

# Socialist Challenge

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# TORIES TILL 1984?

# NO WAY!

**HYSTERIA!** That's the only way to describe the reaction of the Tories and the media to 14 May.

An unprecedented barrage of anti-trade union, anti-working class rantings have poured forth from Maggie Thatcher, Jim Prior, the *Daily Express* and the rest of the millionaire press. Trades unionists have been portrayed as little better than terrorists.

Now the courts have chimed in with their vicious ruling that calling out the printworkers was 'illegal'.

There's a method in this Tory madness. They fear nothing more than the working class taking strike action. The dynamic towards a general strike petrifies them.

The Tories have a huge majority in parliament. If we left it to the Labour leaders, the Tories would be in power until 1984. They can easily cope with any amount of resolutions and speechifying. But mass action on the streets

and in the factories is something they can't cope with.

When millions of workers take direct action, then nothing can stop them — not the police, not the SPG, not even the SAS murderers.

The Tory offensive must be answered. Instead of retreating, the TUC General Council has to step up the action. The whole labour movement needs to mount a massive counter-barrage of propaganda, through mass meetings, leaflets, rallies and so on, to explain why political strike action is essential to defend workers' interests and throw back the Tories.

Millions of workers will take some form of protest action on 14 May. The massive resentment against the Tories must now be taken forward. The TUC General Council must assume its responsibilities, to organise the only form of action that is certain to throw the Tories out — a general strike.



# TUC MUST PREPARE GENERAL STRIKE



## OUR POLICIES

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

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character, grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## EDITORIAL

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

# We can't wait four years

**THATCHER's first year of government has shown one thing: we can't afford to wait four years to get rid of the Tories! Thatcher's is a government of the rich for the rich. The Tories have made their intentions quite plain. They want to solve the crisis of their system at the expense of working people.**

Massive cuts in welfare spending; unemployment zooming upwards, with BL and British Steel being given free rein to sack tens of thousands of workers — while prices go through the roof. To add insult to injury, Prior's Employment Bill to shackle the unions is almost certain to become law.

Thatcher, Joseph and Howe show no sign of being persuaded to change their ways. They want to push home their attack. What's happened over the past year is only a small glimpse of things to come. We can't allow this government to go the full course of five years in power. We have to mobilise the strength of the labour movement to kick them out. But that's only the start of our problems.

Murray and the TUC leadership are a pathetic opposition to the Tories, while right-wingers like Chapple and Duffy are openly aiding the government. Callaghan and his cronies on the Labour front bench are no opposition at all. The TUC and Labour Party leaders have to be forced to organise a fightback. The Day of Action on 14 May is a very small beginning.

The steel strike, the turn out for the 9 March demonstration called by the TUC, and the initial response to 14 May show that a willingness to fight against the Tories is there. But the Tory Party and their allies in the media, have unleashed a tremendous barrage of propaganda against the trade union movement.

This campaign is being waged under the spurious ideological banner of the 'right to

choose' and 'individual liberty'. Yet it only has the possibility of success because of the indecisiveness and timidity of the trade union leaderships. Their failure to issue a firm call for all-out strike action on 14 May has opened the floodgates for the Tory press to mobilise people not to strike.

But even worse is the TUC's notion that the Tories can be made to 'change course', or that protest is enough. Far from the government responding to the TUC being 'responsible', it seizes on the spinelessness of the trade union leadership to push home its offensive.

We have to get it across in the labour movement that 14 May is just the beginning; we need to go on from here to launch an all-out offensive to bring down the Tories. As the 'general staff' of the labour movement, the TUC General Council has to assume its responsibility to get rid of the Tories by preparing to organise a general strike.

The alternative to the Tories is a Labour government. But we can't afford another Labour government like the last one. That's why in addition to simply struggling against the Tories, we have to initiate a fight for socialist policies at every level of the labour movement.

As British capitalism reels into an ever deepening crisis, there is an urgent need to develop a programme which can solve the crisis, but in the interests of the workers not the capitalists. What we need is bold socialist measures which put all the major decisions about investment and planning of the economy in the hands of working people.

Such a programme must include:

- \*A sliding scale of wages to ensure that wages keep pace with inflation.

- \*A 35-hour week with no loss of pay and a massive programme of public works to cure unemployment.

- \*A freeze on all prices and the introduction of price controls to stop runaway inflation.

## Fleet Street loves Downing Street — with a vengeance

**By Geoffrey Sheridan**  
**MILLIONS of people will be taking action on 14 May, but you would hardly know this from the mass media.**

Over the past week, teams of investigative journalists have been put to work to find evidence in the labour movement of what the press proprietors and their pals in government are furiously trying to foment — opposition to the Day of Action.

Any group of trades unionists prepared to grin and bear the Tories' policies have been guaranteed a place on the front pages.

Following the High Court decision last Wednesday that printworkers cannot legally be called on by their unions to take political action against the government, no banner headline has been complete without the word 'revolt' or a 'we want to work' slogan.

The headline writers must by now be having difficulty

thinking up fresh insults to heap on the millions who believe that Thatcher's policies are unacceptable.

'Rank and file rebel over Day of Shame' declared the *Sun* on Friday, following this up with 'Flop of the Century!' on Saturday. The *Daily Express* — whose boss Victor Matthews, brought the court action against the print unions — has provided a 'Day of Shame' logo for its vitriolic coverage of 14 May.

The *Daily Mirror*, which passionately declares its support for the Labour Party, has decided that trades unionists will be engaging in a 'fiasco fiesta' on the 'Day of Chaos'.

It concluded its editorial on Friday with the message: 'The Only Day of Action that counts in a democracy is Polling Day'. That's the hope which unites the media, radio and TV included. Never mind that the Tories aim to cripple working people. There must be no collective resistance.

The abuse of the trade

union leaders — 'the unelected Lenin Murray and all the Bully Boys', as the unelected Victor Matthews put it in his personal note pad, the *Daily Express* — has already surpassed the media's treatment of the public sector strikers during the 'winter of discontent' which preceded the Tories' election victory.

Thatcher needs to inflict a clear defeat on the labour movement to be confident of imposing the measures in the Employment Bill, and tons of newsprint will now be devoted to supporting that task. Anyone who stands in the way will be granted the coverage the media accords to 'terrorists'.

It is not hard to fathom the love affair between Fleet Street and Downing Street.

The capitalists hand out over £100m a year to support their national press, by way of advertising. The press owners themselves, many of them multi-nationals, are relying on the Employment Bill to crush the closed shops of the print unions, so that they can

boost their millions through large-scale redundancies.

How long will the labour movement allow such a travesty of press freedom to continue? There are signs that the leadership of at least one of the print unions, NAT-SOPA, will fight back. It has refused to accept the court ruling over 14 May, and on Tuesday night it led a mass picket of the *Daily Express*.

Hopefully this militancy will encourage printworkers to ensure that the press barons' screed does not continue to roll off the presses without a reply from the labour movement.

After the 'winter of discontent' the print unions and sections of the labour leadership launched the Campaign for Press Freedom, with the object of exposing the bias of the existing mass media and debating the kind of alternatives which would be valuable to the working class.

So far the campaign has registered strong support in terms of attendance at its

\*The nationalisation under workers control of the major monopolies, the banks, and the finance houses to give the working class control over investment and planning.

These measures would immediately hit at capitalist anarchy — the source of unemployment and austerity.

After 14 May the fight to roll back the Tory offensive must continue. Given the scabbing role played in the build up to 14 May by the right wing, it is obvious that a major fight against class collaboration needs to take place inside the trade unions. The building of a class struggle left wing remains the urgent task of the moment.

Such a left wing would have to link workers in different unions across industry. If the Labour Co-ordinating Committee were to push ahead with its proposal to organise Labour Party supporters in the unions it would be a decisive step forward towards such a class struggle left.

But on a broader scale during the build up to 14 May, delegate action committees have been formed in numerous places to co-ordinate the anti-Tory activity and build up the mobilisation. These committees can be made the focus for developing the anti-Tory struggle; they should be kept in existence to push forward the fight on cuts, jobs and so on. They can be an invaluable springboard for the fight back.

The response of the Tory Party to the Day of Action shows that the fight is in earnest. The Tories have responded hysterically because they know the stakes are the very existence of this anti-working class government.

If things are left to the TUC General Council, the Tories will be let off the hook. The crucial task of the hour remains to mobilise and organise to force Len Murray and company to assume their responsibilities; to force them to organise a general strike to kick out the Tories.



rallies and by way of membership, with some 150 labour movement organisations joining up, including 15 trade unions at national level.

The campaign should now be arguing in the media unions for a commitment to support the right of reply by all those facing media hostility, and it should publish a guide as to how this right can be secured, by way of pickets, occupations, and the like.

A mass daily for the labour movement has become a matter of urgency, and the Labour Party and TUC should be urged to launch it now, with the provision of the right of reply and open debate to establish at least the basic tenets of press freedom in the workers' movement.

**The Campaign for Press Freedom's AGM and one-day conference are to be held on Saturday, 24 May, 10.30am to 4.30pm, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. To join, write to: Campaign for Press Freedom, 274/288 London Rd, Hadleigh, Essex. Tel 0702 553131.**

# asSASsins

## Those who can't cheer any more

By Geoff Bell

**AFTER** the SAS operation at the Iranian embassy we are all now, according to Margaret Thatcher, 'proud to be British'. 'Our lads' did what the Yanks couldn't do in Iran itself and freed the hostages.

