

SOCIALIST NEWSLETTER

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LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

By George White

What really happened at the Labour Party Conference? Nearly all the left journals hailed Brighton as beginning a possible fundamental change in the social democracy. To quote Workers' Action, "The 1979 Brighton conference of the Labour Party could go down in history as the point of take-off to a renewal and regeneration of the political wing of the British labour movement." This is not what happened. On the contrary, Brighton once more revealed in full colours that the social democracy cannot "renew" itself.

The whole of the apparatus which runs the party, left and right alike, is a reactionary force within the working-class. Its historic role is to block and to betray the struggle of that class.

But what about the votes on the Party Constitution, then? These certainly took place in the context of immense pressure from the working class. But behind all the left leaders' speeches lay the understanding that one wing of the apparatus must move "more to the left" in order to develop a firmer hold on its base.

The key to the conference was not left speeches. It was the question: who is to lead the Labour Party? On this delicate subject Benn, Heffer and their friends did not care to speak. The whole debate on party structures was manipulated by both the right and the left. The lessons of the January-February struggles and of the election defeat were to be played down. People like Tom Litterick tried to raise them, but were drowned in a flood of "reform" speeches.

The apparatus feels far from secure. This came through in the speech by Hayward. But Hayward is an old Gaitskell-ite, and apparatus man through and through. He is no tribune of the class war, and his speech called for a change, not in aims but only in methods.

Benn and Heffer had made clear even before the conference that they would mount no challenge to the Callaghan leadership. They had clearly agreed between themselves on this. The record of the party in Government, then, was only obliquely questioned - from the platform. Allam mentioned the disastrous effects of the "5% limit" - and left his attack hanging in mid-air. What he did not say was: "Therefore Callaghan Must Go!"

As a left social-democrat, indeed, he could not take the necessary step to which his own position leads.

The mood of the delegates was high and every left-wing figure was received with enthusiasm. But those who could have carried through to the end the attack on Callaghan stopped short. Why? For fear of the consequences for themselves. They too have reason to fear the strength of the working class. Not once did any of them appeal directly to the union delegations to defeat the right. On the contrary, in speeches full of cant they uttered not a word about carrying the call to battle to the most combative elements in the working-class.

While this was going on inside, outside the hall Rolls Royce workers, locked out by the engineering employers in the battle to contain the effect of the series of two-day strikes, were lobbying the delegates. These workers made it clear that they wanted an end to the right wing, in the unions and in the party alike.

Inside the hall, everyone witnessed the half-hearted ovation at the end of Callaghan's speech. Everyone heard the laughter at his lame excuses and slips of the tongue. But the left only won on paper. Callaghan's place in the leadership was not seriously threatened by either the votes or the NEC elections. Callaghan held his fire. His was not the "fight, fight and fight again" of Gaitskell. Why not? Because the enquiry into the running of the party, which is about to open, can come to his rescue. Will it be public or in secret? Who will be able to put ideas to it, and how much notice will it take? These will be central questions.



There will, of course, be careerists who desert the Labour Party to the Right. The Left has been strengthened. But the victory of the Left is not durable. The hesitancy of its leading figures has ensured that. Their whole approach, slanting the debate towards a "friendly" adjustment within the leadership when "Jim" consents to retire, opens the door to a right come-back.

In the Spanish PSOE Felipe Gonzalez was recently thrown out of its leadership and forced to resign his place as secretary. Yet at the recent congress, lo and behold, he is back again with 80% of the votes behind him. Does this express a massive right-ward swing in the Spanish working-class? There is absolutely no evidence for that! What allowed him back was the craven behaviour of the Spanish equivalents of Benn and Heffer.

The Spanish Lefts were frightened to take the leadership of the PSOE in the conditions of a defeat for Gonzalez. The left leaders in the PSOE, like our Benns and Heffers, act to hold in place and keep intact the bourgeois apparatus within the workers' movement.

The vote on re-selection can be most important. It can truly open up a way for future mobilisations in the unions to flow over into a battle in local Labour Parties to exert control over M.P.s. The class wishes to remove the reactionaries and now has a means of trying to do so. But re-selection does not change the nature of the Labour Party. It is our duty as Trotskyists to say it. Re-selection is not the magic talisman that will remove the apparatus. The right wing will break up the party before it allows the working class to throw it out. Brighton revealed that the class, as such, cannot "control" the apparatus. The class expressed its feelings directly, in Resolution 379 calling for the removal of Callaghan, supported by militant mine-workers from the Kent coalfield. It naturally came into conflict with the right. But it was also opposed by Heffer. In a fringe meeting he asked the miners to "drop the issue", since the party leadership question had been settled the previous day and the status quo maintained. To their credit the miners challenged Allaun's attempts to silence them, before the whole conference.

UNIONS

Then there were the battles about mandating the union delegations. These went on before the conference and during it. There was the even right-left balance in the AUEW, a long step from the days when Carron rode rough-shod over his delegation and cast all their votes against nuclear disarmament. The NUM delegation changed its position at the last moment on constitutional change, under right wing pressure.

