of Reagan to lower interest rates, the failure of the US economy to stage a recovery and continued high levels of state spending. The downturn was started by many small investors selling and pulling out of the market.

The weaker European currencies, especially the Italian lire, French franc and sterling, have been under pressure from high interest rates in the USA. Geoffrey Howe recently tried to persuade Reagan to drop the rate. He failed. The Tories then had no choice but to raise rates here for the second time in 16 days. Base lending rate is now up 4%. Industrial borrowers now have to pay a staggering 17% on loans. This will be reflected in the arguments bosses use to explain why only 4% or nothing can be given in pay rises. It will also affect investment in industry, jobs and trade.

The 'stronger' economies and exchanges, West Germany and Japan in the main, are being forced to take the strain of a major erratic monetary shakedown over which they have no real control. They are being pulled into the vortex of the crisis by the actions of the USA.

Interest rates. Its programme to cut public spending, so similar to Thatcher's, is failing. To 'balance his books' Reagan needed 30 billion dollars in cuts. So far only 13 billion has been forthcoming. US industry is responding negatively to the crippling high interest rates.

After a week of pressure on the French franc, Socialist president Mitterand was forced to devalue by 3% in the European Monetary System. Combined with an uprating of the German mark by 5.5% this makes an effective devaluation of the franc and lire within the EMS of 8.5%. Sterling is not in the EMS, but its 'central rate' was quietly devalued on 4th October by just over 9%.

The era of 'extended credit' is also closing at government level. The US treasury has told the International Monetary Fund, not indeed the most liberal of bodies, that it gives loans too easily. This will affect a whole range of countries from Europe, Latin America and Asia. Eastern European countries such as Poland will also find it much harder to extend and modify the terms of their loans from capitalist banks.

The crisis at the end of September shook money markets and exchanges. It did not have an immediate effect on industry and trade. But conditions are lined up for further similar wild crashes and these must spill over into industry itself. As the Bank of England warned, "Large rate movements caused by volatile capital flows... might cause unhelpful effects in the real economy." Loosely translated into everyday language this means that factories would close, currency values collapse, trade walls be erected by nations and whole economies threatened.

The working class of Britain and of the whole world now stares these problems in the face for the first time in many years. They are the inevitable result of the structural changes in capitalism. The time has come when the workers must fight back.

The line on pay settlements over the next period has been drawn by the Tories at 4%. This compares with the 8% 'norm' of early 1981.

Already the public sector and engineering have received offers around the 4% mark. British

Leyland are offering 3.8%, which even Terry Duffy has called "completely unacceptable" and could lead to all out industrial action. The unions opened their claim at £20 a week. The initial BL offer meant a rise of £4 for skilled workers.

# 4%? no way!

Why have the Tories drawn the line on pay so low?

We have to remember the 2% offer made to the steelworkers soon after Thatcher took office. That was a political decision, designed to challenge the strength of the steel unions. In some respects the 4% 'norm' is similar, except that much wider layers are involved this time. The 8% already offered the miners shows that the Tories once again want to leave the stronger sections out of the action.

How should public sector workers, white and blue collar, and

engineers, respond to the 4%? No doubt, the choice of wages or jobs will be put to them once more. In other words, keep your wages down and work harder or lose more jobs.

This is a trick against the workers. Jobs will be attacked under current trading conditions if the bosses have their way, whether wage rises are pegged at 4% or not. The 4% is designed, so far as the state is concerned, to be part of its overall cuts. If services are cut then less workers will be needed. For the engineering industry the 4% is being fought to try to maximise profits.

Nobody argues that the crisis of British capitalism is not severe. Choices have to be made. Either the whole plan of the Tory government to make the workers pay for the crisis is thrown out, along with the Tories themselves, or 4% plus wide scale unemployment plus massive cuts in social services will be imposed.

The key to fighting the 4% is unity. Across the public sector an alliance of all unions and local members of those unions should be formed to defeat the Tory offer. In engineering the Confederation must immediately be brought into action.

## STEEL

The steel industry is being hit hard by the current economic conditions. The industry is facing a crisis of confidence and is being forced to cut costs wherever possible. This has led to a series of plant closures and job losses. The industry is now in a state of deep recession and is unlikely to recover in the near future.

try and break up the industry into a net of competing local plants and threaten trade union unity. BSC is being placed in the balance. On top of this MacGregor wants more job losses, probably centred on Teeside. The ISTC does not have the strongest leadership in the world. It has remained silent on the BSC issue. More jobs are traded away to the USA. It is time for another strike. The workers must stand up to the bosses and demand a 4% rise.

## SHIPS

yard in Dundee, to halt its closure. This action has been endorsed by weekly industrial action across the industry. On September 28th, 55,000 shipbuilders staged a nationwide one-day strike against yard closures. A complete overtime ban has been called for. This particularly hits the ship repair yards, which are profitable only if they work on a continuous basis. The employers, British Shipbuilders, have threatened widescale layoffs if the action continues. This latest dispute is one of a long line of battles against the run-down of an industry which now employs only around 70,000 workers.

# Students under massive Tory attack

by Michael Keene



★ This summer has seen an intensification of the Tory Government's drive to dismember the system of higher education in Britain. The Government has recently imposed cuts in University budgets which will mean at least 12,000 and maybe as many as 20,000 places disappearing along with massive staff redundancies and wholesale closure of courses. In July a Government Green Paper spelled out the options for imposing a central funding and management body on the Polytechnics and other colleges of higher education at present controlled by local authorities. The Tories want to bring in this central body as a vehicle for cuts and course closures.

The Department of Education and Science wants the central body to be dominated by appointed "industry and commerce" representatives, their function clearly being to gear higher education to the needs of and the strictures of the crisis of the British capitalist economy.

At the same time, the plan is to completely cut out the local authorities, chiefly Labour, who have acted to a certain degree as a cushion in implementing education cuts in these colleges. Labour controlled authorities like ILEA must be geared up to defend their control over the public sector of higher education as an essential part of fighting back against the Tories.

★ Student grants have been held down to a 7% increase this year, continuing the downward slide in the real income of students. The cuts have meant an almost total disappearance of the payment of discretionary awards by some local authorities for some types of courses,

depriving many of any chance of entering full-time education. Many students are at the same time going to bear the brunt of large rises in hall fees (in some places by as much as 30%). This means that working-class students will be increasingly squeezed out of the education system and those that are not will be living on the bread line in many cases. *What Thatcher's Government means for students' living standards is best expressed by the fact that a case of scurvy (caused by poor diet) was reported recently at one London Polytechnic.*

★ Overseas students' numbers are once again substantially down. The impact of "full cost fees" introduced by the Tories, is biting hard, with many overseas students having to drop out of courses as money runs out.

★ Government policy is having its effect in a new spate of attacks on student unions. The five polytechnics in Inner London currently face proposals by ILEA to penalise them to cover "losses" due to such activities as rent strikes and occupations. In fact North East London Poly Students Union currently faces a situation where the Poly is attempting to cut £8,500 from its budget as a result of an occupation last year.

Other proposals which ILEA officials tried to put forward recently have included the introduction of the right to "contract out" of student union membership, to impose financial penalties on political and campaigning activities and to attempt to interfere in and limit the self-government of unions. After a sharp response from London Poly unions and some lobbying of the ILEA Labour majority, a partial retreat on these

proposals has been obtained but the issues are not yet resolved.

★ Cuts are being seen in a thousand different ways. Paint is peeling from walls, premises are dirty, equipment in laboratories is not renewed or is becoming antiquated, libraries are becoming more inadequate. As well as this, welfare and medical services in colleges, needed more urgently than ever before, are coming under attack.

