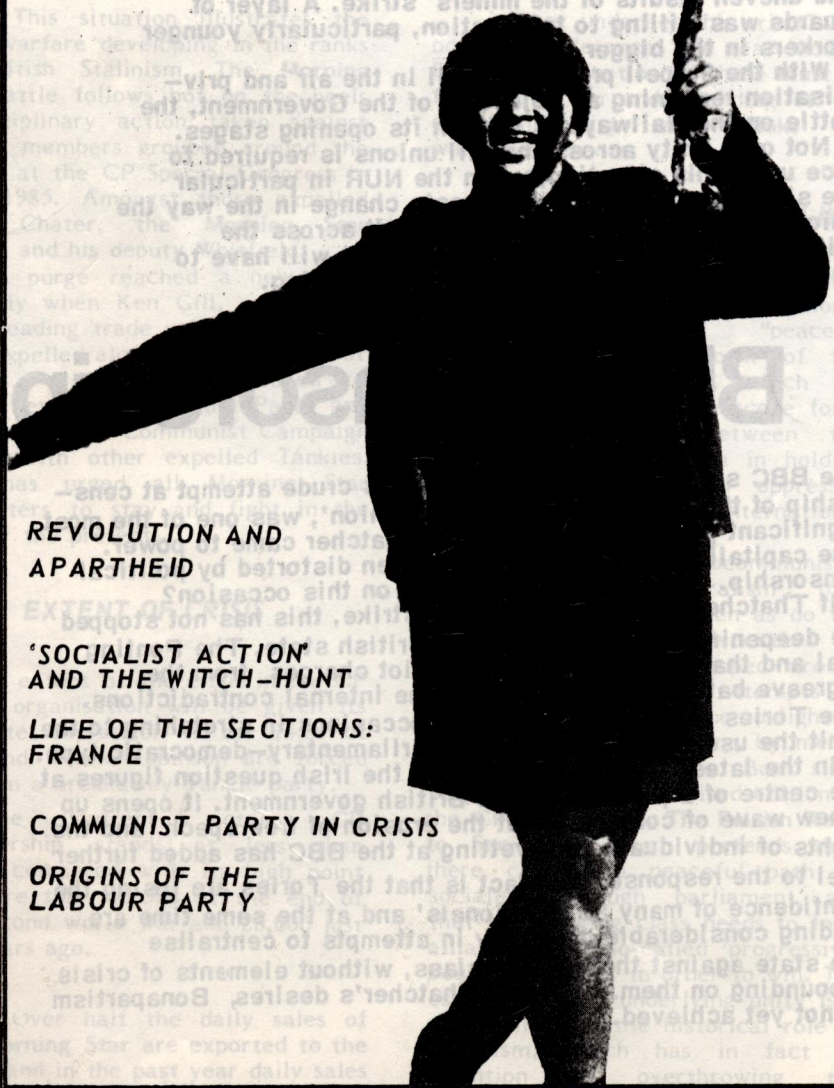
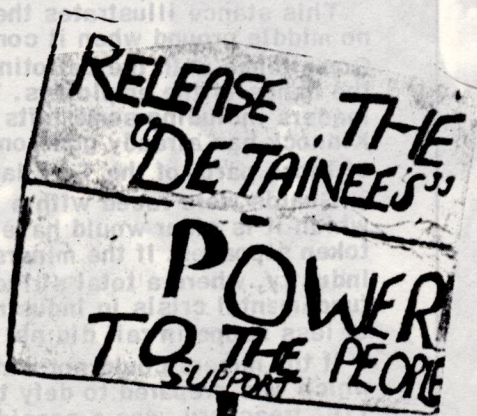


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- REVOLUTION AND APARTHEID
- EXTENT OF THE 'SOCIALIST ACTION' AND THE WITCH-HUNT
- LIFE OF THE SECTIONS: FRANCE
- COMMUNIST PARTY IN CRISIS
- ORIGINS OF THE LABOUR PARTY

FOURTH INTERNATIONALIST



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NUR Ballot

The ballot vote by NUR Guards, over opposition to Driver Only Operation resulted in a narrow majority against industrial action on a high turnout. What does this result indicate?

Firstly, the Guards action to defend their jobs began at a local level. Especially after the first men were sacked by BR we witnessed a willingness to take unofficial and solidarity action by different groups of Guards. In face of this the Knapp leadership turned to organising a ballot in compliance with Thatcher's anti-union legislation. This had the effect of giving a month in which the BR management and behind them the Tories could prepare and respond with selective sackings. It also prevented the dispute effectively escalating.

This stance illustrates the way in which there can be no middle ground when it comes to the Tories laws.

Compliance with the balloting provisions plays directly into the hands of the employers. Yet this is precisely what TUC leaders including some lefts like Knapp are advocating. Kinnock has already gone on record as favouring maintenance of those parts of the Tory laws which 'extend democracy'.

Guards were faced with a prospect of vaguely defined action which it is clear would have been focussed on selective and token stoppages. If the miners could not win in a declining industry, where a total strike could no longer produce a fundamental crisis in industry in the short-term, then action of less scope in rail did not seem credible to many Guards.

If the miners could not win alone under a leadership which was prepared to defy the Tory laws and in face of TUC treachery, was a consideration which affected the votes of many. That the vote for action was so high in these circumstances is witness to the very contradictory and uneven results of the miners' strike. A layer of Guards was willing to take action, particularly younger workers in the bigger depots.

With the Serpell proposals still in the air and privatisation remaining an objective of the Government, the battle on the Railways is still in its opening stages.

Not only unity across the rail unions is required to face up to this situation, but in the NUR in particular the situation cries out for a drastic change in the way the union functions. A fighting Broad Left across the rail unions is the need of the moment. It will have to be built in the teeth of Knapp's left posturing.

BBC Censorship

The BBC strike against Leon Brittan's crude attempt at censorship of the film 'The Edge of the Union', was one of the most significant political strikes since Thatcher came to power. The capitalist media have always been distorted by political censorship. Why then all the rumpus on this occasion?

If Thatcher survived the miners' strike, this has not stopped the deepening of the crisis of the British state. The Ponting trial and that of the miners facing riot charges from the Orgreave battles, illustrate the same internal contradictions. The Tories came unstuck on both occasions in stretching to the limit the use of institutions of a parliamentary-democratic type.

In the latest incident, once again the Irish question figures at the centre of a problem for the British government. It opens up a new wave of concern about the erosion of free speech and the rights of individuals. MI5 vetting at the BBC has added further fuel to the response. The fact is that the Tories are losing the confidence of many 'professionals' and at the same time are finding considerable difficulty in attempts to centralise the state against the working class, without elements of crisis rebounding on them. Whatever Thatcher's desires, Bonapartism is not yet achieved.

British Stalinism in Crisis

The 1985 Annual Meeting of the People's Press Publishing Society (PPPS) voted in June by a majority of 1952:2702 to reject an amendment calling for the 'Morning Star' to "express Communist Party policy."

At the same time, the CPGB-sponsored candidates for editor and deputy editor, Chris Myant and Frank Chalmers, were rejected.

According to Gordon McLennan, writing in *Focus*, the weekly paper of the CP's Eurocommunist leadership, the result meant that "instead of the paper supporting Communist Party policy, it has been turned into one attacking it."