And just to teach those brown-skinned terrorists a lesson, the heroes who dared to win shot dead all but one of them.

A person by the name of Jean Rook informed us in the *Daily Express*: 'At least we now know that Britain is still a great nation — and so does the rest of the world.'

'They sniped that we were a second class power, going bust — until we blasted open the Iranian Embassy... In 45 minutes flat we proved to a gaping world that we're still a Super Power — and a super people.'

'Super' indeed. Patrick McVeigh would testify to that. Who?

Patrick McVeigh was shot dead in Belfast in May 1972. No one ever suggested he was a nasty terrorist or anything like that. His crime was that he was a Belfast Catholic.

McVeigh was a victim of one of many so-called 'motiveless murders' which were becoming common in Belfast in those days.

But a funny thing happened after the killing of McVeigh. The three men who killed him were in a car and after the shooting the vehicle drove straight through a British Army checkpoint without being stopped.

There it is, in the SAS handbook, 'Counter Revolutionary Operations', duties include: '... liaison and organisation, training and control of, friendly guerrilla forces operating against the common enemy'.

Patrick McVeigh was shot by the SAS as part of the attempt to intimidate the Catholic community. As George Lennox writes elsewhere on this page, such is the pattern of SAS activity.

But back to Fleet Street and this time the *Daily Mail*: 'The bold and successful sortie has restored the balance and put the forces of law and order back on top...'

'This success cannot fail to have wider and very beneficial effects. It shows to our own people that men of violence can be dealt with.'

'Men of violence' like, perhaps, James Taylor, who was shot dead by the SAS in September 1978 on the shores of Lough Neagh in the North of Ireland. And Taylor certainly was violent — he shot ducks!



Mr. Taylor and his son Jason

One of the terrorists was sitting on the floor, and when he was pointed out by the Iranians, the commandos asked him to stand up, and then he was shot. It was a war situation. They killed two terrorists and the third went down to the garden with the hostages.

## The asSASsins in Aden

**GEORGE** Lennox was a corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps stationed in Aden in 1964. Here's his experience of the SAS:

I knew that the Special Air Service was called into Aden to act as an undercover, covertly to act in an overtly provocative role.

The SAS and other volunteers were stationed inside Aden and those who could speak the language were dressed up as Adenis, with chocolate colour on their faces.

They went out into the streets and they had the names of suspected so-called terrorists and those who were heading the then illegal political opposition, and they had instructions to seek them out and to assassinate them, kill them.

Inside Aden you had two main political groups, one was the NLF and the other was the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen. The SAS's role was to create confusion within both political organisations.

They would go out and bump off a couple of the FLOSY guys and in turn this would be put out by the Army press as being an inter-group fight.

And of course this would make the FLOSY group take on a retaliatory role and go and seek out the NLF and take revenge and bump off a couple of these people.

\*Taken from *British Soldiers Speak Out on Ireland*, produced by Information on Ireland, 1 North End Rd, London W14. Price 30p plus 15p p&p.

It was while he was out fowl hunting that the SAS struck. James returned to his car with his uncle Given Shuter. The tyres on the car had been let down. James strolled over to a car parked nearby hoping to ask the occupants if they knew anything about the deflated tyres.

He was met with a hail of bullets. Said his uncle later: 'It was a shocking thing to happen. There was no warning given.' The killers, it was later confirmed, were in the SAS. They were never prosecuted.

The *Daily Star* wasn't even in existence in those days. But it was last week and its 'political editor', David Buchan, commented: 'The SAS troops have made the rest of the world hold its breath.'

Billy Hanna has been holding his breath since 21 June 1979. In the early hours of the morning of that day he was on his way home to the Loyalist Shankill Road district in Belfast. The SAS struck when he was walking in the vicinity of three members of the IRA.

The IRA volunteers were unarmed, but the SAS knew who they were and shot them dead. Just to be sure no one,



Billy Hanna

even an innocent like Billy Hanna, lived to tell the tale, Hanna was assassinated as well.

But forget that, after all the *Sun* tells us: 'The SAS are Britain's crack Secret Army. They are the go-anywhere, do-anything super troops. And their bold motto is: Who dares Wins.'

John Boyle didn't win. He was killed by the SAS on 11

July 1978 when he was trying to be helpful. He discovered an IRA arms dump in Dunloy in the North of Ireland, and told his father who reported it to the police.

The next day James went back to the graveyard where the guns were hidden, just to make sure the Army had collected the weapons. That's when he was shot in the back and died. The SAS killers were later acquitted in court.

But what, it may be asked, have such incidents got to do with the British working class? A few Irish people may be killed now and then; the SAS might have a long record of torture in Kenya, Malaya, and Oman, but does this really have any relevance to British workers?

Back to Jean Rook: 'On 14 May we may turn strike crazy. But, today, we are heroes and true Brits — not scared by union mobsters or stirred by little Len Murrays.'

Note the connection — the SAS and strike breakers are heroes, 'terrorists' and trade unionists are 'mobsters'. Which makes it very simple: the heroes of the ruling class are our enemies.



## Secret? We name names

**IF** you believe everything you read in the Fleet Street press, the SAS are so secret that no one knows the names of those in the regiment or the bases from which they operated.

'Because of the dangerous and clandestine nature of their work, the names of the officers and men are known to only the top Army brass', said the *Daily Mail* on 6 May.

In fact the much-vaunted security of the SAS is quite easy to penetrate. As well as the headquarters at Bradbury Lines in Hereford, the SAS is also stationed at Chelsea barracks in London. In the North of Ireland it operates from Holywood barracks, a few miles from Belfast.

As Socialist Challenge reported last week, the head of the SAS is Colonel BM Franks. The head of 'intelligence' at Chelsea barracks is Major Andrew Nightingale. Two other leading officers are Major Derke Newell and Major Mike Wingate-Gray.

Further down the ranks there is the interesting case of Sgt Barry Davies, one of the 'top secret' SAS men who assisted the German commando unit which stormed the hijacked Lufthansa jet at Mogadishu.

Davies has also served in the North of Ireland, and in 1974 he was awarded the MBE. What for? Would you believe 'services to community relations in Northern Ireland'?

The two SAS men who murdered John Boyle were Corporal Ronald Temerley and Sergeant Allan Bohun.



# Build the Labour conference lobby

**MICK SULLIVAN** will be the delegate from North Islington CLP to the special Labour Party conference on 31 May.

He told **Socialist Challenge** why he was supporting the call for the lobby of the conference and why his Labour Party was calling for united action against the Tories:

The Tory government is determined to destroy the welfare services won by the working class in this country over the past 35 years.

It plans to drive down living standards by mass unemployment, low wages and soaring prices, while our ability to organise and fight back is to be undermined by attacks on basic trade union rights.

Thanks to the inaction of the trade union and Labour Party leaders, the Tories have already achieved some successes.

The South Wales general strike was sold down the river by the TUC. The Leyland workers' resistance to Edwardes' job-cutting and speed-up plans has received a serious set back.

## Rates

And Labour Councils up and down the country have been making cuts, raising rates — or both — in an effort to avoid a fight with the Tories.

The Special Labour Party conference on 31 May can be an opportunity to begin to organise the kind

of fightback that we need. An open and democratic conference called to plan action against this government will meet with a massive response from rank and file militants.

## Defeat

This is why I urge **Socialist Challenge** readers to build the lobby of the special conference, on the basis of the resolution published here.

We need united Labour Party and trade union action at all levels if we are to build the kind of movement that can defeat the Tories. And we need open and democratic conferences to organise and plan this action, where all sections of the movement can put their point of view.

I have been delegated to the 31 May conference with a mandate to fight for such united action between the Labour Party and the unions and I shall be fighting to get a hearing for these proposals in the conference.

But with the leadership's refusal to take amendments or

alternatives to its conference statement, we will need to begin to build such a movement ourselves.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee's plan to organise a conference for rank and file trade unionists in September is an important first step in this direction.

In order that the Conference be

as large and representative as possible, we are urging the committee to open the Conference to the whole labour movement and to seek the co-operation of other rank and file bodies, such as the Defend Our Unions Conference and the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions



Kick out the Tories badge available now from: Relgocrest, PO Box 50, London N1. 20p each or cheaper rates for bulk orders, especially for cash in advance.

## The resolution

**AS A growing number of labour movement bodies and prominent trade unionists are backing the call for the lobby of the 31 May Labour Party special conference.**

**Socialist Challenge will be publishing a full list of those who are backing the call.**

**In the meantime get your trade union branch or constituency Labour Party to sponsor and sign this resolution:**

'We welcome the calling of a special one-day conference to discuss the alternative to the Tories.

'Believing that joint action by all sections of the movement is the only way to defeat this vicious anti-working class government, we call on the Labour Party to support and build mass action against the Tories and their policies, leading to the removal of their government.

'In line with this, we call on the Labour Party actively to support trade union and community action against the cuts, against redundancies, and against the proposed Tory Employment Bill.

'We further call on local Labour councils to refuse to implement cuts, or to collaborate in their implementation, and to throw the resources of the town hall and local party behind the anti-cuts movement.

'We call for a clear declaration that a future Labour government will reverse the cuts and repeal the Tories' Employment Bill, in the light of the present equivocation of Labour's Front Bench on these issues.

'We are dismayed that conference will be unable to take resolutions or amendments other than the NEC resolution, and call for a change in standing orders so that discussion on this and other resolutions may take place.