Every effort, or even every threat, by Thatcher to attack social services or the independence of the trade unions narrows the room of the bureaucracy to manoeuvre. In the 1950's and 1960's the extreme right wing trade union bosses could bully the conference and dictate to it. Now they are reduced to miserable threats to "cut off the funds" if the Party gets "too far to the left".

The Basnetts and Granthams cannot carry the day directly as their forebears did. Indeed, their threats open a discussion about democracy in their own unions and whether they can carry their members with them. Not only was Chappell shouted down by CLP delegates. The next day eight members of the EEPTU delegation dissociated themselves publicly from the speech in which he attacked "entrists" and from his anti-working-class article in the "Daily Mail". This Conference may well have started the fight which will break the stranglehold of the right wing on the EEPTU.



Chappell - Grantham - Basnett

One main theme of the Benn-Heffer axis throughout was the call for greater democracy. Benn reduced the whole history of the political battles of the working-class to a series of elementary thrusts towards "full democracy", with references to Cromwell, Chartism and the suffragettes thrown in for good measure. The problem for Benn will be that democracy does not lie only in the right to discuss politics, to hold meetings and to elect other people to a bourgeois parliament. Chartism will not end at Westminster, it will end in Soviets.

Yet Benn was also playing with the idea of "extra-Parliamentary" movements. He can feel another 1974 in the air. The nature of political struggle in the next period lies in a conflict between proletariat and bourgeois state - between the masses and parliament. The disagreement between Benn and

Callaghan, is whether this rising wave of class struggle has to be ridden, channelled and allowed to die down, or whether it must be opposed head-on, now, from the start. Benn stopped short from any mention of the bourgeois state. He obliquely mentioned the role of the civil service, but, that apart, he deflected the hostility of the workers for the state into a criticism of the "media", on precisely the same wave-length as that used by the most reactionary trade union leaders.

What is the essence of Benn's method? He uses left rhetoric. He never offers a perspective of mobilising the workers for class struggle. Like Ron Hayward, he could refer in glowing terms to the support which the "Militant" tendency provides to the apparatus. They were "not wreckers but activists". What's wrong with being a Trotskyist in the Labour Party? They made it sound almost fashionable. The "Guardian" used the word "moderate" of the speech of a long-standing "Militant" cadre. Delegates detected a new, unofficial, alliance between Tony Benn and Ted Grant, less fantastic than it might sound, when they both use the same method: parliamentarism, left rhetoric and containing political activity within the routinism of the apparatus.

The Conferences of 1973 and 1974 came in the middle and at the end of a great wave of mobilisation. They opened up a new period in the party. They were then frustrated and flouted by the leadership. However, the Brighton Conference of 1979 cannot, like those of 1973 and 1974, be followed by a simple reversal of its intentions on the old Gaitskell-Wilson-Callaghan model. This time we stand at the opening of the biggest battles in Britain since 1926.

But the Brighton Conference will not lead automatically to a left swing in the programme and activity of the Labour Party. The British workers' movement is unique in that the great majority of the organised workers are all under the one political umbrella. On the one hand, the reformists have room to manoeuvre which they are still far from having used up. On the other hand, it provides a framework within which conflicts can reach a very high level before fragmentation can begin.

The Conference deepened the conflicts within the apparatus. It showed that the mood of the most conscious layers of the local leaderships of the Party and the unions has changed. Benn and Callaghan may have regarded the battle between them as largely shadow-boxing, but its importance lies in the fact that many took it for real, because they are seeking their way forward.

IRELAND

While the conference decided to maintain the bi-partisan policy in relation to Northern Ireland, tremendous and courageous efforts were needed to get the taboo subject discussed at all. Neither Benn's nor Callaghan's supporters could challenge the ruling class on the ground of withdrawing troops. Even on the human rights aspect of H - Block and the Castle-reagh "interrogation" centre, the overwhelming bulk of the bureaucracy recognise that nothing less than full repression can suffice to defend the British bourgeois state.

Lastly, the Conference saw its first sustained principled attack on Stalinism for many years, if ever. The East German political police had just freed Annette Bahner, in the face of the big international campaign against them, which revealed that they could bring no charge against her. She immediately made a press statement, revealing that a young East German steel-worker, Bernd Dietz, had been picked up with her and was still being held. Many hundreds of leaflets were distributed in the conference demanding his release and no delegate can fail to have heard about him. Hundreds signed the petitions and showed interest in other aspects of the work of the International Campaign Against Repression.

While most members of the National Executive Committee like to be thought of as "sound" opponents of repression, many of them also like to keep on good terms with the Stalinist bureaucratic regime of Russia and Eastern Europe. The NEC therefore did its best to prevent Dietz's case from being discussed in the conference. The case got on to the agenda, finally, but was referred to the NEC with all the other "unfinished business".

After hours of negotiation, Dietz's defenders agreed that they would accept that a delegation should meet the East German visitors. These were top officials of the SED, the so-called "Socialist Unity Party", which rules East Germany.

The SED then laid down their own conditions. They would only

meet Reg Race M.P. for Wood Green (a party which sent in a resolution of support for Dietz which "got lost" at head office), the delegate from the Rochdale Labour Party, which had supported Annette Bahner, and the Labour Party full-time official who runs the International Department. They refused to meet anyone directly identified with support for Dietz.

