

# Socialist Challenge

# IRELAND TORTURED

Scream as loud as you like - Europe won't listen



Photomontage: PETER KENNARD

Assemble: 1.30pm  
Shepherds  
Bush Green,

## DEMONSTRATE 29 JAN

# Editorial

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.  
Editorial 01-359 8180/9. Distribution and  
Advertising 01-359 8371.

## After Soares, Mitterrand?

THE PORTUGUESE Socialist Party (PS) and its leader Mario Soares have resolved, albeit temporarily, the governmental stalemate in Portugal. They have reached an agreement with the right-wing Centre Democrats (CDS), whereby the latter will receive three Ministries as a price for their support to the Soares government, including the prestigious Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ever since the massive setbacks suffered by the Portuguese working class in November 1975, it has been the Socialist Party which has been the central instrument for maintaining bourgeois democracy. The situation since then has been marked by a political and economic instability and despite a set of regressive measures, especially over land reform, the Portuguese working class has not allowed the Soares government to ride roughshod over its interests.

Soares preferred an alliance with the Centre to one with the Communist Party (PCP). This was not so much because the PCP was putting forward unacceptable demands, but simply because the move could have been misinterpreted by the international bourgeoisie and the Portuguese working class. The International Monetary Fund would naturally have opposed any idea of a PS-PCP government, especially where the PCP had opposed the conditions attached to its proposed loan to the Portuguese government. The odd PCP minister would have been acceptable, but the PCP refused to enter a government which collaborated with the CDS.

More to the point the PCP militants would have probably refused to accept the 'pact for social peace' (austerity measures) demanded by Soares. So Portugal now has a coalition government with a Communist Party in opposition. But this is not a satisfactory solution for Portuguese capital and is unlikely to lead to any long-term stability.

The Soares experience will provide an example to Francois Mitterrand and the Socialist Party (PS) in France. With the collapse of the Union of the Left, Mitterrand is absolved of any responsibilities of an alliance with the French Communist Party (PCF). If the PS emerges as the single largest party, an alliance with Giscard's men to form a PS-dominated government cannot be excluded. In which case the PCF would be in opposition (through its own choice) in France as well.

Despite its 'Eurocommunist' stance, the PCF is closer, in some ways, to Cunhal in Portugal rather than Carrillo and Berlinguer in Spain and Italy. What this indicates is that it is facile to ascribe the same tactical qualities to every Communist Party in Europe — a common mistake in the far left press. With actual or potential governmental crises in Portugal, Spain, France and Italy, it is not enough for revolutionary socialists to fall back on the timeless truths of the necessity of dual power or whatever. We must examine our attitude to 'left governments' and what programme we would put forward for a genuine workers' government. These are the questions we must answer before the European workers' movement if we are not to be outdistanced by the centrists and the Communist Parties themselves.

THE FARCE continues. The *Leveller* and *Peace News* received a visit last Monday from Sergeant Blackmore and Fickling of New Scotland Yard. They were informed that the Attorney General was considering a prosecution against them because they published the name of an 'anonymous' army intelligence witness last month. The witness appeared in the court proceedings under the Official Secrets Act against Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell.

This is yet another example of the grotesque censorship laws which exist in Britain. We are in complete solidarity with *The Leveller* and *Peace News*. We will be discussing with both papers how we can make this solidarity more meaningful over the next few weeks. This is vital because of champions of press freedom in Fleet Street will not be waging a fearless campaign to defend the papers in question. The freedom they defend is essentially that of those who agree with them. How many columns will the ideological mercenary, Bernard Levin, produce in favour of the freedom of our press? How many angry editorials will there be in *The Guardian*? How many liberals will protest in the House of Commons?

The struggle for democratic rights, including freedom of the press, is not something that we can take for granted. Left wing papers should understand that while the old trade union slogan 'An Injury Against One is An Injury Against All' might not be totally sufficient to deal with our problems, it nonetheless provides a useful starting point.

# STEELING UP FOR A FIGHT

The British Steel Corporation has offered its 200,000 employees a six per cent pay rise. For the unions to attain their modest claim of 10.9 per cent the corporation has demanded that they accept around 40,000 jobs lost, a pledge to end unofficial action by steel workers, and a cut in bonuses.

To add insult to injury, BSC boss Sir Charles Villiers will not tell the workforce which plants he intends to close to achieve the redundancy programme. So despite the huffing and puffing in the House of Commons about secrecy, the full extent of BSC's plans for the industry are still a closed book. STEVE POTTER reports.

Villiers has challenged the unions to produce an alternative to his proposals. But he is rightly confident that the reformist leaders of the unions are in no position to provide plans that do anything but tinker around with the same framework which he proposes. Their only answer is to pump more money into the BSC and tighten up import controls. But BSC is already doing both these things. The problem is deeper.

The world steel industry is in crisis. The main problem is the continued low level of capital spending, particularly in construction of plants. Since capital goods account for about 70 per cent of steel consumption, the downturn has hit the industry particularly hard.

Capacity for making steel wildly exceeds the restricted market available. In addition new steel industries in South Korea and Brazil sharpen the competition between the steel monopolies.

## NO SOLUTION

Bethlehem Steel, the USA's second largest steel producer, has announced it will cut production capacity by 10 per cent, sacking 7,500 workers. Even in Japan, the world's biggest producer, Nippon Steel has temporarily shut down half of its blast furnaces in its main production complex.

But if the effects on the world's leading steel companies are serious, for Britain they are disastrous. Productivity in the BSC has plunged to three times as low as that in Japan or the USA. The reason is nothing to do with laziness or unofficial strikes.

The British steel industry failed to adopt modern steel-making methods after the last world war. Instead, the private owners continued to produce with the outdated 'open hearth' process. By the time the need for technological change was forced on them, the cost of re-equipping was astronomical. As their profits fell only state-ownership (and more to the point state funds) could bring about the change. So Harold Wilson created the BSC in 1967

with the objective of closing down all the unprofitable parts of the steel industry.

The plan eventually emerged in the shape of closing down some 30 plants and concentrating production on the 'big

The first thing that the steel crisis shows is that capitalist nationalisation is no solution to redundancy. The way forward for steel workers is to start to impose control over the point of production.

For a start, every worker needs to be aware of the plans of the employers, the better to plan the counter-offensive. This means demanding access to all forward planning documents of the BSC, including the exchange of correspondence between Varley and Villiers and the list of plants currently under threat. In particular, the workforce needs to know the estimated production of each plant.

Then when the workload does contract (whether through recession or technical change) action should be taken to ensure

already covered by a guaranteed working week agreement. It was BSC's attempt to take this away that led to the actions in January 1977. This agreement itself is part of the way to the principle that when production falls the workers should not suffer, since they are not responsible for the crisis in the steel industry.

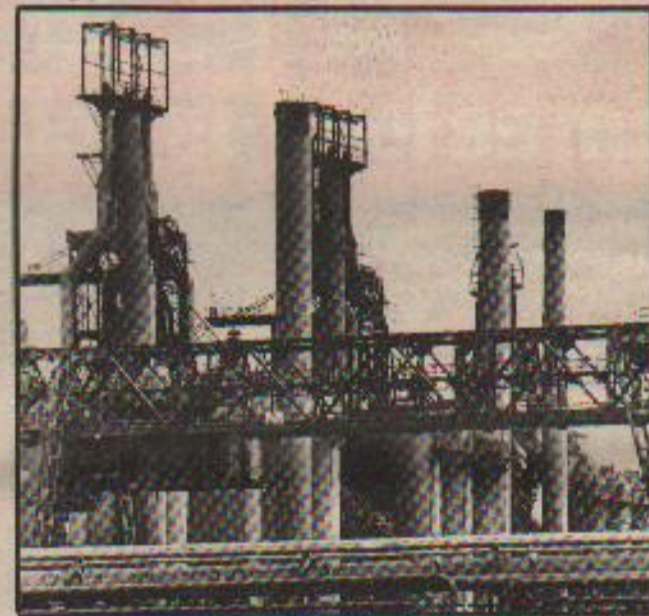
This is an alternative which Charles Villiers will fight tooth and nail. It puts the cost of the crisis on the state, and the BSC. For that reason it is not an easy policy for steel workers to win. They are crippled by the most bureaucratic leadership in the labour movement in the shape of Bill Sirs, leader of the largest steel union: the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.

## IMPLICATED

Rather than adopt the road of mass action to defend his members' jobs, Sirs did the opposite. He has concluded a participation scheme on the basis of a joint strategy by management and unions called — 'the steel contract'.

Sirs is already up to his neck in negotiations with the management while his membership remain in the dark. Sirs backed up to the hilt the refusal of Varley and Villiers to disclose their correspondence for fear he would be exposed as being fully implicated in their job-cutting plans.

The fight for a workers' answer to the crisis of the British Steel Corporation must therefore go hand in hand with the fight to build a new leadership for steel workers. A good beginning would be the creation of elected rank and file action committees in every plant around the policy of fighting for a shortened working week



five' — Scunthorpe, Teeside, Ravenscraig (Glasgow), Port Talbot and Llanwern.

The closure of other plants such as Ebbw Vale, Shotton, Corby, Clydebridge and so on was meant to be completed by 1977. But newly awakened militancy among steel workers — culminating in a wave of occupations at the beginning of last year — plus fears of electoral repercussions, stayed the hand of the steel bosses.

## ALTERNATIVE

Technical changes in the industry are inevitable as are recessions in the world steel industry. The choice for steel workers is whether they bow to the demands of the Labour Government and the BSC, adopt the King Canute attitude of forbidding the tide of technical change, or develop a fightback on the basis of a plan that will allow steel workers to weather the storm of technical change and slump.

that the work available is shared out among the workforce with no loss of pay — resulting in a shorter working week.

Half of BSC's workforce is

## Marxist Worker Group regroups with IMG

AS A small grouplet which had its origins in the expulsion of the Democratic Centralist Faction from Workers Fight in the spring of 1975, the Marxist Worker Group (Bolton and Leigh) has always recognised the need for a regroupment of the fragmented forces of the revolutionary left.

In view of this we welcomed the IMG's initiatives of Socialist Challenge, Socialist Unity and the moves to regroupment, and felt it necessary to take an active part in furthering them. After discussion and joint work with the IMG we consider that there are insufficient differences to justify our continued separate

existence.

Differences certainly do remain — around the organisational methods necessary to the functioning of a revolutionary organisation, and the level of education required of its members; around what we consider to be an inadequate attitude towards sexism; and over the position of the group with regard to the Labour Party.

But we feel these differences can be worked out within the internal democracy of the IMG. Consequently the Marxist Worker Group has regrouped with the IMG and we hope to be part of further regroupments of the far left in Britain.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us:

I am interested in more information about activities in my area.  
I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.  
(Delete if not applicable)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/329 Upper Street, London N1.

# OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades unions offer solutions that are in the interests, not of the workers, but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:  
\* To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

\* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

**1** The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of the workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

**2** Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

**3** The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

**4** The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Eurocommunist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and saving internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.



# As BSC nails the coffin 'Ebbw Vale: a tale of woe'

Last week, the British Steel Corporation put another nail in the coffin of the Ebbw Vale Steel works. The Western Mail, South Wales' authoritative morning newspaper, carried an explanation of 'the lost battle of Ebbw Vale'. GORDON GIBSON reports

Eric Willis, an economic adviser to the Ebbw Vale Workers' Council, told Mail readers of the faultless tactics of the BSC. First was the negotiation for a closure programme. After long talks, the plan was rejected by the unions. Not long after, BSC came in with a full and accelerated programme with no talks, according to Willis. At the ensuing negotiations, the unions agreed to the original scheme.

## ACCELERATED

Another BSC tactic was its offer of accelerated closure of one part of the works — in return for a stay of execution on the others. Then, says Willis, 'A few months after agreement was reached, changing trade circumstances meant the open hearths would have to be closed as well (since, of course — unfortunately — no absolute guarantee had been given concerning this closure).

This sort of tactic, linked to the desertion of the steelworkers by both local politicians — including Michael Foot, MP for Ebbw Vale and the unions, left the Works Council isolated, and the writing was on the wall.

The story of Ebbw Vale is a tale of woe. Not just for one works under the axe. The same applies to Port Talbot, one of the 'Big Five' in the steel industry. The workers have been conned. The £182m development of Port Talbot works has been on and off more times than it can be worked out on a pocket calculator.

Last year's electricians' strike was one excuse as Les Sexton, who was one of the strike leaders, explains to Socialist Challenge, 'Productivity deals, natural wastage, incentive schemes, the TUC/BSC Six Point Plans: all have been

accepted. 'Yet despite this, the industry is still in chaos and the workforce is still being asked to accept closures and pay rises below the magic 10 per cent'.

Port Talbot will get its investment — a new strip mill is almost certain — but not before BSC makes a few more threats. As Sexton says, 'What happens is that one works is played against another. Shotton, East Moors, and Ebbw Vale are to get the chop. Port Talbot will be developed (but not to the degree that was first promised). In the meantime, places like GKN in Cardiff can import steel billets.'

Everyone agrees that poor production is the problem. And when the bottom drops out of the market, uneconomic units have to go. But it is gross underdevelopment which has made the whole of the British steel industry uneconomical, and not the workers.

As the unions accept all sorts of deals to protect the big plants with the high union membership and Bill Sims of the ISTC goes head over heels not to offend the Labour Government, many steel workers can't see any way out except to look after themselves.

## SICK TEETH

Les Sexton sums it up. 'Because they are sick to the teeth, there are enough people ready to take the golden handshake to get out of the industry for once and for all. But this is a perilous solution for the unions to agree to.

'They have no right to sell job potential for the future. Unemployment is too severe as it is, and short term answers are not worthy of the unions. Experience shows that BSC will keep biting at the apple and all the workers will be left with is the core'.



Michael Foot, MP for Ebbw Vale.

## Necrophilia in Sheffield

REPORTS are still coming in of an act of political necrophilia carried out in Sheffield. The occasion was the December shop stewards quarterly of the Engineering Union. The chief guest was none other than the late Hugh Scanlon (RIP). He had come to receive an award from Communist Party district secretary George Caborn 'for services to trade unionism'.

The union's broad left were paying their tributes to the dear, departed president. Caborn was in a generous mood: 'We might have had our little differences, but Hughie is one of us.' Hughie was not in a reciprocal mood. He responded by attacking the firefighters for not accepting the Government's offer. This was greeted with jeers, to Caborn's great embarrassment.

It is precisely the inability of the Broad Left to wage a struggle against the likes of Scanlon and Jones that weakens it and leaves it prostrate in the face of the combined Labour and bosses offensive.

## Some whimper!

'IN THE EVENT of a nuclear war there will be survivors. Will you be among them?' No, not a question missed out of our Xmas quiz, but part of an advertisement for 'Survival Shelters' sold by a firm called Greenhows in Leeds.

These shelters certainly look useful. Lavishly kitted out, they can also be used as 'a luxury basement flat, vault or wine cellar'. That's a relief, we thought — we're a bit pushed for executive space in our Upper Street offices.

But there's a problem — the shelters are only available to 'knowledgeable military, civil, industrial and commercial leaders', some of whom have already placed orders. Why only them? Because at £30,000 a throw, these people, who will undoubtedly be the ones to start a nuclear war, are the only people rich enough to survive it.

## Monitors for whom?

TELEX MONITORS Ltd. is a London-based company dealing in second-hand news. They tape all news and current affairs programmes on TV and radio, and then sell transcripts to various clients. The latter are usually firms and embassies interested in knowing what has been said about their particular product or regime. The spectrum runs from Tate and Lyle, through Grunwick, to the embassies of Israel and Egypt.

Telex itself is ferociously hostile to trade unions, and National Union of Journalists members who work there have appealed to ACAS after the firm's refusal to negotiate. One staff member who indicated that he was about to join APEX was threatened with instant dismissal.

It is hardly surprising that the firm's most important client is the South African embassy. Normally they are concerned solely with programmes dealing with their 'internal' affairs, such as the murder of Steve Biko. There has been one notable exception. Following

the Labour Party political broadcast against the fascists there was a flood of interviews, discussions and 'analysis', the bulk of which were hostile to Labour's anti-racist offensive.

South Africa House bought the lot. All their orders were marked 'urgent'. Was their interest mainly to discredit Labour or to boost the prestige of the NF to Pretoria, where it could be argued that the embassy should give financial assistance to aid in its world-wide racist crusade.

It is also believed that Telex provides a covert news service for the Smith regime in Rhodesia. A thorough check on this piece of sanction-breaking is therefore surely in order.

## Brazil nuts

CONNOISSEURS of indoctrination might be interested in a glossy publication currently circulating around London schools. Called *Brazil, Land of the Present* and published by the European Brazilian Bank, the brochure provides fascinating details of industrial progress, investment prospects, and natural resources.