'We believe that it is vital that a fully democratic conference, open to all labour movement bodies, be organised to plan the fight back against the Tory government.

'We therefore support the call of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee for a Labour Party/trade union conference in the autumn which, we believe, should be organised on this basis.

'We support the call for a lobby of the one-day conference in order to express these views to delegates.'



# Fighting the Tories 1920s style

**AS THE TUC leaderships staggers halfheartedly through its Day of Action the need for a decisive lead in the struggle against the Tories becomes even clearer.**

**As the leaders vacillate, failing to call official strike action, and capitulating to the media attacks on 'political strikes', the massive opposition to the Tories is dissipated. The urgent task is to build a rank and file movement which can resist attempts to turn the struggle off course, even when the TUC leaders prevaricate.**

**Such a movement did exist in the 1920s — organised primarily by the Communist Party. It was called the National Minority Movement. MIKE DRAKE tells the story of that movement, with its lessons for today.**

**THE decade following the First World War was one of tumultuous class struggles. The General Strike of 1926 was the culmination of a whole period of struggle that began in the war-time shop stewards movement, and burst out with the impact** *Socialist Challenge* 15 May 1980 Page 4

**of the Russian Revolution.**

The period after the war, began with a short boom, when union membership rose dramatically from 2.6 million to 8.3 million. This was followed by a sharp slump which sent unemployment shooting up to two million.

The Tory government resorted to wage cuts to solve the economic crisis. On Black Friday 15 April 1921, the working class suffered a major defeat when miners' pay was successfully cut by 40 per cent.

By 1924 union membership had slumped to 4 million. These were the circumstances in which the Communist Party, new and tiny, launched the National Minority Movement.

The groundwork for the national movement had been laid by the CP's 'back to the unions' campaign among miners. In the wake of this campaign a miners' section of the Minority Movement had been founded early in 1924.

The Miners' Minority Movement, and later the Metal Workers' Minority Movement, scored some successes, but the Communist Party recognised the limitations of them.

The disparate sections of the Minority Movement needed to be united nationally around clear demands. As a resolution on perspectives at the CP's Sixth Congress in 1924, put it:

'The various minority movements cannot realise their power so long as they remain sectional, separate and limited in their scope and character. The many

streams of the rising forces of the workers must be gathered together into one powerful mass movement which will sweep away the old leadership and drive forward relentlessly to the struggle for power.'

So it was, in August 1924, that 270 delegates representing 200,000 workers gathered in London to launch the National Minority Movement.

Along with basic demands for a £24 a week minimum wage and a 44-hour week, the National Programme of Action adopted by the Movement called for workshop and factory committees, workers control over industry, and industrial unionism.

This programme provided the basis for united action by individual militants, syndicalist-minded workers, Labour Party and CP members. Overall it provided the necessary political basis to challenge the right wing leadership.

By adopting a complex federal structure involving affiliated union branches, trades councils, unemployed committees and actual Minority Movement groups, held together by a strong central body, the NMM was able to unite these diverse forces behind a common programme.

The NMM was spectacularly successful. From 271 delegates in 1924, it grew to have 443 in 1925, then to 547 delegates representing 957,000 workers in March 1926. Its growth seemed to be all upwards.

Its success didn't simply lie in that it united all those prepared to fight on the shop floor.

The tactics employed by the NMM towards the in-

creasing number of left bureaucrats drew wider layers of workers into struggle. Applying united front tactics, it supported these leaders as long as they defended their members' interests. Because it did not rely on them it could resist their moves to retreat.

The NMM made it impossible for the TUC to retreat from support for the miners on Red Friday, in July 1925. On that day the threat of general strike forced the coal owners to withdraw lock out threats. The Tory government continued to pay coal subsidies rather than the miners being forced to accept a wage cut.

This was the high point for the Minority Movement. In the next nine months, to May 1926, the Communist Party became increasingly uncritical of the left bureaucrats. By the time the 'left' bureaucrats betrayed the General Strike the NMM was not prepared to challenge them for the leadership.

The eventual failure of the Minority Movement shouldn't blind us to its lessons. By struggle to develop a united front of the working class against the capitalist offensive it offered a clear challenge to the bureaucracy.

If a similar movement existed today, Len Murray and the other trade union leaders would not get away with so much inaction. If there was a Minority Movement today there would be much less chance of 14 May being an empty gesture and more chance of it opening a genuine struggle to kick out the Tory government.





By Tariq Ali

THE general strike which erupted in France in May-June 1968 was not a thunderbolt out of a clear blue sky. For ten years France had been ruled by General de Gaulle. While Britain was in the throes of an economic crisis and the United States was crippled by the costly war in Vietnam, Gaullist France presented a facade of total stability.

In 1968 most of France's population lived in the towns. Industrial workers represented 41 per cent of the population; white-collar workers accounted for a further 15 per cent. Together they represented the majority class in the country.

Six per cent of the population was engaged in small-scale production, while the majority of peasants owned their own land.

Since the Second World War the French ruling class had been unable to find a stable political instrument. Hence the notorious instability of the Fourth Republic in which the annual making and breaking of ministries had become Europe's favourite joke.

De Gaulle seized power in 1958 and proclaimed the Fifth Republic. The powers of parliament were drastically reduced; decisions would henceforth be arbitrated through the Presidency. The aloof and arrogant style of de Gaulle was an apt symbol of the new Republic.

Thus the lack of a stable ruling class political party was to be compensated by the creation of a strong state with a Bonaparte at its head. De Gaulle spoke directly to the masses through a tame mass media. The Gaullist state was not dependent on any political party.

The General was everything.

## Students

The new administration, however, required a strong bureaucracy and this was to form the lynchpin of the Gaullist apparatus. Though the mandarin was indispensable for the Fifth Republic, at the same time it insulated Gaullism from the masses.

In 1963 a draconian wage-freeze was imposed on the workers. In 1968 unemployment had reached the half million mark.

The development of French capitalism had necessitated a large expansion of the student population in order to meet the needs of the third industrial revolution. The number of students in France had rocketed from 100,000 in 1961 to 500,000 in 1968, making them an important intermediary between the contending social classes in the urban centres, especially Paris.

The education system was totally authoritarian and the system of instruction hopelessly out of date.

Towards the end of 1967 there were signs of increasing militancy in the factories. At the same time there was a student strike involving ten thousand students.

## Barricades

In February 1968, the impact of the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese partisans was felt in Paris. Tens of thousands of students occupied the Latin Quarter and renamed it the 'Heroic Vietnam Quarter'. It was the arrest of the students' leaders which sparked off the revolt.

Barricades went up in Paris and on the night of 10 May the students fought an all-night battle with the hated CRS riot police and won. The government capitulated and released the arrested student leaders. Meanwhile a one-day general strike was called.

The day after spontaneous factory occupations began. An aircraft plant in Nantes and a Renault factory near Rouen were taken over by the workers and the red flag was hoisted. Within the following week there was a tidal wave of factory occupations.

# France, May 1968 The largest general strike in history



## WHAT THE WORKERS ACTUALLY DID

By Ernest Mandel

AT the CSF factory in Brest, the workers decided to carry on production, but they produced what they themselves considered important, notably walkie-talkies to help the strikers and demonstrators to defend themselves against the forces of repression.

At Nantes, the strike committee tried to control traffic to and from the town; it distributed permits for the use of vehicles, and blocked the entrances to the town with barricades.

It also appears that the same committee even issued credit-tokens which were accepted as currency by certain shopkeepers and farmers.

At the Mureaux cement works, the workers voted in a

general assembly to remove the manager. They refused to accept the employers' proposals for a new vote.

The manager in question was thereupon sent off to a different branch of the same cement works, where, out of solidarity with those from Mureaux, the workers immediately came out on strike — for the first time in the history of the factory.

At the Wonder Batteries factory, at Saint-Ouen, the strikers elected a strike committee, and in order to show their disapproval for the reformist line of the CGT, the Communist Party-led unions, they barricaded themselves inside the factory and refused to let the union officials in.

At the Rouen naval yards, the workers took young people selling revolutionary

literature under their protection, and prevented the CRS who were following and trying to arrest them from entering the factory.

In several Paris printing works, the workers either insisted on changes in a headline (*Le Figaro*) or refused to print a newspaper (*La Nation*), when the content was directly damaging to the strike.

In the Peugeot plant at Sochaux, the workers built barricades against any intrusion by the CRS, and chased the latter victoriously out of the factory.

Perhaps the most eloquent case of all: in the Atlantic Yards at Saint-Nazaire, the workers occupied the plant and for ten days refused to submit a list of immediate demands, despite constant pressure from the union apparatus.

The French working class was in full-blooded revolt. The communications system was paralysed and soon the power stations, printing presses, and the shipyards came to a standstill. The scale of the strike had become clear. It was a spontaneous general strike from below.

The general strike had a number of important features. The first was that it had no clearly defined economic objectives. It was a revolt against Gaullism. The Gaullist state trembled. Isolated and paralysed by the strike it took comfort in the fact that it was not yet facing a frontal attack.

Georges Pompidou emerged as the leading bourgeois strategist. He accepted that France confronted a 'pre-revolutionary' situation. But he insisted that the state should remain inactive, since any provocation could have very serious results.

The strike had no political objectives, either, and the only workers' party capable of giving a lead refused to do so. The French Communist Party (PCF) became the ultimate bastion of the French state. It did not even lay down any conditions for its support to de Gaulle. The favourite slogan of French workers occupying the factories was: 'This time we will go all the way.'