★ It is clear that next year is going to be a year of struggle for students who face a multi-faceted attack from the Thatcher Government. The present leadership of the NUS is incapable of responding to this attack, as they have shown time and time again, whether on the issue of overseas students, student union finance, or their latest acceptance of the "principle" of a central body in the public sector.

★ NOLS, with a national organisation and five members on the NUS Executive, can become a pole around which an alternative to the shabby sell-outs that have come to characterise the NUS Executive can be developed. The TUC is campaigning against youth unemployment in the autumn, in collaboration with the NUS. The task for NOLS and student union activists must be to develop initiatives in this campaign which can involve thousands of students in the battle to force Thatcher out and replace the Tories with a Labour Government. *Socialist Newsletter* supporters in the student movement will take up this fight from the autumn, confident that we can take our place in the movement of the miners, civil servants and others who have taken on the Tories.

# Chapple's end is nigh



The closing of the Central London Branch of the EEPTU is part and parcel of the battles taking place within the Labour Party. In organising against the left Frank Chapple has launched a campaign of flooding local Labour Party committees with hand picked followers, more responsible to EEPTU head office than to the union branches they are supposed to represent. In most areas Chapple has got away with this undemocratic practice. However in Bermondsey Labour Party and the Central London EEPTU branch an opposition was mounted. Someone who had the distinguished record of not having been to a branch meeting in 17 years, was sent as a delegate to Bermondsey Labour Party without the branch even being informed.

The branch said they would allow him to be a delegate but only if he reported his actions back to the branch. This he refused. The branch refused to accept him as their delegate. Frank Chapple had the branch closed.

What makes this latest in a long line of undemocratic practices by the EEPTU leadership special is its connection with the leadership battle inside the Labour Party. Chapple was a signatory to the founding statement of the 'Council for Social Democracy', before the Gang of Four left the Labour Party. Politically he is with them, though for tactical reasons he may not have chosen to leave with them. This has as much to do with Chapple's position inside the Electricians' Union as within the Labour Party.

Chapple will now ally with Denis Healey to do as much damage to the left as he can. It is vital for the left in the Labour Party and for those seeking a restoration of democracy within the EEPTU that Chapple is challenged and thrown out.

The opposition in the EEPTU is faced with a great task in taking on the Chapple apparatus. At the moment he has virtual unlimited powers. The opposition within the union has a very heavy influence from the Socialist Workers Party and they see the struggle within the Labour Party as an irrelevance.

Yet this is far from the truth. The hold of Chapple can be broken by a nationwide campaign against Chapple mounted from within the Labour Party on the basis of his practices there. The Benn campaign for deputy leader struck echoes in many unions beset by right wing leaders. *This is one of the main reasons the rights were so strongly in opposition to Benn.* The key to an advance in the EEPTU lies in the opposition forces joining the Labour Party and carrying the fight there.

The stand of Bermondsey Labour Party and the support given by Swindon Labour Party to the EEPTU Central London Branch must be built upon. The National Executive of the Labour Party must be called upon to disenfranchise the EEPTU until it stops the undemocratic practice of appointing local delegates to Labour Parties from union head office. Local Parties must likewise not accept these delegates and should carry the fight to the EEPTU locally.

## MEET THE JOBS EXPRESS

Support youths' demands for jobs, education, training and a voice.

● London  
 ● Bristol  
 ● Cardiff  
 ● Swansea  
 ● Birmingham  
 ● Sheffield  
 ● Manchester  
 ● Liverpool  
 ● Glasgow  
 ● Edinburgh  
 ● Newcastle

23 November  
 24 November  
 25 November  
 26 November  
 27 November

**Jobs for Youth Festival**  
 On the evenings of 27, 28, 29 November, concerts will be given at the Rainbow, Finsbury Park in North London featuring top rock bands.

**Lobby of Parliament**  
 On 30 November those who have taken part in the Jobs Express will lobby MPs.

**March and Rally**  
 On 29 November a march and rally will be held in central London.

For further information contact your regional council of the TUC or write to: 208, Strand, London, WC2R 0ET.

Swindon Labour Party voted to support the closed Central London Branch of the EEPTU against the opposition of the local right wing and the EEPTU. The local EEPTU branch supported the action of the Labour Party despite the fact that Chapple demanded they inform the Labour Party that the question was none of their business.

The Brighton Conference took place against a background of unresolved battles between the Tories and the working class. 1981 opened with the Irish Hunger Strike, continued with the miners forcing a retreat on its closure, followed by the widespread mobilisation of the Peoples March for Jobs.

The Tories have been unable to stem their own internal breakdown at cabinet level. The removal of the 'wets' from key positions in the way means that Thatcher can solve the problems of capitalism.

All the signs point to a coming winter of sharp battles between the Labour movement and Tories on several fronts: the 4% pay 'norm'; the Heseltine attack on Labour councils; on trade union rights and over foreign policy. There is a contradiction between what Labour's rank and file want their

party to do and what the Labour leaders are prepared to do. This was graphically shown in the rally of 200,000 at the end of the Peoples March, in Trafalgar Square.

Most people there wanted to hear Foot call for the bringing down of the Tories. They jeered Healey in Hyde Park and cheered Benn. Over 20 weeks the civil servants tried to solve the problem of breaking their Tory employers. That dispute was a test case for the 4% limit Thatcher has now declared for the winter. The struggle of the civil servants was not successful, but not because the unions as such were weak. The dispute was *sold out by the union leaders.*

In July the youth of Britain took to the streets, in an elemental and violent rejection of police brutality, the dole queue and racism. At that time Foot did nothing to champion

the cause of the oppressed youth. The Labour leaders avoided attacking the violence of the state at all costs.

1981 has been the year in which all Labour councils, including those with left leaders, like Lambeth and Lothian, have been forced to make cuts and enforce job losses. The need was to unite the councils in a nationwide movement to deny the Tories the ability to make the cuts stick. This the Labour leaders steadfastly refused to do.

The fight for the Deputy Leadership drew together all the strands of the long battle between the rank and file and the parliamentary and union bosses in the Labour Party. Benn was clearly the man of the left. Healey that of the apparatus. The fight spilled over from the local Labour Parties into the trade unions. *This marked a shift within*

*the unions which is terrifying the union bosses, even though Benn lost — just.*

The response of the ruling class to the struggle inside the Labour Party and the rise of the left has been to sponsor and publicize a new bosses' party, the SDP, whose main purpose will be to try and stop a majority Labour Government after the next Election. Backed by the ruling class press the SDP has managed to split off from the Labour Party a significant number of MPs and local councillors.

The Healey right wing have not condemned the exit of their colleagues. The main attack for them has been against the left.

Brighton set back, temporarily, the breakup of the apparatus within the Labour Party. For the leaders it was a chance to stem the left wing tide.

# Labour Right

# Car to



## The policies Foot will never implement

Against the wishes of bureaucrats like Duffy the Brighton Conference passed many radical policies. Pledges to repeal the racist Nationality Bill, to abolish fee-paying schools and to remove 'full-cost fees' on overseas students were easily passed.