The one tiny omission is the lack of comment on Brazil's shining human rights record and its well-known commitment to political pluralism. It seems that the bank is concerned that British investment is not in the 'Top 5' foreign powers, but they are going about attracting capital in a strange way. With teachers' pay whittled away by inflation, it is unlikely that they have a lot to offer the land of the future.

## Anti-racist teacher victimised

DESPITE THE swift and widespread opposition to the 'Spot A Red Teacher' campaign, reported elsewhere in this paper, the fascists have received a boost at one school. Dave Potter, secretary of Hillingdon NUT, has been put on 'extended probation' after being suspended indefinitely before Christmas.

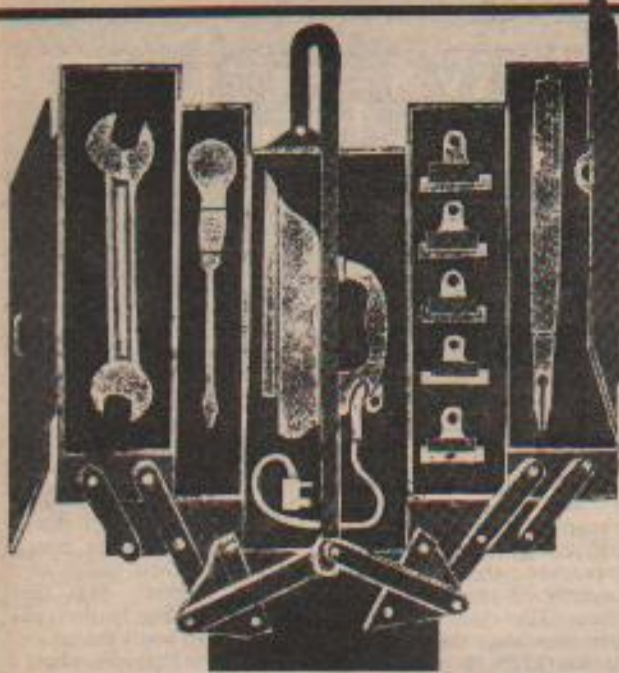
Potter was originally suspended for using 'sensational political literature' in the classroom, namely an Anti-Nazi leaflet written in 'National Front style'. In addition his motives for teaching at all were questioned, being accused of being a 'political catalyst' and source of 'general unease' in the staffroom.

These allegations were contained in a letter from Potter's headmaster. Many are based on hearsay evidence from a small minority of staff, and all of them seem to attack a teacher's autonomy in the classroom, and specifically a teacher's right to oppose racism in an active and creative way.

## Apology

IN THE last NFN, we asserted that Doug Hill, the literary editor of Tribune, was preparing to relinquish his post because of disagreements with editor Richard Clements. These concerned the supposed non-publication of an article concerning the recruiting tactics of SLADE.

We now fully realise that there was no truth in these assertions and that we were misinformed. We apologise for any embarrassment that has been caused.



## Wages, profits, inflation Callaghan's circular arguments

by CPS, a collective of socialist economists

UNDERLYING nearly all the government's economic strategy over the past few years has been the well known adage 'Wage rises cause inflation'. This after all was supposed to be the main reason for the social contract — for add the trade unions' power to strike for high pay and you then get the even more familiar saying, 'Trade unions cause inflation'. To combat inflation it was necessary to obtain the cooperation of the labour movement in curbing its members' 'excessive' wage claims.

This cooperation was obtained and now the rate of inflation is falling. Indeed, by last November the annual rate of inflation had fallen from its peak of about 24 per cent a year to 13 per cent, and single figure inflation is promised by February or March this year. Or so the story goes. But is this in fact correct? Do wage rises cause inflation? We shall examine this question by asking someone, let's call him Jim (Jack or Dennis might do) who really believes in it, to explain it to us.

**JIM:** Well there's nothing to it really. It's obvious. A large part of the cost of producing anything is wages; if these go up then costs go up and prices have to go up to cover them.

**US:** But not all costs are wages. What about raw materials, tools and machines used in production? These have to be paid for too. Why don't you put the blame for inflation on the rise in the price of these things instead?

**JIM:** Well, that wouldn't be much of an explanation would it, trying to say that prices rise because prices rise. No you have to find the root cause of it all. Now you Marxists keep telling me that workers produce everything, that labour is the source of all value. So it must follow that if the cost of labour goes up, the cost of everything goes up. Now that's what I call a theory. It traces inflation back to its root cause.

**US:** Yes, I see. But hang on a minute, you haven't really finished your explanation. You haven't explained why wages rise so you haven't got your root cause yet.

**JIM:** Come off it, we all know why wages rise. Workers are just greedy (like everyone else) and trade unions have the power to make sure they get what they want.

**US:** Sure, we would all like a bit more in our wage-pockets. But that's not the point, what we want is more in real terms, in terms of the things we can actually buy with our wages. But we have to keep putting in bigger and bigger wage claims, for more and more money, just to keep up with inflation, just to be able to buy the same things as before. In fact, in real terms our take-home pay is

lower than it was in 1970. That doesn't sound as though we've been very greedy or very powerful since then. So I don't think you've found your root cause. Our wage rises are simply a reflection of price rises (and an inadequate one at that). You can just as well say inflation causes wage rises as wage rises causes inflation. It's just circular.

Now of course that's right. His argument is completely circular. In fact it's just the same argument that he criticised us for trying to put forward earlier. For wages are just prices — the wage is the price we are paid for letting a capitalist use our ability to work for a week, what Marx called our labour power. We are not paid for the work we do but just the price of our labour power. For if capitalists paid for all the work we did, they would pay out all their money in wages and have no profits left for themselves. This is not how the capitalist system runs. It is run for profit and profit alone. In contrast to profits, wages are just prices and while one price rise clearly leads to another, you cannot explain price rises in general by any one price rise in particular.

So, what has been happening? Why is Callaghan now talking about having wage rises and price rises of around 5 per cent next year, compared with the 10 per cent of this year, and inflation rates of well into double figures in previous years? Basically it's because by a number of measures, one of which is succeeding in getting the working class to accept falls in its standard of living, he has cut the real price of labour power and so other prices can fall too. But the explanation of how the rate of inflation was cut is not in the tautology that slower rises in prices cause slower rises in prices, but in the political defeat suffered by the working class over the past few years.

In other words, if we want to look at causes of inflation and at what has been going on during the last few years, we should look at what has been happening to the economy as a whole. And this, as we have seen, depends on profitability. If profits fall too low, then something has to be done to raise them. Inflation, unemployment and productivity deals are all directed in different ways towards this goal. So it's not very surprising, given the acceptance of wage restraint and inflation, that trading profits, reported by companies between June and November 1977, increased by nearly 32 per cent over those of the same companies in the previous year. That's what the cooperation of the labour movement achieved. Inflation just backed up the process.

# LEYLAND: UNION LEADERS SELL JOBS

WHILE British Leyland holds the axe over 30,000 jobs, the union side in the Joint Negotiating Committee continues to discuss an incentive scheme that will mean even more jobs lost.

The scheme was one of the unknown elements in the corporate bargaining package, which was voted on in November. At that time we were told that the rest of the package was to be negotiated, and there were even hints that the results of the negotiations would be referred back to the membership for another vote.

It is now clear that the JNC will not be going to the membership for any vote. As a matter of fact, it has even decided to accept a security of earnings document which the membership kicked out last year. The JNC is a self-perpetuating body where the union leadership will go into permanent session with management, and attempt to block any independent action by the shop-floor. That is why leading convenors have been put on it by the officials. They see this as the way to put the blocks on the shop-stewards' movement in Leyland.

## INCENTIVES

The role of the JNC could not be more clearly demonstrated than in the present discussions. Management proposals on incentives would mean large-scale loss of jobs. At Solihull, for example, the number of clocked hours would have to fall by 77,000 by March just for the chance of earning bonus. This is the equivalent of 500 jobs.

But this would not mean automatic bonus: for bonus to be earned, all the plants in Solihull would have to exceed 92½ per cent of management's

vehicles to sales programme.

This would be difficult enough for any one plant, given normal breakdowns, components shortages, etc., but for all three in Solihull (Range-Rover, Land-Rover, and 3500) to hit the targets together is so unlikely that you would have a better chance of winning the pools.

## CARROT

Maximum bonus is about £8 per week. In addition, since the bonus would be calculated monthly, and depends on the relationship between clocked hours, allowed hours, and vehicles to sales, and is dependent on three plants, nobody would know until the end of the month whether or not they were on bonus! The carrot on the end of a stick has nothing on this scheme.

But it is the willingness of the JNC to discuss this scheme, while the axe is poised over jobs, that is the worst aspect. The union leadership however, is willing to go even further and has voted to recommend acceptance of the so-called Security of Earnings document (which was rejected throughout Leyland last year) to a conference of convenors at Longbridge.

The reason that document was rejected was because of the penalty clauses in it. But the one now being accepted is unchanged in this respect. The clause which disqualifies from lay-off pay, any section taking 'unconstitutional' industrial action of more than 4hrs at any one time, or 8hrs in total, in any quarter, remains.



The lay-off pay for disputes external to a plant, but internal to Leyland, is reduced to 7 days from 13. Both of these clauses actually worsen the present situation. The only improvement in the document is that the three waiting days for sickness benefit is eliminated, but only in the case of sickness due to an accident at work!

Management is obviously treating the JNC with the contempt it deserves. Shop-stewards' bodies throughout Leyland must pass votes of no confidence in the JNC, and

demand that plant representatives withdraw.

If plant reps use the argument that they were elected by a special regional meeting they should be voted out of office.

It is clear that the JNC has nothing to offer Leyland workers except the most craven surrender to management. It should be remembered that this spineless body will be negotiating for the next pay rise, due to start in Nov 78, the new common review date.

PAT HICKEY, Rover Solihull

## NUT elections - letting in the right-wing!

THE Rank and File Teachers group, dominated by the Socialist Workers Party, have rejected an offer by the Socialist Teachers Alliance for a united slate in the Outer London area National Union of Teachers' National Executive elections.

For eight months the STA tried to get the R&F to discuss these important elections. Their failure to do so means that the left vote will be split in the Outer London area between 7 candidates standing for 4 positions, and in Inner London between 3 left candidates fighting for 2 places.

The STA recognises the R&F as an ally in the fight to reject the right-wing policies of the present NUT leadership which has resulted in: 40,000 unemployed teachers; an acceptance of the massive cuts in educational spending; inadequate response to the offensive against progressive educational methods and more recently a totally inadequate response to the offensive launched by the fascists of the National Front.

The central criticism by the

STA of R&F is that it lacks the policies which can link teachers up with militants in other sectors around demands like the need for inflation proofing of wages and all social service spending, which provides an alternative to the Callaghan, Healey and Williams formula of cash limits.

## SECTARIANISM

This lack of alternative policies, and their continuing sectarianism towards other left-wing militants, led to the formation of the STA by militants who walked out of the Rank and File. Sadly the R&F have as yet learnt nothing from their own history.

Three weeks ago they offered to form one slate with the STA in Outer London. The STA agreed to support two STA and

two R&F candidates — the STA gave its support to Dave Finch of Croyden and Archie Faulds of Harrow. Dave Harvey (Ealing) accordingly withdrew his nomination and the STA requested Ron Haycock (Newham) to withdraw. (Unfortunately Haycock, a Workers Power member, refused to withdraw.)

Dick North, a leading SWP and R&F member, assured the STA that two of the four R&F candidates (all SWP members) would withdraw. Ten days later, and one day after the last day for withdrawal, R&F informed the STA of its about turn. This will make it extremely difficult for the left to hold the executive seat vacated by SWP member Beth Stone.

In Inner London R&F has behaved in a totally bizarre way. First they decided to nominate Dick North (Lambeth) and Joan Waddis (North London). While R&F members throughout London, including Dick North, were valiantly trying and failing to

get a nomination for Waddis, the R&F group in Waddis' own union branch back in October had nominated Amanda Leon (Southwark). Leon and the other ward in Southwark was nominating Waddis!

## LETTER

In contrast, the STA decided to nominate only Bernard Regan and to support North. As a result, Regan has won the support of six out of the eleven Inner London branches to North's seven.

A letter signed by 37 London teacher militants, including the General Secretaries of 5 local associations asked R&F to withdraw Leon. But they refused. Many of the left militants who issued the call to R&F believe that this sectarianism acts as a serious obstacle to the left convincing the majority of voters that it can act as a viable leadership for teachers in London and nationally.

## Power workers ready to fight

The working class could apparently bring about a fascist regime in Britain — by asking for 'inflationary' wage-claims! This is the gospel according to Tom Breakwell, an executive member of the Electricians' Union, reports RICH PALSER.

This hysterical warning to last November's bi-annual conference was not unrelated to the fact that 50,000 power workers were pressing for a wage-deal well above the Government's 10 per cent norm. And despite their aborted work-to-rule just

before Xmas, the power workers are still in a militant mood.

Negotiations by four unions — the EETPU, Transport Union, Engineering Union and the General and Municipal Workers — on behalf of 90,000 workers in the power

industry are due to be settled in March.

The negotiators meet the employers again on 2 February to get their reaction to a claim which includes the consolidation of bonus earnings in the basic rate, reduction of the working week to 35 hours, an increase in holidays, increases in shift allowances, and a 'substantial increase' in earnings.

The last point in the claim is discontinuation of clause 202 in the agreement, which

permits management 'flexibility' in working arrangements. The package would effectively wreck the Government's pay policy, and will almost certainly be thrown out by the power-industry management.

So how is it that the EETPU, led by right-winger Frank Chapple, who has backed the Government's 'battle against inflation' through wage limits for the last three years, is taking such a stand? The answer lies in the substantial shift in the balance of forces inside the Electricians' Union, and the rising opposition from the rank and file.

Despite Breakwell's hysterical warning at the last conference, the EETPU executive was forced to put a resolution which stated that a return to free collective bargaining was needed. 'Only a miracle could stave off a catastrophic strike in the power stations if the Government stuck to its 10 per cent limit, Chapple declared.

This 'left turn' was recently followed by an EETPU vote in support of the firefighters at the TUC General Council.

But in spite of this 'change of heart', Chapple enthusiastically joined the press witch-hunt of those power workers who took unofficial action just before Xmas. He wants any action on the claim to be kept firmly under his control.

### STRATEGY

Chapple's 'strategy' is to pressure the Government into accepting a compromise wage deal which he can then sell to his members — but which will somehow keep the Government's policy broadly intact. The key to that is agreement on productivity.

Although further productivity deals are impossible — 70,000 jobs have been lost in recent years — Chapple wants those past productivity increases to be rewarded now. In short he simply wants 'flexibility' in applying the 10

per cent limit.

Power workers should have no part in this special pleading. Industrial action by power workers could easily win the full claim. Unlike the miners — whose strikes take six weeks to result in power cuts — even a work-to-rule by power workers causes power cuts immediately, as they recently demonstrated.

Unlike the firefighters, troops could not even be used half effectively to break a power workers' strike. If the power workers want to ensure that they win their claim, they should not rely on the leaders of the four unions involved: Chapple, Bassett, Moss Evans or Hugh Scanlon — the gentlemen who did nothing for the firefighters. The future co-ordination of those shop stewards who launched the last unofficial action will be vital.

A conference of stewards in the power stations in late February should be the place to assess the management's offer and prepare for national action on the claim.

## Socialist Unity: 'In gear for May election'

In the next few weeks Socialist Unity groups in most major towns will be preparing meetings to launch their campaigns for the local elections to be held in May. The meetings, which will elect local candidates, are to be open to all supporters of Socialist Unity's class struggle programme, and candidates will make themselves directly accountable to workers' organisations in their area.

by COLIN SMITH

show the necessity of a fightback against the attacks on living standards of the working class, against racism and for women's rights. Socialist Unity stands in elections to stimulate and encourage struggles against Labour's policies.

### CANDIDATES

On the question of Socialist Unity's attitude to other candidates and organisations, the following guidelines were established: we will support those candidates standing on a class struggle programme, which stimulates the self-activity and self-organisation of the working class and the oppressed against aspects of the crisis. For this reason support for the Communist Party candidates was rejected.

Other decisions taken were: \* Further approaches to the SWP and other other left-wing

groups for joint electoral slates.

\* The production of a Socialist Unity pamphlet, to provide guidelines for local groups on the main themes of the campaign.

\* Promotion of black and women's caucuses within Socialist Unity to discuss their particular problems.

\* A school for Socialist Unity candidates and election agents before April.

\* The acceptance of Socialist Challenge's offer of a four-page supplement in the run-up to the elections.

### 'DRY RUN'

From now on Socialist Unity is in gear. As Paul Thompson of Big Flame said, the local elections will be a 'dry run' for the general election later in the year. Hilda Kean, Socialist Unity candidate in Spitalfields last year added: 'Local issues must be used now to highlight national political issues.'



Bringing [their] justice home. Students from Bradford University were joined by Grunwick strikers when they picketed the house of Judge Stucley in London last Friday. He had turned down the appeal of Bradford student Chris Roys against a £50 fine for allegedly using threatening behaviour on the Grunwick picket line. Stucley found the prosecution's story very appealing — he sent Roys to Pentonville for 21 days.