They were unable, however, to dodge the question, and now know that if Dietz gets badly treated a lot of people in Britain at least will hear about it. Like their friends on the NEC, they are very concerned about their favourable "image". They would like to be asked back next year. The authority of the British Labour Party is valuable to them at home. (There were no visitors from the ruling party of Czechoslovakia this year because of the way they have treated the supporters of Charter 77.)

Yet the East German police have behaved towards Annette Bahner and Bernd Dietz in such a grossly repressive way that these bureaucrats could say no more than "if they had done nothing wrong, they would not have been arrested"! With no plausible explanation to offer, they fall back on refusing to discuss the Dietz case and created the worst possible impression. The meeting, consequently, was acrimonious. It provided for those who were in it or heard about it a salutary experience of what a Stalinist bureaucracy really is like and of its attitude to those over whom it has power at home. They and the NEC have not heard the last of Bernd Dietz!

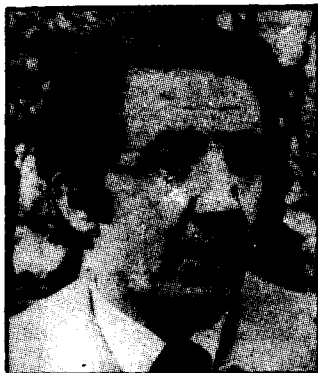
THE LEFT AT BRIGHTON

Of major importance to revolutionaries were the developments of the left around the Brighton Conference. First of all, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee fully revealed its character as a regroupment of elements within the left of the apparatus limiting itself to providing a carefully controlled forum for discussion. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee is not, in itself, a vehicle through which to fight Callaghan. Its fringe meeting at Brighton consisted of a "debate" with two representatives of the right-wing "Manifesto" Group. From the platform Heffer rebuffed calls from the floor for a fight to remove Callaghan from the leadership.

About the same size as the LCC meeting (150) was that of the National Register of Tribune Groups. These appear to have survived only in Bristol and South Wales. Delegates attended this meeting only to hear various well-known M.P.s speak. No prospect of regroupment was advanced in it.

The meeting of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (which also started with about 150) was advertised as preparing to fight the cuts. In fact it essentially gave a platform to Ted Knight from which to put the best face on his oscillations in Lambeth. Deliberate confusion underlay the loud talk about campaigns against the cuts.

The platform - Skinner, Knight, Corbishley - failed to raise the call for "No cuts, No rate increases, No rent increases" and floor speakers who put this point of view were treated with hostility.



Dennis Skinner

The Tribune Rally was massively attended, though at the conference itself "Tribune" was hardly to be seen. It was here that Benn and Heffer made their most populist speeches about democracy. Foot bent before the obviously aggressive mood of the audience and made no attempt to defend the record of the Callaghan - Wilson governments in which he played a key role. Barbara Castle was heckled when she tried to give a left apologia for participation in the 'Europarliament'.

MILITANT

As to "Militant", they maintained a low-key presence at Brighton. Perhaps their leaders hoped to avoid provoking attacks from the Right. Perhaps their supporters took seriously the illusion, spread by the "Militant", that the Left now automatically turns to "Tribune" and will then see that it has no other road except to turn to "Militant". In any case, "Militant" had no specific contribution to offer to the big battles. On the rostrum their speakers were outclassed by the left social-democrats proper. Apart from their ritualistic proposal that a future Labour Government should nationalise the top 200 monopolies, their positions were not to be distinguished from those of the left. Benn himself, who did not hesitate to lean on "Militant" for support, opposed this demand from the conference platform on the ground that it could not be carried out until socialism had been won. No group which proposes to turn a social democratic reformist party into an instrument for 'revolution' - as does the "Militant" - can advance the programmatic needs of the working class. The "Militant" is forced to fall back onto sectarian maximalist formulas which even the left social democrats can demolish.

It was a feature of several of the meetings that much of the audience drifted out after the main speakers. Discussion from the floor was not generally taken up. It is clear that the presence of Benn, Heffer, Kinnock and the rest is needed to bring about a re-groupment. The declaration of one or another group does not command the necessary authority. Heffer made clear at the LCC meeting that he did not belong to it and that he and Benn spoke from every platform they were offered.

There was evidence that the Communist Party was trying to make an impression on its own account, in alliance with its co-thinkers in the social democracy. A new paper, "Straight Left" was on sale, with articles by Joan Maynard, Dennis Skinner and Ray Buckton, side by side with glowing reports about Bulgaria and the GDR, and the inevitable plea for pressure on the Thatcher Government to show a better spirit of co-operation with the Kremlin.

REGROUPMENT

There was no move towards forming some new organisation in which the left can be re-grouped. Benn and Heffer carefully avoided this problem. But there is an axis, which passes through the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and its broadsheet, "Labour Activist", the "Tribune" newspaper and the "Tribune" group of M.P.s. There was no existing grouping which provided, by itself, the way forward. For this, several elements must be drawn together. The left leaders have not directly encouraged this.

Those who went to the fringe meetings were all brought there by the same problems. The organisational means for a left regroupment has still to be developed. Our task is to build a movement to drive Callaghan and Healey and their immediate circle out of leading positions. We must do so by raising, not alone the betrayals of the late government, but how the policies of Callaghan and Healey prevent the movement now from effectively opposing the Tory Government.