However on all the major issues matters were less clear cut. In the last *Socialist Newsletter* we listed the following as the central policy questions:

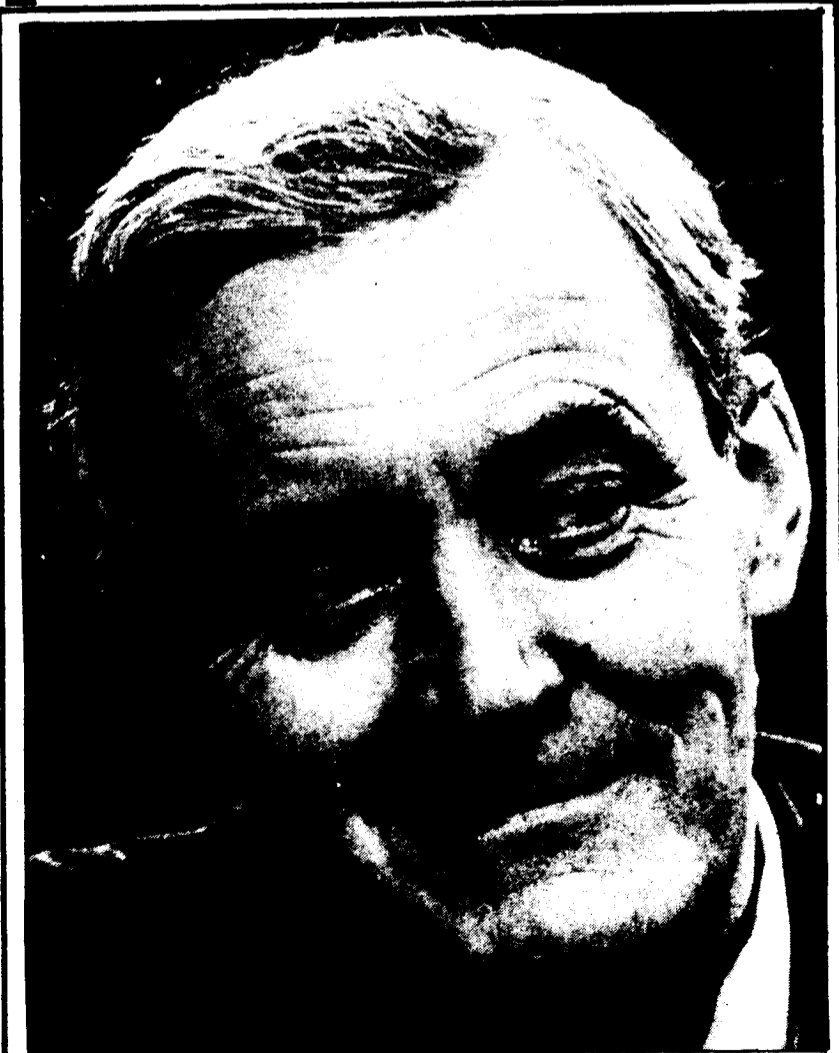
1. NEC control over the election Manifesto. This was passed and then overturned on a card vote after Foot made an appeal against it.
2. Withdrawal from the EEC. This was passed with much rhetoric but only a vague assurance from Foot of a withdrawal within one year. This allows Foot to hold a referendum in order to overturn the decision to leave the EEC.
3. Unilateral nuclear disarmament. This was passed, but will not go into the Manifesto because of the work of Duffy and company. Added to this, the cutting edge of unilateralism, withdrawal from NATO, was defeated. Foot already started dodging the issue. He called for a convergence between unilateralists and multilateralists which only means maintain the status quo.
4. Break the bipartisan agreement with the Tories on Ireland. As we predicted, many genuine resolutions in support of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland were blocked behind a formal and worthless agreement for 'unity' at some unannounced time.

Foot did indeed win its support for the unilateralist and unilateralist policies and guarantees of the government

will even try to carry them out. Without a full blooded campaign to force these policies on the Labour leaders they are left as hollow formulae.

The debate on the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' provided a perfect example of how this 'alternative', in fact, means all things to all people. Foot remarked that Benn and Healey's "unity" on the AES offered a good augury for the future. In moving the resolution on the economy Healey said, "The AES is supported by the entire NEC, including Tony and me." How is it that the figureheads of opposite poles within the Party, who fought each other so bitterly in 1981 can agree on supposedly basic economic strategy? The truth is that the AES in practice will amount to nothing. It is a utopia and it will never acquire an anti-capitalist cutting edge in its present vague form. It is for this reason that Healey can say he supports it. When Benn summed up the debate he had this to say, "Attacks on Thatcher are empty rhetoric unless followed by constructive policies . . ." Absolutely correct! But the AES is not a set of policies hitting at monopoly capital in the interests of working people. It is an academic exercise in wishful thinking. It is the old Keynes line — 'structural reform' of capitalism, dressed up in radical clothing.

Overall, the conclusion for rank and file Labour and trade union militants from Brighton is that the leaders successfully avoided being committed to anything which would throw them into open conflict with the bosses after Labour returns to office.



Tony Benn received 49.754% of the votes in the election for Deputy Leader. This was 0.852% less than Healey. After Michael Foot and other leading figures had called on Benn not to run and union bosses Duffy and Basnett worked to engineer the block vote for Healey, 49.574% of the Labour Party voted against Healey. The right has no mandate. The left must begin now to call

on Tony Benn to run next year and fight within the unions to bring into question the votes of the right wing leaders. Clearly Michael Foot, as he indicated in his leader's speech, wants to buy Benn off with a prime place in the Shadow Cabinet. The left should not allow such a manoeuvre to disenfranchise 49.574% of the Party at next year's Conference. Draft Tony Benn for 1982!

In the last few years the Block Vote which trade unions exercise in the Labour Party has been attacked from time to time as not being representative of the wishes of trade union rank and file. The capitalist press made this point many times before the last General Election. Today, this criticism from the right has vanished, because it was precisely the Block Vote which saved the day for the Labour right wing at Brighton.

Healey spoke with contempt of the decision of the TGWU to back Benn. He argued, as did all the media, that the TGWU rank and file supported him. He greeted NUPE's support as the true voice of the rank and file. In both cases his claim was fraudulent.

Neither in the TGWU nor NUPE was the rank and file consulted in what could be seen as a full way. Ballot forms or the 'consultation process' rarely went beyond the regional and district offices and committees. It is no surprise that many full-time middle order trade union officials would vote for Healey. They also feel under threat by the battle for democracy and accountability which has gripped the Labour Party and could so easily spill over into the unions.

NUPE's backing for Healey was an insult to the thousands of NUPE local government workers who fought the cuts in 1979 and the low pay policy of 1979 — the main architect of both those was Denis Healey.