The PCF's leading trade union bureaucrat, Seguy, interpreted this call in the following way: "All the Way" for us trades unionists means the satisfaction of the demands for which we have always fought... "All the way" means no wage less than 600 Francs a month... The PCF sought to defuse the political potential of the strike into wage demands.

The general strike was the result of a combination of old and new contradictions which confronted French capitalism. The transformation in consciousness affected virtually every social layer and occupation in France, excepting the bourgeoisie and the state bureaucracy. Even the conscripted soldiers were infected with the revolution.

Without clear objectives, the strike fizzled out after three weeks. It was defused not by repression (even the banned far-left groups reformed under new names a few weeks later), but by a combination of two interrelated factors: mass reformism and bourgeois democracy.

It was elections which ended May 1968. Gaullism was prepared for a frontal clash, but took great care not to initiate one. Ten million workers wanted a fundamental change, but were not convinced of the necessity for a frontal assault at that stage.

## Communists

The only way they would have been convinced is if the factory occupations had developed into a network of urban and rural soviets, thus enabling millions of workers to experience socialist democracy for themselves. Having no experience of dual power, French workers could not spontaneously perceive the need for a test of strength.

The French Communist Party won a massive wage increase through the Grenelle Agreements and a million new workers were unionised. The revolutionary left acquired a toe-hold in the factories.

Waldeck-Rochet, the PCF leader, stated on television: 'The truth is that throughout the grave events which we have just lived through, the French Communist Party conducted itself as a responsible party.' It was one of the truths spoken by French Stalinism in 1968.

May 1968 revealed in the space of two weeks the central problems of revolutionary strategy which will confront socialists in the West.

The Fifth Republic proved to be a more tenacious and resilient enemy than Tsarist Russia. Its 'cetera ditch' was the entire system of bourgeois democracy. Its inner fortifications were the professional soldiers of the French Army on the Rhine. It was further aided by the non-existence of a revolutionary party.

## Revolution

Petrograd in 1917 had fallen to a revolutionary party basing itself on a strategic minority of the population. It then wooed the majority aided by an inter-imperialist war and a series of bold, agrarian reforms.

In the West the opposite will be the case. The involvement of the majority of the working population will be vital right at the start before a socialist revolution is possible. It will be the experience of socialist democracy through organs of workers' power that will create the best conditions for challenging the bourgeois democratic state and defeating its repressive apparatus (the army).

This elementary lesson first learnt in Paris was confirmed seven years later in Lisbon.

The revolution has undoubtedly suffered some setbacks in Europe, but the working class has not been defeated. The big tests lie ahead. That is one reason why the French general strike needs to be studied closely. It is the reservoir of experience which aids the elaboration of a revolutionary strategy much more than text books.



# FEMINISM IN THE '80s

URSULA Hurley started work as a night waitress at a Bistro in Kentish Town, London, but on her first night, when the owner learned that she had four children, she was fired. An industrial tribunal backed up her employer, agreeing that, in a smaller business, women with children were 'unreliable'.

If this was one isolated case, which could be easily reversed, it would not be too shocking. But it is not.

The Employment Bill going through Parliament at the present time, codifies the attack on every woman's right to work. Firms with less than 20 workers will no longer be required to hold jobs open for women who leave to have babies. All employers will have greater freedom to refuse women the same job they had before after having a baby.

Alongside these legal attacks on a woman's right to have a job, are the effects of the non-provision of school meals, the run-down of state childcare facilities for the under fives (meagre as it was), the declining provision for the old and sick and the drift of women's employment towards part-time working compared to the early '70s.

## Abortion

The attacks on fertility control also threaten women's freedom to do what they choose with their lives. Despite the defeat of John Corrie's restrictive abortion Bill it is likely that there will be further attempts, perhaps even a government-backed Bill, aiming to reduce the time limit on abortions to at least 24 weeks.

Back door attacks on fertility control are going on at the present time. The DHSS told the Pregnancy Advisory Service, a London charity clinic, to remove all posters advertising their services from London Transport. The offending words were: Abortion Help? Phone PAS. Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for Social Services, (who thinks that mothers are the best people to care for children and that they should stay at home fulltime to do so), has seen fit to allow only a three month renewal for two pregnancy advisory bureaux, one of which is London's PAS!

## Feminism

The right to work gives women financial independence from men. The right to fertility control gives women sexual freedom, because it allows them to separate their sexual activity from having children. Both allow women to control their own lives. Both these fundamental rights are under attack. How should the women's movement respond?

The fact that so many women in Britain today understand that abortion should be the woman's choice must be credited to the National Abortion Campaign. Through mass petitioning and campaigning on the streets against restrictive laws, NAC has brought the issues of women controlling their own lives into many British homes.

But NAC has come under fire inside the women's movement. Not least from the women on the TUC-sponsored 28 October demonstration who shouted: 'Not the unions, not the state, women must decide their fate'.

TEN YEARS ago this February, the first ever women's liberation conference was held at Ruskin College, Oxford. 600 women turned up to express their new found confidence as women. The Women's liberation movement in Britain was born.

Ten years later women have made their mark on British politics. Anti-discrimination legislation has been passed, battered women have gained some protection in the eyes of the law, repeated attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act have been repulsed. Above all the women's movement in this country has created a

changed attitude towards women, both among men and women themselves.

But the heady days of the '60s and early '70s when more and more women gained economic independence as they filled offices, shops, canteens, and light engineering factories, are over. Women's unemployment over the last two years has been three times the rate of men's. The economic recession, coupled with the monetarist philosophy of the Tory government is hitting women hard.

Here VALERIE COULTAS takes a look at the future of feminism in the '80s.



when Marie Patterson, chairperson of the TUC, and Jo Richardson, Labour MP, were speaking.

These women, some of whom were revolutionary feminists, were a tiny minority of the demonstration, but they reflect a feeling that somehow alliances with the trade unions are wrong — a 'compromise' of feminism.

This Tory government is deadly serious about its economic philosophy. Nothing is being allowed to come before the needs of big business, certainly not the needs of women. Marion Roe, a GLC Councillor, made this crystal clear at the Tory Party conference earlier this year. The women's liberation philosophy, she argued, was responsible for juvenile crime and vandalism because it had 'brainwashed' women into being ashamed to look after their children properly.

## Unions

Women will become the scapegoat for the Tories' economic policies, forced out of work, back to the kitchen sink, having to provide — free of charge — the very facilities that the state should be providing. Freedom of choice for women is not a Tory priority.

How can it be suggested that urging the trade unions, as NAC has done, to take up the demands of women is a 'compromise' when there are millions of women who are members of trade unions today. How else can women expect to rebuff the Tory attacks unless they seek the most

powerful allies — the organised labour movement?

Does such a strategy challenge the autonomy of the women's movement, the right for women to have their own independent organisation? No, it makes it even more important that women build a strong independent movement that can fight for women's demands — at home, at work, at school, in society at large.

The trade unions will not move unless they are pushed, the whole experience of the last ten years underlines this point.

The more organised women become both in and outside the unions, the more the unions will respond to demands for women's equality, the more women can raise feminist issues in society at large. The women's movement in Britain has

always been strongest and most effective when it has mobilised women on the streets, to publicly demonstrate, to women and men alike, that they have power and confidence. The International Women's Day marches, the Reclaim the Night marches, are all a vital part of winning women to a broad understanding of their oppression as women.

## Production

But while the women's movement should continue to develop its politics on a broad range of issues, there is one area where its response has been weak. Since the passing of the equality legislation in 1974 (the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act) the problems facing women at the point of production have received less attention than the issues of reproduction (fertility control, domestic violence, domestic labour).

This was perhaps understandable given the tendency of many socialists to completely ignore the centrality of the problems of women in the home. But, now that women's right to work is so severely threatened, it seems vital that the women's movement turns its energies to this arena of struggle.

Should women support the removal of protective legislation for women workers to allow them to work shift work alongside men? How can women break into male-dominated areas of employment, particularly those that require skills? How are we going to stop the drift of women into part-time work? How should women organise themselves within the unions? These questions must be answered if women are to respond in a rounded way to the Tory attacks.

The women's liberation movement has not met for two years. The last International Women's Day events were small affairs, although it was a big step forward that 250 British women went to Armagh to express their solidarity with Irish women prisoners.

If large numbers of women, from all walks of life, are to be mobilised against the Tories it does seem that the women's movement will have to come to grips with its present dispersal, both at a local and a national level. For it is clear that without such forums for debate and discussion and a powerfully organised women's movement, the enormous potential of feminism in the '80s could easily be lost.

NAC National Conference  
17-18 May  
Belle Vue Centre,  
Belle Vue Road, Leeds.  
Ring NAC: 01-278 0153 for details.

## 14 years for doing an abortion

By Megan Martin

**FOURTEEN years hard labour for carrying out an abortion — that's the barbaric punishment proposed by Queensland's right-wing coalition government in an anti-abortion bill they've just introduced into the State's parliament.**

A woman trying to procure her own miscarriage will be liable to three months jail. This penalty was originally seven years hard labour when the bill was first drafted in September 1979.

### Loopholes

The bill originally proposed that abortion would be legal only in cases where the woman was likely to die if the pregnancy continued or in cases where the woman was likely to commit suicide.

Since then rape, incest, and serious risk of major foetal abnormality have been added as grounds for abortion. But cases of rape must

have been reported to the Queensland police within seven days and the doctor must get a certificate from the police declaring that a rape complaint has been made. Similar provisions apply for cases of incest.