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ALL OUT AGAINST CORRIE!

By Lynn Davis

Once again the democratic rights of women are under attack. For the third time in eight years the right to abortion is threatened. The right to maternity benefit is threatened. Married women are to be driven from their jobs back into the isolation and poverty of the home.

These attacks did not start with the return of the Tory Government nor are they a purely British phenomenon. The Corrie Anti-Abortion Bill and the pronouncements of James Prior have to be placed in their international context. Internationally the bourgeoisie are attempting to take back the gains of the working class in every area of social life, beginning by attacking the most oppressed members of society, in this case women, in their drive to inflict great defeats on the class as a whole and to stabilise once more their rule and exploitation. Counter-revolution in Iran tries to drag women back to the Middle Ages. Women are sentenced to death for adultery. Prostitutes are shot. The traditional veil and cloak are often physically enforced.

The Pope, throughout his visits to Ireland and the USA condemned intimate personal relationships outside marriage as "moral anarchy", urging a return to the patriarchal family, with its brutality and domination of the women and children.

From what may appear to be a different angle, James Callaghan also made the "defence" of the family a central plank of his General Election Campaign, in which he also defended his cuts in social services and attacks on trade unions!

Since May 1979 the immediate attacks on the working class have included proposals to deny to working women with children an automatic right to return to their jobs after childbirth. This proposed return to the nineteenth century receives a spurious support from those who pretend to "sympathise" with the plight of the working mother but want to make her situation even worse.

MOBILISE

The mobilisation against Corrie's Anti-Abortion Bill will be a massive one. Women will not readily accept being driven back to the old conditions. Women, and especially young women, will direct their anger into political struggle. We must fight for the whole Labour Movement to throw its weight into the demonstration on October 28 and open the road to women activists to link up their movement with that of all the oppressed.

Attacks on women are the immediate spearhead of a general attack on all working people. Under the pretence of defending the "nuclear" family and the "unborn child", the Churches and other obscurantist agencies of the bourgeoisie plan to drive women back into slavery and imprisonment of the narrow, miserable homes which are all that most working-class families can get.

All who wish to fight these attacks on women's rights in united action through the organised Labour Movement should join the October 28 demonstration with the object of advancing the struggle to bring the Tory Government down.

These attacks on the rights of women to control their own personal lives and protect their health without legal res-

traint, currently centred in the Corrie Bill, will not stop, even if the Bill is "talked-out" in Parliament. The ruling class cannot avoid continuing to try to re-instate reaction in the areas of personal life, whether under the guise of morality or of necessity.

TORIES

James Corrie is linked into that network of Church front organisations like SPUC. These have their supporters among the leadership of the labour movement, especially opportunists based in Catholic areas. Even now some areas of the Labour Party are directly, although covertly, under the control of the Catholic Church. But the main enemy to the rights of women is the Tory Party itself. All those right wing moralist campaigns which aim to restrict personal freedoms, such as the 'Festival of Light' and those who took 'Gay News' to court for blasphemy are based on the ruling class, especially on its unstable lower elements. They are linked in a thousand ways to the major party of the ruling class - the Tory Party. This Tory government will be the organiser of many attacks of the Corrie kind on the rights of women.

The Corrie Bill is both a removal of the right of all women, regardless of class, to free abortion on demand, or to be more exact, to those facilities currently extant, which are not sufficient, and a doubly hard blow to poor women. This is because those women with money will still be able to buy their abortions, under adequate medical supervision. It is the working class woman who will find even the limited facilities now available removed and who will be put through the wringer of 'moral attacks' and castigation for seeking an abortion.

WORKING CLASS

Capitalism in its death-agonies is a totally repressive system. The ruling class, through its obscurantist ideologues personifies this repression. The first great blow in the battle against them will be to bring down the Tory Government by driving it out of office.

The fight, then, is not merely one for women, by women, it is a fight by the whole working class to maintain its conditions of life.

There are middle-class feminists who utilise this and other mobilisations to expound their theory that "women form a different class" or that "the unity of all women, across class lines" is more important than mobilising working women as part of the mass movement of workers of both sexes. These petty-bourgeois feminists serve in the end to divert the movement from the only fight which can give lasting results, the fight for working women as a component of the working class, to take full control of their lives through the fight for socialism. The real road to defeat Corrie, not the illusory one, lies through struggle in the trade unions and the Labour Party. The reactionary apparatus blocks this road, nonetheless it is the only road to victory over obscurantism, reaction and the hatchetmen of the bourgeoisie.

Down with the Tory Government! For a Labour Government Pledged to Free Abortion on Demand!

Defeat the Cuts! Expand the Health Service to Cover All the Needs of Women!

For a Three-line Whip on Labour M.P.s to defeat Corrie!

All Out on October 28!

ZIMBABWE

5

By Sam Stacey

With the overthrow of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau (combined with the opening of the European revolution in Portugal) and the defeat of the Haile Selassie regime in Ethiopia, a new period in the development of the proletarian revolution in Africa opened up. Since 1974 a grave instability has reached the continent. Despite the obstacle of the nationalist regimes, acting as agencies of imperialism, in holding back the revolutionary upsurge, the bourgeois regimes are far from secure.