Photo: MARK RUSHER (IFL)

## Miners: The incentive scheme saga 'More deaths, accident and disease'

JONATHAN SILBERMAN

In Tynemouth last July, miners voted for a wage claim of £135, rejected the 12-month rule and opposed any increase in wages being tied to increases in productivity.

Seven months later, the wage claim is effectively buried, the 1 November deadline decided on by the miners' conference has elapsed uneventfully, and in the past week, the NUM's strongest fighters — the Yorkshire area — voted 63 per cent in favour of an area incentive scheme.

This leaves South Wales the only area yet to decide in favour of incentive schemes, at area or pit level. While South Wales voted 83 per cent against the incentive scheme in the national ballot, and will still be hostile to the National Coal Board's pit-based schemes, Yorkshire and Scottish Area Council decisions will undoubtedly affect the South Wales ballot.

Yorkshire president Arthur Scargill greeted the news of the Yorkshire area ballot by reiterating the message of the left at the national conference: 'I have said repeatedly that an incentive scheme will result in more deaths, serious accidents and industrial disease', he announced.

'It will result, I believe, in at least thirty pit closures over the next five years. It will mean an enormous increase in physical effort on the part of our

members who receive bonus payment.'

Scargill is right. The increases won through productivity schemes, which stand to be as much as £25 in 'easy' pits, will be blood money. The Coal Board and the Labour Government have been prepared to accept such increases, and the risks to miners they entail, because they hope to deal a blow to the unity and militancy of the miners by splitting pit from pit, area from area — with wage rates being determined by the particular local scheme.

Gornley and the rest of the right wing on the NUM national executive have trampled all over the democratic rights of their members in their collaboration with the employers. The right called a national ballot in an attempt to overturn the conference decision

on incentive schemes. Following the overwhelming endorsement of this decision in the 55 per cent national ballot rejection of the proposed scheme, the executive decided to overturn the result of the ballot. At the same meeting, in December, it decided — again in defiance of conference decisions — to respect the 12-month rule.

Scottish area president Mick McGahay — a member of the Communist Party — continually pronounced himself to be in favour of 'increased productivity'. This got him a smack in the face when Solsgrith Colliery miners took strike action against the area council's support for a pit-based incentive scheme.

### SABOTAGE

When the left leaders did attempt to co-ordinate their opposition to the executive's sabotage — in October and, then again, in December — it was by taking legal action. Not surprisingly, the court ruled in favour of the right wing every time. Scargill commented on the second occasion: 'I believe this judgement should firmly convince any trade unionist that it is useless hoping for justice in the courts of this land.' This may have been good



The above photomontage is one in a set of six postcards designed by Peter Kennard. Set of 6 for £1 from SC, 328/9 Upper St., London N1.

education, but no miner had been organised to fight against the productivity deal.

When the time for the left to move was most opportune — at the executive meeting which followed the result of the national ballot — the left failed to act at all. Instead of calling for a special conference to prepare the fight for the wage

claim, they said they would wait and see what the Coal Board came up with! This allowed the right wing time to marshal their forces and relaunch their assault.

A united attempt by Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and other areas to call an unofficial rank and file

conference would have been the only effective way to provide an alternative to the right's manoeuvres. Scargill, McGahay, Williams and Co missed the boat again.

With the lack of effective opposition to the right wing, the choice for the rank and file began to look like a wage rise through a productivity deal — or no wage rise at all. Gornley and Co had won executive support for the 12-month rule, so any fight for the claim would now have to start in March, one of the worst times for the miners.

### INSULT

Scargill's area council then added insult to injury. Increasingly isolated, and with no preparation, the area council suggested that the alternative to an area strike — without even so much as a hint that Yorkshire could unite with any other area.

Moreover, in contrast to the national ballot when Scargill launched a massive campaign against the scheme, the area council made no recommendation this time on how the miners should vote!

The incentive scheme saga has almost come to an end. The left in the union has suffered a defeat, and failed to organise the rank and file for a fight. But the miners' militancy remains. Within a day of the Yorkshire scheme decision, miners at Parkhill colliery, near Wakefield, were on strike in protest at their bonus payments.

There is still the opportunity to build a fighting left wing in the NUM. With eyes now set on the annual conference preparations, this is the task to which militants must turn.

# Fighting fascism - which way forward?

COMMENT

TWO problems need to be faced when considering 'which way forward for the anti-fascist movement'. The first is the necessity of a workers' united front against fascism. This was the strength of the original Socialist Challenge article which correctly raised the concept of a unitary organisation within which different ideas could be raised and fought for.

The other need is to overcome the obvious absurdity of various sectors of the left organising three or four counter-events to a single NF demonstration. In the short term, it is and has been possible, to avoid the latter mistakes on occasion.

The first problem is more difficult since, again in the short term, it is sadly very unlikely that we can create a mass permanent and unified anti-fascist organisation. The reasons lie in deep political divisions. Most of the reformists believe that anti-fascists should avoid at all cost confrontations and should rely on the police and courts to implement the Race Relations Act.

Those anti-fascists who themselves are prepared to stop the fascists organising are often regarded as being

virtually in the enemy camp — consider just about everything Sue Silpman has said on the issue of fascism in the past period. This doesn't mean that it is not possible to periodically involve quite large sections of reformists in anti-fascist activities: this occurred, in varying ways, on the 23 April demonstration and in Lewisham.

Failure to involve broad sections of the labour movement means that we risk isolation and turn our 'no platform' position into a recipe for kamikaze tactics. But the creation of a permanent united front against fascism, that would actually organise, is not on the cards in the short term.

It is in the context of what is to be done in the next months that many of the points made by Dave Wise of the Merseyside Anti Fascist Committee are very valuable. There is no doubt that the National Coordinating Committee of anti-fascist committees is at present the most significant attempt being made to nationally organise anti-fascists.

The fact is that Joint Campaign Against Racism will not organise. The Anti Nazi League has explicitly stated that it is in business just to

provide propaganda and will not be a body to which groups can affiliate in the sense of taking part in any democratic decision-making.

Within these limits it still has a positive potential, but its somewhat mysterious inner functioning and stated unwillingness to form a movement means that the ANL will not produce an anti-fascist organisation.

The NCC has over sixty affiliated committees. It is open to all committees that agree with its aims, which include an acceptance of the 'no platform' position. Having said that, it is necessary to add that the NCC has still to win the affiliation of many anti-fascist and racist groups. Perhaps more important, it must be grasped that the NCC cannot be turned into the working class united front we must aim at, just by a process of arithmetical growth. Failure to understand this leads to the familiar 'join us', organisational sectarian syndrome.

In late May, after the local elections, the NCC and the All London Campaign Against Racism and Fascism intend to hold a weekend conference. The conference hopes to deal with two sets of problems. Firstly, it wants to open up a

debate on a number of political issues that have emerged in the past period. Both Lewisham and Hyde have shown that the struggle cannot be reduced to a punch up between two sides: the fascists and ourselves.

We have to be able to involve working people on our side, particularly from the black communities, and Manchester police chief James Ancerton spelled out just how the state intends to take part in future events. These factors demand more sophisticated tactics by anti-fascists.

The second major area of discussion will be on the organisation of anti-fascist activists. The aim will be to broaden the base of the NCC and to improve its functioning. This section of the conference will be open to delegates from local anti-fascist and racist groups and labour movement bodies, as well as from national political organisations.

The short term answer to the question, 'Which way forward for the anti-fascist movement?' is to build the May conference. This only takes us part of the way we have to travel, but it is in the right direction.

Andrew Jenkins

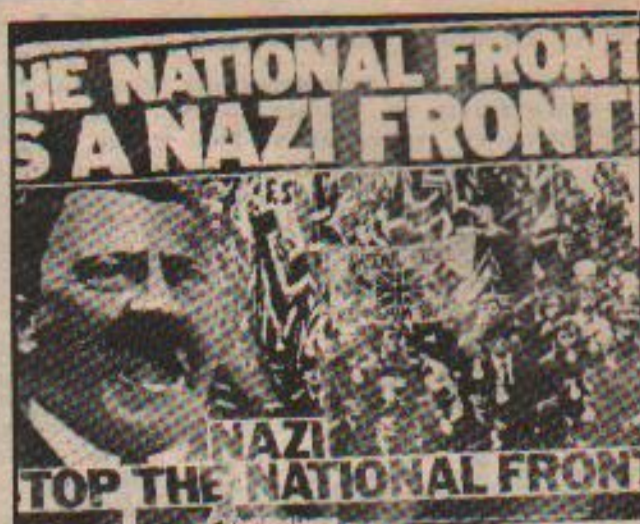


Photo: MIKE SMITH (JFL)

# How to spot the YNF — read the papers!

by Betty Hunter

TO A blaze of publicity, the fascists have announced the launching of a campaign against 'red teachers'. But the evidence suggests that the NF do not as yet have anything like the support in schools to distribute the thousands of leaflets being churned off their secret non-union presses.

But from reading the papers, you'd think half the school students in London were in the NF. From the press conference to launch the pamphlets, to the articles quoting NF attacks on the 'Somebody's Daughter' TV programme, the media certainly gave the NF an easy ride.

## DANGER

Teachers and anti-racist organisations are already organising against the potential danger, however. Before Christmas, East London NUT sent a letter to schools urging teachers to discuss the situation and plan what to do. The response, which has involved many teachers previously inactive in union affairs, has seen leaflets put out, letters sent to parents, meetings held.

## LEAFLETS

The National Union of School Students, in collaboration with

local groups and organisations like the Anti-Nazi League, is already leafletting some schools. One NUSS member told Socialist Challenge: 'school students aren't huff so gullible as they're made out. A lot of kids are ready to kick shit out of them (the YNF) if they turn up'.

## ONSLAUGHT

Such quick responses as that of NUSS are important in countering the NF's onslaught in the schools. Teachers and students must begin to organise so that any NF foothold in schools can be stopped. The NF is trying to gain national publicity for the local elections in May, and also to recruit young members who will become tomorrow's stalwarts.

Their orientation towards youth is based on a serious assessment as to where recruits can be won. As the economic situation stagnates, the expectations of a young generation brought up, expecting an efficient Welfare State with wider job choice and broader education than that of their parents, are continually frustrated. The cuts and unemployment mean that there is no rosy present or future for the youth. And it is easy for the NF to simply blame black people, and teachers for

the failings of the education system.

Unless this situation is met with regular propaganda which explains the need for self-organisation of school students alongside all those fighting for a better standard of life, the NF will grow. A meeting has been organised for 16 March by the All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism (ALTARF), which already has the support of six of the IEA's 11 associations.

This meeting, as well as proving how widespread the teachers' opposition to racism has become, will be able to map out further united action together with school students and parents.

ALTARF Meeting  
16 March, 5.30pm  
Central Hall, Westminster



Badge available from SC Badges at 15p each (plus 7p p+p), or 11p each for orders of 10 or more (post free). PO Box 50, London N1. Cheques to J. Wilson.

# The oldest teenagers since Tutenkhamen

by John Thackara

THE MEDIA gave much attention to the launching of the National Front's campaign in education last week, with press conferences to launch the 'How to spot a red teacher' leaflet, and interviews on the TV for the grease-haired YNF 'leaders'. But on the basis of their first public appearance, the YNF are pitifully small, and running already against widespread opposition.

Last Saturday, the fascists had said they would picket the main Education TV centre of the Inner London Education Authority. Supposedly, a huge crowd of 13-15 year olds would turn up to protest about the 'multi-racialism' of the programme 'Somebody's Daughter', a new school TV prog-

ramme featuring a white girl pregnant by her black boy-friend. Although no member of the NF could have seen the programme, which has yet to be broadcast, the rag *Spearhead* had attacked the programme as 'revolting — it's sheer poison'. In the event, the massed teenagers promised by the NF turned out to be a motley band of NF thugs no more than thirty strong. As usual a large police contingent was on hand to protect the fascists. But as one local anti-racist put it, 'if they're teenagers, I'm Sir Robert Mark'.

The cream of fascist youth started their nationwide campaign with the slogan: 'Nigger lovers, we'll send you to Moscow in a coffin'.

About 350 anti-racists from

South London had been mobilised at only three days notice to oppose the NF picket. Led by ACTT members working at the TV centre, support came from broadcasting, teachers and journalists unions, as well as from Battersea Trades Council, the Labour party, Anti-Nazi League and anti-racist groups under the ALCARAF banner.

Having occupied the road outside the TV centre, the anti-racists voted to march through local working class areas to Clapham Junction. In only a mile, the march grew to over 500 people — proving that the example of the ACTT shop, which initiated and maintained this unity of action, can be the basis of opposition to any more moves by fascists to organise within education.

## Reading Rampage

THE OFFICES of the Reading Council for Community Relations were attacked last week by a gang of racist thugs. A man rang up the RCCR director and claimed it was the work of the Ku Klux Klan. Local police have denied that the KKK exists in Britain. The *Reading Chronicle* reports that a group of right-wing extremists based in London uses KKK methods and was responsible for the attack.

The police said: 'We are treating this as an isolated case of criminal damage. This is typical. The indulgence of the British police for right-wing terrorists and fascists is well-known. Given Special Branch infiltration of right-wing groups (or do they just concentrate on the left?) they should know what's going on for it is anything but isolated. Why then are there so few prosecutions of right-wingers carrying out terrorist activities? Their Reading case merely illustrates this point further and local anti-fascists are making independent inquiries.'

## Redbridge Blues

IN AN amazing about turn Redbridge council have reversed a decision, taken two weeks ago, to hire out council property to political groups other than the 'big three'.

Within a few days of this decision the council have refused the hire of a hall to the local anti-fascist group. The Redbridge Campaign against Racism and Fascism, an all-party group, have been told by council officials that any meeting held by them 'would be liable to disruption and violence'.

The earlier decision to impose no bans was a reply to a request from RCARF that the council refuse to hire out halls to the NF after incidents of racial violence in the area.

RCARF had planned to hire Ilford Town Hall for a rally at which it was hoped Trevor Brooking, Miriam Karlin and David Edgar would speak.

Barry Hugill, a spokes-

person for RCARF, said —

'Redbridge council by their action have shown the enormous threat that the NF present to democracy. The NF have been very active in the Barking and Ilford areas intimidating members of the local Asian community and violently attacking local members of the Young Communist League who have attempted to hand out anti-fascist leaflets. When a broad based anti-fascist group is formed to counter their evil influence they are actively hampered by a council scared of Front violence. The council did not ask RCARF about stewarding arrangements nor did they ask the local police for their views, they simply said no, although the previous week they had refused to ban the NF.'

RCARF hope to pressure the council into changing their mind. If this is not possible the meeting will be held in alternative premises.

## Why 51 per cent of the population can't be kept in their place

Scarcely a day goes by when the media does not have some item which — in however distorted a fashion — reveals the growing influence of the women's movement and the ideas it has generated over the past decade.

No one can now ignore the challenge to the notion that women's place is in the home: as passive sex objects sacrificing their needs to those of their husband and children, writes CELIA PUGH.

In spite of the initial 'outrage' against lesbian mothers, for example, liberal sections of the mass media have sympathetically examined this question. Who could have imagined such

athing even a few years ago? The manager of a Tesco supermarket can be made to apologetically withdraw from sale underpants illustrating a rapist. A newspaper such as the

Daily Express recently published the views of power-workers' wives on why they supported their husbands' strike.

The ideas and actions of the women's movement have penetrated every corner of this male-dominated society, provoking a response which ranges from sympathetic support, attempts at assimilation, to fierce attack. In short, we can now speak of the 'women's issue', and millions of women and men have an inkling of what is implied.

Questions such as child care, rape, women battering, abortion and the repression of gay people are no longer seen as purely matters of private or individual concern.

### UNTHINKABLE

Many of these questions are being raised within the labour movement — something that again would have been virtually unthinkable a decade ago. Who would have thought that both the TUC and the Labour Party could be made to register their support for free abortion on request, as happened in 1975?

This is among the achievements that have been clocked up by the Women's Liberation Movement, and the campaigns which it has spawned, such as the Working Women's Charter Campaign — with its ten demands that have been adopted as official policy by many union organisations; and the National Abortion Campaign, which has led demonstrations of over 20,000 opposed to compulsory motherhood.

That is one side of the picture. But against the renewed impetus of women to snap the chains of their oppression stand some of the most powerful ideas that assist in propping up the wreckage of latter-day capitalist society.

And many of these ideas — fundamentally that women's place is in the home — find their most fervent supporters in the workers' movement. There are far too many examples of how these reactionary ideas have divided working class men and women; in failing to support women's strikes; in ignoring the closure of nurseries, and other public expenditure cuts which help to make the home a woman's prison; in denying the right of women to choose whether to have children.