The Manchester meeting witnessed Arthur Scargill launch an attack upon George Bolton of the Scottish NUM and Peter Carter, the CP's industrial organiser, both leading Eurocommunists.

OPEN WARFARE IN THE CP

This situation illustrates the open warfare developing in the ranks of British Stalinism. The *Morning Star* battle follows hot on the heels of disciplinary action taken against 42 CP members grouped around the paper, at the CP Special Congress in May 1985. Amongst those expelled were Chater, the *Morning Star* editor, and his deputy Whitfield.

The purge reached a new pitch recently when Ken Gill, one of the CP's leading trade union bureaucrats was expelled along with a number of others. Gill has pledged to fight 'revisionism' in the Party and has formed the Communist Campaign Group with other expelled Tankies. Gill has urged all *Morning Star* supporters to stay and fight in the CP for the present.

EXTENT OF CRISIS

The extent of the crisis in the CP as an organisation will be given its ultimate expression if the likes of Gill and Derek Robinson are forced to form a breakaway Tankie party.

The current active CP membership stands at less than 10,000 compared with its high point of more than 40,000 at the end of the second world war and 28,000 just ten years ago.

Over half the daily sales of the *Morning Star* are exported to the USSR and in the past year daily sales have dropped by nearly 1,000 to less than 14,000.



Gordon McLennan

What underlies this crisis? The political differences are real enough. But an examination of these must be founded on an understanding of the cast-iron unity which links the warring elements.

ADHERENCE TO THE KREMLIN

Both factions adhere to the Kremlin's version of international diplomacy, to "peaceful co-existence" in the form of the Yalta-Potsdam accords, which for forty years have set the scene for a division of labour between the Kremlin and imperialism in holding back the workers and oppressed peoples and maintaining international 'order'.

Whilst the "Eurocommunists" may bleat about 'pluralism', they oppose every bit as much as do the more unashamed advocates of Stalinist repression grouped around the *Morning Star*, the attempts by workers in Eastern Europe to fight to overthrow the bureaucracy, by means of a political revolution. Both sides supported the 1977 revised edition of the CP programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, which pretends that there can be a peaceful path to socialism through parliament and that the working class needs to form alliances with so-called 'progressive' bourgeois forces in order to win. The essence of this underlying unity is a restatement of the historical role of Stalinism, which has in fact no intention of overthrowing the bourgeoisie. Rather, the politics of Stalinism are a historical product of

the character of the Kremlin bureaucracy and the international political apparatus linked to it. This bureaucracy, which has expropriated political power from the workers in the USSR and Eastern Europe, plays a servile role in world politics, as a junior partner of imperialism in resisting socialist revolution. It needs to preserve world order precisely to preserve its own parasitic existence, which it defends against the Soviet and Eastern European workers only by means of repression and stifling attempts at independent organisation.

In the advocacy of a "New Popular Front" by the Eurocommunists, we can see not the abandonment of the international needs of the Kremlin, but rather a repetition of a classical means by which Stalinism has in the past blocked the strivings of the working class towards independent struggle and attempting to take power into its own hands.

POPULAR FRONTISM

The essence of Popular Frontism is the blatant sacrifice of the independent demands and activity of the working class in the name of "progressive" alliances, to prepare its future defeat at the hands of the ruling class. Millions of workers through history have paid the price of this class-collaboration of Stalinism, from China to Spain in the 1930's and again in Chile in 1973.

The current CP crisis finds its roots in the development of the class

struggle. This is an international phenomenon, which emanates from the decay of the world imperialist system upon which the bureaucracy rests, and which it props up. The very same pressures test all organisations claiming to represent workers' interests. But these pressures are manifested in relation to a given position occupied by the Stalinists within the class struggle in any one country. Whatever the contradictions produced in the Stalinists' ranks, the argument is between different conceptions of how to betray the working class.

CP AGAINST MASS PICKETS

The Popular Front perspective was expressed during the miners' strike in the role played by leading CP NUM officials Mick McGahey and George Bolton. It was McGahey who enlisted the support of the church to intervene in the dispute as divine arbiters. Bolton proposed that the union comply with the sequestration of their funds. It was McGahey who allowed British Steel to continue production as normal at Ravenscraig. To cap it all, Carter - the CP's industrial organiser who has attacked

the militant tactics used at Orgreave - has said in drawing a balance sheet of the strike that mass picketing was a 'diversion' and that the NUM should have concentrated on winning 'public opinion' by using the church.

In much of their rhetoric the Eurocommunists present "Thatcherism" as if it were a supra-class phenomenon. They erect a contradiction between this and parliamentary, bourgeois-democratic political forms. On this pretext they raise the need for a "broad democratic alliance", in which, by implication, sections of the 'democratic' bourgeoisie may be included.

POPULAR FRONTS IN HISTORY

Not surprisingly, this quack theory flies in the face of history. As Trotsky explained in the Transitional Programme, the bourgeoisie will resort to cross-class alliances in the form of the Popular Front only as a 'last card' before Fascism.

In history, popular fronts can prepare fascism, not defeat it. The popular front arises to tie the working class hand-and-foot to

bourgeois property and the state. It does so only in conditions where the working class is striving to break out of capitalist legality and to the revolutionary road.

Against this threat popular frontism is a counter-revolutionary response, with the Stalinists at heart, to the challenge of the working-class for power, for workers' government. History shows that the Popular Front marks a temporary phase of the class struggle which either leads to the defeat of the working masses (as in Spain and Chile) or alternatively, through the masses smashing through the Popular Front obstacle, creating their workers' United Front and building revolutionary leadership, to struggle for power.

The example of the Russian Revolution in 1917 still serves to illustrate the process which struggle for power must recreate in every country. The strategic line and methods of this battle for independence of the working class - the forging of its unity as a class - stand in complete opposition to class collaboration and deception in the name of 'democracy' peddled by the CP.



EUROCOMMUNISM

What then is Eurocommunism? Although it is undoubtedly true that both wings in the CP crisis represent part of the same blockage for workers, there are significant differences that make the current inter-factional war a real one, not shadow-boxing.

The term 'Eurocommunism' was coined in the 1970's. Some who claim to be Trotskyists have attributed its emergence to contradictory national pressures. Thus on the one hand CP leaders Carrillo (Spain) and Berlinguer (Italy) who distance themselves verbally from the crushing of the 'Prague Spring' in 1968 by the Warsaw Pact, have been seen by some as responding positively to working class pressure. On the other hand, those who look for such 'positive' aspects in Eurocommunism also often point to the overt class-collaborationist attitudes in domestic policy that are integral to Eurocommunist perspectives. Thus, Eurocommunism has been presented as if it were a 'contradictory' phenomenon. Ernest Mandel, leader of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International has gone so far as to talk of 'left' and 'right' Eurocommunists.

'Eurocommunism' is not a 'contradictory' phenomenon. It is a product of the deep-going crisis of international Stalinism which is beset by the problems of resisting and betraying revolutionary struggles, East and West. The Western Stalinist Parties can no longer cynically lean upon the attachment of the working class to the gains of the Russian Revolution. They have to operate in conditions where millions of workers have seen the rise of political revolution in Poland. They are compelled into all sorts of convolutions in order to maintain their capacity to betray. Thus, 'Eurocommunism' is not as some would have it, a process whereby the Stalinist Parties are becoming a new variant of reformism, defined not by its relations with the international apparatus of the Kremlin but rather by direct class collaboration with its own national ruling class.