In this context the situation in Southern Africa is of critical importance for imperialism. The Soweto uprising - a product of the revolutionary wave in Africa - shook the central imperialist bastion of South Africa. The nationalist regimes on the borders of South Africa, in response to pressure from the African masses, and in defence of their image as supposedly 'anti-imperialist', 'anti-racist' regimes, give limited support to the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

However, the main concern of these regimes is an immediate prospect of the eruption of proletarian revolution which will not only spell the end of the apartheid regimes, but also the end for the likes of Kaunda, Nyrere, Machel and co. Armed struggle, for these petty-bourgeois traitors to the African masses, has always been a means of pressuring the racist regimes into 'democratic' change, precisely in order to prevent an explosion which will sweep away all the bourgeois regimes.

The 'British solution' to the problem of Zimbabwe, was however, so obviously a fraud, with power remaining in the hands of the white bourgeoisie, that it was impossible for the 'frontline' state leaders to sell the Muzorewa constitution as 'black majority rule' to the African masses, whose hostility to the racist regimes is a considerable burden on Kaunda and co.



This posed a problem for imperialism, for, if the frontline states opposed the 'new' regime and continued providing bases and support for the Patriotic Front guerrillas, the war would continue and the possibility of a stable neocolonial state being set up would recede. Thus British imperialism vis the Thatcher government was forced to undertake a shift in policy in line with US imperialism. Previously they had supported Muzorewa constitution and the 'free and fair' (fraudulent) elections. At the Commonwealth Conference however, Thatcher suddenly discovered several areas in which the Muzorewa constitution was 'defective', namely the whites' power of veto and complete control of the armed forces, plus the absence of 'external forces' from political life in the country (i.e. the Patriotic Front). This change of line brought the frontline states and the Tory government together and opened the way for the London Conference. With the Commonwealth Conference agreement the frontline state leaders demanded of the Patriotic Front a swift end to the war, under threat of an end to their support.

At the very time of the opening of this Conference against the Zimbabwean masses, virtually the entire country was under martial law. As the conference proceeded, the armed forces stepped up their attacks against the blacks in the country, and guerilla bases in Mozambique. An estimated 15,000 have been held without trial since the introduction of martial law, any of whom can be hanged without trial. In the tribal reserves thousands of homes have been burned down by the 'security forces' under powers given them by martial law, to exact retribution from civilians alleged to have harboured guerrillas.

Whilst the murderous work of the 'security forces' has been heightened the Patriotic Front have agreed to white representation in the proposed new assembly. Joseph Tongogara, commander of the guerilla forces of ZANU declared that he was willing during the 'transition' period to work together with the mass murderer General Walls, head of the 'security forces'. A few days after he made that statement Walls' forces made their biggest yet attack on Tongogara's base camp in Mozambique.

LAND QUESTION

The problems of Zimbabwean workers and peasants cannot be resolved by negotiations with the very forces which oppress them. A 'settlement' can only be one in the interests of the white ruling class and their toadies like Muzorewa. This is clear when you consider a central element of the Constitution proposed by Lord Carrington: that is, defence of white owned land from confiscation for 10 years! This is hardly surprising when you consider the complete domination of land by the whites.

The 1969 Land Tenure Act entrenched a 50 - 50 division of land between blacks (96% of the population) and whites. But the blacks get the worst land, of course. By 1970 98% of land suitable for afforestation, fruit growing and intensive beef production lay in the European areas, as did 82% of land suitable for intensive farming. Of land suitable for no agricultural purpose 100% lay in African areas!

Consequently the agrarian question is at the very centre of the Zimbabwean revolution. None of the problems of the mass of the populace can be resolved without the complete expropriation of the European sectors, and distribution of the land to the peasants. However, a 'peaceful negotiated settlement' can only mean defence of white domination.

SOUTH AFRICA

The future of Zimbabwe is of central concern for imperialism, for the defeat of the present regime will have an emphatic impact on the development of the proletarian revolution in Africa in general, and in South Africa in particular, where an explosion is in preparation. The spectre of Soweto hangs threateningly over the bourgeois regime. For the past month there has been a bus boycott by black workers, in response to fare increases of 50%. Workers in Durban, in the townships of Ladysmith and Hammarsdale are refusing to use the buses. The boycott has in the past been a clear barometer of an approaching mobilisation of black workers.

For these reasons, imperialism, in combination with the frontline states, is bringing all pressure to bear on the Patriotic Front to accept a 'compromise' i.e. to capitulate. However, even if the London Conference reaches an agreement, as seems likely (at the time of writing) it will be unable to be implemented, for the struggle of the Zimbabwean masses will blow it apart. The demands which express the needs of the Zimbabwean workers and peasants are: End the Talks! Down with a 'negotiated settlement'! For a dissolution of the 'security forces'! For free elections to a Sovereign Constituent Assembly! No to a 'transitional regime'! No to British or UN troops in Zimbabwe! Expropriate the land!

NO SELL OUT!

In support of the struggle of the Zimbabwean masses for their liberation, revolutionaries must struggle in the Labour movement against British involvement, against the 'legitimacy' of 'British responsibility'. A struggle must be waged against a negotiated settlement which can only be one in the interests of imperialism and the settler regime; a struggle against the sell out by the Patriotic Front.