### TGWU Block Vote cast

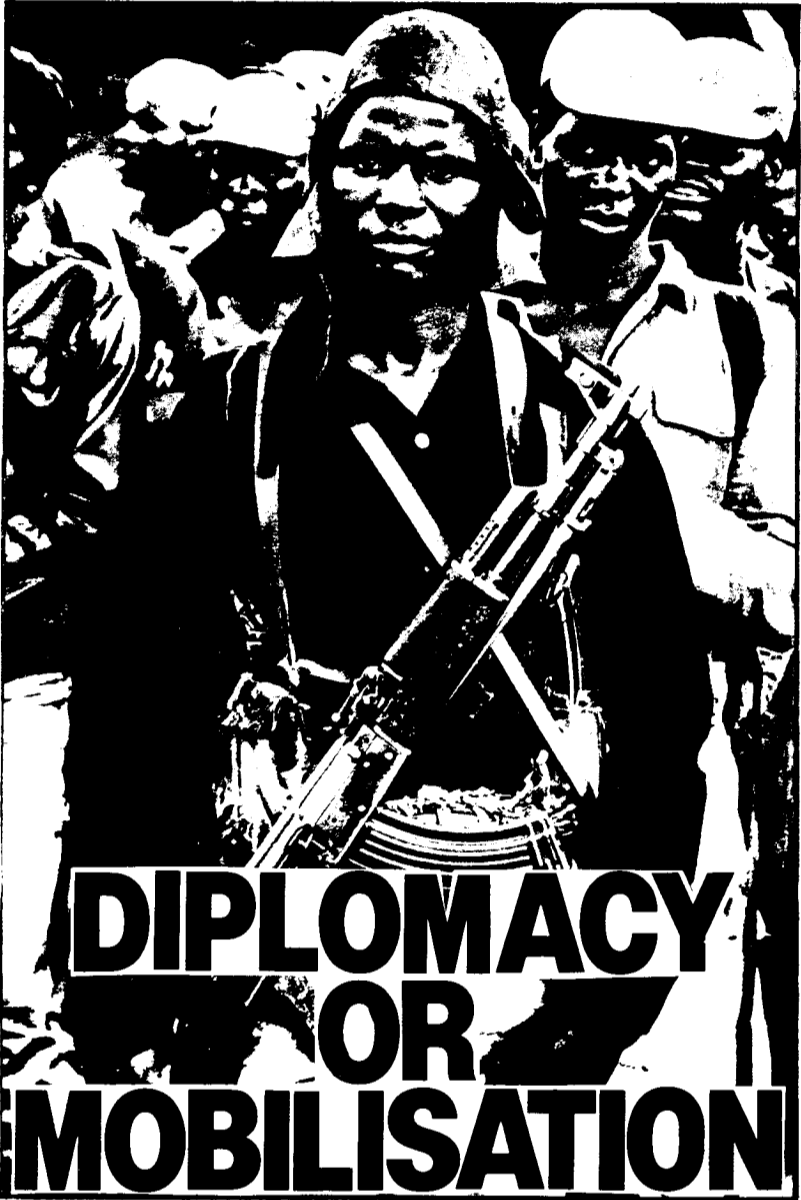


# AFRICAN FLAME

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The workers are the flame of the revolution

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## DIPLOMACY OR MOBILISATION

The UN-oriented response of the 'front-line' states to the South African invasion of Angola highlights again the total bankruptcy of the 'diplomatic strategy' in advancing the struggles of the oppressed masses of Southern Africa. The role of the UN in supervising elections in Namibia on the basis of 'safeguards for minorities' (that is, a built-in White imperialist veto) is a forceful example of the limitations of SWAPO's diplomatic approach. Similarly, the 'political settlement' imposed on Zimbabwe has meant leaving the old colonial structures intact and not challenging the domination of imperialism over the economy. Diplomatic agreements, whatever their form, only perpetuate the domination of imperialism and its key military arm in the region, South Africa.

It is for this reason that the interests of the African masses of the whole region demand a united struggle to bring down the apartheid regime; for it is the same regime that holds the black workers of South Africa in a vice of degradation and slavery and shackles the 'front-line' states through economic dependence.

How can that dependence be broken? Clearly, all the experience shows that political 'independence' does not solve the problem. Even the most radical of the petty-bourgeois nationalist leaderships have been unable to challenge the domination of imperialism. Why? Because they have contained the revolution within a capitalist framework. The national economies remained tied to the international capitalist market. What they produce

is determined by this market and not by the needs of the people.

Even nationalisation under capitalism cannot break these chains. Only the mobilisation of the masses on the road of struggle to a workers' and peasants' government, which breaks with capitalism, smashes the bourgeois state and sets up its own state power (breaking the power of the petty-bourgeois layers that feed on the crumbs of imperialism) can open the road to challenging the stranglehold of imperialism.

Nationalism and 'African Socialism' which deny the class struggle as a western phenomenon that does not apply to Africa, produce capitalist regimes staffed by the petty-bourgeoisie subordinated to imperialism. They pursue the class struggle in their interests and those of imperialism against the interests of the African masses.

The liberation of the productive forces in the interests of the black South African masses would be a great step forward for the revolution in Africa and a huge blow against US imperialism. It would end the exploitation of the 'front-line' states by South African (and US) capital, and open the road to a United Socialist States of Southern Africa.

Only then on the basis of free co-operation, can the resources of the region be pooled and developed in order to deal with the material problems of the people in the region.

It is precisely the revolutionary implications of the mobilisation of the masses sweeping away the apartheid state, that makes the petty bourgeois leaders place their hopes on the United Nations.

# Central Africa

## French troops out! Free elections now!

On September 1st there was another military coup in the Central African Republic, removing President Dacko - Emperor Bokassa's heir.

The new head of state has promised "free elections" within a "few weeks", while suspending the constitution.

Ange Patasse's 'Liberation Movement of the Central African Republic' (MLPC), called the coup the logical outcome of the fall of Giscard in France, who had

imposed "an unpopular and anti-democratic regime on Central Africa". This did not stop Patasse from taking part in false "elections" under the old regime. *Central Africa has never held free elections.* The 2,000 French troops in Bangui were "continuing to work with us" according to Andre Kolingba, the new strong man. The French Foreign Office maintains it had nothing to do with the coup. No doubt! Dacko's departure was in the face of riots and disorders. Only a month previously he had *person-*

*ally* promoted Kolingba to "restore law and order". Here we see the hand of French colonialism.

The 2½ million workers and poor peasants of the CAR need to rid themselves of the likes of Ange Patasse and other collaborators of French imperialism. What is needed is the mobilisation of the masses against the French administrative centre, Bangui, to demand the *immediate withdrawal of French troops and free elections to a Constituent Assembly.*



The Kolingba Administration

# Uganda in crisis

Uganda today presents the worst example of the impossibility of finding a capitalist solution to the problems of Africa. Following the defeat of the brutal mass murder regime of Amin, a number of presidents in quick succession have failed to stabilize the economy and political life of Uganda. These have been, to one degree or another, the puppets of Tanzania, kept in power by the presence of the Tanzanian army.

Today, almost a year after the fixed election 'victory' of Milton Obote, the country is ravaged by a civil war. There is a state of anarchy in some provinces, with over 1,000 civilians reported killed in July and August alone.

The Ugandan 'security forces' have become virtual bandits, looting, raping and killing as they go. The black market is supreme. It is nearly impossible to get basic

necessities any other way in the cities. Corruption is the order of the day.

Obote and his party are unable to unite the nation, which is breaking down into tribal and regional units. The Red Cross reports 120,000 refugees from the West Nile area have gone to Zaire alone. About 2,500 political prisoners are being held without trial since the 'election' last December.

Obote's answer to this collapse is a strong austerity programme, designed to please the World Bank and other capitalist agencies. The Ugandan shilling has been floated, driving up import costs. At the same time imports have been restricted, putting even more power in the hands of black marketeers who turn to smuggling. This has, not surprisingly, led to a worsening of the situation. Obote's measures have hit the people of Uganda hard

but still only result in gaining meagre loans of £4 million from Britain and \$5 million from the USA.

Obote has no programme capable of reconstructing the economy. He continues to rely on naked repression. The Bugandan people suffer especially at his hands, as they did under Amin. He turns a blind eye to the corruption of his officials and cannot stop the violence of his troops.

What the Ugandan people need is a party which will put an end to tribal discrimination, fight corruption and repression, and represent the economic needs of the Ugandan people, not the wishes of the World Bank and the IMF. The Ugandan economy was once rich. Its peoples have long cultural traditions. There are only political reasons behind the continued tragedy. Those reasons centre on the continued domination of Uganda by imperialism.

# 800 shot in Morocco

More than 800 people were killed, many of them women and children, and thousands were wounded when the troops of King Hassan rained bullets on the poor areas of Casablanca, during a 24-hour general strike on June 20th and 21st. The strike was called to protest against the massive price rises planned by the government, the announcement of which sparked a huge wave of working class

militancy. The mobilisation of June 20th was the culmination of a series of demonstrations over the previous month which had forced significant concessions from the King and exacerbated the political situation.

This new stage of collapse of Hassan's regime explains the severe repression meted out to the workers' mobilisation as well as the increased support to Hassan from the IMF, Stalinism and the client regimes of

imperialism in Northern Africa. But as in Iran, neither the bloodiest repression nor the international backing for the King can overcome the deep-rooted need of the masses to abolish the monarchy and to establish a democratic republic on a programme of expropriating imperialist interests, self-determination for the oppressed minorities and democratic rights for the Moroccan masses.