The ability of the labour movement to oppose the concerted onslaught on living standards and basic rights depends on its willingness to recognise and defend the interests of all working people and oppressed groups in society. An obvious step — and yet one that has still to be broadly accepted — is support for measures to aid women's participation in the labour movement; creches at union meetings; recognition of the right of women to caucus; meetings held during working hours.

### CONFIDENCE

Women's groups — in the workplace and in the community — have led women to a new confidence in their ability to recognise and fight for their own interests and demands. The Women's Liberation Movement is an essential backbone to this development.

And that is one vital reason why all socialists must support an independent women's movement.

Through the WLM's discussion and analysis of women's oppression, socialists are learning how best to incorporate women's interests within our own programme, and win increasing numbers of women to the side of revolution — a social process that will necessarily need to continue after the political defeat of capitalism.

For the first time since 1975, socialists within the Women's Liberation Movement are meeting this weekend at a national conference. The issues that will be discussed have a wide relevance, not least for the current debates on programme and strategy on the far left.

On pages 7 to 10, Socialist Challenge carries contributions on the impact that the women's movement has made, its growth, and the debates within it. We hope that in future issues other women activists will contribute on their own ideas and experience.



MARGE WRIGHT of the Society to Support Home Confinements speaking at a Radical Midwives Conference held in London on Saturday. Sixty attended, to discuss issues such as: alternative patterns of pregnancy and childbirth; re-establishing the confidence of midwives in their own skills; and encouraging them to allow the active participation of women in birth. Further information from: Radical Midwives, 19 Bloomfield Crescent, Leeds 6.

Photo: LAURENCE SPANHAM (FL)

## How the women's movement is hammering out the message

The women's movement is one of the most long lasting results of the youth radicalisation of the late 1960s. At that time, large numbers of young educated women found themselves on student campuses and in the expanding white-collar, semi-professional sector.

But they rapidly discovered that the expectation they would eventually become housewives and mothers still dominated the attitudes of those responsible for their education, training and employment, write PENNY DUGGAN and SARAH ROELOFFS.

From these conditions emerged a women's movement which challenged the distortion of women's social, sexual, political and economic life by the family.

At the same time, women industrial workers were beginning to demand that the higher living standards and other benefits won by the strongly unionised sections of the working class be extended to their own pay and conditions. They began to question the assumption that women's work was worth less than men's, and that women didn't have the right to a job or a decent standard of living.

In the late '60s and early '70s, groups of women met on college campuses and in many cities to discuss their oppression. They quickly responded to the need to support women workers; such as the Ford machinists in 1968, the night cleaners campaign, and the many other equal pay struggles of the early 1970s.

This experience, together with the sharpening of the class struggle against the Tory Government, forced the women's movement to begin to define its political standpoint. 1972 saw the first of the Women and Socialism conferences, which discussed not only the relationship of the women's movement to the workers' movement but also developed a theoretical understanding of women's oppres-

sion. This included debates such as that on the role of domestic labour in capitalist society. The defeat of the Tories in 1974 ushered in a new political situation. The Labour Government came into office with promises of a better life for all — women included. The Labour Government and the trade union leaders quickly disregarded these promises.

This has led to a discussion in the labour and socialist movements about alternative policies and forms of organisation to those offered by the labour leaders. These discussions have been reflected inside the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM).

The campaigning activities of the movement have raised many fundamental questions. With whom should the women's movement ally itself? On what political basis should women organise, and what forms of organisation will give women's struggle for liberation the greatest impact? What is the relationship between an independent women's movement and political parties?

These questions of strategy are being taken up by different currents in the WLM. The current of socialists in the movement is about to have its first conference since 1975. This conference is an important step.

The women's movement is essential for uniting women of

many different political perspectives in a struggle for its six demands. However, that unity should not prevent the most open and democratic discussion between different political positions in the movement. As the class struggle deepens and the WLM is forced to choose its allies, we are confident that large numbers of its activists will throw their weight behind the working class in the struggle for socialism, just as increasing numbers of male workers are being won to the side of women's struggles.

The development of a strong socialist current can strengthen the women's movement by helping to win it to an understanding of the necessity for alliances with the labour movement and other oppressed sections of society against our common enemy — the capitalist system.

The recent formation of groups like Women Against Racism and Fascism, and Women and Ireland, together with the exemplary role played by women from the WLM on the Grunwick battle lines have served to develop the links between both feminism and socialism, and between the WLM and the broader labour and socialist movements.

By such self activity, we have also exposed some of the gaping holes in many trade unionists' understanding of socialism, not least Scargill's attitude to sexism.

Socialists in the WLM should see one of their central tasks as exploring the relationship between a movement for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism. This is why we welcome this weekend's conference for an open socialist feminist journal and for a future conference to discuss a revolutionary socialist strategy for women's liberation.

### The six demands of the WLM

- \* Equal pay now.
- \* Free contraception and abortion on demand.
- \* Free 24-hour community controlled nurseries.
- \* Equal education and job opportunities.
- \* For financial and legal independence.
- \* For the right to a self-defined sexuality.



Photomontage: RED RAG. Most of these badges are available from The Other Bookshop.

**SOCIALIST FEMINIST NATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
27-29 January, Manchester

Registration, Friday 27 January, 6-11pm at Manchester Poly, Ayton Street, Manchester. Saturday session from 10am at Manchester Poly (Commerce Building). Sunday session all day at Barnes Wallace Building, UMIST. Creche, food and accommodation all available. Emergency phone: 061-226 1520.

**Socialist Woman**  
A JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

New issue out Friday includes: Which Way for the Socialist Feminist Current?; debate on NAC and Sexuality; contributions from Women Against Racism and Fascism group, Women and Ireland group, and Lesbian Line; balance-sheet of Working Women's Charter Campaign; discussion on 'Women and Socialism' and 'Capitalism, Politics and Personal Life'; international reports from Spain, Lebanon and USA; plus book reviews.

Single copies 30p plus 10p p&p. Subscriptions £1.50 for four issues. All orders to: Socialist Woman, c/o Relgocrest Ltd., 328/9 Upper Street, London N1 2XG. Please make all cheques/POs payable to Relgocrest Ltd.

**'It is not necessary to know that matriarchal societies have existed in the past to see that women could be liberated.'**

**W**E ARE ONLY beginning — under the renewed impetus of the women's movement — to see the complexity of the issues raised by the questions posed in the introduction and the limitations of classical Marxist analysis of women's oppression in acknowledging some of the problems and providing answers. This is really a plea against the traditional temptation of seizing facile answers because they are useful to bang against an opposing point of view, and thereby transforming them into a new orthodoxy.

Of course, we cannot and should not avoid political argument — any more than we can avoid action — because we don't fully understand the historical, theoretical, practical relationships between women's oppression and capitalism. But we must, against the more sectarian traditions of the British left, try to develop our understanding by drawing into it the experiences of political practice and discussion rather than reverentially repeating the words of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky...or by responding to criticism or awkward questions only defensively.

First, let's look at some problems of some of the historical questions. Women's oppression pre-dates capitalism. But has it been a feature of all human social life? Is that what history means? Or were there matriarchal societies in the distant past among groups of people living at a level of bare subsistence before a surplus, giving a material basis to oppressive social relationships, was produced? Was it the development of the earliest class societies which gave rise to the 'world historic defeat of the female sex' and the increasingly universal development of patriarchal societies.

This is not just a debate between bourgeois intellectuals (reflecting a bourgeois concern to keep women out of history, along with other peoples) and socialists. It is also an important debate which has emerged from the women's movement and which, in my view, is open to much further and fuller development before either interpretation can seem adequate.

These debates are interesting, but how crucial are they? How far do they help us to identify the exact relationship between

though varying history, and they are tightly tied up with concepts of nature and biology. We then have to ask what happens to these particular features of patriarchy within capitalism? How do patriarchal structures and consciousness about the relations between the sexes relate to class structures and consciousness about class relations? And how do we challenge each and both?

To take some of these questions further we have to look at what happens to the oppression of women under capitalism. The development of capitalism involved an extensive re-construction of social relationships. The separation of labour and capital established the major class relationships of capitalist society. The separation of the home from general production, the preservation of the family and its transformation into a privatised domestic unit created a new basis for the sexual division of labour with the woman as housewife — the 'domestic labourer'. Yet at the same time, by also drawing women out of the domestic unit and into general production, capitalism indicated that the sexual division of labour could become redundant.

#### PUBLIC SPHERE

Such a possibility is blocked within capitalism, but the position of women is structured by the contradictory features of the relationship between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of general production. Thus questions of women's rights, emancipation, and liberation are recurrently posed through capitalism. While women have never been totally excluded from capitalist production — and in the last 20 years have been drawn increasingly into it — their position in the wage labour force is in practice largely an extension into the public sphere of the tasks of domestic labour: cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing, nursing, teaching, child care, and so on.

During the early stages of industrialisation the family of the working classes was considerably undermined, with men, women and children drawn into production. However capitalism stopped short of the total

with the appropriate notions of their masculinity and femininity, to direct them into their 'proper' place in the sexual division of labour, who will be 'free' to sell their labour power to capital as required. Domestic labour is private in a number of senses. It is carried out in isolation; millions of housewives engaged in the same activities, each in her separate home.

Although it contributes to the reproduction of labour power and is therefore necessary to the production of surplus value, the work of the housewife produces use values for the immediate consumption of her family. Her work is not socially productive in the Marxist sense. It receives no direct recognition from capital, and has no place in the capitalist market; it commands no wage. Indirectly, capital acknowledges the existence of domestic labour in three main ways: through its changing need to draw more women into general production, or to ease them out again; through its recognition of the family as an important unit for the consumption of commodities — from plastic bread to washing powders to freezers; through the public provision of some of the tasks of domestic labour either by capitalist enterprises, such as laundrettes, or by the State, as with day nurseries.

Any social recognition of the housewife is established through the marriage contract, which acknowledges her husband's duty to maintain his dependants — wife and children. Thus it is the State — through family law, the welfare State — which gives some social recognition to the housewife while the individual capitalist can preserve an appearance of disinterest in the private domestic arrangements of his or her employees. The wage is paid to the worker, how it is spent then appears to be his or her affair. Within the family, the housewife's position is that of dependence. This may be modified, though not fundamentally altered, if the woman is also a wage worker, given the continuing inequality in wages and opportunities affecting most women in general production.

There is therefore no equality of interest in or access to the wage in the relationship of the husband/worker and the housewife. Assuming, in order to sharpen the point, that the housewife has no waged work, the immediate day-to-day responsibility for purchasing, making, organising the food, clothing and general care of the family is the housewife's and she requires some substantial part of her husband's wage in order to be able to carry this out. But the wage is 'his'; he has 'earned' it, and he is cushioned from the most immediate knowledge of the costs and work involved in domestic consumption because that is not his sphere of responsibility.

The resultant differences in interests and consciousness are most clearly seen in strike situations, where wives berate their husband's militancy and irresponsibility when the burden of their actions in the immediate sense of having to feed the family will fall upon the wives. Ironically, this reactionary class position embodies an element of feminist consciousness. On the other hand, wives rallying in support of their husbands' militancy may be operating within the framework of their own subordination. This lack of symmetry in the relation to the wage can only be overcome to the extent that the sexism structured into the working class is consistently challenged.

# Patriarchy sto the man



## women oppre

What are the pre-conditions of patriarchy and capitalist relations and relations? Between the struggle and the struggle for socialism to these crucial questions, argues MALCOLM...

**'Working class people strove to re-establish the family as a means of protection against the insecurity and alienation of their social existence.'**

patriarchy and capitalism now and to draw out the strategic implications for the struggle for women's liberation? It is not necessary to know that matriarchal societies have existed in the past in order to see that women could be liberated. For example, the argument that women's oppression is 'natural', a 'fact' of biology, can be defeated without reference to that.

However, some extremely important issues are raised in the context of this debate. It seems that throughout history the sexual difference between male and female has been socially and psychologically defined into distinctive sexual identities — feminine and masculine, and socially and economically into a sexual division of labour. The precise content of these distinctions, which have been socially constructed on the basis of biological difference, has varied enormously from society to society, from historical period to historical period. And the extent of the differences has varied too, as endless examples from anthropological studies have shown.

But across such variations and whatever the power relationships involved, it seems that sexual identity has been structured into human personality as an organising principle. It may be that in early human societies before the production of a surplus, these societies may have been matriarchal. The sexual division of labour and the definitions of femininity and masculinity may not have had specifically oppressive connotations for women or for men. Nevertheless, the history of patriarchy since that period is extremely long, continuing through the emergence and disintegration of many types of society, many systems of exploitation and oppression, all of which have produced and reproduced their own versions of oppressive sexual relations and of femininity.

It seems to follow from this that — despite variations between societies — patriarchal assumptions are structured into us very deeply at the level of personality and individual identity; they draw on an exceedingly old

fragmentation of the working population as it became apparent that this was economically and technologically unnecessary. It was causing excessive damage to the present and future labour force and had ideological dangers. Working class people strove to re-establish the family as a means of protection against the insecurity and alienation of their social existence. Probably for women this meant a reclamation of a support system between female kin; for men it meant the claim for their wives to be returned to their 'proper domestic sphere' and out of direct or indirect competition in the world of men.

Through apparently disparate pieces of legislation, such as that limiting hours of work for women and children, and establishing universal education; through the gradual development of social policy in relation to such matters as health, education, housing, delinquency, child care; and the related development of social work, the State has increasingly intervened to encourage and impose an increasingly standardised form of family life — 'the bourgeois family'. Thus, what is now recognised as the 'welfare' State has emerged, built around this concept of the family with its division of labour between the male breadwinner and the female dependent housewife and mother.

Why this State concern? What bourgeois interests were and are at stake? And how far has the working class co-operated in its own containment in general, and in the oppression of women in particular in its struggles to improve the 'quality of family life'?

From the point of view of capital, the work of the housewife at home is concerned with the production and reproduction of labour power on a day to day and generational basis. This functions biologically, in the reproduction of actual human beings, and ideologically — in the reproduction of 'useful' and law abiding members of society: the reproduction of boys and girls imbued





# Patriarchy's y - faces of



## en's ssion

se relations between  
alism? Between class  
s between the sexes?  
for women's liberation  
ocialism? The answers  
tions are not easy or  
GARET COULSON



**'We do not have a clear understanding of how to develop the struggle to transform personal identity from passivity towards revolutionary autonomy.'**

Finally, a brief discussion of certain aspects of the ideology of the family and of ideological commitment to the family will illustrate more of the problems we have to work on.

Ideologically, the patriarchal division between the sexes in capitalism is perpetuated not merely as a sort of reflection and justification of the way relationships between women and men are actually structured within the privatised family unit and in relation to the capitalist economy and State. It also draws on residual pre-capitalist concepts which cling with a special persistence around social relationships which appear 'natural'. Consider, for example, the question of sexuality. A heterosexual norm is clearly established in the very structure of relationships within the bourgeois family, defended and reinforced through a range of ancient and modern, religious, medical, and psychological beliefs and 'explanations'. Challenging that means challenging the past and the present and the past in the present.

Working class commitment to the bourgeois family is a commitment to sexism, and the oppression of women. But the problems of how to confront this effectively have by no means been worked out.

The issue is so complicated because the reproduction of labour power involved the reproduction of human beings. Because the family is both socially isolated and the main source of personal relationships in capitalism, most people are emotionally dependent on family relationships and see personal relationships and family relationships as inevitably tied together. Alternative ways of

organising human reproduction and personal life hardly exist or are hardly allowed to exist, as the media exposés of AID and lesbian mothers illustrates. And yet the ideal of family security is becoming more mythical as families increasingly break up, break down, or never 'properly' form.

The economic dependency of the housewife within the family extends into and is reinforced by social, psychological, and sexual dependency operating at the level of ideas and emotions. Because the development of personal identity and sexual identity are fused in one process — and for women that means an identity of inferiority — the problems of trying to reconstruct personal identity in the process of struggling against oppression are acutely and intimately raised in the struggles of women.

We do not yet have a clear or adequate understanding of how to develop the struggle to transform personal identity from deference, dependence, and passivity towards some ideal of revolutionary autonomy, or of how to generalise and collectivise those personal struggles.

But we have to recognise their validity as a necessary part of the struggle for women's liberation. Moreover, the development of any revolutionary concepts and practices of collectivity and democracy is doomed to failure if divorced from the development towards personal autonomy. This is just one example of the way in which the struggle for women's liberation, and the questions raised in trying to define the links between patriarchy and capitalism, raise important questions for the revolutionary movement as a whole.



### ITALIAN ABORTION IN ABEYANCE

ABORTION in Italy remains a very big issue. The old fascist law is still on the books, declaring abortion to be a 'crime against the Italian race.'

In 1974 the Radical Party collected 700,000 signatures for a referendum to get rid of it and since then the issue has come up a number of times in parliament — but with no reform. In 1975, under the impact of massive women's demonstrations for free abortion on demand, parliament was dissolved, as the main political parties (the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party) could come to no agreement on the issue, and risked confrontation with the Catholic Church if the referendum was to be held.