FREE BERND DIETZ!

We publish below extracts from a declaration by Annette Bahner. She is an active member of the SPD (the West German Party corresponding to the British Labour Party).

She has recently been rescued from the gaols of the East German bureaucracy, after a very important campaign started by the "Committee for the Defence of Democratic Liberties throughout All Germany, East and West".

The German section of the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, organised round the journal IAK (International Workers' Correspondence), played an active part in this campaign.

Annette Bahner's declaration shows how unprecedented this campaign was, despite its being systematically obstructed by the leaders of German Social-Democracy, who want above all to make sure that the Honnecker regime in the GDR is protected, which they see as part of the present European order which rests on the division of Germany.

Annette Bahner's freedom was won unconditionally. She was neither exchanged nor "bought back" by the Bonn Government. This is a considerable victory over the Stalinist bureaucracy in East Germany.

Annette Bahner now appeals to all those who worked to get her freed, in Germany or elsewhere. Particularly a notable struggle for her took place in Britain. She appeals to us to put the same energy in winning the release of Bernd Dietz, the steel worker from Karl-Marx Stadt who was arrested with her on July 8.

We must respond to her appeal!



ANNETTE BAHNER APPEALS: FREE BERND DIETZ!

"I was arrested in East Berlin on July 8 this year by the state security police of the GDR. I was taken to Karl-Marx Stadt and held there in preventive detention for nine weeks..."

I must thank all who entered the fight to liberate me. This fight consisted of 14,000 signatures, of forming committees, of resolutions, letters and telegrams from factories, schools and universities...

I am convinced that it was this unprecedented campaign which won the unprecedented result, that I was unconditionally released.

Why was I arrested?

I went into the GDR, as eight million West Germans go every year, showing that the German people do not accept the frontier which crosses Germany...

I am a democrat. I fight in the workers' movement. I belong

to the SPD and to the public services and transport workers' union (OTV). I cannot reconcile myself to the division of the population of Germany, to the division of the workers and the youth of Germany, to the division of their struggle for common interests and aims...

In the same way, the working people and the youth of the GDR as a whole are united in opposing the continuation of the oppressive rule of the bureaucracy of the SED, the Stalinist party in East Germany.

They express their opposition through the existence of a political opposition and through the growing number of strikes which the workers call. At the same time their solidarity with Robert Havemann, Rudolf Bahro and all the political prisoners in the GDR is growing.

The bureaucracy sees itself to be more and more isolated. It falls into a panic and reacts by increasingly severe measures of repression...

What do the workers and the youth in the GDR want?...

They do not want a return to capitalism. They direct their resistance against the corrupt bureaucracy, which feeds like a parasite on the conquests of the workers' movement in the whole of Germany and of Europe. This bureaucracy is the most formidable enemy of Socialism in all Germany...

The workers and youth want the unity of the workers and youth of all Germany against the rule of the employers and of the bureaucracy...

I believe it to be the duty and the responsibility of the SPD and the trade unions to undertake publicly and in unity with the workers and youth of East Germany the struggle for the right to organise in trade unions independent of the state, for the right to hold political opinions, to meet and to organise.

Bernd Dietz was arrested at the same time and place as I was. He is 21 years old and is a steel-worker in the Rudolf Harlass steel plant at Karl Marx Stadt. He has undertaken the struggle in this city with other young workers for respect for democratic rights and liberties...

The success of the efforts of the workers and youth in West Germany in getting me released shows how to win the release of this courageous fighter for democratic rights and liberties..."

It is a tragic irony of history that Bernd Dietz comes from a city named after Karl Marx, who, with Frederick Engels, more than 130 years ago, began a fight which had at its centre three great aims:

The unity of Germany

For democratic rights for all citizens

For an independent workers movement

It is no fault of the German working class that these aims remain so central to the agenda of political life in that country. It is due to the criminal betrayals of the apparatuses in the workers' movement, both social democratic and Stalinist. Although in Germany the Stalinists have played a major sanguine role. Since the division of Germany was decided by imperialism and Stalinism at Potsdam, the German working class have suffered a series of blows from both the Stalinist client regime in the East and the imperialist bastard state in the West. These have been delivered under the gaze of the occupying armies of four nations. First the enforced liquidation of the SPD in the East, then the building of the Berlin Wall. In the West the KPD was banned. The berufsverbote laws prevent socialist activists from holding state jobs.

The German working class does not accept these blows as being there for all time. It will once again, and sooner than its enemies think, assert its place in the centre of the European revolution. The working class youth of East Germany have had enough of repression, they want to find the road back to their revolutionary past. That is why Bernd Dietz was arrested. But his arrest will be fought and his release will mark a step on the road to the German revolution itself, which will depose his gaolers for all time.

2 DAY STRIKES

PART ONE

By Ray West

From the outset of the Engineers' action the Press and T.V. gave enormous publicity to small groups or workers who crossed picket lines, the inevitable 'man in the street' who demanded 'democracy' and the handful of poor misguided 'wives-sweet-hearts' who 'marched on the militants' etc. They ignored the massive solidarity of the 1½ million workers who, with impressive and heartening regularity stand solidly behind their union's call, in spite of a divisive claim, a dubious strategy and an eminently treacherous leadership.