# Party Conference Brighton 1981

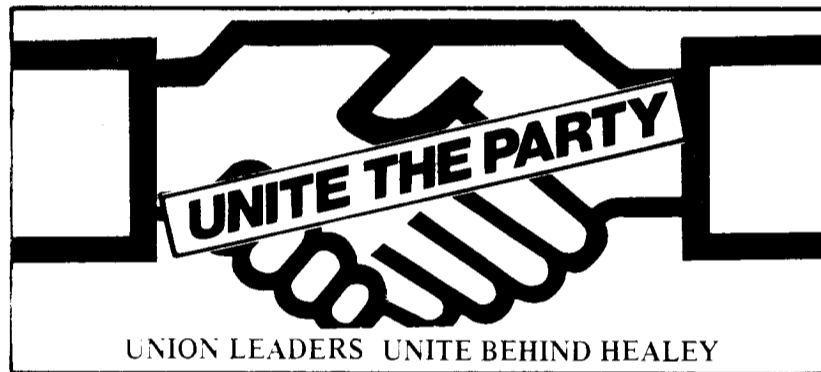
# Block vote stems tide with Duffy the fight the unions

The Block Vote system was used persistently at Brighton by trade union bureaucrats to obstruct radical policies, to keep whatever was passed out of the next election manifesto and to drive left wingers off the NEC. The AUEW was central to this offensive by the right wing. Duffy consciously used the union's 800,000 votes to prop up the right wing.

On the question of NEC control over the Manifesto, the Block Vote was used to overturn the decision of Conference floor. USDAW came under massive pressure to change its vote, from Foot on the platform and the union right wingers in their section of the hall.

The democratic reforms won in the Labour Party are not immutable. Already some union leaders, Duffy among them, are looking at 'constitutional amendments' to overturn the gains of the rank and file. The fight to defend these gains, such as reselection of MPs, must be carried into the affiliated unions. A campaign must be mounted to make the Block Vote accountable. A democratisation process could centre on the rights of branches and workplace union bodies to determine the make-up of union delegations to Labour Party Conference and to decide on policy.

Brighton proved beyond all doubt that the Block Vote as currently structured is used to bolster the right wing and to defy the wishes of the Labour Party rank and file.



UNION LEADERS UNITE BEHIND HEALEY

Healey's wafer thin 0.8% victory in the Deputy leadership contest highlighted the fine balance between the left and right in the leadership of the Labour Party. The immediate response of the Benn camp to the result was to regard Benn's 49.5% as a "brilliant victory". It is true to say that the size of Benn's support, especially the 80% plus backing from the CLPs, represents a shift to the left in the ranks of the party.

However, relying on the union block votes the right-wing managed to radically alter the balance of forces on the NEC by ousting 5 left wingers. The departure of Kelly, Dix, Short, Beckett and Atkinson gives a majority of the right and the 'centre-left'. Michael Foot has the opportunity to prevent the 'Benn-left' from winning anything on the NEC. This "coup" was well planned by Duffy and others, and succeeded in wresting the NEC from the left despite Benn's record 530,000 votes for the NEC.

In this new balance of forces the 'centre-left' will play a crucial role. Already the abstainers in the deputy leadership contest have made it clear how they will operate. Before the Conference their votes were decisive in the NEC decision not to back the proposal that the NEC have final say on the Manifesto. Eric Heffer, long regarded as a champion of the left, has visibly shifted to the right. During Conference he remarked "... we can't tie down every individual to every conference resolution." This is precisely the let-out which the right-wing need to ignore Conference policies.

Foot took up Heffer's point saying "MPs had the right to exercise their own judgement, conscience and political experience." Backing this up by saying "The PLP does not presume the right to party conference and the party conference does not presume the right to dictate to the PLP." This really means the MPs can continue to ignore Conference policy.

Scargill, addressing the CLPD fringe meeting said, that an abstention in the Deputy leadership ballot was in reality a vote for "trying to operate capitalism better than the Tories". He was absolutely right.

The 'centre-left' has become the agency through which the right-wing can ignore the demands of the party's rank and file. This was realised by constituency delegates. In the NEC elections Kinnock's vote slumped by 53,000 and Lestor's by 121,000.

Benn took up some of these problems at conference fringe meetings. On the one hand the majority of the PLP and Shadow Cabinet, he said, did not accept conference policies. On the other hand the Tribune Group was failing to convert the PLP to the views of the left. In fact the issue is much clearer. The Kinnock-Lestor-Silkin wing of the Tribune Group has become a crucial pillar supporting Healey, as borne out by their activity in the deputy leadership election.

Already moves are underway to stop Benn winning any other important positions in the party. Alan Fisher has appealed to Benn not to stand for the LP/TUC Liaison Committee. The right wing are clearly aiming to seize control of this committee. Added to this the right-wing, in particular Terry Duffy, are backing Alex Ferry for the General Secretaryship which Ron Hayward has just vacated. The left are as yet undecided between Bob Wright (AUEW) and Ron Keating (NUPE).

Having won the deputy leadership and marginal control of the NEC the right-wing clearly want to ensure maximum control over all positions crucial to the Labour Party apparatus.

Benn himself is central to this whole struggle. Foot is obviously trying to entice him into the Shadow Cabinet thereby neutralising the figurehead of the left.



JON LANSMAN AT IT AGAIN!!!

## REGROUP THE LEFT! FOR A NEW MOBILISING COMMITTEE!

The name of Jon Lansman became synonymous with supposed secret left wing 'caucuses' at the Brighton Conference. Reading the capitalist press could have given a picture of a close knit left movement with Lansman as a kind of wizard. This was far from the truth, as the defection of many Tribune MPs away from support for Tony Benn showed.

The Rank and File Mobilising Committee, which had a real presence at the previous Wembley Special Conference, was really not to be seen at Brighton. The components of this coalition for party reform broke up to make separate interventions. Already, one of them, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, associated with Michael Meacher MP, was arguing for the end of the Mobilising Committee.

No leading Labour left at Brighton fringe meetings or in a press statement, called for its retention. *Socialist Newsletter*, in one of its Conference Briefings said, "This is not the time to break up the forces which have stood together in the fight for Party democracy and a left wing leadership."

Tony Benn, at the Tribune Rally, implied that the Mobilising Committee had seen its day, without naming it directly. He also said that the Tribune Group in parliament had to be 'broadened'. What he didn't say was how the left, inside and outside parliament and the NEC, in the localities, must organise itself to take back from the right what they won at Brighton.

The leadership of the Labour Party now resides in a so-called 'centre-right' group in parliament and on the National Executive. In plain language this means that some Labour lefts dropped the fight and supported the right. Thus strengthened, the right now contemplates how to attack the left further. Quickly the idea of banning *Militant* was mentioned. The 'soft lefts' like Kinnock spoke against this at Brighton fringe meetings but they cannot be trusted to hold to their word. The idea of bans and proscriptions must be opposed by every Labour Party member who values democracy.

The tasks before the left are very clear. We have to regain seven seats on the NEC for a clear majority. We have to oust Healey at next year's Electoral College. We have to win control of the election Manifesto by the National Executive and we have to make withdrawal from NATO, immediate unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC without a referendum part of the mandatory election Manifesto policy.

There is another dimension to the gains of the right. They make it harder for the rank and file to force the Labour leaders, in conjunction with the TUC, to bring down the Tories before their term is up. Healey is a firm believer in live and let live in parliament. The working class cannot give up the fight against Thatcher. It has to fight, on jobs, on wages, against warmongering and for its own government in power. These things demand of the left in the Labour Party that it maintain its unity against the right. A period of consideration among its elements may be necessary. But it would be a self-inflicted setback if the outcome of that were retreat into a 'battle of ideas' from the battle to drive the right wing and their appeasers from office. *Only driving the rights out of the leadership guarantees policies can be implemented in the interests of the working class.*

The fight must now begin for a new Mobilising Committee, working on the broadest basis, linking together all those who stand for Conference and elected NEC to control Party policy; for the removal of Denis Healey; for the forcing of an immediate General Election and the bringing down of Thatcher. Wherever possible, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Socialist Organiser Alliance, Clause Four and NOLS, Labour Co-ordinating Committee, Militant and so on, must maintain co-operation and a united front against the 'centre-right'.