No! The 'Eurocommunist' mask is a necessity, in given conditions, for the Stalinists to play out their role. It is a mask that can be taken off when necessary. Thus for example, in the space of a decade, the French Communist Party (PCF), went from being the archetype of subservience to Moscow, to 'Eurocommunist' and back again.

In its 'Euro' phase, the PCF even went so far as to permit a member of its Central Committee to speak at a meeting in defence of

human rights in the USSR, organised on the initiative of the French Trotskyists.

WILD OSCILLATIONS

Such wild oscillations conceal the content of the Stalinists' policy which remains consistently counter-revolutionary. They cost the Stalinists dearly however. The PCF's own manoeuvring has resulted in a shaking of its position with wide sections of workers. Even more dramatic are the kind of explosions such as that seen in Spain, where the PCE's own virtual destruction was the price it had to pay for kissing the hand of King Juan-Carlos and propping up the regime left by Franco.

DISLOCATION

In Spain, after the death of Franco, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) fought doggedly to maintain the state structure in the hands of the bourgeoisie and advocated the return of the king and the Cortez. Carillo, leader of the party said later: "We had to adopt a statesmanlike responsibility to get the country out of the rut it was in."

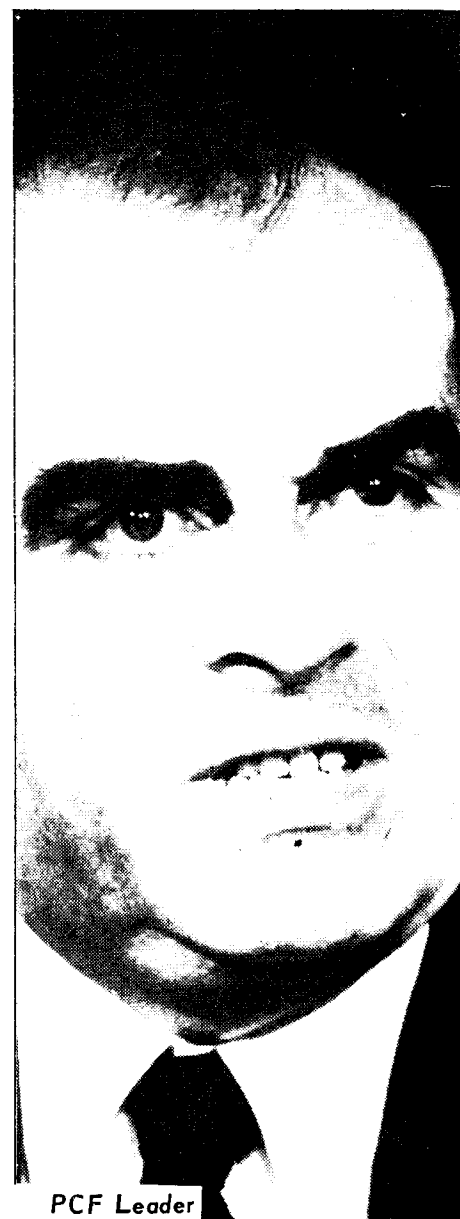
In a period of the upsurge of the working class, being "statesmanlike" for the bourgeoisie has led the PCE membership to dwindle from 300,000 to around 40,000, with its daily paper closing down in the process. Similar problems face nearly all Western European Stalinist Parties.

In no way does this dislocation represent a break in a revolutionary direction of any section of Stalinism. The major Western European CP's are the foremost defenders of the division of Europe and the maintenance of bourgeois rule in the West.

HOBBSAWN & CO

The problems facing the CPGB are similar in many ways to the extreme case of the PCE. As the crisis of capitalism deepens the more breathtaking are the betrayals of Stalinism. The British Eurocommunists, making use of the bogus theories of Professors Hobsbawn and co. grouped around **Marxism Today**, project an orientation based upon "new movements", feminism, pacifism and the ecological movement, the radical and not so radical petty bourgeoisie.

Perhaps at this stage we should allow them to condemn themselves from their own mouths. Again George Bolton, analysing the great miners' strike said recently: "One of the main lessons of this strike has been that we cannot achieve things on our own: we need solidarity and we need to build alliances to succeed."



PCF Leader

Was this the problem of the strike? Workers' solidarity at the rank and file level helped sustain the strike for 12 months. It was the problem of the left leaders, particularly those on the TUC General Council, including CP members who **refused to lead** the mass solidarity action required. What alliances did the miners need? Was it the SDP of David Owen? Or the wet Tory Peter Walker? Perhaps the Church? But was their advice anything other than condemning violence and telling the miners to go back to work?

Martin Jaques, in **Focus No.5**, said that **Marxism Today** was aimed at "others beyond the left but disturbed by Thatcherism. (This) was the keynote of the politics of the Popular Front of the 1920's.(sic)"

According to ancient CP theoretician Sam Aaronovitch, the 'broad front' is very broad indeed! Right up to and including the SDP-Liberal Alliance. Aaronovitch described the forces involved as "very significant...I also think that the nature of Thatcherism is such that I'm prepared to construct an alliance with all kinds of forces who are

prepared to challenge what Thatcherism is about, and I don't care, in a sense, what party they're in."

This is why discussions between Euro academic Hobsbawm and Neil Kinnock are so important. For all his denials of coalitions with the SDP and others, all his political actions, particularly in the miners' strike, his condemnation of picket-line "violence", and opposition to a total amnesty for strikers indicate otherwise. He has described Hobsbawm as the "greatest living intellectual", and gathered together a coterie of advisers whose political background is rooted in Stalinism. In earlier issues we have analysed the role of the Kinnock leadership of the Labour Party as one which paves the way for a Popular Front government. Through this, Kinnock means to ensure that capitalism in Britain is safeguarded. His able assistants help to project this course.

Kinnock is not a Stalinist; he is a rightward-moving reformist, who will utilise Stalinism in whatever form as his closest ally, using them as chief witch-hunters of all who fight for the independent needs of the class.

39th CONGRESS

According to an appeal by the SWP recently, the 39th Congress of the CPGB was a victory for the right wing. Their appeal for "hard-left unity" against the supposed drift to the right by all and sundry is aimed at the "Tankies", the grouping around



Labour in peril— it's a job for Superman

Morning Star editor Chater. This is not the place to develop to any length the gross opportunism of the SWP in this particular appeal.

Here we will only remark that an organisation such as the SWP, which is incapable of analysing the degeneration of the Soviet state in Marxist terms, cannot grasp the international character and role of Stalinism. Little wonder they are all at sea and end up discerning 'progressive' aspects in the rhetoric of Chater and co. They confuse

these noises about 'class struggle' for the real thing. The fact is that Stalinism has always resorted to revolutionary rhetoric the better to betray the revolution.

CHATER GROUP

What then are the politics of Chater group? In many ways internal squabbling in the CP began in the early eighties when Euro leadership of the Party back Marxism Today's article which revealed the corruption and bureaucratisation of the top layers of the shop stewards' movement. M Costello, then industrial organiser resigned in disgust and went over to the Morning Star under Chater's wing to the great displeasure of the CP leadership.

The Gill/Chater wing are all characterised by the fact that they are deeply integrated into the apparatus of the trade unions. They do not seek to generate any genuine expression of the rank-and-file. Rather their operations are illustrated by the way that they promoted left bureaucrats Scanlon and Jones in the late 1960's through to Wilson's 'Social Contract'.