However, after a settlement which needs some analysis, the 'Observer' of Sunday 7th October admits the single most significant factor in the dispute was the immense solidarity of the workers. In contrast the 'solidarity' claimed by Mr Anthony Frodsham of the Engineering Employers' Federation is ludicrous. The simple fact is that they broke under even the limited strain imposed by the weak strategy of the CSEU. Many small firms settled in full and the shattering news that the EEF's second largest client GEC is withdrawing from membership brought unbearable pressure on the employers and their government advisers. A major factor in the Gatwick Agreement.

Much of the press did a complete reversal and lauded the soon-up-for-election-again Duffy as hero of the hour and the single handed winner of a 'famous victory' and 'historic breakthrough'.

It was not possible to inflict the crushing defeat demanded by the EEF and required by the Thatcher administration to establish their anti-TU legislation; but the strength and solidarity of an important section of the working class was frittered away, the claim watered down, and a dangerous and deceptive settlement foisted on them by a desperately relieved leadership.

In spite of all the calls for votes for the strike no-one thought to call for a vote for acceptance of the Settlement! In fact the 'Famous Victory' is a million miles from the claim itself and the EEF speak guardedly of many benefits for employers.

The tactic of embarking on a long series of partial strikes, (for this was the implication of the one and two day strikes), under a Tory government known to be pledged to across the board conflict with the unions, was something more than cynical on the part of the union leaders. The one and two day series strike, not well known in this country but very familiar on the continent, especially in Italy, is a tactic which takes the full strength and devotion of the members of the unions and fritters

them away. It was especially the case with this dispute, where everyone knew after a few weeks that the two day strikes should be ended and an all out strike or some other form of action called. The union leaders allowed, week after week, the right wing press to attack the strikes. They allowed the right wing anti-union elements in some plants to rear their heads and try to score points on the unions.

The tactic of the Thatcher government was to keep its distance as long as possible, knowing that the undercurrents generated by a long drawn out inconclusive dispute would help them to attack the engineers later.

This dispute has not solved the mass of problems rampant in the British engineering industry, an industry in the throes of a historical decline. It has not strengthened the hand of the working class in its fight against redundancies, in its fight to ameliorate its general conditions of labour. It has divided the employers, but not inflicted a major defeat on them. The problems which underlay the strikes will raise themselves again in new forms.

Nonetheless this dispute is historic. For the first time in ten years (1968), there has been a general strike, or rather series of strikes, in the engineering industry. It is for this reason that the press, apart from playing up the role of strike-breakers, chose to give such little publicity to the dispute.

Not able to crush the engineers, some time has been bought, hoping for peace in the Engineering Industry while de-Industrialisation continues. However the ability of the Thatcher administration to create new Service industry 'feather beds' is nil: the cuts must proceed as planned. Unemployment must rise. The organs of the working class must be dismantled where possible and drawn into treacherous collaboration elsewhere. Tory policy is clear.

The anti - Trade Union legislation must be established. The closed shop must be broken. Secondary picketing and actions must cease. No one must call for fraternal solidarity. No blacking. Each dispute must be isolated and garrotted in the back alleys, like Grunwicks.

On the face of it every facet of the claim has received some recognition but at what cost?

to be continued

BRAZIL

Twelve of the trade union militants from the state of Minas Gerais imprisoned by the dictatorship after a period of insurrectionary strikes in Belo Horizonte have been released. But seven more remain in the hands of the police and it is known have been tortured.

A savage repression has been enacted by the dictatorship in face of the third great wave of strikes since the start of the year. Since the 13 September, the bankworkers of Rio and Sao Paulo have been on indefinite strike. In Rio the strike takes place against opposition from the government sponsored "union", which is but a police tool of the dictatorship.

We must fight for the immediate release of Adeli Sell, Paulo Grapiglia, Antonio Moreira Filho and Paulo Muller Lopes.

The current upsurge by the Brazilian working class, leading towards independent trades unions and workers' parties, is one of the most crucial developments in Latin America. Combined with the revolution in Nicaragua and the continuing revolutionary crisis in Peru it offers the way forward not alone for the overthrow of the comprador military regimes of the past period but of the very hegemony of US imperialism which held them in place.

H BLOCK from page 8

of its reformist leaders, such campaigns are a necessary bridge to mobilising the British workers.

Simply to raise the question of repression, - in this instance the denial of political status to Republican prisoners, raises at once the whole question of why they are fighting at all? What is Britain doing in Ireland? Why is Ireland divided? It poses very quickly the question of taking sides - for or against British imperialism in Ireland!

The Bennett revelations, the Amnesty International Report on Torture in Castlebaragh "interrogation" centre have exposed the tip of the iceberg of repression conducted by the British state. Repression, torture, the juryless Diplock courts have led to incarceration in the H - Blocks for more than 360 Republican militants.

We have to get the reality of this across to thousands of trade union and Labour Party members in Britain. To do this will require patient and serious work within the trade unions and Labour Party. This is not a problem of calling sporadic "Troops Out" demonstrations which march through the West End of London on a Sunday afternoon, are composed only of the "far left" groups and their milieu and do not impinge on the life and experience of the working class and its organisations.