The 'centre-right' has won some victories. A strong principled left can reverse those victories over the next years.



On Thursday 6th August 1945 the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Thirty six years later Reagan announced his intention to produce neutron bombs.

The atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the conclusion of the imperialist carnage called the second world war. Today Reagan and Thatcher ponder the use of incredibly lethal weapons on a continental scale. Reagan will use military force. He supplies the hardware for the blood-soaked dictatorship in El Salvador to butcher thousands of workers and peasants. The shooting down of Libyan planes was greeted with glee by Reagan. More recently the South African invasion of Angola, an act of aggression on behalf of imperialism, was backed by the US imperialists.

These events reveal the wish of Reagan to declare war on the oppressed of the world. The development of the neutron bomb, which destroys people and not property, is a technical affirmation of imperialist intentions to physically liquidate those who pose a revolutionary threat.

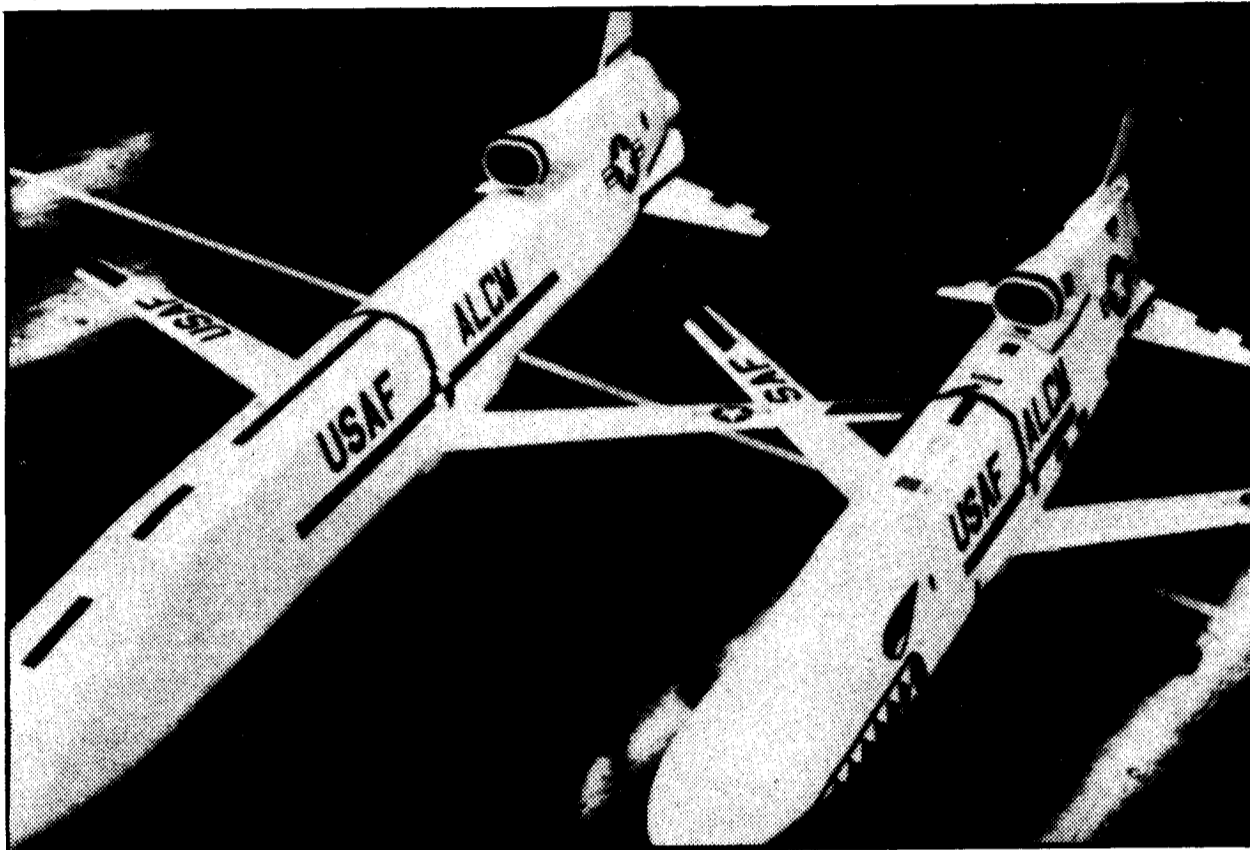
The concept of the 'nuclear deterrent' is just a crude gloss over the real intentions of imperialism. There is a dreadful logic to the production of nuclear weapons. US Secretary of Defence, Caspar Weinberger, does not mince words. He said the neutron bomb was being built because "we shall probably want to use it".

Reagan, Thatcher and Denis Healey have all spoken about the need to match the nuclear capacity of Moscow. But is this the real truth? Take the Polish situation for example. Despite all the rhetoric about the threat of 'communism' the western banks are providing billions in funds to prop up a supposedly 'communist' regime. This money goes to buy time for the Stalinist bureaucrats to re-stabilize their oppressive regime. What really offends the imperialists is not that the Stalinists deny democratic rights to the working class. This doesn't worry Reagan any more in Poland than it does in El Salvador. The real problem is that the imperialists are denied access to vast markets which were open prior to the 1917 Revolution and the end of the Second World War.

## Campaign for immediate unilateral nuclear disarmament

# No to Cruise! Out of NATO!

by Frank Irvine



The socialised property relations in the USSR, Eastern Europe and Asia, represent, despite the deformations and oppression of the Stalinist bureaucracy, a tremendous gain for the working class and at the same time a threat to imperialism. When Reagan talks about the threat of 'communism' it is not Brezhnev he means, for Brezhnev, like those before him, exists by counter revolutionary repression and deals with imperialism. The threat of communism for Reagan, lies in the revolution in Salvador, in

Solidarity in Poland and with the black people of Southern Africa. It is against this threat that the neutron bomb is being developed and to once again show the bureaucrats in the Kremlin that it is imperialism which has first say in the counter revolutionary order of things.

The arms race has, in a sense, no logic even from a military viewpoint. In Britain, for example, there are 103 known missile sites. In other words 103 potential targets.

On top of this NATO plans to install 572 Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in western Europe. Britain and the whole of Europe would be an instant cinder under such a barrage.

It is obvious to all with any grasp of the horrific dimensions of nuclear arms that neutron bombs and cruise missiles are useless to the working class. As Tony Benn has pointed out, how can the Polish workers use nuclear arms against the threat of Russian invasion without destroying themselves? In

the course of the class struggle the workers can utilise many weapons, but nuclear arms mark the destruction of civilisation, not a road to socialism.

Those like Denis Healey who argue for a 'multilateral' approach to disarmament are merely providing a cynical cover-up for even greater stockpiling and development of weapons. *Multilateralism is designed to fail.*

The fight for disarmament has become a central question inside the Labour Party. Both the TUC and the Labour Party are committed to unilateral disarmament. Michael Foot's left wing credentials were largely built on a reputation of opposition to nuclear arms. Although he has expressed opposition to buying Trident he is becoming increasingly ambiguous on Cruise and he is working within the Labour Party to confuse unilateral and multilateral disarmament. Foot has maintained a notorious pro-nuclear MP, Brynmor John, as Defence spokesperson. Such hypocrisy in relation to Labour Party conference policy must be challenged. *John must be fired as Defence spokesperson.* The Labour front bench spokesperson must be a committed unilateralist.