Abortion has never been freely available in Queensland. The anti-abortion laws are already the harshest and most restrictive in Australia. Yet the government has motivated the bill by saying that it is necessary to close up loopholes in existing legislation.

They want to close down the one clinic that has been able to function in Brisbane in

the last two years and to prevent Queensland women from going interstate to get an abortion. Any doctor who advises a woman about an abortion (for example, advice to go to New South Wales) could be regarded as 'frustrating the object of the Act' and deregistered.

Any person who counsels a woman about abortion would be liable to be charged with conspiracy to commit a crime. The government's intention is to close down the referral agencies which at present send thousands of women to New South Wales each year.

And just in case any woman is enterprising enough to refer herself to New South Wales, it is rumoured that women crossing the border will have to undergo a pregnancy test.

At the end of the debate on the first reading, the

Queensland Premier, Mr Bjelke-Peterson, allowed his National Party MP's to vote according to their consciences — as long as they didn't vote against the bill. The bill was carried by 49 votes to 16.

Perhaps the most disgusting aspect of the affair has been the role of the leader of the Labour opposition, Ed Casey. A member of Right to Life, Casey led the attack on women's right to abortion by presenting a petition to Queensland Parliament in August 1979 calling on the government to close down Brisbane's only abortion clinic.

He voted for the new bill at the first reading, but now says that, while he would not vote against it, he can see no purpose in supporting the legislation because it contains loopholes that would still make it possible for some women to obtain lawful abortions in Queensland!



# The British disease and Dr Thatcher's remedy

By Alan Freeman  
(With acknowledgements  
to John Harrison)

IN EARLY youth the patient contracted chronic capitalism. Although initially a source of tremendous vitality, the disease rapidly gained control of the higher mental functions and formed a destructive parasitic growth, the capitalist class.

This renders the whole body subservient to its insatiable needs, weakening it and producing pronounced symptoms of inner decay.

The parasite secretes a drug, jingoism, to which the body becomes addicted, rendering it incapable of ejecting the parasite.

## Previous history

Patient engaged in a wanton spending spree abroad in later youth. Lived by bullying the rest of the world for a while. Now lives in the past, refusing to overhaul basic industry, and scrounges off former victims and partners in crime.

## Symptoms

Since the war the patient has suffered low productivity growth, loss of international competitiveness, and loss of export markets. Acute symptoms began with the end of the world boom, notably a much sharper decline in profit rates and feverish inflation. While the world economy was expanding exports could grow despite a declining world share, covering up the underlying weakness.

Deprived of a healthy international environment, the patient experienced an absolute decline in sales abroad, and headlong decline of old exporting industries.

Inflation and unemployment reached epidemic proportions everywhere and the patient, who was already ailing, caught it worse than anyone else.

Former victims and partners began to slam the door in the patient's face. Severe psychological and side effects followed. North Sea oil has paradoxically made matters worse. The strength of the pound makes it harder to sell abroad. High interest rates, resulting from a strong pound, discourage investment. The patient is in danger of losing all its industry.

## Treatment

First developed by patent medicine salesman Dr Friedman of Chicago. Applied without success in Chile but still recommended by the world's bankers. The aim is to make the body cure itself by creating an environment in which the free market can restore competitiveness.

The main policy prescriptions are:

### 1. Monetarism, or holding down the money supply

However unpalatable, and whatever short-run shocks to the patient, the medicine is the central component of the treatment, and industry must adapt to it.

It is supposed to work like this: tight money makes credit harder to get and cuts down spending on tick. This cuts back production and employment, and makes it harder to finance losses by borrowing. Bankruptcies increase.

This is supposed to produce self-induced surgery. The weak firms go bust, so average productivity rises. The bankruptcies are concentrated in the least internationally competitive industries, so competitiveness perks up. Competition for work forces down wages, and competition for survival gives management that keen fighting edge.

Unfortunately, as with any major surgery, the body as a whole is weakened in the short term. The theory is that by cutting out all the weak bits, the whole must improve in the long term.

The other measures are medical back-up intended to make sure the treatment takes:

### 2. Anti-trades union legislation

Designed to weaken worker resistance and speed up the process whereby the body produces scabs.

### 3. Reduced aid to industry

Clearly the treatment requires that the lame bits are not propped up, but are allowed to fall off decently.

### 4. Cuts in state spending

To re-enforce the fall in expenditure and employment, to make sure the market is allowed full sway, and to transfer income to the richer parts of the system.

### 5. Income tax cuts

Local anaesthesia for the rich.

The treatment is best summed up by 'Keynesianism in reverse'. Keynesian techniques used blood transfusion to keep ailing parts of the body healthy. Monetarism uses the same methods to carry out the mediaeval remedy of bleeding the sick. Unfortunately the effect is to strengthen the parasite at the expense of the patient.

## Side effects

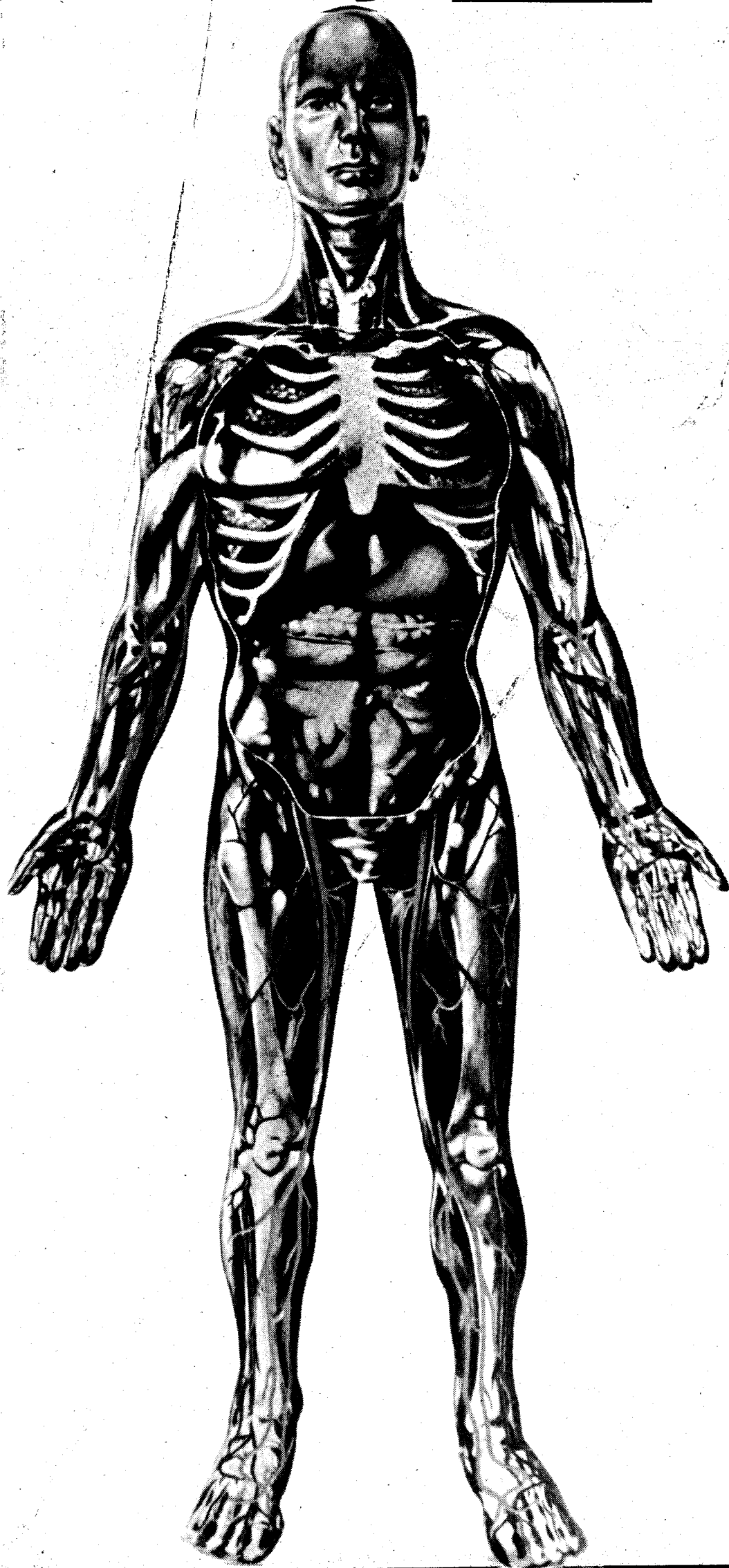
Increasing attention has to be devoted to holding down the healthy parts of the patient which react to the treatment with violent convulsions, attempting to eject the parasitic growth that is the underlying cause of the malady.

Further complications are created by the alarming rise of psychopathological symptoms of military aggressiveness and delusions of grandeur. If continued this may well lead to early death.