We must also bear firmly in mind that the real treachery of their politics is revealed by their fiercest opposition to 'Solidarnosc' - a matter of the first importance to the international working class.

Chater's plan to salvage the Morning Star was based on links with Trade Union leaders like Evans, to form a new paper sponsored by



Trade Union apparatus. The opposite of the leadership's plan, for a paper aimed at radical petty-bourgeois elements around **Marxism Today**. The '**Star**' faction are feeling the pressure of the CP's decline in unions like the AUEW. They are seeking to reforge their position and to shore up their bloc with a layer of the trade-union bureaucracy. The position of the Chater group is in jeopardy precisely because of the attacks of the ruling class who have put the squeeze on the privileged layer the **Morning Star** crew aim at. Chater and co. are rank Stalinists, enemies of the working class and classical defenders of the trade union bureaucracy, covering for their betrayals. In no aspect are they progressive; all the worst instincts remain, like social chauvinism, supporting import controls and by implication, the myth of an independent British mixed economy, wholly in keeping with "the British road to socialism". Leading Tankie trade union officials, like Gill and Alderson, despite their verbiage, refused to lead a struggle against the betrayals of Willis and Murray, using their positions on the TUC General Council. Under the last Labour government they allowed right-wing trade union leaders to foist successive incomes policies on the working class.

What produces the crisis in the Stalinist parties is the developing

struggle of workers against both imperialism and Stalinism. The political revolution in Poland and that against imperialism in Central America test to the limit the counter-revolutionary role of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The British CP's crisis is an integral part of the international destabilisation of Stalinism taking particular forms. The British CP was never a mass party and has been reduced to a rotten rump from its once revolutionary tradition in the early 1920s. The CPGB are but the British satellite of the Kremlin. The internal fratricide is centred on how best they may perform their role. It is the crisis of the Trade Union and Labour Party apparatus, arising from the turbulent changes in class relations that makes the CP's internal crisis uncontrollable.

DIVISIONS AND EXPULSIONS

The divisions and expulsions will more than likely increase in the near future as the working class attempt to find the way forward to struggle and defend themselves. Undoubtedly, the splits will affect the coherence of the CP's attempts to control and behead movements at vital times. The working class will positively gain by the dislocation of Stalinism in the form of the CP. However, while the splits and loss of

membership suffered by the CP will undoubtedly weaken it as an organisation, an inevitable by-product of the crisis will be a large influx of people, bringing the methods and training of Stalinism into the Labour Party. This is a process already begun and leading to the formation of organisations such as Clause 4 and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, who perform the tasks of Stalinism within the Labour Party, spearheading the witch-hunt of the left.

The Stalinists are in crisis precisely because the working class, in Britain and internationally is on the march and is seeking ways to organise itself and fight. This movement places the need for a revolutionary Party on the agenda, armed with the Transitional Programme. No element arising out of Stalinism's crisis points in this direction. Rather a party which bases itself on the lessons of the October Revolution, will be founded only on the basis of remorseless struggle in unity with the workers of Poland and their independent organisation. This fight calls equally for independence from the ruling class and a battle to reclaim the trade unions.

That is why such a Party must be built out of the same movement that will destroy the CPGB.

By Steve Bush June 1985



REVOLUTION

On the 19th February this year, the Botha regime in South Africa launched a repressive onslaught against the leaders of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the mass anti-apartheid united front which comprises more than 700 organisations and more than two million members.

Two days later, the UDF leaders were brought before the Durban regional court and formally charged with 'high treason', charges punishable either by the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Who are these people? What is the United Democratic Front and its affiliated bodies? This article addresses itself to these questions.

Albertina Sizulu: Aged 66, president of the UDF, wife of Walter Sizulu, a former general secretary of ANC, condemned to life imprisonment in 1964, along with Mandela.

In a speech urging the boycott of the elections, Sizulu said 'The coloured and Indian youth from the inauguration of the new Constitution will be called upon by the South African army to take up arms against their own brothers'.

To thunderous applause she called for the destruction of the Bantustans and the release of the political detainees (Africa-Asia no.331, 24 Sept. 1984). Bantustans are so-called independent black territories, in reality 'reservations' whereby the apartheid regime can maintain control

Sisa Njikaleni: Aged 29, president of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), a general union of African workers affiliated to the UDF. In March 1983, he was placed in detention for the sixth time since 1981. President of the East London branch of the SAAWU, he has significantly stated; 'We are not fighting against a particular race, we are fighting our exploiters'

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UDF

The significance of the United Democratic Front (which counts Nelson Mandela and Walter Sizulu among its honorary members) is related to two facts. Firstly it unites all the anti-apartheid organisations whether tolerated by the South African government or not. This includes the trade unions, which have witnessed a spectacular growth

recently, and the community organisations and sections of the church who play an important role. Secondly, but of no less importance, the UDF has taken as its programme of action the 'Charter for Freedom'.

This Charter, adopted in 1955 by the Congress Alliance, comprising the ANC, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and the South African Congress of Democrats (SACOD), set out the perspective of struggle for a democratic and non-racist South Africa. As the preamble stated:

"South Africa belongs to all the people who live there, white as well as black and no government is

powerless, rump parliament side by side with the white parliament, ignoring the Blacks who constitute 80% of the population.

Indeed these mobilisations, which resembled the mass demonstrations after the suppression of the Soweto township in 1976, were themselves met with the same savagery. Hundreds have died around the country since September 1984.

RELEASE THE PRISONERS

This is why, in such a situation, the entire international labour movement must condemn the



justified in pretending that it exercises authority if it does not adhere to the wishes of all the people".

Since its adoption, nearly thirty years ago, this Charter has never had such force and relevance as today, precisely because it reflects the deep aspirations of the South African people against Apartheid.

The UDF represents the continuity of that struggle today. It has been responsible for the main mobilisations against the government since the massive boycott of local elections in September 1984.

It was through these elections that the Botha regime sought to reinforce the apartheid state by granting to the Coloureds and Indians a

repression in South Africa and organise to demand the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners.

SAAWU

The South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), whose primary base is in the East London region, in the 'independent' homeland of Ciskei, is the trade union organisation which has suffered most from the repression of the Botha regime.

Founded in March 1979, the SAAWU came about as a result of a split with the Black Allied Workers Union (BAWU). It differed from the latter in that it placed no racial barrier to the recruitment of

& APARTHEID

members.

Close to the ANC, the SAAWU has always refused to make a separation between its trade union activity and the political expression of workers who denounce apartheid in its totality.

Tenaciously holding on to its independence, the SAAWU refuses to 'register', a process which empowers the Minister to intervene at any time to control the unions rules, finances, lists of old and new members, election of leaders and means that the union must agree in writing 'not to disturb peace and harmony in the workplace or threaten the national interest'



For the SAAWU, non-registration implies a refusal to recognise the reactionary laws of the apartheid regime, and an attitude of defiance and open resistance at every level of negotiations.

Despite the exhortations of the Pretoria authorities to South African workers to break this independent union, the SAAWU has a large following among the country's workforce. This has led several companies to recognise it as a trade union. This has incensed Pretoria, whose aim is the destruction of the SAAWU, which in 1983 organised over 100,000 workers.