The October 24th CND demonstration is the chance for all supporters of unilateral disarmament, inside and outside the Labour movement, to show their opposition to the warmongering plans of Reagan and Thatcher; for British withdrawal from NATO and for the next Labour Government to immediately and unilaterally remove all nuclear weapons from British soil.

The recent movement around disarmament in the Labour Party and unions has centred on committing them to unilateralism. This was necessary and must be continued as an ongoing fight to stop Foot from renegeing on Party policy. However there can be absolutely no moves towards nuclear disarmament so long as the Thatcher government remains in office. The anti-nuclear movement is potentially one of the arms of a mass movement to bring down the Tory government.

**Make October 24th into a monster anti-Tory demonstration. Unilateral disarmament! Withdraw from NATO! No backsliding on Labour-TUC policy!**

On 30th August, one month after replacing Bani Sadr as head of state, Ali Rajavi was blown up by a bomb along with Prime Minister, Bahonar. Previously on June 28th, the headquarters of the ruling Islamic Republican Party (IRP), were blown up, killing Ayatollah Beheshti, four ministers, six secretaries of state and twenty eight members of the Majlis, the Iranian parliament.

These killings followed the unleashing of a savage repression by the ruling IRP, which has to date resulted in more than 1,500 summary 'official' executions. Above all these have hit militants of organisations declaring themselves anti-imperialist and for socialism.

Many of them played a major role in the battle to overthrow the Shah, in particular members of the People's Mojaheddin Organisation of Iran (PMOI). Among the victims of the repression are heroes of the resistance to the Shah, including Said Sultanpour. PMOI leader Massoud Rajavi has said that among those executed were thirty girls aged between 9 and 14, accused of being Mojaheddin militants.

The repression is intensifying daily. According to official figures announced on Iran radio, 150 were executed in Teheran on September 28th and the same day another 52 at Isfahan.

On September 27th there was an armed confrontation between the Mojaheddin and the Pasdaran (Khomeini militia), in the very centre of Teheran, which lasted three hours. This followed the convergence of three demonstrations organised by the PMOI.

These events show the development towards a civil war situation. The character of the bombing of government officials reveals a high degree of 'inside involvement'. This is a crisis which reaches right up to the top of the controlling elite. Former Prime Minister Bazargan recently said that the repression

# Repression in Iran aids Imperialism

by Michael Keene



must stop - in the name of stability. Bazargan has no concern for the suffering of the Iranian masses. He articulates the fears of those in the ruling class who see the repression leading to all-out civil war.

Clearly the situation in Iran is becoming more and more uncontrollable for the regime. Since the overthrow of the Shah the policy of one capitalist government after another has been to try and limit and push back the gains of the

masses. In this they have been led by the Clerical hierarchy, above all by Khomeini. The Shah's army, shattered by the revolution, has been considerably reconstructed. This has been facilitated by the war with Iraq, which

is one of the reasons imperialism is happy to see that war drag on in the manner of a contained stalemate. The bloody repression of the Kurdish people has continued despite fierce resistance. The workers' councils set up after the fall of the Shah have often been closed and replaced by bodies run by the mullahs. On top of this a new apparatus of repression has been constructed, often utilizing the old secret police of SAVAK.

Imperialism is conscious of the blow it suffered with the overthrow of the Shah, the major military policeman in the area. They would like to break the revolution and install a regime under Western control. To do that they have to encourage the emergence of reactionary forces inside Iran, capable of crushing the masses. Imperialism has not yet definitively chosen its agents, but its aim is clear. For the present it has to leave the Khomeini-clerical regime in place while preparing the ground for military intervention, linked to a coup by one of the factions of the IRP or other elements such as Bani Sadr or Bazargan.

The participation of the PMOI with Bani Sadr in the "National Council of Resistance" which lays claim to being an alternative government, ties the masses who follow the Mojaheddin to a perspective of a capitalist led coalition and not a government speaking and acting in the interests of the poor masses.

*Only opening the road to a workers' and peasants' government, which could not include the likes of Bani Sadr, can open a way out of the impasse.*

The repression being conducted by Khomeini is striking a blow at the very foundations of the Iranian revolution. The attempt of the clerical reactionaries to crush the PMOI must be condemned by every socialist and democrat. *Imperialism is waiting its chance and the repression, with its counter campaign of assassinations, opens the door to it.*



The first National Congress of the Polish free trade union *Solidarnosc* was held in two parts in September and October. It was an historic step for the workers' movement in the whole of Europe. This movement of ten million workers has rocked the oppressive institutions of Stalinism to their foundations, throughout Eastern Europe and the USSR. Thus far the Kremlin and their client regimes have been powerless to take any action against it.

The most significant and symbolic moment came when Congress delegates voted to send a message

to the workers of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Rumania and the USSR. It called upon them to follow in the footsteps of *Solidarity* by setting up free, independent trade unions of their own and promised full support if they chose to do so.

A whole host of policies got the backing of the 900 delegates from factories, mines, offices and workshops all over Poland.

These included a demand for free elections to local councils and Parliament; control of food production and pricing by *Solidarity*, in conjunction with rural *Solidarity*; public control of television and the

press; freedom for political prisoners and an end to repression.

The Congress appeal to other Eastern European workers constitutes an immediate threat to the Kremlin and was quickly denounced by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a "revolting provocation". At the same time it is a startling confirmation of the outlook of the European Conference for Free Trade Unions, uniting activists from East and West, which met in Paris in 1980. Edmund Baluka, a Polish shipyard worker and leader of strikes in 1970, was elected president of the campaign which that Conference initiated.

He attended the recent *Solidarity* Congress.

The entire western press has labelled the appeal to the workers in other Eastern European countries as, a "grave political error". This confirms the unity of interests capitalism feels with the regimes in the East. Any support which western leaders and press give to *Solidarity* is hedged around with qualifications and its real intention is to take advantage of the Polish bureaucracy's difficulties to make a threat to the socialised property relations in Poland.

This is the way in which Poland's massive debts to western banks are being used. The western bankers see their vast loans being threatened by *Solidarity's* call for more free trade unions. Thus the *Times* on September 19th advised, "*The second stage of the Solidarity Congress next week must establish beyond doubt that Solidarity policy is in the hands of sensitive moderates, not hotheads who talk of 'revolution'.*"

For months, factory workers councils had been demanding the right of each workplace to elect its own manager. This came out of earlier calls for the setting up of food supply committees controlled by *Solidarity*. To ensure supplies reach the shops, they said, requires that control over the planning of the economy be put into the hands of the workers. As the Congress took place one Warsaw printing plant went on strike, displaying notices saying, "*We shall not work for 16 eggs a day*". Which is what their average take home pay would buy!

The second big controversy of the first phase of the Congress was the resolution demanding that parliament call a national referendum on the election of factory managers. Some of the delegates called on *Solidarity* to go out and organise the referendum straight away itself. In the event it was agreed to do just that, should the parliament refuse.

The Congress was adjourned for three weeks, and during this time Walesa and other members of the *Solidarity* executive approached the Government with a proposed compromise. Both the government and the workers' councils would be able to recommend the appointment or dismissal of managers, with each side having a veto. In the event of deadlock, reference had to be made to an arbitration board. But the government would retain control over senior appointments in a number of industries defined as 'strategic'. The Polish parliament certainly lost no time in getting to work - two days later a law was passed enshrining the compromise!

Since parliament was about to enact a new trade union bill limiting the right to strike, Walesa argued that the compromise had to be written in there and then. The *Solidarity* Congress delegates were thus presented with an accomplished fact, against a background of vicious attacks in the press and the Kremlin's hardly veiled threats to start cutting back on supplies of food and oil.

Despite this, only four of the eleven executive members were prepared to endorse the compromise. The Congress responded by reprimanding Walesa and voted by the narrowest of margins to let Jacek Kuron, who negotiated the compromise, explain himself.