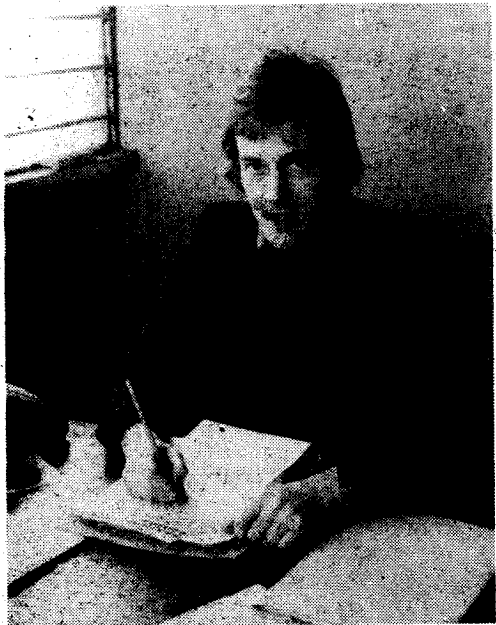
The most painful side effects are unemployment and lost production. If this was made good, over £43.56 billion of new goods and services could be made available, which could pay for a 50% rise in pensions and social security benefits, minimum earnings of £105 all round, a 75% increase in house building, a 25% rise in health and education, and a 50% increase in investment.

## Prognosis

It is unlikely that the treatment will be allowed to run its course. If completed, previous experience suggests that although the patient will die, the treatment has a 50% chance of success.







STEVE POTTER, IMG

## 'Building a class-struggle left-wing in the unions'

**I DON'T think the Tories have much cause for satisfaction. They have claimed a series of successes for a strategy that was designed to avoid the calamities which befell the Heath government.**

The deflection of the general strike threat in South Wales over jobs; the removal of Derek Robinson without serious obstacle in British Leyland; and the decisions of some local and one national trade union body to oppose action on 14 May have been examples of a policy designed to split the working class and sap its tremendous organisational strength.

These setbacks, while real, have to be set against the fact that 14 May will be a massive display of working class organisation and strength; that the cost for the Tories of not entering into conflict with powerful sections of the working class, such as the miners, has been a rate of wage increases that has kept abreast of inflation; that the Treasury has been forced to mark up public sector wage costs to 25 per cent in the public expenditure estimates, and that the principal aim of Tory strategy against the working class in the first year — smashing some of the weaker sections — was confounded by the great struggle of the steelworkers.

The steelworkers' strike sums up the situation very well. The Tories' aim of using the steelworkers as a lesson to the rest of the working class was frustrated; but the steelworkers did not win a settlement that was in any way adequate. They were sold out.

Internationally, the Tories have admitted that their attempts to secure a more solid alliance between the West European powers and US imperialism have been a series of messes and blunders. Only in Zimbabwe have the Tories any cause for satisfaction, but even they realise the political stabilisation of the country is of a temporary character.

The labour movement has resisted major defeats, but it has not scored any major victories either. The greatest threat facing the labour movement today is the danger that the international crisis is used to convince the mass of British people over a period of years that they must be ready to die in wars to preserve British profits abroad and accept austerity as the price of increasing profits here.

There is a pacifist tradition within the British labour movement which can be led in an anti-imperialist direction — that's why the Labour Party demonstration called against the Cruise missiles on 22 June is so important. It is the most significant call to have come from the Labour Party for years.

Since the predictable success of the left at the Labour Party conference following the election, and then over the terms of reference and composition of the commission of inquiry into the Labour Party, I think that the performance of the party must be disappointing to many of its members.

The behaviour of the unaccountable Parliamentary Labour Party has, of course, been scandalous. The right-wing leaders have aided the Tories in their attacks on the trade unions — Eric Varley's speech supporting state-financing

# WHAT DO W

**How successful have the Tories been in their plans to defeat the labour movement? After a year of Tory rule that will be the question many will be asking about the performance of the government and the resistance of the labour movement.**

**Socialist Challenge spoke to ERIC HEFFER MP, a leading left winger on the Labour Party ex-**

**ecutive; DAVE COOK, Communist Party; and a member of the International central committee.**

**We asked them: How succeeded in their strategy? How effective in their strategy? How effective in their strategy? How effective in their strategy?**

of ballots and incomes policy being the latest example.

But even the left MPs have not been prominent in building activities like the Day of Action, and Tony Benn has remained true to the manifesto he issued when he refused a place in the Shadow Cabinet, by limiting his efforts — such as they are — to building a parliamentary opposition.

The stalemate in the class struggle has been reflected in the Labour Party, and this is a direct result of the situation in the trade unions. It is dramatically shown in the shift to the right in the Engineering Union.

Some people obviously think there has been a shift to the left in some unions, such as the TGWU. The Communist Party is trying hard to consummate an alliance with Moss Evans; an effort which is sharpened by the failure so far of their attempts in the AUEW to reverse the trend started by Terry Duffy's accession to the presidency.

It was the TGWU which initiated the proposal for a special Labour Party conference on 31 May, and this is a potentially important development if the conference were used to plan the fightback against the Tories' attacks.

But this 'swing to the left' seemed to have been sharply arrested when Moss Evans sold out the thousands of Leyland workers who went out on strike, with their union behind them, against the Slaves Charter of Michael Edwardes. The CP has treated this episode as a victory for the Leyland workers; with, it appears, the sole aim of covering up for Evans' role in the affair.

I think there is a way out of the stalemate in the fight against the Tories and the stalemate inside the labour movement. Unfortunately it will not be a rapid process, and that's dangerous given the stakes that the Tories are playing for.

As the big defensive struggles against the government restart after 14 May, workers' leaders at every level of the movement will increasingly be drawing political lessons about the way forward. Right now the number engaged in this is not large.

Those drawing lessons about the way forward are organised in different currents inside the labour movement; in national tendencies, like the Broad Left or the Defend Our Unions current, or they are isolated as individuals in shop stewards committees, Labour Party branches, or sometimes any combination of these.

Unifying this militant minority in the trade unions is one of the first steps that can be taken to break out of the stalemate. It would be a step towards building a new left-wing in the unions; based on class struggle policies rather than class collaboration. Such unity in action could start to have profound developments in the Labour Party, too, because the left in the constituency parties also needs organising.

The proposal made by the Labour Coordinating Committee — to organise Labour Party members in the unions — could be a valuable catalyst in both respects. Such a proposal should apply to all trade unionists who are counted as members of the Labour Party by virtue of having subscribed to the political levy as well as individual members.

Neither socialist policies nor a new left-wing in the unions will be fought for without constructing a revolutionary organisation in Britain. The depth of the crisis on a world scale means that we have to construct an international party; a party which simultaneously builds on a national and an international basis.

Today there is only one such organisation in Britain: the International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International.



Photo: GM COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

**9 March demonstration: marchers show their anger with Len Murray — but will he be allowed to**

**DAVE COOK, CP**

## 'Forging alliances between the various parts of the working class'

**THE Thatcher government is not a re-run of Heath's. They have as their aim not just to cut the welfare state, public ownership, and comprehensive education; they want to destroy them.**

The Tories are also in the battle of ideas. Take health: for every hospital they threaten there is also a barrage of propaganda, aimed at undermining the basic democratic idea that the responsibility for looking after the sick belongs to the community at large.

And so it is on every issue; a cluster of combination punches — both hard hitting policies and a fierce drive to push reactionary ideas to back them up.

The Tories have made much popular mileage out of issues like law and order, racism, rates and

taxation, state bureaucracy and education. They combine cold war international policies with their reactionary offensive in Britain.

Right at the heart of the Tory strategy is to go for the organised trade union movement, both to cripple the unions' ability to mobilise to fight back and to weaken the influence of progressive ideas in society.

In their campaign against the Day of Action the class character of the Tory offensive becomes very clear. Big business, the Conservative Party, the media, the judiciary — all have their part to play.

I do not think the Tories have succeeded in this strategy. However, building the fighting takes places in a political context which provides a hard arena for the left. This context includes the Tory offensive, and a growing awareness and fear among working people of the depth and severity of the economic crisis.

Coupled with much foot-dragging 'leadership', this helps to explain the unevenness of the fightback and some of the setbacks the left has faced.

Right from the general election, the Communist Party said that we should not accept that Thatcher was here for 'the duration'. The first question is how to create the political conditions which will force an early general election.

The determined fight by the left at last year's TUC which resulted in a commitment to 'national demonstrative action' was an important stage in this. The right wing in the trade union and in the Labour Party always oppose the use of industrial action for political ends.

One of the big lessons of the fight for the Day of Action is that it is where the policies have been



# WE DO NOW?

national organiser of the  
**STEVE POTTER**, a  
national Marxist Group's  
... have the Tories suc-  
... against the labour  
... has been the opposi-  
... ment?

What's the significance of the shift to the right in the Engineering Union, and the fact that the Labour Party's special conference has been called at the instigation of the Transport Union? And what of Peter Hain's proposal that the Labour Party should organise its supporters in the trade unions?



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

**ERIC HEFFER MP**

## 'The left in the party has to fight for its policies in the unions'

**UP UNTIL now the Tories have done much better than they ought to have done. Unfortunately they have been reasonably successful in dividing the working class.**

Their wages policy in particular has succeeded in dividing the working class — dividing private sector from public sector works, and creating divisions within the public sector according to the relative strength of the workers concerned.

What should not be underestimated is that the Tories' biggest weapon is unemployment, which is bound to have an effect on the working class's ability to fight back.

The opposition has been better than the media has given it credit for, but one of the problems is that the alternative strategy which the Labour Party executive is putting forward is not supported by everyone within the Parliamentary Labour Party, and therefore the lead the parliamentary leadership has provided has not been as effective as it should have been.

Again in the trade unions, the lead there has not been as effective as it should have been.

There is no doubt that the shift to the right in the Engineering Union can be a real setback to the advances made at last year's Labour Party conference, but it's still too early to say categorically that the proposals on the manifesto and re-selection will be defeated because of the AUEW's position.