By dissolving parliament and holding elections the referendum was postponed. The Communists (PCI) aimed to reach a rapid compromise with the Christian Democrats before the referendum came up again. This has not happened so far. The six-party agreement of recent months (which ended with the current governmental crisis) reviewed most of the main political problems but abortion was not dealt with.

The parties were afraid of repeating the split of June 1977. Then the abortion reform law had got as far as the Senate, where the Christian Democrats broke their tacit agreement with the PCI to vote 'according to conscience' and pass the bill.

The same law has now been presented again and discussion in the Chamber of Deputies should have begun in December. Again it was postponed, but will have to come up by February or the referendum will again come into play. The proposed reform law is not the most liberal of laws, but the Christian Democrats, under the influence of Vatican-backed 'right to life' movements, have hardened their position even further.

The PCI, on the other hand, has to reconcile its strategy of a 'historic compromise' with the main ruling class party with the aspirations of its own rank and file, particularly the women, who are largely influenced by the women's movement support for free abortion on demand.

### AMERICAN WOMEN DEFEAT RIGHT WING

WHILE THE European women's movement is taken up with debates on the relationship between feminism and the class struggle, things in the United States are a little different.

'Feminism' has become the stock in trade of half the bourgeois politicians in the country. At the recent National Women's Conference in Houston there were even delegations dominated by the Ku Klux Klan (including men) which — not surprisingly — were anti-women and racist.

There was another big problem with the conference. The Carter administration had spent \$5 million setting the thing up, so it wasn't meant to challenge government policies. Nevertheless, at a time when abortion rights and affirmative action programmes are under attack, and the Equal Rights Amendment is still hanging fire in state legislatures, the conference overwhelmingly backed childcare provisions, abortion, the ERA, and gay rights. It also passed a strong resolution against the double oppression of women from racial minorities.

But the problem was that liberal feminists, like the National Organisation of Women, were able to use the presence of right-wing delegations to block some of the more militant resolutions, saying they would undermine the feminist spirit of the conference. But the minority women resolution, drawn up by minority women's caucuses, showed that a stronger alternative was possible. It went far beyond the NOW plan and was passed overwhelmingly.

In next week's issue we are printing a reply by the Communist Party to our recent Serplus Value, 'The Communist Party and Women's Liberation'.

## Conference against repression

# The 'children of 1968' fight on

Roy Mason's recent epitaph for the Irish resistance to British imperialism has proved to be premature. This is the message from last weekend's conference against repression, organised by the local Relatives Action committee in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone. From Coalisland, AILEAN O'CALLAGHAN reports.

The organisers of the conference expected no more than a couple of hundred people to attend. The Republican Movement, Marxist organisations, community groups, and reformist organisations such as the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the recently formed Irish Independence Party had all been circulated.

If nothing else, hoped the organisers, a wide spectrum of opinion would be represented at the conference.

### UNITY

In the event, over 700 people from all over the Six Counties turned up. Representation could hardly have been wider, and the demand for genuine unity was the clear feeling expressed from the floor of the conference. All speakers were warmly applauded, and when these included speakers from both the Provisional and Official Republican Movements that says a lot.

Delegates of organisations which had not so long ago been engaged in deadly feuds ended up voting for the same motions. As Bernadette McAliskey put it: 'The people at the conference were the children of '68, who ten years later had come together to see how the lessons they had learnt in struggle could be taught to the anti-unionist masses.'

The major motions were passed unanimously. One gave full backing to the International Tribunal into the British Presence in Ireland, which was publicly launched in London

last Tuesday. The conference also resolved to build Relatives Action Committees throughout the Six Counties, and where possible in the 26 Counties.

This and similar activity aims to build the type of major demonstrations which were characteristic of the period from 1968-72. This time the main themes will be for the ending of torture and for the immediate return of political status for all Republican prisoners.

The Castlereagh torture centre and the 250 men and women 'on the blanket' dominate political thinking, with good reason. Despite world-wide British propaganda, people in the Six Counties are fully aware that torture is central to Britain's war effort.

John McNulty told the conference of the case of Ronnie Bunting, a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Nine months ago Ronnie was taken to the Castlereagh torture centre and had the letters 'UVF' carved on his arm by his 'interrogators'.

He has just been re-arrested for 'wasting police time'. His 'crime' was to make a formal complaint about being tortured. Delegates at the conference feared that this may be a start of a new policy aimed at discrediting the victims of torture.

Clearly the Coalisland conference is a direct challenge to British imperialism. Its success or failure to build the agreed activities will be of the utmost significance to the struggle of the Irish people for



Members of the United Troops Out Movement picketed the headquarters of the Special Air Services regiment in Chelsea, in London last Saturday. They were drawing attention to the role of

the SAS in the North of Ireland, particularly the recent assassination of Col. McNulty in Derry. McNulty was murdered by a plainclothes soldier.

national liberation. Consequently, socialists in Britain need to give the utmost practical aid to the determination shown at Coalisland.

Following the commemoration of Bloody Sunday, solidarity actions need to be built for the first Sunday in March which the Coalisland conference has named as 'Prisoners' Day'.

Most of all, a firm commitment to build the International Tribunal is essential. In this way it is Mason and the Labour Government which can be isolated in 1978, rather than 'the children of 1968'.

## What's Left

Rates: 3p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication.

'FIRST OF MAY', Edinburgh, is a left meeting place and bookshop at 45 Niddry St 031-557 1348. Open 12 noon to 7pm Mon to Sat (5pm Sat). We have an excellent range of books and periodicals. We welcome all visitors.

SINN FEIN Bloody Sunday march. Assembly 2pm, Sunday 29 January. Speakers' Corner. March to Whitehall. All banners welcome.

INTERNATIONAL Socialists and Revolutionary Unity. Conference sponsored by ex-IS/SWP activists. Sessions on IS tradition, political situations, revolutionary unity, Africa Centre, King St, London WC2. 11 Feb. Details and registration [£1 includes documents in advance] from Martin Shaw, 67 Salisbury St, Hull.

LEEDS CACTL day school. Speakers on industrial occupations, homelessness and squatting, and the law, plus workshops. Sat 28 Jan, 10.30-4.00, at Leeds Trades Club, Saville Mount.

RADICAL solicitors need experienced legal secretary, NW6, £3300 p.a. to work with us in our young, friendly office. Fast, accurate audio-typing and sense of humour required. Tel. Anna 01-328 8655.

BLOODY Sunday Commemoration Irish night. Sat 28 Jan, 8.00 till late. With Chanter, Beltones, Elu, Fox and Giltrap, and Connolly Folk; at White Horse pub, Church Rd NW10. Buses 266, 260, 297; tube Neaden or Willesden Green. Tickets £1.

SOCIALIST CABARET. Benefit for Right to Work film. CAST present 'Confessions of a Socialist' and disco. Plus live music. PA available for singers and musicians. Bar 8 till late. Admission £1 (50p claimants). AA, 34 Bedford Square, WC1. CAST... imaginative, sophisticated and quick-hit form of agitprop which leaves most other groups gasping. (Sandy Craig, Time Out, 2 Dec 1977) CAST offer you a half hour show, 'Confessions of a Socialist' plus disco and use of PA for your own entertainers. Book now for your next

benefit, social, party. Phone 01-806 4208 (evenings).

LONDON IMG Day School on the Revolutionary Party. Saturday 4 February, 11am-5pm at Caxton House, St Johns Way, London N19. This school is open to all IMG sympathisers and Socialist Challenge supporters by credentials from London IMG, c/o PO Box 50, London N1, or by signed letters from local IMG organisers.

NORTH LONDON Socialist Unity Public Meeting. 'Hospital Closures and the role of Labour Councillors'. Speakers: Mike Simpson, (GMWU shop steward, Royal Northern Hospital) plus speaker from EGA (invited). 7.30pm, Thursday 26 January, John Barnes Library, Camden Road, London N7.

CAMPAIGN against Racism in the Media. General meeting to discuss policies and activities in 1978, in particular preventing the fascists making party political broadcasts. With speakers, Friday 27 January, 7pm at the Roebuck Pub, Tottenham Court Road, London W1 (between Goodge St and Warren St tubes). Please note new address of CARM, c/o PO Box 50, London N1.

YORK UNIVERSITY Weekend Conference 'Marxism and Culture'. Organised by University Socialist English Group, 28/29 January. Theory and Practice, outside speakers include Terry Eagleton and David Craig. Creche, crash-pads available. For more details contact Anne McGaughren, 6 Priory St, York.

LONDON IMG will be organising a series of all-London aggregates over the next two months as part of the IMG's preconference discussion. Because of the crisis of perspective on the revolutionary left and moves towards revolutionary regroupment, the following organisations and individuals have been invited to attend the conference: Workers League, Big Flame, International Socialist Groupings, Libertarian Communist Group and Socialist Challenge supporters. If you are a member of any of these currents and would like to attend the London discussion, write for details to London IMG, c/o PO Box 50, London N1.

BRIXTON Socialist club. Fri 17 Jan. 'Hands over the city' - Italian thriller about corruption in local government, starring Rod Steiger. 8.00pm, the Canterbury, Canterbury Crescent (behind Brixton police station). Entrance 50p.

CARDIFF Debate between IMG and Communist Party: 'What strategy?' Mon 13 Feb, 7.30. Corporation Hotel, Crowbridge Road East. Admission 20p (OAP and unemployed 10p).

KINGS LYNN radical discussion group. All shades of left opinion welcome. For further information contact: Tim Webb, Kings Lynn 5766.

TRADE UNION action against apartheid. Speakers Chris Childs, TU officer of AA movement, and local trade unionists. Organised by Southampton AA group, Mon 20 Feb, 7.30 St Matthews Church Hall, St Mary's Rd.

NAME PUNK rock group will play at your benefit or social. Minimum expenses. Further information - Brookwood 3446.

THE LONDON Labour Library is a democratic and cooperative venture which aims to provide information and library facilities to trade union activists, socialists, black groups, women's groups and gay groups. We invite all individuals and organisations in the labour movement to support us in our efforts to liberate information resources in order to service the struggle for workers' rights. We need books, periodicals, money and offers of support. Write to London Labour Library, c/o 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

SERIES on racist Zionism. Hear Akiva Orr (Israeli anti-Zionist) speak on Zionism and the non-sectarian alternative in Palestine. Chairperson: Tony Greenstein. Sun 29 Jan, 2pm, Corway Hall, Red Lion Square. London Region British Anti-Zionist Organisation (BAZO) c/o 56 Old Brompton Rd, London.

FIGHTBACK Conference in Defence of the NHS. Sat 18 Feb 10-5. Central Hall, Westminster SW1. For details, credentials etc, contact Fightback Conference, c/o Occupation Cttee, Hounslow Hospital, Staines Rd, Hounslow, Mdx. (01-570 4448).

# NUS Gay Conference

THE RIGHT of gays to their self-determination turned out to be the crucial debate at the National Union of Students' gay liberation conference, reports GERRY AHRENS. A hundred gay activists met to discuss the deplorable state of the gay campaign.

Decisions made at the conference are not binding on the union executive, dominated by the Broad Left-Tory alliance, and as with the women's campaign, majority decisions taken by the gay campaign have been consistently rejected by the executive.

A measly £200 is all that NUS treasurer Penny Cooper allocates for the campaign. The subsequent loss of faith in the NUS leadership was clearly

shown by decisions to vote in favour of motions put by delegates involved in the Socialist Students Alliance, calling for prioritisation of campaigns both within and outside the NUS: Anti-fascism, Gay News, and Lesbian rights to Aid.

The conference, held on 14-15 January, also called for the right to hold closed conferences and gay-soes, and to have decision-making conferences. The main task for gays in the NUS is to launch a campaign for a prioritised motion, giving gays the right to self-determination, to be adopted by NUS conference. For the immediate future, the Gay News Appeal demo on 11 February must be built with

strong NUS contingents, including all the NUS Executive!

National Gay News Appeal Demo. Saturday 11 February. Assemble 1pm, Temple Tube. March to Trafalgar Square for Rally. Stop at Canada House to protest over treatment of Canadian brothers and sisters.

Picket of Canada House on Friday 27 January, 4-7pm. Picket Royal Court of Justice, 13 February, 9am-2pm and meeting Leicester Sq, 7pm. Disco 10 February, Lambeth Town Hall, 7pm. 70p earners, 50p non-earners.

# Welsh feminists meet

SUPPORT for the International Tribunal on Britain's presence in Ireland and for the Bloody Sunday demonstration will be forthcoming from the Welsh women's liberation movement. Those are just two of the decisions taken on 14 and 15 January, at the all-Wales women's liberation conference. Attended by women from Wrexham, Aberystwyth, Newport, Abergavenny and Swansea, the conference was organised by the Cardiff Women's Action Group.

Workshops were held on sexuality, health, nationalism, and on the question of women's liberation and the class struggle. A regional socialist feminist conference in Newport

in May will concentrate on the latter point in more detail.

The conference also took many practical steps: the distribution of feminist literature was planned, and steps towards building the movement

by GILL ALLEN

in the valleys were discussed. To this end, the second issue of *Rhianon* was distributed, and a workshop was held on video recording. The Swansea group of the National Abortion Campaign also won backing for its day school scheduled for 11 February.



# European Court abolishes human rights

Over a hundred years ago the Irish radical and land agitator Michael Davitt wrote: 'The long history of Ireland proclaims aloud that the only way to obtain justice for Ireland is through the illegal use of righteous violence.'

The verdict announced last week by the European Court of Human Rights on the early days of Britain's internment policy, give Davitt's words a timely relevance, reports GEOFF BELL.

Upholders of the right of the Irish people to self-determination ceased holding illusions in British justice centuries ago. But continental Europe was a little more distant; the ruling class there were not so directly involved in oppressing Irish women and men. Perhaps justice could be found in Strasbourg.

Some in Ireland were quick to insist that this was what occurred at the Human Rights court last week. The Fianna Fail Government argued the 'judgement... must be welcomed by all who are interested in the protection of human rights'. The liberal *Irish Times* agreed: 'The European Court of Human Rights is now seen to be creating standards for the protection of the individual against the abuse of state power'.

## TORTURE

This is nonsense. Strasbourg's verdict gave none of the reassurances which ageing liberals are always eager to insist are obtainable through bourgeois legal channels. The most headline catching decision was that Britain had not tortured in the early days of internment, but had merely indulged in 'inhuman and degrading treatment'.

At one level the difference can be reduced to one of semantics. The dictionary defines 'inhuman' as 'cruel, barbarous, savage'. But the difference is not about dictionary definitions.

The 'quiet satisfaction' with which the British Government is reported to have reacted to Strasbourg's verdict underlines the importance of being acquitted of torture. 'Torture', after all, so the story goes, is something Western liberal democracies just do not do, while 'inhuman' treatment carries connotations that things merely got a bit out of hand.

The verdict was all the more amazing as Britain had not contested the torture allegation. In effect, Britain pleaded guilty, but Europe found it was innocent. No wonder Amnesty International is severely critical of the acquittal.

## PREJUDICIAL

Other decisions of the European court were equally prejudicial. The Irish Government had complained that internment discriminated in favour of Loyalists. The court would have none of that. It spoke of 'profound differences between Loyalist and Republican terrorists', adding 'in 1970 and 1971 the Protestant community included political pressure groups with extremist tendencies but apparently concealed within its rank no underground military forces akin to the IRA'.

The facts of the violence in Ireland from 1969-71 show the hollowness of this claim. The first bombs were planted by Loyalists, in an attempt to discredit the 'liberal' Unionists in power. The first killings were committed by Loyalists. The Ulster Volunteer Force existed from 1966 and was selectively recruiting from 1969 onwards. But as with the torture

charge, the British argument was accepted. Those who supported the British presence in Ireland, however much violence they used, were only 'hooligans' and did not merit internment.

## VERDICTS

Of the 17 judges, only the Irish and one other said discrimination was practised. On the torture acquittal there were four dissenters, Ireland, Austria, Greece and Cyprus. The last three are not in the Common Market; the people of the last two have their own experience of torture, and Cyprus is in an especially good position to deliberate on Britain's treatment of 'rebels'.

Two verdicts were unanimous. The first that no evidence had been presented that Britain was still 'ill-treating' its opponents in Ireland. At no time did the court seek or invite such evidence. Had they done so they would have quickly found that such respectable figures as lawyers, police surgeons and Church leaders in the North of Ireland have recently protested about the treatment of suspects by the RUC.

The other unanimous verdict was in many ways the most important of all. Britain, they declared, had been justified in adopting the policy of internment without trial. They argued that the situation in August 1971 had 'threatened the life of the nation'.

## INTERMENT

It was a strange verdict considering that it was internment which led to an increase in violence and which eventually led to the abolition of the Northern Ireland parliament. But the real point about that verdict was that it totally avoided the issue — that it was the undemocratic practices of the Northern Ireland state which caused the popular resistance to the government in the first place.