The second phase of the Congress then went on to demand freedom of political activity; independent courts; reduction of censorship; an end to the Communist Party's monopoly of political life and a second parliamentary chamber representing trade unions. The only thing they declined to involve themselves in was an acknowledgement of the leading role of the Communist Party!

The third item which really stands out in the proceedings is the demand for free elections. The question arises: who would workers wish to elect in preference to the hated Party bosses? How will such alternative candidates organise themselves?

What is contained in this simple demand is an explosion. The only independent trade union in Eastern Europe, the representatives of the strongest workers' movement in the world today, have taken up a demand which is the most difficult of all - one which leads to the creation of an independent political party of the workers.

In an interview with veteran British Stalinist Monty Johnstone for *Marxism Today*, Walesa acknowledged a trend in *Solidarity* towards the setting up of such a party. This is encouraged, he said, by the existence of food queues, repression and so on. The moderate wing of *Solidarity*, with Walesa at the head, is pressing the Stalinists for concessions on workers' self-management and control of the media precisely to head off this development. His problem is that the authorities cannot meet his demands.

Walesa has thus far not been able to stem the tide of anger against Stalinism. Behind him, the bureaucracy know, stand people like Jan Rulewski, who after calling for Poland's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, added, "Our union should not compromise but should start smashing this country's totalitarian system."

# SOLIDARITY

## Towards an independent workers' party

by Peter Lane



### Socialist kidnapped



Francoise Baluka

On September 16th, Francoise Baluka and her son were abducted by eight unidentified men and illegally deported from Poland. Francoise is the wife of Edmund Baluka, leader of the 1971 strike in Szczecin, who recently returned to his job after years in exile.

Francoise worked closely with Edmund as a socialist, in the free trade union movement in Poland. Her deportation is a fragrant overturning of the basic democratic rights granted under the Polish constitution. She is a French citizen by birth, but has a full right to live with Edmund in Poland.

A central reason behind the virtual kidnap was her association with a fight for an independent workers' party in Poland. The ruling Stalinist clique cannot tolerate the prospect of an emergent working class party which challenges the so-called 'United Workers' Party'.

The case of Francoise Baluka should be widely taken up by socialists in Britain, not just as a case of personal injustice, but as an act of solidarity with those in Poland fighting for their right to form a workers' party independent of the Stalinist state. Not a restorationist, capitalist party, but one pledged to defend the socialised property in Poland.

Labour Party and trades unions should pass resolutions demanding her right to return to her home in Szczecin and send them to the Polish Ambassador, 41, Portland Place, London W1.

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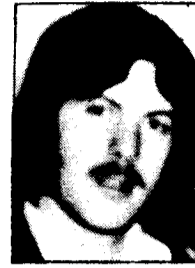
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## FIGHT ON FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL!

After seven months of Hunger Striking and ten deaths, the Republican prisoners in Long Kesh called off their strike on October 3rd. For the previous two months a powerful campaign by capitalist media, the church, Irish politicians and labour leaders had worked on the prisoners and especially their relatives, to bring an end to the strike.

During the Hunger Strikes, which were themselves the climax of five years' fight for the special status which was taken away from Republican political prisoners in 1976 by the then Labour Government, the whole of Ireland was mobilised against Thatcher. Industrial action; tens of thousands on the streets time after time; escalation of the military campaign in the Six Counties and widespread applications to join the IRA; all these showed the depth of support the Hunger Strike sparked off among the overwhelming majority of the Irish people.

Perhaps Bobby Sands best typified the fact that the Hunger Strikers were intelligent, politically motivated and had sprung out of the depths of the oppressed Nationalist community. Sands' election as MP in Fermanagh and South Tyrone was undeniable proof of where that community stood. It was followed by the victory of Owen Carron and the two prisoners elected to the southern Irish parliament.

It was the effect of the Hunger Strike movement which forced down the government of Charles Haughey. The coalition government now in power in Ireland is the weakest for thirty years. The whole basis of Partition, with a British client state in two thirds of Ireland and direct colonial rule in the other third, has been shaken to its roots. The ruling parties of both Britain and Ireland are being driven by a sense of urgency to open talks seeking a way to revamp the capitalist political structures in Ireland. This is to stop a direct challenge to capitalism there.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party, supposedly the voice of a peaceful road to national unity in the Northern Island statelet,



PICTURES AN PHOBLACHT/REPUBLICAN NEWS

the youth of Ireland came out

has been thrown into disarray. The SDLP has been a main prop for the 'constitutional' games which Britain has played to cover up naked military rule in the North.

If the Hunger Strike had not happened, not one concession would have been given to the prisoners. In this sense, at considerable human cost, a victory over Thatcher has been won. James Prior is in Ireland to try to defuse a political situation which had reached near revolutionary proportions. That cannot be done without concessions and an attempt to try to build alliances with the Irish ruling class parties. Paisley has some reason to condemn the concessions. The Tories, tailed by Labour, intend to try to restabilize capitalist rule in Ireland. Partition and the Unionist 6 County statelet have been expedient for 60 years. They are

not to be thrown away lightly. But they are not, as far as the British bosses are concerned, unchangeable.

The 5 Demands, all of which could be supported in full on humanitarian grounds alone, have not been won. Significant concessions have.

But there is another dimension. In their statements the prisoners made it clear they were also giving their lives for Irish Unity. Hundreds of thousands of Irish people, basically young working class people, came out for Irish Unity. During the Hunger Strike great things were possible. Socialists must not forget that dimension, which far exceeds any prison reform. *Until British imperialism has been pulled out of Ireland, lock, stock and barrel, the ten martyred prisoners and their comrades will not have won their fight.*



● Pupils from local schools stage a 'white-line' picket on the Andersonstown Road, Belfast, on Thursday, September 24th

### HOT AIR AT BRIGHTON

What really did happen on Ireland at the Labour Party Conference?

First, the Hunger Strike was pushed to the background. By compositing over 50 resolutions down to two and then counterposing these to an NEC statement, the Labour leaders turned what could have been a heated exchange into a debate in the abstract. True, Concannon was howled down, but his line won the day and he has not been removed as a parliamentary spokesperson. *The campaign on this must go on!*

Second, the resolutions specifically calling for an end to agreement with the Tories on practical policy – the so-called bipartisan policy – were defeated, by the union block vote and on NEC recommendation. Labour MPs still have a virtual free hand to support the Tories in parliament and to implement repressive measures when in office. *This must be challenged in the Constituency Parties.*

On paper the Labour Party is now committed to an 'eventual' unification of Ireland. Alex Kitson, for the NEC, opposed the withdrawal of troops before the idea of unification gained support among the Northern protestants. To withdraw troops before then would be "an abdication of responsibility". Kitson and supporters of *Militant*

argued for an attempt to unify catholic and protestant workers on issues like jobs and housing, ignoring the fact that the whole setup in the Six County statelet has always been based on discrimination against catholics on these questions. *To advance on economic questions also means to fight against Partition.*

Third, the Labour Committee on Ireland mobilised much support for withdrawal, but lost the round. The LCI fringe meeting was well attended but also reflected the contradictions within the Committee, placing on the platform Anthony Coughlan, a southern Irish academic who did not support the Hunger Strike, alongside Owen Carron.

Now the Hunger Strike is over Ireland must not be allowed to recede as an issue in the Labour Party. The new NEC will try to drown the issue of principle – the fact that the unification of Ireland requires the immediate and total withdrawal of Britain – in a sea of discussion. The LCI must not become a party to that, a left wing talking shop in an overall talking shop atmosphere. *What lies ahead is to campaign within the unions and Labour Party to give substance to the general commitment of Labour to campaign for "a united Ireland".* Such a commitment left at the level of discussion is worth very little to the Irish people.