The Labour Party special conference is a very important development, because it gives the opportunity for the Labour Party and the trade unions at the conference to organise around a very progressive, socialist and radical statement.

It's surely no accident that it was the biggest union, the Transport Union, which asked for such a conference to be held.

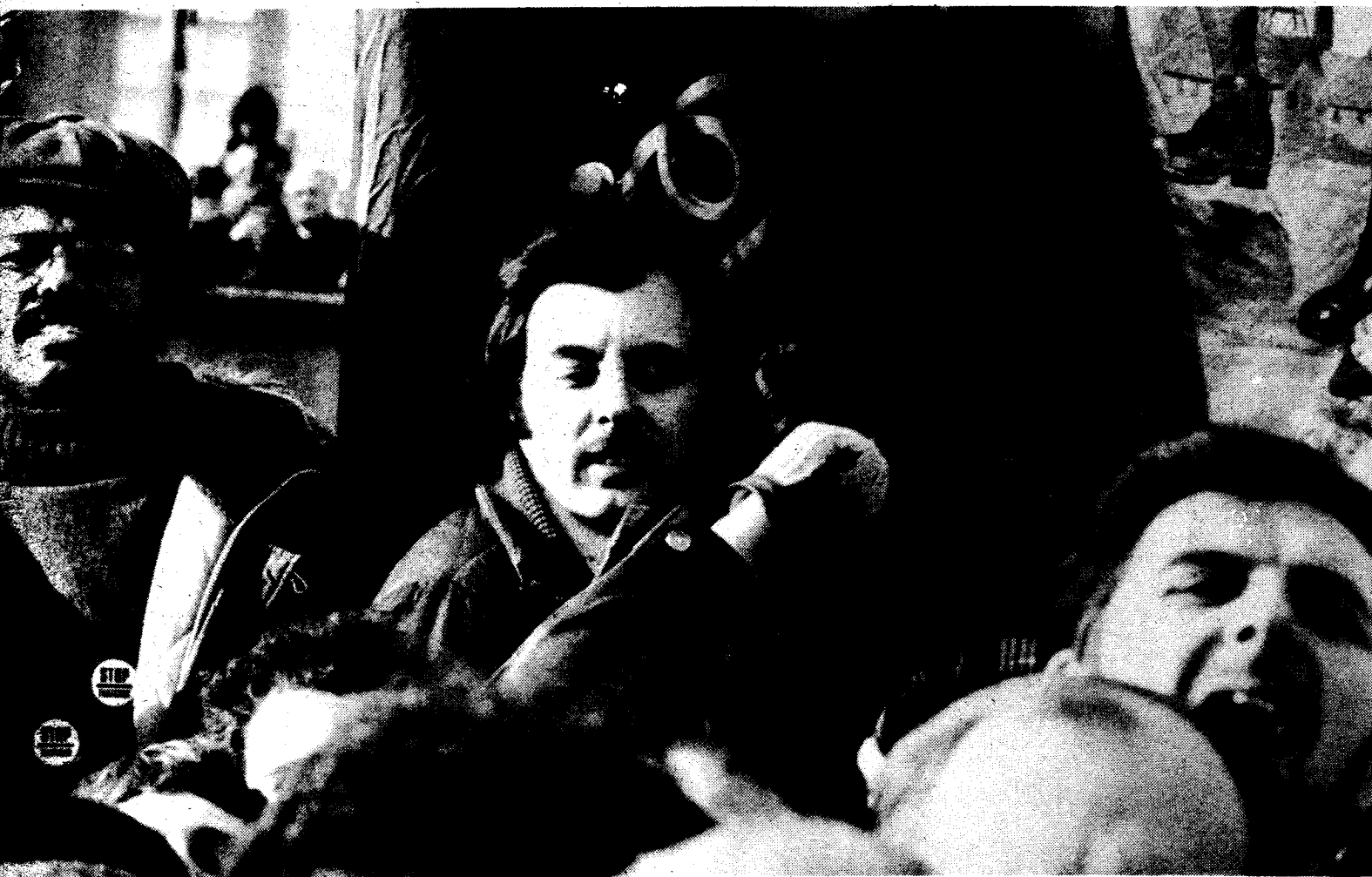
At the Tribune meeting at last year's Labour Party conference I said that there had to be considerable work done in the trade union movement over the coming 12 months, and that if we were going to win it would depend on that.

We have to build on our contacts, and that's precisely what we have been doing, although it can and should be done more effectively. The Parliamentary Labour Party meets top leaders, but the real work has to be done among the rank and file in order to win support for our policies.

The rank and file in the Labour Party are all active trades unionists. Thousands upon thousands of party members hold positions in the unions. Many of them happen to be local councillors. They're interchangeable; all part of the same thing.

But there has to be greater concentration. The left in the party has to fight for its policies in the unions.

It wasn't the constituencies which swung the vote at the last conference, it was the unions. The right-wing leadership in the unions thought they had it sewn up, but they were wrong. Now there has been a setback for us, there's no doubt about that.



... more struggles?

argued out, on the shop floor, that stoppages take place. This has been the approach of the Communist Party.

At the heart of the left's political alternative is the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'. Communists and the *Morning Star* have played a big part in developing and winning support for this

strategy. What is needed now is massive argument and initiative to turn the many hopeful signs of rejection of Tory policy into positive support for the Alternative Strategy.

The launching of a major campaign for selective import controls, as part of the AES, by several trade unions, is important in this context.

The policy document being presented to the special Labour Party conference contains some elements of the alternative strategy, but in some ways it is woefully weak. There is no commitment to reject incomes policy and the need for free collective bargaining. There is no clear pledge on selective import controls. Only small cuts in arms expenditure are proposed. There is inadequate recognition of the need for higher wages to power expansion of the economy.

On domestic issues there is no clear commitment to repeal racist immigration laws; no mention of the need for devolved assemblies in Scotland and Wales; no proposal to break with the shameful bipartisan approach on Northern Ireland. Intimately connected with defeating the Tories is the need to ensure that a future Labour government begins to operate radically different policies.

In achieving this, the fight for democracy in the Labour Party is very important. What is also crucial is the degree to which the Labour Party and the trade unions are won to developing the overall political alternative they offer, and make them issues of mass politics. Communists work with the left to help this happen.

Our strategy, 'The British Road to Socialism', describes this difficult task of forging alliances between the various parts of the working class, as building a Broad Democratic

Alliance. No other section of the left has this objective.

Without the contribution of an independent, organised, revolutionary party, rooted in the working class, and based on the revolutionary ideas of Marxism, the labour movement will not be so transformed.

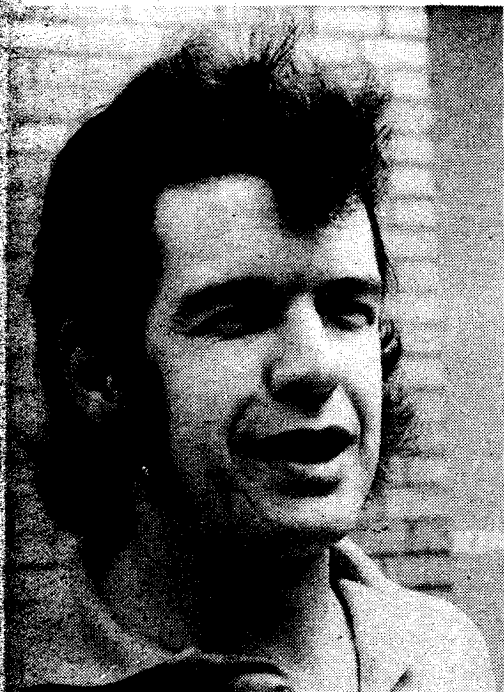
There has been a highly organised, relentlessly executed, media-backed campaign to reverse the previous left majority on the Engineering Union's national committee. The right-wing advance reflects in some measure the debilitating influence of years of social contract.

However, I think it is important to guard against final judgement with this union, and it is wrong to assume that the irresolution of its leadership necessarily reflects the mood of the shopfloor. For example, the sell-out of the Leyland stewards by Duffy produced an unprecedented number of branch protests.

But we have to work to reverse the gains the right wing has made. The defence of union democracy through the process of rules revision is particularly important. The inner right-wing caucus is out to eliminate the many democratic features of the AUEW constitution. Maximum unity can stop this.

Some of the points made by Bob Wright about the Broad Left in *Marxism Today* seem to be significant; in particular, the need to broaden its concerns to include wider political questions.

As far as Peter Hain's proposals go, I've heard the idea that the Labour Party should organise factory branches for a number of years. If it happens, great! The problem is that the dominant reformist trend in the Labour Party is bitterly opposed to any conception of politics, other than electoral ones.



**DAVE COOK**



# REVOLUTION

**THIS weekend sees the first national conference of revolutionary socialist youth organised by *Revolution* newspaper. Colin Talbot interviewed veteran Trotskyist, Harry Wicks, on why he is going to the conference and on the early history of the revolutionary movement's approach to**

**building a youth organisation.**

**Here we reprint some excerpts from that interview, together with an article by Ann Henderson from the National Committee of Revolution on the significance of the launching conference this weekend.**

## 'The youth have got so much to lose' — Harry Wicks

As far as the organisation of young workers is concerned it's been the weakest point of the labour movement of this country, its refusal to face up to the organisation of young workers. So the tradition of a youth organisation is weak in this country.