The decision of the Irish judge at Strasbourg to justify internment is not surprising. If Britain had not been justified, by the same reasoning Ireland would not have been justified in setting up no-jury courts to deal with Republicans in that part of Ireland.

The same reasoning can be applied to every ruling class judge who deliberated at Strasbourg. If Britain was not justified in abolishing trial by jury, could Western Germany not be criticised for its present adoption of the 'Strong State'? No ruling class in Western Europe would want a decision at Strasbourg which questioned their right to abolish the rights of a fair trial whenever they felt the need.

Oh no, said the learned judges of 17 Western democratic countries. The right to a fair trial is not a principle. The state can do what it wants whenever it feels it is necessary.

This decision takes Strasbourg's verdict away from the simple issue of Britain's presence in Ireland. Last week the right to fair trial was finally and openly abolished by Western democracy. It was that serious.



"MY GOOD FELLOW, YOU'RE ONLY ALLOWED TO SCREAM UNDER TORTURE! THIS IS MERELY 'WHIMMAN TREATMENT', SO PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER."

# A new Labour Party South of Ireland

ROSE O'MAHONY reports from Dublin on the recent formation of a new political party.

THE FOUNDING conference of the Socialist Labour Party was marked by the passing of two motions concerning the national question in Ireland. One dropped a territorial claim to the Six Counties, and pledged that unity could only be achieved by uniting Protestant and Catholic workers. The other committed the party to campaigning for the withdrawal of British troops from the North of Ireland.

The obvious contradictions of these two motions has its roots in the party's founding history. But the real significance of the SLP's line on the national question is the extent to which it breaks from the thesis of the official Labour Party, that work on this question is a deviation of backward nationalism.

The Socialist Labour Party was formed as a result of the election to the Irish Parliament of a former Labour TD (MP), Dr Noel Browne, as an independent. The Labour Party had refused to ratify Browne's

nomination to run for election. Importantly Browne, a left-social democrat, is one of the very few Labour TDs to have a lot of support among Irish workers.

Many of those who became involved in the independent campaign to elect Browne and his running mate, Matt Merrigan (a left trade union leader), had been radicalised in the late '60s, and had been politically inactive since then. Others were militants in the unions, others again had been members of the Labour Party who had left it during the period of coalition. The majority of the members of the new party did not come from the Labour Party, a point which is important because — unlike its British counterpart — the Irish Labour Party has no political or rank and file roots in the trade unions, and has played an extremely reactionary role in relation to repressive legislation and the North.

The Socialist Labour Party has adopted a very open constitution, allowing political tendencies to organise openly

and sell their literature to the party. The right of women to organise autonomously was also accepted, and a national women's conference of the party will be held next month.

There are two political weaknesses to be noted, though the openness of the membership means that these can be possibly overcome. The first is a workerist tendency on the national question, and a failure to understand the backward nature of the Protestant masses.

The second weakness is the new party's electoralist orientation. While few believe the party will become a major parliamentary group in the near future, the importance of constituency work and the running of parliamentary candidates tend to be over-emphasised.

Despite these drawbacks, the formation of the new party is one of the healthiest political initiatives of this decade in the South of Ireland, and signifies the beginning of a period of upsurge and regroupment.



The West London United Troops Out Movement has just published a lengthy pamphlet by Frances M. Blake. The Irish Civil War — and what it still means for the Irish people. The pamphlet covers the period of 1922-1923 and the war in Ireland against the British imposed 'solution' to the Irish question. With well-produced illustrations and at only 30p it is the bargain of the year. Available from: The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Price 30p plus 10p p&p.

In Brief

**SOUTH AFRICA:** The Anti-Apartheid movement has called an Emergency Action Conference on 11 February at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. It is particularly aimed to plan for the trade union week of action on South Africa in March. Details and registration forms from the AAM Office, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1PD2DQ.

**PUERTO RICO:** Electricity and water supply workers are continuing a strike for a 70p an hour pay rise begun on Boxing Day. The Government-owned Utilities Company will not budge beyond a 9p offer. The strikers' union, UTIER, called a conference in which it won the support of the bus workers, teachers, Teamsters, petrochemical workers, students, and pro-independence parties. Telegrams, letters and badly needed financial support to: UTIER, Luis Lausell, Pres. Consejo Estatal UTIER, Apartado 13068, Santurce, Puerto Rico.

**FRANCE:** Alain Bobbio, the director of *Rouge*, the French Trotskyist daily, has been fined 2000 francs for 'apology for a crime'. The offence was the publication of statements by members of the FLNC, the Corsican nationalist movement, in which they argued the necessity for armed struggle. Although *Rouge* explicitly distanced itself from the statements (which were carried by a number of other dailies) it was held to be in sympathy with a number of bomb attacks that took place subsequently.

**USSR:** Georgian nationalist Vladimir Jvania was shot last week for bomb attacks against official buildings in several Georgian towns. Jvania said that this was a protest against the Russification of his country.

**COLOMBIA:** Without Parliamentary consultation the Colombian Government has issued a decree granting the armed forces and police complete legal immunity in dealing with 'terrorism and drug trafficking'. Many observers see this as a prelude to further direct military intervention into politics.

STOP PRESS

The long British pretence that it was protecting the inhabitants of Belize from an aggressive neighbour has been dropped.

David Owen, the Labour Government's Boy Wonder, has come up with a plan to hand over two thirds of the Central American colony to Guatemala and Mexico — something none of the Caribbean, English-speaking population wants. So the frequent military outings to the colony are exposed for what they were: imperialist sabre-rattling, not protection of the people's interests.

This is the classic model of decolonisation. Instead of just getting out the imperialist power imposes an unwanted political solution which will only lead to future trouble.

The real solution is far simpler: No to Britain. No Partition. Independence for Belize!

**THE IMG is holding a school on "South Africa — the rise of workers struggles" on Saturday 28 January, 10am, at Small Lecture Theatre, 1st floor, Polytechnic of Central London, New Cavendish St, London W1. [Note the change of venue.] Socialist Challenge supporters are welcome.**

# Italian Communist Party loses members

from ANNA LIBERA in Milan

**THE CHRISTIAN Democrats** still seem unlikely to let the Communist Party help them solve Italy's latest governmental crisis. And latest information from the Communists (PCI) shows that the party rank and file is far from happy with the leadership's governmental strategy of a 'historic compromise' with the right wing.

Figures for the party youth federation show that membership this year has dropped by 20 per cent, while the adult party has also fallen short in reissuing all its membership cards for 1978.

FED UP

An inquiry made by *L'Unita*, the PCI daily, confirms the obvious reasons for the fall in membership. These were typical reactions from PCI militants: 'We no longer recognise the line of the party but of the extra-parliamentary groups...'; 'I don't understand the PCI line — it's too conciliatory'; 'I don't agree with the way the unions operate in the factories'.

And, straightfaced, a party leader admits that 'the line of austerity has not succeeded in expressing all the potentialities for regeneration.' Too true! Strip away the jargon and you find that many workers are fed up to the teeth with 'their' party backing government attacks on their living standards.

'COMPROMISE'

This is reflected in the fact that the drop in membership has particularly affected worker militants. Today they comprise only 31 per cent of the party and in some areas as little as 15 per cent. So the PCI's project of



becoming a party for all classes has not only meant dropping working class policies, but also losing working class support as well.

In the factories the 'historic compromise' is very simple. For a Fiat militant, for example, it means 'compromise' with their boss, Agnelli, who is a leading

Christian Democratic figure.

In the localities there is a similar problem. Again and again PCI journals reflect the problems of work in areas with PCI local governments. The party acts as little more than the mouthpiece of the 'red' administration.

A leader of a PCI local

federation accurately summed up the problem: 'The worker cadres have declined in number. They count for less in the party. It is more difficult for them to express themselves.... The real roots of this phenomenon are political: workers' experience counts for less than the political will of the party.'

## Revolutionary slate in March elections Third choice for French workers

In the first round of the French legislative elections, on 12 March, workers will be faced with three clear alternatives. There will be the ruling class parties led by men such as President Giscard, Prime Minister Barre and Chirac, the Mayor of Paris.

Then there will be the parties which previously made up the Union of the Left, that is the Socialist Party (PS), the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Left Radicals. Finally the opportunity will exist to register a vote for revolutionary change. RIC SISSONS and PAMHURST report.

Three revolutionary organisations, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionaire (French section of the Fourth International), the Organisation Communiste des Travailleurs, and the Comités Communistes pour l'Autogestion, have signed a common political platform and agreed to field 235 candidates in the first round of the ballot. Of these 235, 170 will be LCR, 50 OCT, and 15 CCA. They will stand under the name of 'For socialism, power to the workers'.

The decision to stand a single revolutionary slate, allowing workers a clear socialist alternative to the reformist parties, was undoubtedly influenced by

the high votes won by a revolutionary platform in the municipal elections last March. 10 months ago the revolutionary vote averaged 5.5 per cent, while in some working class districts it was as high as 17 per cent.

ALTERNATIVE

A similarly high vote would show that hundreds of thousands of workers who want to get rid of the right are not prepared to give Mitterand and Marchais, the leaders of the PS and PCF, a blank cheque.

The common platform does not mean that the three organisations no longer have

any political disagreements. While all three accept the importance of a clear revolutionary alternative, scope exists for each organisation to defend its own ideas and programme within the joint election campaign.

FLEXIBLE

Each candidate will stand on both the platform of the joint slate and their organisation's own programme. The candidate will be supported by all three organisations in the particular locality through a committee open to all those who accept the common platform.

Since there is such a flexible structure it is regrettable that one important revolutionary organisation, Lutte Ouvrière, prefers to stand its own candidate.

Lutte Ouvrière, which was part of the revolutionary slate in March 1977, argues that any future PS-PCF government will be a bourgeois government no different from that of the right. The organisations who have formed the 'For socialism, power to the workers' argue that

because both the PS and the PCF have broad support in the workers movement they will be unable simply to implement policies favourable to the ruling class.

Their common platform states: 'Nevertheless, it would not be just another bourgeois government, for both the PCF and PS, once in power, would both be compelled (though in different ways) to take the demands of their "proletarian constituency" into account.'

Lutte Ouvrière also argues that to make the demand for the PCF to commit itself to vote for the highest placed workers party in the second round merely breeds illusions in any future left government. At the moment the PCF is refusing to give a guarantee of standing down in the second round in those towns where the PS wins a higher vote in the first round. This sectarian behaviour of the PCF threatens to allow the ruling class parties to stay in government despite only winning a minority of the votes.

The common platform thus states: 'To defeat the right on the second round — despite

## Greek Trotskyist still held Felekis on Aegina

**THE GREEK authorities still hold leading Trotskyist Iannis Felekis behind bars, though three other newspaper editors arrested with him in October were provisionally released last week.**

Felekis and the others were charged with 'moral responsibility' for demonstrations against the Greek Government's collaboration with West Germany in its Mogadishu attack on the Red Army Fraction hijackers. The evidence was an article commemorating the tenth anniversary of Che Guevara's death and resolutions from the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International, published in *To Odophragma* (The Barricade) of which Felekis is editor.

After his arrest Felekis learned that he had been sentenced in absentia for another offence — an article which criticised a prison sentence on a political militant in April 1977.

An Athens tribunal refused Felekis' release on the grounds that he might try to escape, or that 'he would wipe out the traces of his crime'. This is unlikely since the offences are newspaper articles which are in every library in Athens, as well as in police hands.

Felekis was imprisoned twice by the colonels' regime — from May 1969 to August 1973 and again in late 1973 — and in 1976 was again arrested and ill-treated by the 'democratic' regime that succeeded the military dictatorship. Ironically Felekis is now being held in the Aegina Island prison, where he spent a number of years under the colonels.

Socialist Challenge is circulating an appeal protesting at Felekis' arrest and continued detention. Copies are available from PO Box 50, Islington, London N1 2XQ.

VIGILANCE

The joint platform concludes by pointing out the significance of a large revolutionary vote on 12 March. It states: 'Working men and women, by voting for the revolutionary slate in the first round, you will be saying no to Giscard, Chirac, and their ilk, but you will also be saying no to any kind of "austerity of the left".... You will be showing the reformist parties that, if they triumph, they will have to reckon with your demands, your vigilance, and your readiness to mobilise.'

PLATFORM

The full text of the Electoral Platform, 'For socialism, power to the workers' is available in Intercontinental Press combined with *Inprocor*, 16 January 1978.

## Vietnam-Cambodia war

# Socialism in one country?

One of the principal political accusations made by the Cambodian leadership against the Vietnamese is that they want to set up an 'Indochinese federation' dominated by Hanoi, writes PIERRE ROUSSET.

The press revels in references to this attempt by the Vietnamese Communist Party to realise the wish expressed by Ho Chi Minh in his political testament. However, Ho's last known writing does not contain a single line that mentions this question.

There has not been a single VCP document for several decades putting forward the perspective of such a federation. You have to go back to the 1930s to find the slogan of a

'Socialist Federation of the United States of Indochina' as part of a 'World Socialist Federation' systematically advanced in the texts of the Communist Party.

During the period of the liberation wars there was silence on the problem of regional organisation. But from 1975 this question returned with a burning relevance, above all in Laos and Cambodia. These are the two countries which most need

active regional solidarity because of the gravity of the problems that confront them.

After the victory, Laos, for example, found itself in a dramatic situation: without access to the sea and dependent on Thailand for its supply lines, facing serious food problems, and having just finished a civil war with the part of the Meos tribe organised by the CIA. The Laotian Communist Party leadership made the right choice.

### COOPERATION

The deputy minister of Foreign Affairs declared that summer that the three Indochinese countries 'need to cooperate still more closely (than during the war) to safeguard independence and the results of the revolution and to build socialism.' And the Vietnam-Laos 'common declaration' of 18 July 1977 noted how much it was 'a vital necessity to reinforce socialist cooperation between the two countries in all areas.'

The Cambodian leadership chose an opposite course. Cambodia found itself confronted with the same basic difficulties as Laos: difficulties that are inherent in a country where the social and economic

forces of socialism are particularly weak and where the revolution was largely a product of regional developments.

The Indochinese economies are partially complementary. Vietnam could give Cambodia a lot in the way of industry with Cambodia's agricultural produce in exchange. The Mekong Basin, potentially the main energy source in the region, cannot be exploited without pooling the three countries' resources.

The Cambodian rejection of any regional cooperation was brutal, immediate and fundamental. The possibility of joint aid was refused. The country was shut up, henceforth to be dependent on only China for financial aid and commercial guarantees. According to Prime Minister Pol Pot 'Kampuchea... will never participate in any alliance, federation, or regional organisation.'

### RETREAT

In doing this the Cambodian regime was making a double retreat: an internal retreat because of the brutality of the internal measures it was then obliged to take; and an external

retreat by exacerbating anti-Vietnamese nationalism.



HO CHI MINH

The stakes in this debate are very great for the future of Indochina. Taking national realities and aspirations into account does not imply giving credence to nationalist ideologies. The defence of the 'national independence' of a country newly liberated from imperialist domination does not mean falling back on nationalism.

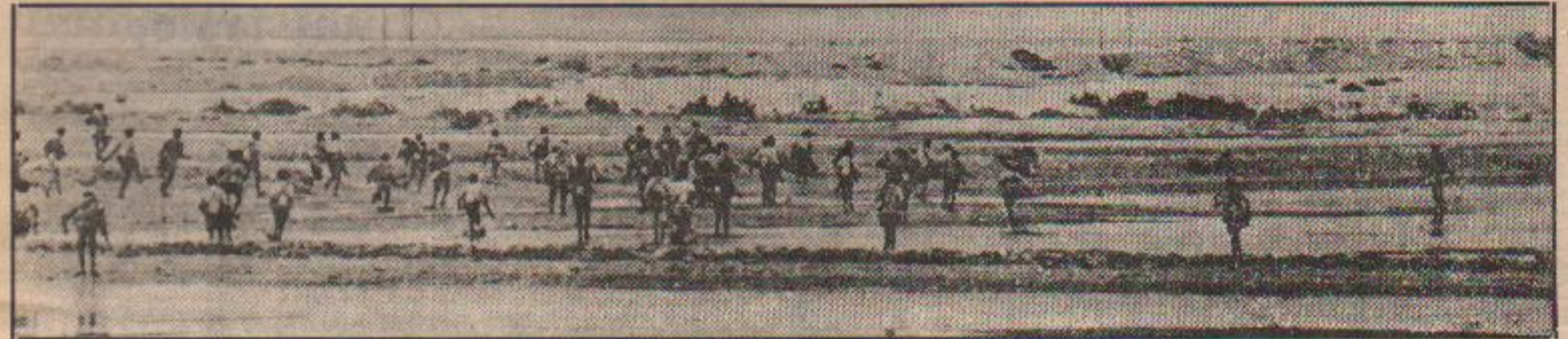
And if the advance to socialism could not be achieved in 'sub-continental' countries like China or the USSR, how can it be seriously expected to succeed in a country like Cambodia, which closes its borders in the name of national sovereignty and tries to 'rely on our own forces'.