By M. Bagakoyo.
Translated from International Tribune
by Sarah Bennet.

ANC on UDF

From the organ of the ANC, "Sechaba", November 1983.

The United Democratic Front (UDF) was launched in Capetown on 20th August. More than 12,000 people were present. Since then, numerous events have occurred. The UDF has been described as either a blind and directionless off-shoot of apartheid, or as "another front-organisation for the ANC", being used by the invisible hand of the ANC.

Our task here is not to explain the policies of the UDF or to reply to the widespread slanders about it - that would take up a whole article. We simply want to put our cards on the table.

It was in January, at the anti-South African Congress of the Transvaal Indian Council, that Dr Allan Boesak called for unity and common action against the constitutional 'reforms'.

He issued an appeal to the churches, civil organisations and sporting bodies, calling for unity in the struggle for a democratic, non-racial South Africa, by pooling their resources in order to tell the people about the fraud that was about to be committed in their name.

On 1st May 1983, the democratic traditions of the Transvaal Indian Congress were revived at a meeting of 1,500 people at the Lewasian Rama Krishna Hall, chaired by Dr E.Jarrat.

From May onwards, regional sections of the UDF were set up in Natal, Transvaal and the Western Cape. At a time when the Coloured Labour Party - or rather the majority of the leaders who influence the policies of the Labour Party - had accepted the racist government's new constitutional proposals (which, amongst other things, excluded the Africans), the stand made by several black political leaders struck a chord with the population.

The racists had imposed the constitutional proposals of a three-chamber (or tri-racial) Constitution for Whites, Indians and Coloureds.

The UDF says that the South African Constitution should be written by all the peoples of South Africa, and should be totally democratic in its planning and execution.

Another element in the birth of the UDF was the Koornhof Bills. Piet

Koornhof is the racist Minister for Development.

His Bills, in particular those affecting the African local authorities, are supposed to offer black towns the same rights as those enjoyed by white townships; in fact, they are designed to weaken popular resistance, and at the same time strengthen apartheid.

In other words, the appearance of the UDF was a reaction to the disastrous policies of the regime. The fuss made over "power-sharing" in South Africa was all about a mere expression, a journalistic catch-phrase. These "changes" are not real reforms. On the contrary, the only noticeable effect is renewed deportation of populations, strict control of movement, the Group Areas Act, assassinations, forcible evictions and destruction of dwellings, and more hangings of ANC militants.

The Western press is very confused about Botha's "reforms". These have been described as a "godsend", the exact opposite of apartheid. The widespread savagery and violence which apartheid is using to preserve itself justify the use of the word "reforms". "Reforms" and naked barbarity are not mutually exclusive in today's South Africa, because the "reforms" are being used to justify the use of violence in the effort to consolidate apartheid. For most of the time, Western journalists don't seem to have noticed the harmony that they think ought to reign throughout the land.

In other words, the birth of the UDF is a reaction to the worsening situation. The UDF is mobilising the whole of the population in a mass movement and is co-ordinating the community's resistance, but it does not aim to replace the recognised popular movements. The UDF expresses the viewpoint of practically all the social layers of the poor. Consequently, the organisation's principal perspective is that of involving the workers in their workplace, community, or wherever they may be.

The UDF is a United Front in which all organisations retain their own identity and independence, but co-operate in opposing the Presidential Council, the new Parliament and the Koornhof plans.

They seem to have understood the essence of the oppression of South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT BY THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL (INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF RECONSTRUCTION)

People the world over condemn the largescale campaign of murder and assassination being carried out by the South African apartheid regime.

This regime is the state of a racist minority, which seeks to keep the Black majority in conditions of real slavery.

It is a state which denies millions of Black people any chance, however small, of taking part in the political life of their own country, even though they form the majority of the population.

Such a situation has been allowed to continue because all the strong imperialist powers have supported apartheid. This should not surprise anyone, least of all the Black South African masses, since under apartheid imperialism has invested billions in the country and reaps massive profits on the basis of the plunder and exploitation of the Black majority.

Not only does the apartheid state uphold imperialist interests in 'townships' like Soweto, but it does so as well in all the neighbouring countries which are regularly invaded by its armed forces.

But this can continue no longer. Black people have begun to take their future into their own hands and decided to break the chains of slavery. The Black majority is taking the road of revolution since its aspiration to take a full part in political life comes up against the very existence of the apartheid state.

The essential demand of the Black masses for political rights, giving them the power which is rightfully theirs, is totally contrary to the preservation of any vestige of the apartheid state. However long it may take, no one can stop the forward march of the South African revolution, whether it be an individual or a government, starting with those whose support has ensured the existence of apartheid.



This is the situation as of now.

The South African state is in its death throes, yes, but it will bring about a bloodbath rather than give in. This is why the state of emergency was proclaimed on the 20th July. Why hundreds of people were arrested straight away and why dozens of Black activists have been murdered during the past days.

Nelson Mandela and the thousands of other imprisoned Black militants serve as hostages for the regime. Their very survival is under daily threat and will continue to be threatened so long as they remain in prison.

Only the largest and most vociferous international campaign, such as is being developed among the youth and working class in the United States, can help prevent the bloodbath which is being prepared by the apartheid regime.

The Fourth International urges all socialists, working class militants and all democrats to fight actively for the following demands:

For the immediate lifting of the state of emergency!

For the release of Nelson Mandela and all the other prisoners!

For an immediate end to apartheid!

29th July 1985.

What is the future of the Labour Party? This question presents itself today as a crucial problem for working people in the aftermath of the miners' strike.

Kinnock and the Labour leadership are committed to a course aimed towards a Popular Front government. Their road is not that of mass struggle but rather support for the imposition of parliamentary legality on the workers. Kinnock's condemnation of the miners' pickets and his actions to isolate the strike fully illustrate this. Abandonment of Labour's more radical policies over recent years now goes hand in hand with a full-scale drive to reassert the discipline of the party bosses over the ranks. The witch-hunt of socialists, beginning with a purge of the **Militant** is part of clearing the decks before the next election.

On the other hand Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have recently counterposed to this course the proposal that Labour must "reshape itself so that it can discharge, for this generation the historic task that the founders of the movement dreamed of so many years ago."

Meanwhile, in petty bourgeois circles outside the Labour Party speculation is rife. For instance Professor Miliband has recently urged the formation of a "new ILP", while the Socialist Workers Party project the idea of a "new pole of attraction" embracing everybody from themselves through the **Militant** to Tony Benn.

What do Marxists understand by the Labour Party? What is its place in the class struggle?

A new revolutionary party of the workers is necessary to achieve socialism. Trotskyists argue that this must be a party of the type led by Lenin and Trotsky, which made the October 1917 Revolution. But how do we work to build that party, beginning from the existing way in which the working class is organised today?

For the SWP the foundation of the Labour Party was a great mistake. It is, so far as they are concerned, the product of a sudden fit by trade union leaders in 1900 when they set up the Labour Representation Committee. They understand the resulting Labour Party as nothing more than a bourgeois blockage to socialism ever since. Further, they see in the fact that treacherous reformist leaders control the workers' movement, proof of the essential backwardness and lack of class consciousness of the workers.

How was the Labour Party actually brought into being?