The SLG seeks to take part in a new regroupment of militants in the mass organisations which will begin to raise the Irish question in a serious way.

H BLOCK MEN APPEAL

By Micheal Keene

For British imperialism, what is at stake in Northern Ireland is not only the question of preventing the development of a struggle for the unification of Ireland and its working class but preserving the British state itself, in its existing form of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

That is why, British imperialism, Tory and Labour governments alike, have not shirked from exercising the most fierce repression and the most dense military occupation in relation to the population of the six counties that has been inflicted on any people in Europe.

Because the struggle for Irish freedom hits directly at the forms of the British state, the British working class and the Irish people have a common enemy. The destinies of the Irish national struggle and the struggle of the British working class are intimately bound together. That is why the fight for the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland must become a basic task for the British working class if it is to take up fully the fight for its own political independence, to defeat the reformist leaders who support and defend the bourgeois state. The working class in Britain must oppose the policy of British imperialism in Ireland. This remains the historical acid-test for British Labour.

DEBATE

At last week's Labour Party Conference in Brighton, for the first time in some years, there was a debate on Ireland, which was forced after a reference back of the agenda. Despite the fact that the motions presented which called for troop withdrawal and for an independent Labour Party policy on Ireland, favouring reunification of the country, were heavily defeated amid much chauvinist sentiment not only on the part of the reformist leadership but in the ranks of the delegates, the fact that the debate was held at all was an expression of a changing awareness on the Irish question.

Ten years of military occupation have not made the question go away. Brutal repression has not been able to crush the national struggle. On the contrary, that struggle has posed imperialism with a deepening dilemma, which its most clear-sighted representatives know they must look for new means to try to solve. Hence we had the recent Young Liberals demonstration, the debate at the Liberal Party Conference, the "Daily Mirror" calling for a "planned withdrawal of troops". All this fits into the attempts by representatives of the American Democratic Party to impulse a "new initiative" which have been echoed by Irish bourgeois politicians such as Lynch. British imperialism however, remains obdurate in the face of these manoeuvres. The Thatcher government is unwilling to modify the policy of the last ten years.

Today we find this pressure being exerted through other channels therefore. Hence the vote to discuss Ireland at the Labour Party Conference. But the significance of the debate being held should not be missed by those who support the Irish cause in the British workers' movement. It opens up new possibilities to oppose the "Bi-Partisan" policy of the Labour leaders through which they carry their support to imperialism.

APPEAL

At the Brighton Labour Party Conference, supporters of the International Campaign Against Repression gave out an appeal to the delegates. The Appeal was signed

"Irish Republican Prisoners, H-Blocks 3, 4, 5, 6,
Long Kesh Concentration Camp, N. Ireland."

This appeal was smuggled out of Long Kesh. It is a unique document, a direct appeal for support to the British Labour movement.

The appeal points out the duties of British Labour to take up the Irish question:-

"... Many delegates may have heard of H Block and its horrors. More of you may be ignorant of the truths or refuse to accept them, but whatever the case, the inhumanities being perpetrated daily on the H - Blocks and on Ireland are perpetrated in your name, by your government, therefore you too must shoulder the responsibility because it is you who elect each successive British government who continue to support this policy of repression in Ireland. Towards the war in Ireland you have remained pathetically indifferent, whilst not only Irish men and Irish women have died, but also your own young soldiers sent across the Irish sea to occupy our country and oppress our people."

The appeal describes the struggle in Ireland not as "sectarian strife" but as a struggle with deep roots in the history of national oppression:

"Contrary to what some of you may think, your troops are not here in Ireland as the protectors of the people, to keep two sides apart. They are here to protect and maintain British interests only, and in doing so as an occupying army, they oppress. We are the only product of repression, Resistance!!"

"For our resistance we have been tortured in the special torture centres along with our people and passed along with our people along the special conveyor belt of repression to H - Block where we are called criminals, dehumanised and tortured."

"We are political prisoners and therefore we demand to be treated as such. Political status is ours by a political right. Your government in an attempt to discredit is and portray us as criminals have denied to us this right. Many of you may likewise recall how your country attempted to criminalise the great Irish Republican Socialist and Trade Unionist - James Connolly - and the great Irish Fenian - Thomas Clarke. The torturers of yesterday are the torturers of today."

The appeal concludes:-

"We, the Republican prisoners of war incarcerated in the dungeons of H - Block call upon you our fellow workers to take a stand against the torture of Irishmen in H - Block and the aged oppression of our nation. We call upon you to smash H - Block before yet another Irishman dies in a British torture hole and we say to you:

Remember that your government will continue to oppress the Irish people in your name. As long as you allow them, do you have the blood of the Gael on your hands."

SLG

The policy of the SLG is to fight for the right to self-determination of the Irish people. This means we are for immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and an end to British claims to sovereignty over the six counties.

But this does not mean that we abstain from the fight for political goals which don't go all the way to this end. The fight to end Labour's bi-partisan policy and an immediate end to repression and torture are immediate ends which the SLG fights for. Indeed, taking into consideration the enormous confusion and ignorance on the Irish question engendered in the British working class by the craven pro-imperialist policy