Today Hanoi again advances the idea of 'regional socialist cooperation' after a long silence. They remain silent on the political forms whereby such cooperation can be fully reached, taking account perhaps of the present situation in the region. We must give proper emphasis to the old slogan of the 'Socialist Federation of the United States of Indochina'.

There is a danger of such a federation being dominated by Vietnam, given the relationship of forces and the bureaucratic character of the regimes. But this danger cannot be combatted by the nationalist response, whose consequences we can see today.

How many Cambodian lives have been sacrificed on the altar of 'national sovereignty'? What price must the South-East Asian revolution pay for the decay expressed by the Khmer-Vietnamese conflict?

The answers lie elsewhere. The only hope for such a lasting balanced federation is the success of the revolution in Thailand. The only way to fight against the dangers of 'great Vietnamese chauvinism' is to educate the population in internationalism and the fight for democratic socialist regimes.



Eritrean guerrillas attack Massawa across the sand flats.

# Soviet dilemma on the horn

by RICHARD CARVER

MASSAWA has nearly fallen. Eritrean guerrillas claim control of Asmara airport. Assab is strongly threatened. In the south Somali troops have been held but not defeated. And

Ethiopia itself faces virtual civil war, with an average of 100 people killed in fighting in Addis Ababa every day.

The nationalist forces in Eritrea in the north and the Ogaden in the south can allow

themselves a certain bewilderment. After years of Soviet-backed struggle against a right-wing Ethiopian regime everything has been turned on its head.

The USSR now supplies the 'socialist' Derg, the Ethiopian military Government, with the same weapons that the nationalists once received. Somalia, which backs the Ogaden nationalists, is demanding support from the imperialist powers, and the Eritreans find their most enthusiastic backers from among the right-wing Arab regimes.

### AID

The imperialists have so far refused to give open military backing to Somalia, preferring

to allow its rich and powerful neighbours, like Iran, to intervene. Iran has a history as imperialist policeman in the region, intervening against the Omani liberation struggle in 1973 at Britain's request.

But covert aid to Somalia is greater than anyone will admit. Britain is known to have stepped up its aid programme, though we don't know its full extent. And West Germany has been secretly supplying arms as a reward for Somali help in repressing the Red Army Faction.

In the last week the Derg has tried to divert attention from the southern front by air and sea raids against Eritrean positions. Militarily this is vital, for the newly unified Eritrean forces now hold all but

the two or three most important towns.

The Soviet part in all this has been utterly cynical. Reports of its naval involvement are undoubtedly exaggerated, but *Granma*, the Cuban Communist Party paper, proudly trumpets the deeds of its own military 'advisers' — Russians by proxy.

### KREMLIN

But it would be wrong to regard the Soviet intervention in the same light as the imperialists'. Soviet interest in Africa has nothing to do with markets and everything to do with military and political 'spheres of influence'. This creates a dilemma for the Kremlin policy makers. They want to extend their influence to the maximum — especially in an area like the Horn, which is on vital sea lanes — but cannot afford to upset 'peaceful coexistence'.

This means that the USSR will not foment revolution in Africa, as the imperialist press would have us believe. Instead it tries to win to its political and military influence radical nationalist regimes that remain economically tied to imperialism. On occasions this will mean intervention to help genuinely anti-imperialist struggles — as in Angola — whereas in Ethiopia it means trampling on the democratic and national rights of the very people it had once supported.

Such a policy is not only brutal. It could also be disastrously counterproductive. Already the Somalis are back in the imperialist fold. It is increasingly likely that the left-wing Eritreans will become isolated and the nationalist movement as a whole tied to the reactionary Saudi, Iranian and Sudanese regimes.

That would be tragic — and we would have no-one but the Russians to blame.



Refugees leave Massawa.

## Shah wipes out another 100

IRANIAN POLICE opened fire into demonstrations at Qon and Meshed two weeks ago, killing over 100, wounding a further 500 and arresting 1,400 people, mainly Muslim students of theology. The demonstrations were organised to protest against the banning of religious ceremonies after the death of the principle chief cleric of Iran.

The state-controlled press in Iran, however, flagrantly lies by saying that only five were shot dead, one child was trampled to death, nine were injured and 70 were arrested. It further tries to discredit the demonstrators by saying that they demonstrated against land reform and the suppression of the wearing of veils by women.

At the same time there was a flurry of open letters, citing

cases of unlawful and arbitrary arrests, censorship and violations of human rights, greeting the arrival of the UN General Secretary, Dr Kurt Waldheim in Tehran. The most important of these came from a group of 20 prominent lawyers and academics who asked the UN to come to 'the aid of the Iranian people in their attempts to establish freedom and democracy'. Waldheim promised to take up their case.

### REPRESSION

After this the group founded the 'Iranian Committee for the Defence of Liberty and Human Rights' and organised a press conference for the first time in 15 years in the history of the opposition within Iran.

As for the Shah, he ended the trade boycott imposed on Italy and Denmark after assurances from President Leone and Queen Margaretha — presumably that they would increase the repression of Iranian dissidents in their respective countries.

In Britain the Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council passed an exemplary resolution calling on the Greater London Association of Trades Councils to take up British complicity with the Iranian dictatorship.

It demands an end to arms sales, to the repression of Iranian dissidents in Britain, and the expulsion of SAVAK agents. It asks for a speaker from the Campaign Against Repression in Iran to address the GLATC and for the

GLATC to consider affiliation to CARI.

### SOLIDARITY

In the light of recent events in Iran resolutions like this are of special importance. CARI now has the sponsorship of 10 Labour MPs and several union leaders. More and more Constituency Labour Parties, Trades Councils and union branches are affiliating to CARI. Readers should make sure that their union branch or other labour movement organisation follows the example of Battersea and Wandsworth.

For further information, speakers or help, contact: CARI, Box 4, Rising Free, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

## Common programme for the Common Market

PHIL HEARSE'S article (*Socialist Challenge*, 12 January) raises two major questions regarding revolutionary attitudes to EEC elections and the attitude of the Labour lefts to the form of election in Britain.

He correctly states 'the European parliament could be used on a European scale as a forum for socialist propaganda'. Revolutionaries have an obligation to maximise this potential.

The EEC elections when they occur will be held in every member country at the same time. A united revolutionary slate throughout Europe would for the first time publicly pose the alternative of socialism and the need for an international on a continental scale.

The Fourth International leadership in Europe is uniquely placed to call a conference of all revolutionary organisations throughout Europe to draft a common programme for such a slate. A revolutionary poll would clarify relations between left groups by sharply posing the question of socialist unity. Undoubtedly it would have a greater impact on fossilised sectarianism than purely national elections.

The programme cannot yet be determined, but it should include demands against the EEC and against protectionism and import controls at a national or international level, as well as a very wide range of other demands. In such a campaign we would ask for seats to be allocated on our aggregate votes, as we are candidates of no particular country.

Phil Hearse notes that Labour lefts are anti-democratic in relation to proportional representation. However, the objective reasons for this are not explained. At present, Labour look to be excluded from the EEC by Tories in

England, and by the SNP in Scotland. In Westminster, it is mainly left minorities that are excluded. Liberals are the present case among the main parties. We can be sure that Dennis Skinner MP recognises these faults.

But why then does he oppose PR? Clearly this relates to the 'project' of the lefts in the Labour Party in case there is PR 'when' they hope to take over the Party. If successful the right wing would probably leave, to unite with the Liberals. In the absence of PR, the lefts see this as risky and tantamount to entering the wilderness — they expect the social weight of the Labour Party to remain unchanged.

Furthermore, a left Labour Party would require only 35 per cent to obtain a majority of seats as opposed to 50 per cent under PR. This seems the 'better bet for socialism'. Those outside the Party on the left would be outside the real fight and, the lefts argue, should join — However, they shouldn't attack the government too hard, as the only alternative under the status quo is the Tories. Finally, the NF is irrelevant as it has no MPs (even with 1 million votes).

Under PR all the above arguments would fall. If the Labour Party remained undemocratic or didn't adopt socialist policies, lefts would leave, with no advantage in staying in. The Labour Party is a soft socialist democratic apparatus in European terms — its built-in electoral advantage has obviated the need to obtain grass roots support. It is unlikely it could regenerate such support as would be necessary to retain hegemony under PR. It has no automatic union allegiance unlike other countries, having grown from the unions and not vice versa.

With its removal as sole governmental party, union affiliations would decline and other tendencies in the labour movement grow. A boost would be given to labour movement democracy in general, and a clearer political debate would result. One of reformism's blindfolds would be removed, and although the left would appear much smaller in parliamentary terms, the true alignment of forces would be much more obvious and the class struggle intensified.

G. MORGAN, Glasgow

## Politics or Diplomacy?

HOW DO WE map out the necessary political basis for revolutionary unity? The International Communist League agrees, generally, with what the introduction to your Draft Statement said. Neither abstract adherence to the historic tradition of Bolshevik-Leninism, nor agreement or disagreement on a few short-term tactical questions, can be decisive: the crucial criterion is where each tendency stands in relation to the 'greatest tests of the international class struggle'.

But your Draft Statement seems not to correspond to this method. Though on some points it gives rather detailed lists of slogans, it is almost entirely devoid of concrete references to the actual tests of class struggle. On issue after issue, it contents itself with general formulations which are not made sufficiently precise to be a guide to action in any real 'test of the class struggle'.

There can be unity despite disagreements: but for that unity to be honest and serious, the disagreements must be explicitly stated and assessed, not covered over with vacuous catch-all formulas.

In the unification which created the I-CL, the majority of one of the components ('Workers Power') had an important and potentially far-reaching difference with the theoretical tradition of the I-CL majority, in that they considered the Stalinist states to be 'state capitalist'. In the fusion statement we stated clearly what the majority position of the unified I-CL was, and explicitly noted the existence of a minority position.

That approach seems to us better than trying to find some 'compromise' formula to bridge such differences — which is apparently what you have tried to do in your Draft Statement.

If the discussion on unity arose from a sudden influx of new, young militants into revolutionary politics, then stating positions clearly would still be necessary — but positive, fruitful revolutionary unity might be possible even on a relatively amorphous basis, to the extent that it reflected the immaturity of the new vanguard. Marxists would have to learn to argue and criticise more patiently, less polemically.

That is not today's situation. Under discussion is unity between groupings and individuals with well-formed political histories and political divisions. Attempting to unify them just by finding 'compromise' formulas, is substituting diplomacy for politics; it can only discredit the idea of unity.

The Draft Statement does not define its attitude to the Stalinist states closely enough to indicate whether or not it is for a working-class political revolution against the bureaucracy in Vietnam, Cuba, or even China. It doesn't state a position on left social-democracy clear enough to rule out the sort of 'supporting through faint criticism' often found in *Socialist Challenge*. It does not come out openly for the victory of the struggle for national liberation in Ireland, against British imperialism. It makes no mention of one of the major recent 'tests of the class struggle' in relation to internationalism: the EEC. It calls for 'the building of a mass women's movement', not saying that this should be a communist, working-class based women's movement, and not drawing any line between Marxism and feminism. It does not include 'No Platform for Fascists'.

Clear positions have to be defined and debated on these questions for real, solidly-based revolutionary unity to be possible. For it is such questions which decide whether revolutionary aspirations and general principles are translated into adequate revolutionary action in the 'tests of the class struggle'.

This is an abridged version of a letter sent by the International Communist League to the Socialist Challenge Editorial Board. The full text can be obtained from the I-CL, 98 Gifford Street, London N1.

## We don't need Jackanory Marxism

IN ARGUING for a clear conception of what the aims and policies of *Socialist Challenge* should be, it is perhaps useful to establish what the paper is not trying to be.

First, *Socialist Challenge* — unlike *Socialist Worker* or *News Line* — is not aimed simply at 'building the party'. It is thus distinctly premature for Sheffield *Socialist Challenge* supporters in 5 January 1978 issue, to suggest that these groups as they stand could be that basis of the revolutionary organisation.

The creation of a unified revolutionary organisation in Britain must necessarily be, to a large extent, the result of regroupment of the forces of the far left. That means winning over

other tendencies, not simply enlarging the IMG by bringing in a few hitherto independent socialists.

Revolutionary unity will be built out of united action in rank and file struggles — in elections, in the united fronts representing the oppressed, and via debate and discussion. It may come sooner rather than later, but it will not appear like a rabbit out of a hat in a matter of months.

Secondly, *Socialist Challenge* — unlike *Socialist Worker* or *Big Flame* — is not attempting to be a 'mass paper'. It is primarily, though obviously not exclusively, aimed at rank and file militants in the workplace, at other activists fighting against particular forms of oppression, at left wing militants in other political groups, and at the unaligned socialists in Britain today. It is not, and should not be, attempting to build the revolution 'from below'.

Whilst I — for one — would agree with the criticisms on the letters pages recently that *Socialist Challenge* is sometimes 'too intellectual', I cannot accept comrade Healy's suggestion in 5 January 1978 issue that it should descend to the economism and Jackanory Marxism of *Socialist Worker*.

Granted, *Socialist Challenge* should not be written for any 'intelligentsia', but it should be aimed at the vanguard, and the two are by no means the same. To water down serious political analysis for the sake of getting onto the shelves of WH Smith (sic), or substituting *Socialist Challenge* for the *Sun*, is not going to take us an inch nearer a socialist opposition or a united revolutionary organisation.

K. PREWER, Leicester

## When the joking has to stop

I READ David Widgery's letter in last week's paper more in sorrow than in anger. His witty and powerful invectives against the IMG's sectarianism have on occasion been justified. In other writings his sense of humour and ability to laugh at himself, his own organisation and the rest of the far left have often proved a welcome antidote to the super-serious toy Bolshevism of many of the far left's Dave Sparts. I was therefore surprised at the venom of his letter and its thoroughgoing sectarianism. In short methought he protested too much.

For does David Widgery really want Martin Shaw's spleen against the SWP 'moderated'? If so then surely references to 'self-appointed patron saints' and insinuations of personal vanity and ultra-intellectualism are scarcely likely to elicit a warm and loving response. Such personal jibes should be given the short-shrift they deserve.

Widgery seems to see a contradiction between the polemical techniques of 'orthodox Trotskyism' and his own style. As a member of the IMG I would be the first to admit that it has over the last decade often been patronising and sectarian towards the SWP. But as we are not religious people we surely think that organisations can make mistakes without being tainted with the blemishes of original sin?

The very fact that the humour is wearing thin and that the jokes are less and less telling, shows the essential weakness of the argument. In short a pot-pourri of 'bons mots' (and bad ones), 'guesses', reminiscences and accusations of sectarianism cannot take the place of a serious discussion about how to win working class people in this country to the cause of socialism. When all the extraneous froth is boiled away there is amazingly little substance in David Widgery's letter; merely an untoward cynicism as to the honesty of the IMG's intentions in seeking revolutionary unity and the feeling that the passions of working people find little expression in *Socialist Challenge*. On the last point I would agree. But isn't it in the worst traditions of ultra-Trotskyism to justify organisational sectarianism on the basis of the style of newspaper articles?

No one is saying 'unity now!' nor is anyone serving a menu of sectarian stew. We are merely saying that a fusion between the IMG and the SWP could marginalise the real sectarians on the left, immeasurably increase the effectiveness of the organisations and begin to make real inroads on the working class support enjoyed by the Communist Party. Such a project is far more realistic and serious than to expect the SWP by its own efforts and individual recruitment to create 'the party'. In the past we all laughed at Healy's efforts to do this. Now the laughter is becoming more hollow. When mirthless 'humour' and sectarian invective replace politics as they do in Dave Widgery's letter, then he must forgive us for being sceptical about the famous openness and non-sectarian stance of the SWP — otherwise he is simply employing double standards. Let us hope that the far left can quickly outgrow this last spasm of an infantile disorder — left wing 'humourists' and 'non-sectarian' sectarians.

CHRIS ROSEBLADE, London

## Socialist Challenge EVENTS

### NORTH WEST

For details of activities in the NW write or ring the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, Third Floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1, 061-236 2352.

Open Tuesday 6-8pm, Thursday 6-8pm, Saturday 10-1pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating facilities available.

**BURY Socialist Challenge** group meets every Wednesday, 8pm at the Wheatsheaf pub, Bury New Road, Whitefield (near Whitefield bus and train station).

**LIVERPOOL Socialist Challenge** group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays at the Dolphin, Canning Place.

**WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge** group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

### NORTH EAST

**DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge** sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rock on High Row, 11am-1pm.

**DURHAM Socialist Challenge** group meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays in the Big Jug Pub, Claypath, Durham City. Further details from J. Fox, The Avenue, Durham.

**MIDDLESBOROUGH Socialist Challenge** sales on Saturdays outside Boots at Cleveland Centre, 11am-1pm. *Socialist Challenge* is also available from Harrison's (newsagent) in Linthorpe Street.

**HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge** is on sale Saturdays from 11am-1pm outside the Library in the Piazza. Next *Socialist Challenge* group meeting on Thursday 9 February at the White Lion pub, Cross Church Street, 8pm and fortnightly thereafter.

### SCOTLAND

For information on *Socialist Challenge* contact Scottish Socialist/Socialist Challenge bookshop, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. (Tel: 041-221 7481). Open weekdays 10-4, late closing Thursdays at 6pm. Wide range of Flpublications.

**DUNDEE:** Information about *Socialist Challenge* activities from 54 Queen St, Glasgow. Join in Sa sales outside Boots (corner of Reform Street) each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

**EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge** meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Kerevan, 12 Merchiston Grove, Edinburgh. Tel: 031-3460466.

**ABERDEEN:** Information about *Socialist Challenge* activities, ring Jim on 43696 (after 6pm).

### SOUTH WEST

**PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge** readers group every Monday, 7.30pm at Wiltshire pub (upstairs), Hampshire Terrace.

**SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge** group public meeting, 'Socialism and the Trade Unions', Speaker from *Socialist Challenge* editorial board, and local trade unionists. Wednesday 8 February, St Matthews Church Hall, St Marys Road.

### MIDLANDS

**COVENTRY Socialist Challenge** meeting. Oliver MacDonald on 'Socialist Opposition in Eastern Europe', Friday 3 February, 7.45pm, Elastic Inn.

**BIRMINGHAM Socialist Challenge** forums begin Wednesday 1 February on 'Perspectives for uniting the revolutionary left'. Speakers: Bob Pennington, IMG; Paul Mackney, Workers League; and a national speaker from Big Flame. Venue to be announced.

**WOLVERHAMPTON Socialist Challenge** forum, Tuesday 31 January, 'The Unions and the Crisis'.

Speakers: Geoff Poxon, FBU Divisional Secretary (in personal capacity), Bob Pennington, IMG. The George Hotel, Stafford St, Wolverhampton.

### LONDON

**BRENT Socialist Challenge** group. For details of meetings write c/o London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

**HARROW Socialist Challenge** supporters meet regularly. Anyone interested please contact PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

**HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge** group meets fortnightly — details from London IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

**SOUTHALL** Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details ring 01-5735095.

**ISLINGTON Socialist Challenge** readers group meeting. Wednesday 1 February, 7.30pm. Hemmingford Arms (corner of Hemmingford Road and Offord Road, N1). 'What kind of paper do socialists need?' Speaker: Dodie Weppier from the editorial board.

**CAMDEN Socialist Challenge** group meets Wednesday 1 February, 'The project of *Socialist Challenge*', Quiet Room (basement), N. London Poly, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town.

**HARINGEY Socialist Challenge** readers group meets fortnightly in the West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road (off West Green Road). Nearest tube: Turnpike Lane.

**GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge** group meets every two weeks. For details ring Ray 01-659 1187.

**SOUTHWEST LONDON Socialist Challenge** supporters meet every two weeks in Battersea. Further information from 26 Latchmere Road, London SW11.

**CAMDEN Socialist Challenge** group meets every first and third Wednesday of each month in Kentish Town. For details ring Neil 3594288, or write PO Box 50, London N1.

# Did The Other Cinema really have to go?

The end of last year saw the closure of The Other Cinema in Central London, just 14 months after opening. 'Predictable yet nevertheless disheartening', one might think.

After all, the financial burden incurred by the venue itself, plus the seemingly pernicious tight-fistedness of the British Film Institute are surely shackles enough for any such non-establishment enterprise, writes MARION DAIN

Indeed, these factors and the way they were handled by The Other Cinema (TOC) Collective are far from negligible, but it seems to me that in order to assess them we have to place them within the perspective of TOC's exhibition project.

From its inception in May 1969, TOC was committed to providing distribution and exhibition for 'independent' and 'political' films. Operating primarily as a distributor, its aim — during years that marked a continued decline in cinema audiences — was to build a Popular Cinema with 'an important role to play in the evolving social, economic and political situation'. (TOC Catalogue.)

## INDEPENDENT

The cinema at Tottenham Street was the realisation of a long-sought exhibition showcase — a home for 'independent' cinema and the means whereby a wealth of progressive, but largely neglected, films could at last find the exhibition outlet they required.

It was envisaged, moreover, that box-office returns would help to offset the cost of new titles thereby creating a subsidy for the distribution department, which carries two hundred political feature films and documentaries for use by film societies and the labour movement. In the event, returns from hiring out these films were used to subsidise the cinema, and it is only the distribution service which has so far survived bankruptcy.

Fifteen months ago, the cinema's programmer, Paul Marris, described the project as: 'A socialist cinema... to contribute to social and political awareness... to re-examine the history of the

cinema from a socialist viewpoint... to develop a left-wing film culture and its audience.' Viewed as intentions or as the TOC Collective's attitude towards the role of the new cinema, there seems little here to criticise.

However, it's worth emphasising that a film culture, 'left-wing' or otherwise cannot be developed without an audience, and the notion of 'socialist cinema' (to me, at least) is extremely unclear. The point is that TOC seemed to assume that an audience on the left already existed for many of its films. In fact, such an audience does not exist.

The repertoire of oppositional films was viewed often by tiny audiences mostly made up of those already involved in oppositional film practice. The development of a constituency for 'independent' film rests on challenging the notion of art produced for consumption which tends to govern the expectations that many people take with them to the cinema. But further, what assumptions do they hold about the nature of political film-making?

## AUDIENCE

In recent years, the exhibition practices developed by film groups and co-ops have incorporated analysis of the relation between given films and their intended audiences, and through this work potential audiences for 'independent' cinema have emerged. Since the left means nothing homogenous, however, these audiences vary enormously in their cultural assumptions.

It therefore seems necessary that precisely these assumptions must first be interrogated as a basis for designing programmes, and that the idea



of programming should be extended to include documentation, discussion, and special events around key debates.

TOC's mistaken assumption about the nature of its audience meant that many of its films were regarded as 'inaccessible' or 'elitist', or were consumed in

much the same way as television documentary. (What I mean is that many political films, while aiming to change content — present the 'correct'

position — use the same mode of film-making as TV documentaries.) Thus the whole question of aesthetics as an ideological weapon remains marginalised.

To trade that marginalism is integral to developing a 'left-wing film culture'. In learning to view the kinds of films that characterise oppositional cinema, audiences will begin to develop a critique of dominant cinema and from that point may begin to 're-examine the history of the cinema from a socialist viewpoint'.

In terms of a venue, however, I'm not convinced that a cinema such as Tottenham Street's was necessary at this point. This is not to underestimate the importance of good exhibition facilities and space for discussions, but the business of popularising the idea of Popular Cinema would seem, in its earlier stages at least, to involve only small groups of people for which more modest but flexible facilities (such as the London Film Makers' Co-op) are adequate and less demanding financially.

As for the British Film Institute, it seems easy to accuse it of reneging on a commitment to British film culture. TOC closed in December when the Institute turned down the application for: £35,000 for the cinema, a £15,000 cash injection for the distribution department, and a discussion on a phased subsidy over the next two years. However, it did initially contribute £17,000 to enable the cinema to open. TOC, given its perennially precarious financial position, should have ensured that its project would sustain BFI scrutiny in the event of a request for money.

This is not to advocate compromise; merely it is to acknowledge one of the many contradictions of developing an oppositional film culture and to say that dealings with the BFI should have been foreseen as one of the politics of TOC's project.

## Community communications Coming up for air space

YOU MAY HAVE read or taken part in producing a community newspaper in your locality, or used your local community printshop to run off posters or leaflets for a demo. You may have used portable video, tape-slides or photography in a community context, or maybe tried to gain access to air-time on your local radio station. Perhaps you are a worker in the established media who is fed up with their paternalism and excessive dependence on commercial advertising.

## FORUM

If so, you should be interested in the Community Communications Group — COMCOM for short. It was formed in May 1977 and is a broadly-based, non-sectarian forum and pressure group for activists and sympathisers interested in radically reforming the communications media in Britain. At present we are concentrating our efforts at a regional and local level, where we believe there is most scope for immediate change.

The aims of COMCOM are to co-ordinate and act as an information exchange for the development of community

From the Community Communications Group

communication services, including press, video, film, radio, television and other communications resources. We want to see a statutory right to local community ownership or operation of radio and television stations, with adequate funding for community communication services.

We are also campaigning for a statutory right of access to and effective participation in communication and information services — from local to national level; as well as for democratic control over these services.

We have so far published two editions of Comcom News, our UK Newsletter, which functions as an information exchange between the many community media activities going on throughout Britain, and contains reports from regional branches and the co-ordinating committee, as well as the latest information on developments in the community media field.

We have also published a 42-page pamphlet in reply to the Annan proposals on the future of broadcasting which we sub-



mitted as our evidence to the Home Secretary. Broadly speaking, we supported the Annan committee's analysis that it was the competing duopoly of the BBC and IBA broadcasting systems which were the major short-term factors in inhibiting the growth of new and radical developments in British broadcasting.

We therefore strongly endorsed its proposals for the setting up of a Local Broadcasting Authority which, among other things, would encourage new forms of non-commercial and co-operative ownership of local radio and

TV; though we equally strongly opposed its proposal that local broadcasting should be financed solely from advertising.

Our activities to date have included establishing regional branches in London, West Midlands, Yorkshire, South-west, West, East Midlands, South Wales, North-west, Scotland, Northern Ireland (and contacts in the Irish Republic). We are holding our first UK General Meeting in Liverpool on Saturday 28 January, at which we intend to establish working groups to examine the following areas, and possibly others.

**Local radio:** to examine access to air-time, control of scheduling, frequency allocation, new forms of ownership. **Community cable radio experiments:** to co-ordinate and exchange information between the five cable radio experiments recently authorised by the Home Office. **Access of half-inch Video and Audio-cassettes to Broadcasting:** to examine the professional and technical constraints. **The White Paper on broadcasting:** a reconvening of the Annan response working party to reply to the White Paper due out in March. **Community printing, publishing and libraries:** to co-ordinate and en-

courage activities in the print-based media.

If you are interested in attending the meeting in Liverpool, becoming a member (individual annual subscription £2), receiving a copy of our Annan response or want further information, please contact: Derek Jones, COMCOM Information Officer, 8 Millfield Close, Farnon, Cheshire. Tel: 0629 270554 (home), or 0925 51144 ext 150. Or if you live in the London region: Simon Partridge, Co-ordinator, London COMCOM, 92 Huddleston Road, London N7. Tel: 01-272 5327.

# Socialist Challenge

Leyland cover-up continues

## NO NEWS IS BAD NEWS

AFTER WE went to press last week, British Leyland confirmed that the document we had printed on Page 3 was indeed genuine. It was all above board, they stated as it referred to perfectly legal commissions. Why, in that case, demanded our reporter Geoff Bell, was it marked 'Private and Confidential'? 'No Comment' replied British Leyland, bringing the brief conversation to an end.

Now the fact of the matter is that the document only makes sense when examined together with the other documents in our possession. These are the ones that British Leyland is desperately anxious to keep secret because they reveal the millions of pounds which the firm spends in bribes — the so-called 'Market Factor'.

We were not the only people who faced problems last week. Two Labour MPs, Tom Litterick and Denis Skinner, also suffered the same fate. They sent the documents to Callaghan and Varley. The latter pleaded judicial privilege and said nothing could be done until the Old Bailey trial of *Reginvs. Barton* was over. The committee which decides whether or not to allow MPs to ask certain questions disallowed Tom Litterick from raising the matter in the House of Commons, thus demonstrating that the procedures in the Mother of Parliaments are both cumbersome and undemocratic.

The lawyers at *The Times* and the *Evening Standard*

refused to authorise publication of the story. Both papers were outflanked by the *Birmingham Post* which did print the story on its front page. It quoted Tom Litterick as demanding an end to commercial secrecy and the opening of Leyland's books.

Meanwhile in Oxford a branch of the Transport Workers Union has condemned the censorship and called on Cowley Shop Stewards to take up the matter. Information pertaining to the documents is now in the hands of most of the senior stewards in British Leyland throughout the country.

The demand of 'Open the Books' has often been used in an abstract and meaningless fashion by socialists in the past. In the case of British Leyland, where Edwardes, with the backing of Varley and the Labour Cabinet, is planning large-scale 'rationalisations', it is an obvious and important demand. The right of workers and their elected representatives to see all the books of British Leyland (including the



tax-dodges and expense accounts of the managers) should be fought for by all workers, as a first step towards establishing some degree of

control over their work-place. Other necessary measures will then begin to become somewhat clearer.

NO NEWS is bad news. Socialist Challenge has decided not to publish this week the documents in our possession relating to the Leyland slush fund. We apologise to our readers but the decision was only made after long and careful consideration.

We had been stopped from publishing last week by the Director of Public Prosecutions on whose behalf Superintendent Wilson of Scotland Yard had told us that we faced prosecution for contempt of court if we published the documents.

In last week's edition we called this censorship. We do so again. Censorship does not always take the form of the thought police arriving at a newspaper office armed with a red pencil. If Socialist Challenge published we could have faced a massive fine which would have threatened our existence. The DPP knew that, and it is that knowledge which defines their action as censorship. Censorship of a different sort operated in the bourgeois news coverage of the suppression of the articles in Socialist Challenge. Not one

national newspaper reported the event.

Once more the law has been utilised to censor a left wing newspaper. Once more those who pose as the traditional defenders of the free press have not raised a murmur. When a left wing newspaper seeks to expose ruling class practices which embarrass the entire establishment, press freedom becomes expendable.

We are still discussing the information contained in the documents with British Leyland shop stewards. If they feel that the struggle against the plans to axe 30,000 workers would be aided by publication we would seriously consider putting the future of this paper at risk.

Throughout last week we had discussion with comrades from the *Socialist Worker* editorial board to whom we made the documents available. If it becomes necessary both papers will consider simultaneous publication. Against the self-censorship of the unfree press we have the unity and determination of the workers' press.

Editorial Board

## WH Smith's give us a test run

WH Smiths, who along with Menzies dominate the distribution of newspapers and magazines in Britain, are to give Socialist Challenge a test run. For 8 weeks Socialist Challenge will be available in 10 of Smiths' London shops. If the test is successful, Smiths will consider national distribution.

Any socialist newspaper faces great difficulties in organising a national sales network. For the most part we rely on local sellers in 70 towns and friendly newsagents. Needless to say that leaves hundreds of towns and cities where the paper is not available. A good response in this trial period in London could lead to a breakthrough in our distribution nationwide. From small acorns

large oaks grow!

Basildon  
Brent Cross  
Charing Cross stall  
Edgware  
Golders Green  
Kings Cross main stall  
St Pancras stall  
South Hampstead  
Victoria Concourse stall  
Waterloo South stall

We will keep our readers informed of the success or otherwise of this venture.

The fund drive picked up slightly this week, although not enough to stop the foundations of the Tatlin tower looking rather shaky. Our supporters in South East London donated £30 for 'paint and brushes'. Perhaps some other supporters would like to send us some doorframes, windows, scaffolding... or anything you can spare.

Preston supporter	10.00
S. Cadwallader	4.00
G. Fagan	10.00
S.E. London supporters	30.00
B. Hunter	10.00
Former Marxist Worker Group	40.00
Anne Gray	2.00
Lera Miles	3.00
J. Norton, Wakefield	5.00
Total	114.00

## Special Offer

Russian Revolution special. Text by Isaac Deutscher, design by David King. 50p.  
1978 Calendar. 13 posters from Paris, May 1968. 4 colours, £1.  
Subscribe for one year to Socialist Challenge (£10) and receive a calendar for 1978 free.  
Set of 6 postcards of Peter Kennard photomontages on South Africa, Ireland, 1974 miners strike, Seveso, USSR and Chile. The set £1.  
Socialist Challenge supporters badge. 20p each plus 7p postage. Orders of 10 or more 15p each, post free.  
All available from Special Offers, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.



Become a walking bill-board. Two-colour Socialist Challenge supporters' badges are popping up all over the place. Obtain yours from the address above, 20p each plus 7p post. Ten or more 16p each, post free.

STANDING ORDER AUTHORITY

TO..... (name of your bank)

..... (branch)

..... (address)

Please make payment to the debit of the account specified as per the details given

A/C to be debited

Your Name

Your A/C Number

Payee: Socialist Challenge  
Our A/C Number 0170678  
Lloyds Bank, Islington Branch, 19 Upper St, London N1 0PJ.  
Sorting Code No. 150570  
First Payment Due

Amount

Frequency, e.g. on first day of each month

This order cancels all previous orders to the same payee and will continue until written notice to the contrary is received by you.

..... (Your signature)

Please complete and post to: Sponsor a Journalist, Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10  
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of \_\_\_\_\_  
Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.  
Complete and return to:  
Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.