Far from being an aberration the Labour Party was founded as the next great step after Chartism in the struggle to form an independent

LABOUR HISTORY

THE ORIGINS OF THE LABOUR PARTY

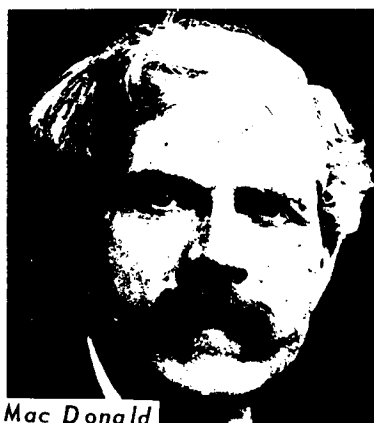
political movement of the British workers. That it took fifty years after the collapse of Chartism to the formation of the LRC needs explanation. During this time mass workers' movements emerged in Europe. The continental social democratic parties, especially the German, came to take Marxism and the revolutionary pursuit of the class struggle as their basis. Yet in Britain, where the industrial working class emerged first, and stable trade unionism was established from the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a long delay in the development of working class politics.

The material basis for this delay lay in the absolute domination of world markets by British capital from the 1850s to the 1870s. Britain not only controlled the seas and dominated world trade, but the scale of this was illustrated by more than 63% of all manufactured goods in the world being British made. This was a period of relative calm compared with the Chartist period. Workers' lives and employment were in general more secure. Living standards continuously improved as did life expectancy, health and literacy. Great capitalist accumulations could accommodate reforms from factory conditions to urban sanitation.

LABOUR ARISTOCRACY

For the top layer of skilled workers and craftsmen these were affluent times. Trade unionism was largely confined to this layer. These unions were very moderate, concentrating on the provision of friendly society benefits rather than strike funds. The strike weapon was retained, but was seen only as a last resort if compromise failed.

Compromise was something which in general British capitalists could afford to make, thanks to their world monopoly. The stability of craft trade unionism was founded upon its ability to control the supply of skilled labour in a situation of very slowly changing techniques of production.



Mac Donald

This then was the heyday of a "labour aristocracy", a layer within the working class which identified itself with the progress of mid-Victorian capitalism and in which strong tendencies emerged to submerge working class aspirations underneath bourgeois "respectability".

Liberal capitalism was increasingly able to sell the idea that "Free Trade", cheap food and social progress went hand in hand. The political system functioned as one based on a counterposition of two bourgeois parties, each of which sought to extend its social base among the skilled workers.

With the second reform act of 1867 the franchise was extended to many working men, something the ruling class would not concede before 1850. But the final quarter of the nineteenth century saw a great transformation take place in the position of British capitalism, which had profound repercussions on class relations and pushed forward the movement towards independent working class organisation. We can regard this period as one of a great upheaval. The first aspect of this was referred to at the time as "The Great Depression". This lasted from 1873 to roughly 1896, with a respite from 1889 to 1891. This was a period marked by a continuous fall in world market prices of commodities and falling rates of profit. British capitalists were increasingly under pressure from the USA and Germany, where industrialisation was proceeding on the basis of more advanced techniques.

For the working class these were years of increased uncertainty and high unemployment, undermining the illusion of Victorian prosperity. Politics was still dominated by the two capitalist parties which now sought consciously to put up a few working men, usually union officials, as candidates in elections. These were years of emerging crisis in the framework of bourgeois politics. British capitalist requirements could less and less be answered by the traditional methods of free trade and resistance to state intervention. The battle for markets sharpened and the need to export capital and undertake a vast colonial expansion ushered in the era of imperialism.

CRISIS OF LIBERALS

From the 1880s key sections of industrial manufacturers starting with Joseph Chamberlain began to shift their allegiance from the Liberals to the Conservatives, becoming ardent champions of imperialist development. They tried to sell the working class the idea that social reform was necessarily the result of imperial aggrandisement. Also the Irish national question burst upon the scene once more resulting in a crisis of bourgeois politics over Home Rule. The Liberal Party began to enter its terminal crisis as main party of the capitalist class. It became increasingly reliant on a working class electoral base and was forced to adapt in order to prevent the explosion of its own centrifugal tendencies.

The mass struggles out of which the Labour Party was born began in this period. The economic upturn at the end of the 1880s produced a new phenomenon in working class organisation: the New Unionism. Waves of previously unorganised workers in unskilled and semi-skilled employment entered into struggle.

The gasworkers, dockers and transport workers and textile workers were led in great battles like the 1889 dock strike. In these for the first time socialists like Will Thorne, Tom Mann and John Burns came to prominence as mass leaders. It was



1899 London Docks Strike Manifesto (left).
Dockers' Strike Committee in session (above).

**SOUTH SIDE
CENTRAL STRIKE COMMITTEE,
SAYES COURT, DEPTFORD.
SEPTEMBER 10, 1889**

GENERAL MANIFESTO

Owing to the fact that the demands of the Corn Porters, Deal Porters, Granary Men, General Steam Navigation Men, Permanent Men and General Labourers on the South Side have been misrepresented the above Committee have decided to issue this Manifesto, stating the demands of the various sections now on strike, and pledge themselves to support each section in obtaining their demands.

DEAL PORTERS of the various Commercial Docks have already passed their demands before the Directors.

LUMBERS (Outside) demand the following rates: 10/- per hundred for Docks, 8/- per hundred for all other work, 10/- per hundred for the public wharves. Working days from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 10/- per hundred for the public wharves. Working days from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 10/- per hundred for the public wharves. Working days from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 10/- per hundred for the public wharves.

OVERSIDE CORN PORTERS (S.C.D.) demand the 30/- per 100 tons for Docks. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

QUAY CORN PORTERS & TRIMMERS AND GENERAL LABOURERS demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

WEIGHERS & WAREHOUSEMEN demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

HERMONDSBY AND ROTHERHITHE WALL CORN PORTERS demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

GENERAL STEAM NAVIGATION MEN demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

MAIDLEYS ENGINEERS MEN demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

ADHYS LTD (EMING WORKS) demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

GENERAL LABOURERS demand 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side. Many demands 15/- per 100 tons for all work done on the South Side.

Signed on behalf of the South Side Dockers' Strike Committee,
JOHN BARR
JOHN BARR
JOHN BARR
JOHN BARR
JOHN BARR

propagandist group. But it did lead a mass movement of the unemployed in London and grew to a membership of 5,000 by 1890. The fact that it emerged in this period is symptomatic of the shifts underway and the way in which the most class conscious workers were trying to find a distinct expression of working class politics.

The ILP leaders rejected any scientific conception of socialism. They would talk in terms of classes yet in moralistic and ethical terms. Tub-thumping Methodist rhetoric was employed to cover over their theoretical amorphousness, which could often make them seem very militant. But from very early on the ILP displayed a willingness to horse-trade with the Liberals in terms of the positions it began to occupy on local councils, education and poor-relief boards.

from this period that the rebirth of mining trade unions also dates. In the space of three years the trade unions broke out of the craft mentality and increased their membership from half a million to one and a half millions. With the end of the economic upswing these gains were in large measure retained, whereas earlier upsurges, as in the 1870s collapsed once unfavourable conditions returned to the labour market.

The other major development was the ILP, founded in 1893. This emerged from the fusion of local working class parties, particularly based in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Scotland. Its first secretary was Ramsay MacDonald and its most prominent leader was the ex-miner Kier Hardy, who was elected MP for West Ham in 1892.

This was followed in 1903 by a secret pact negotiated by MacDonald with Hardie's support, with the Liberals to secure mutual non-opposition in elections.

Alongside these changes in trade unionism more expressly political realignments were occurring. The first national organisation with an explicitly socialist programme since Chartism, the Social Democratic Federation, was founded in 1884. It brought together intellectuals with radical workers from East London, who consciously sought to take up again the threads of Chartism. Formally accepting a theory of class struggle, the SDF was responsible for politically educating many of the main leaders of the 1889 battle for unionisation. It was marked from its early days by a sectarian and propagandist inclination and was not able to break out of the position of a

ILP membership was a little more than that of the SDF. It attracted a its foundation some elements from the SDF who were conscious of the need to work in the mass trade union developments, like Tom Mann and Engels, before his death placed hope on the outcome of a struggle with it and Marx's daughter Eleanor was a founder member. At its foundation the word socialist was quite consciously omitted from the Party's name. This went together with unwillingness to present programmatic commitments when advancing the idea of unity with the unions to found a Labour Party. In fact, the ILP hid behind excuses of 'not placing preconditions', from challenging the still essentially Liberal union leaders and thus helped them to exercise a stifling effect politically on the early Labour Party.



Kier Hardy



THE FABIANS

The Fabians who are often referred to as a founding component of the Labour Party, were a very small group of bourgeois and petty bourgeois intellectuals. Founded in 1884 they took their inspiration from the ideas of the Liberal thinker, J.S. Mill. Their role was continuously negative in attempts to break the working class movement from the Liberal Party. Many were open champions of imperialist policy, for instance in the Boer War.

As late as 1906 Sydney Webb insisted at the founding conference of the Labour Party on his right to remain chairman of a Liberal constituency association! The Fabians were dragged reluctantly into the Labour Party, having previously pushed the idea of the "permeation" of the two capitalist parties with "enlightened" ideas. Their function was to provide an ideological stock-in-trade for the emergent reformist apparatus in the years after 1900.

By 1900 great changes were already underway. The actual foundation of the LRC was the product of trying to defend the rights of trade unions. The Taff Vale judgement against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants upheld by the lawlords in 1901 is most often

cited. This meant that unions could be sued not only for damages resulting from industrial action of their own but even unofficial action of their members would make them legally liable. This stripped away the protection and legal status achieved through the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, which gave unions some immunity from civil action and the right to peaceful picketing.

This was not just a threat to union finances, but to the very effectiveness of union organisation.

Many of even the most moderate of trade union officials were forced to respond. Thus, official to the LRC rocketed from 353,000 in 1900 to 956,000 in 1903.

But Taff Vale was only the high point of an employers' offensive which extended through the 1890s, in and out of the courts. In particular the lock-out of the engineers in 1897, in which the newly formed Employers' Federation was partly successful in imposing new working practices. They foreran Thatcher by importing an American colonel with union busting credentials to lead the fight!

The key point here is that even formerly secure and privileged skilled workers felt under threat.

Against the unskilled the newly formed employers' organisations

could much more easily organise scabs. The Shipping Federation began to engage as seamen only those who would agree to work with non-unionists. The railway companies were behind the "National Free Labour Association" of 1893, for the supply of strikebreakers. These anti-union measures had the effect of prolonging and embittering industrial conflict and led on occasion to violent confrontations.

POLITICAL VEHICLE

It would be quite wrong to see the Labour Party as a simple outgrowth of the new unionism of the unskilled. Nor is it correct to see it as being a mere reaction of the traditional sections of the union bureaucracy to a legal threat against them. From its inception the Labour Party has been the focus of the most conscious sections seeking a political vehicle and at the same time was constrained and limited by trade union bureaucrats torn between defending their position against the employers and the state and their fear of unleashing the working class.

PARLIAMENTARISM

The LRC was set up without a programme as a means to secure the election of a distinct group of Labour MPs, with a common discipline in matters concerning the direct interests of organised labour. This step cannot be seen in isolation from the decades of development referred to above. It was a product of the fierce struggles engaged in by the working class. It provided the ground where opposing class interests came into conflict. The Labour Party after 1900 was, as Lenin put it, not independent of the bourgeoisie through its whole activity and programme, but was independent in parliament. It was not a finished product. It was a parliamentary group which still had to acquire national organisational forms and a programme.

The next two decades saw its competing sections fight it out and the emergence of a fully reformist political party. In 1900 the future of the MacDonald-led Labour Party was implicit in its reformist wing, but it was not given in advance that the revolutionaries would be driven out.

In the next issue we will look at the period from 1900 onwards, centring on the battle between Marxists and reformists within the Labour Party.

By

Michael Keene

Socialist ACTION

KINNOCK AND THE WITCH HUNT

During the miners' strike, Socialist Action carried a huge picture of Neil Kinnock on its front page along with a simple one-word caption. It read "Scab!".

At the beginning of this summer, London Labour Briefing put out an appeal to currents on the left of the Labour Party. It called for common discussion on the problem of organising the left. Among the issues suggested as a basis for a united campaign were the preparation of a challenge to Kinnock's leadership as well as resistance to the witch-hunt of the left.

Socialist Action made its position plain. In contrast to last year's call to remove the "scab", it was not prepared to call on left MP's to challenge Kinnock, either this year or next.

This change of line, evident in the practice of the paper's supporters today, was spelled out in an editorial appearing in the June 21 issue. It emphasised that the "key line of divide is not against Kinnock..but against Thatcher" and continued "priority is not given at present to inner party issues of the type which dominated from 1979-81. The emphasis must be on mass campaigning, the fight against the Tories, and opening up the policy issues."

The same editorial puts forward the view that a changed orientation is made necessary by the outcome of the miners' strike. They state that "with the defeat of the miners' strike a significant setback was suffered". The conclusion drawn is that it is defeat which sets the limits to the activity of the left in the Labour Party which "has to rebuild".

RESULTS OF STRIKE

The results of the miners' strike are not simple. The pit closures and victimisations are real enough. The bosses have been emboldened as the sacking of BR Guards shows. A years' energy expended in struggle by millions who backed the miners, will not instantly be regenerated in these conditions. Yet if the problems of leadership of the working class have



become more acute, this is not a situation dominated by the strength of Thatcher. The Brecon bye-election and internal disaffection in the Tory Party demonstrate that in different ways.

The problem of political realignment is one that is forcing itself on every tendency. Livingstone and Blunkett have responded by rallying to Kinnock. But that does not equal the destruction of the

Labour left. For at the same time, some elements of left reformism have maintained a stance in opposition to Kinnock, which is a product of the strike. In this respect the two "Memoranda" circulated by Benn and Heffer give important new openings around which the Labour left can fight. The thousands who actively backed the miners are the real material for this battle, it is their combativity which is crucial,

not the capitulation of the likes of Livingstone.

TAKING SIDES

This is an absent factor in **Socialist Action's** reckoning. The fact is that the Kinnock leadership, in order to pave the way for its Popular Frontist course, is actively preparing the "internal" conflicts that **Socialist Action** wants to avoid. The NUPE Conference decision to back witch-hunting **Militant** indicates that the fight will be a fierce one following on the Labour Party Conference.

Whether **Socialist Action** likes it or not, the consequence of the strike is that sides have to be taken. The same editorial goes a long way towards adapting to the idea of a "truce" in the name of unity, which has been a constant theme of the apparatus since 1983. The "two dramatic exceptions" it concedes to are the "question of black sections and the demands of the Women's Action Committee" where, we are told there can be "no truce in the labour movement...until (our emphasis) these issues are completely won."

This is not the place to develop a discussion of what is wrong with the line of "autonomous black and womens' movements", pushed forward by **Socialist Action**, and currently in vogue with petty-bourgeois radicals, which is opposed to a real perspective for working class unity. But the rest of the same issue of the paper contains several lengthy articles dealing with these questions which throws light on the

real content of the political course being advocated.

A full page is devoted to discussing the question of "racism and the Labour Party", the thrust of which is to give equal prominence to and even to equate the opposition to black sections of Kinnock and **Militant**, who are described as "lining up" and as "white chauvinists". In its coverage of the Labour Women's Conference, the paper makes a token criticism of Kinnocks' failure in his speech to address the problem of women "having more power in the Labour Party". It then proceeds to spew venom against the **Militant**, condemning the election of one of its supporters to the Conference arrangements committee.

ATTACK ON MILITANT

Also, discussing the debate on Ireland, the paper focussed the weight of its criticism on the **Militant** once again. Significantly no attention is paid to the problem of dealing with the Labour leadership's treacherous service to imperialism. We think that the **Militant** does indeed succumb to imperialist pressure in its policy on Ireland. Yet this cannot be equated with the role played by the Labour leaders, who are a main support of imperialist oppression of the Irish people.

In a signed article in the same issue the **Militant** is again equated with the reformist and Stalinists of **Broad Left 84** in the CPSA. We are told that individual activists "found working in **Militant** led BL branches an impossible task as **Militant** supporters are prepared to use all

kinds of dirty tricks to maintain their prominence."

FIGHT THE WITCH HUNT

Here we come to the crux of the matter. If a political tendency deserves not to have a single representative elected to a committee, if its "racism" places it on a par with the main leaders of reformism, if its positions of leadership in unions is maintained only on the basis of "dirty tricks", then what follows?

It would seem logical to conclude that an attempt to witch-hunt that tendency is a case of thieves falling out, or at best a matter for formal and token gestures in opposition.

It is an absolutely necessary task today for the Labour left to defeat attempts at witch-hunting. That means rallying with full force to the defence of **Militant**. The course which **Socialist Action** is outlining will lead it to capitulate to Kinnock if it is not corrected. It is a method for which the left will pay dearly and the Kinnock leadership will profit. We invite comment from supporters of **Socialist Action**.

By
Michael Keene





WORLDWIDE
INTERNATIONALS
INTERNATIONALS



LIFE OF THE SECTIONS

FRANCE : PCI

On the eve of his election as President in 1981, Socialist Party leader Mitterrand said, 'The driving force behind policy must be finding solutions to unemployment'. He warned that if the old policies of Giscard d'Estaing continued, 'We will have at least two and a half million unemployed'. Four years on that figure has already been exceeded.

The spectacular growth in unemployment is in large part due to the policy of closing down whole sections of 'unprofitable' industry practised by the Mitterrand government - in the mines, the dockyards and in shipbuilding. Now 20,000 jobs in the Lorraine steelworks are under threat.

POPULAR FRONT

The election of Mitterrand to the Presidency and a majority of Socialist and Communist deputies in the Assembly was a real blow to the French bourgeoisie which had ruled through its own parties since establishing the Fifth Republic in 1958. The subsequent formation of a government with Popular Front characteristics, firmly within the context of undemocratic state institutions, reflected the pressure of the bourgeoisie attempting to neutralise the electoral victory of the working class. The result was that the Mitterrand government, seen at first by workers as 'its own' government for the first time in 23 years, was able to act without reference to the elected Assembly and get away with attacks on the working class that Giscard would not have been able to push through.

The scale of those attacks-on living standards, education, jobs and social security-soon dispelled the illusions many French workers had had in the government. The massive working class abstention first in the European and then in local elections indicated a dissatisfaction with their leaders, but more importantly a questioning of the extent to which Parliamentary elections can solve the fundamental economic and social problems facing the working class.

De Gaulle was fond of saying, 'Either me or chaos'. This continuing fragility of the Fifth Republic is underlined by the appearance of a number of worried newspaper articles asking what would happen if the right-wing replaced the SP-CP

majority in the Assembly, with Mitterrand remaining President-all this over a year before the elections take place. This very real possibility has enabled some leaders of the Socialist Party, such as Rocard, to hint at the need for a fully-fledged coalition government. Yet none of the ensuing divisions within the Socialists has led to any leader or current putting forward a clear position of class independence both in relation to coalitionism and against the Bonapartist state institutions and for a shifting of power to the elected Assembly.

PCF BLOCKS FIGHT

French workers are getting nothing positive from the Communist Party either-except that its profound crisis helps to clear a way for a regroupment of workers' forces. Rapidly losing members and electoral support, the CP finally left the government last year. But no-one is fooled by the criticisms it makes today of Mitterrand's anti-working class policies, which it until recently supported. Its 'oppositionism' is at all times limited by an overriding refusal to threaten the stability of the Fifth Republic. Yet precisely today France is at a moment in its history when political issues can very quickly become constitutional ones. The CP has therefore attempted to block any real fight by the working class against the government: faced with up to 20,000 job losses at Renault, the CP-led CGT called a single Day of Action-not against the redundancies-but for a new industrial and commercial strategy from Renault's directors!

Blocked by the CGT and the union federation led by the Socialist Party, the CFDT, the French working class has sought to use the Force Ouvriere federation to fight back. As a result of new members pressuring FO its leadership was forced to oppose the government's 'flexible working' proposals, which threaten contracts, conditions of service and established working practices within French industry.

WORKERS PARTY

Against the divisions and obstacles placed in the path of the class by Socialist and Communist Party leaderships, the PCI, French section of the Fourth International (ICR) has

been working for the construction of a Workers Party that can provide a genuine political expression for working people. In the local elections last spring, candidates representing or supported by the Sections for a Workers Party recorded significant votes in industrial areas where strong links with local workers were existing.

POLITICAL FOCUS

At its Second National Convention, 283 delegates from 74 departments resolved to constitute a Movement for a Workers Party and run candidates throughout France in next year's Assembly elections.

The Movement for a Workers Party is more than a pole of attraction for the hundreds of militants disaffected from the Communist and Socialist Parties. It can become the political focus for the growing upsurge by French workers against redundancies. It was the St. Nazaire Section for a Workers Party which initiated the meeting on shipyard closures which led to the European Conference against closures in Brussels.

"Either they listen to the workers of this country, or else there'll be a general strike"

This appeal by industrial militant Miguel Brioso became the watchword of a significant demonstration of workers in heavy industry in Paris recently. Several thousand workers and their families marched against closures and redundancies in a demonstration strongly supported by the PCI and the Movement for the Workers Party, but ignored by the official leaderships. As Marc Gauquelin, who led the candidates for a Workers Party in last year's Euro-elections, said in his address to the march:

"In every factory where the delegations of workers come from, there are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands who are taking note of what we are doing here today...They are waiting in the factories, in the schools and the working class estates. They are waiting to see what we are going to do, and our appeal will find a powerful echo.