What you did have was the Socialist Sunday School movement which was pre-First World War, and then there was the attraction of youngsters in the immediate period after the first war into the revolutionary movement, into the ILP (Independent Labour Party) and the Labour Party with the leftward swing that took place in 1919.

But there was no solid organisation of youngsters doing youth work. It was really from outside, from the young communist international, that the pace was set for the building in this country of a revolutionary youth organisation.

In 1920/21 the youth first came together internationally. In Britain in the early '20s there was the Young Workers' League, a revolutionary youth organisation heavily influenced by the British Socialist Party — itself the largest constituent element in the founding of the British Communist Party — which merged with another communist youth movement to form the Young Communist League (YCL) in about 1921.

From about September 1920 you had the start of a big recession and crisis following the boom for about 18 months after the first war.

That recession placed the burden on the young workers as far as organisation and their standards of living were concerned — there was no work.

### 'Unemployment to a young worker is something more than to an adult worker'

You had the cutting out of apprenticeships and the tightening up of conditions on them so that young workers were separated from their workmates really. If a young worker came out on strike and he was apprenticed to a firm it was legally recognised that his indentures (contract) were broken. He could have done two years of craft training but be reduced for evermore to the ranks of the unskilled worker.

A lad left school at 14 and went straight into industry into the mines, engineering, whatever job he could get. If he became unemployed he became part of a giant reserve of unskilled labour.

I knew some youngsters in the Rhondda valley who left school at 14 and I knew them when they got married at 22 and they had never been to work. This was not the exception it was commonplace. That is an example of the greater intensity of exploitation of young workers.



### 'The "Upstairs, Downstairs" labour force was supplied from the valleys in South Wales.'

And for young women in South Wales leaving school at 14 there was the recruitment of girl

labour to come to London to go into domestic service. And if it was not that, it was into nursing in the Poor Law Institutions.

The young workers were doomed, if they left school at a period when there was no work, to unskilled labour for the rest of their lives. That's worth remembering in the current situation.

With the cuts in education, the closing of technical colleges, the reducing of apprenticeships, it's necessary more than ever for the young workers to organise themselves.

In addition to organising as revolutionaries it's necessary for young workers to think in terms of directing their efforts into the trade union movement just as efforts were made by the YCL in the 1920s to get influence in the unions to get conferences of young workers.

### 'If you're not romantic when you're young, what are you, you're nothing, are you?'

The young have got so much to lose. They are living in a precarious situation with the hotting up of the imperialists' war ambitions, with the American youth confronting the draft, and in this country registering the youth for national service cannot be ruled out.

The revolutionary youth will be interested in the growth of the anti-nuclear movement too. Another thing that seems to me to be vital about the organisation today of revolutionary youth is for them to be intimately connected with their class.

There is a tendency to break away from your ordinary lifestyle when you become a revolutionary. This is the greatest fallacy as far as the young worker is concerned.

Because the issues that confront the youth are so grave today it's necessary to have a viable youth organisation that has the organisational autonomy to stir things up and create an impact.



## Youth Against the Tories

By Ann Henderson, Manchester Revolution

THE SUMMER of '78 saw thousands of youth on the streets, organising through the Anti Nazi League and Rock Against Racism. That's also when Revolution was born — a revolutionary socialist youth paper fighting to win youth just getting into political activity to the understanding that it's the whole system which oppresses them, and which needs to be overthrown.

Revolution has come a long way. We produce a regular paper — number 10 is just out — and we have Revolution youth groups up and down the country from Aberdeen to South Wales. We were centrally involved in organising the first national young women's conference last year, a recent young workers' conference in Manchester and the successful youth march against unemployment in South Wales.

Revolution members are also active in lots of other political campaigns round racism and Ireland.

Around the world, youth are always in the forefront of the struggle against the capitalist system. In Nicaragua they gave their lives for the fight for freedom from the Somoza dictatorship. In South Africa students shut down their schools organising against discrimination and the apar-

theid system.

Here in Britain black youth took on the police in Bristol.

There genuinely is no future for youth under this rotten system, which is why we need a revolutionary youth organisation to fight for a society where we can control our own lives and our own future.

This weekend, 17/18 May, Revolution will be launched as an independent national youth organisation, electing its own leadership, deciding on its own programme and running its finances. Up until now we have been dependent on the International Marxist Group for much of our resources and organisation.

Our first national conference has three immediate tasks. Firstly, we want to build a mass 'Youth against the Tories' movement to work alongside all the other movements organising to get rid of Thatcher and her government. We are not going to wait another four years.

Secondly, we want to build and strengthen organisations of youth like the National Union of School Students and NUS as well as establishing young workers' committees in the trade unions. Thirdly we want to build Revolution and fight for all revolutionary socialist youth to join with us in that project.

More than 200 youth will be at the Revolution conference this weekend. You should come along too and help us build a large and effective revolutionary socialist youth organisation.

Saturday/Sunday 17/18 May  
**REVOLUTION**  
**NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

at  
The University of London Students Union  
Malet Street, London WC1  
(5 mins from Euston Station)

Guest Speakers from:  
America, Ireland, France  
plus Filmshows and Workshop Discussions

### Rock Against Thatcher

Spectre and The Pack  
Saturday 17 May,  
9pm, at University of London Students Union,  
Malet Street, London WC1.  
Admission: £1.50 (£1 un-waged)

Admission to Revolution and gig combined £3 (include accommodation).  
Transport from every major city, for details telephone 01-359 8371



NEW badge, only 20p.  
Order from Revolution,  
PO Box 50, London N1.  
Send cash with order. £1.50 for 10.



# EDUCATE, AGITATE, ORGANISE

## IMG 1980 CADRE SCHOOL

AT THE 1980 IMG Cadre School comrades from all over the country together with visitors from Europe will be able to meet and discuss questions of Marxist theory and strategy in a relaxed environment.

Marxists, in contrast to reformists and centrists, have always stressed the importance of theory in building a revolutionary organisation that is confident in its programme. This school can be a step in this process.

The main sessions of the school will examine the important revolutionary upheavals in 20th century Europe and the Third World to help deepen our understanding of the central historical tasks of the working class in our epoch.

We will study the relationship between the world imperialist crisis and the colonial revolution, looking in particular at the nature of various nationalist movements and the relevance of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. We will look at the Stalinist global

policy of 'peaceful co-existence' from Yalta to the invasion of Afghanistan.

When looking at Europe the school will focus on the role of the workers' government, dual power and insurrection in the context of developed bourgeois democracies.

The school is designed to combine  
\*A forum for discussing questions of Marxist theory and strategy

\*The opportunity to hear authoritative lectures by Ernest Mandel, Charles Udry, Margaret Coulson, Robin Blackburn, Tariq Ali, John Ross, and many more

\*A variety of recreation facilities including: Filmshows, relaxing in the sun, sports activity to watch or join in (Tariq will be leading morning jogging sessions — optional)

\*Socialist Worker/Socialist Challenge cricket match on Saturday afternoon

A DEPOSIT of £10 will secure your place, but the full £47.50 has to be paid in full by 31 June. This sum covers accommodation, all meals, morning and afternoon coffee and the full programme of events.

Detailed programme reading lists and information regarding the exact venue will be received on registration.

Attendance at the school is open to members and sympathisers of the IMG, Revolution and the Fourth International. To avoid a last minute rush and disappointment — there are only 150 places available — send off your registration immediately.

Send cheques/postal orders to: 'The Week Society', PO Box 50, London N1.



ERNEST MANDEL

### MAIN SCHOOL SESSIONS

The main sessions are grouped into three parts:

- 1) Permanent Revolution and Strategy in the Third World  
Stalinist Global Policy from Yalta to Afghanistan  
The Cuban Revolution  
Revolution in Nicaragua  
\*Debate on Cuba Today
- 2) Political Revolution in the Workers States — Hungary and Czechoslovakia  
\*Debate on Afghanistan
- 3) The German Revolution 1918/19  
Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain, 1936  
Revolution in Portugal 1974/5  
Nature of the Coming British Revolution  
\*Debates on State Capitalism and the Trade Unions in Late Capitalism.

### OPTIONAL COURSES

As well as the main lectures there will be a series of optional three-part courses. Two introductory courses are planned:

- 1) An Introduction to Revolutionary Politics
  - 2) An Introduction to Marxist Economics
- There will be two other subsidiary courses on:
- 3) Marxism and the Family
  - 4) Aspects of the History of the British Labour Movement

It would be very helpful if comrades would state their preference on the application form provided. It will not be possible for comrades to attend more than two optional courses.

### The Other Bookshop Reading List

A full reading list per topic will be provided on registration, but the following will be generally helpful background reading. All books available on request from the Other Bookshop

- Revolutionary Marxism Today, Mandel, NLB £4.50
- Transitional Programme, 30p
- Lessons of October, Trotsky, 90p

### Special offers

Trotsky — A Study of the Dynamic of His Thought, Mandel, special price £2.  
From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, Mandel, special price £2

# Steelworkers international

By Brian Grogan

ON May Day steelworkers from South Yorkshire renewed the worldwide links with other steelworkers that they built up during the steel strike. A number of leading rank and file militants went to several countries for May Day celebrations, carrying the greetings and thanks of British steelworkers for the help given during their 13 week strike.

The trips were organised under the auspices of the Stocksbridge joint shop stewards committee in contact with rank and file militants abroad.

Brian Molyneux, secretary of the Stocksbridge committee, who went to Venezuela at the invitation of steelworkers there, explained: 'We have many common problems. The bosses have international links, so should we. At some stage we have to take on the Common Market's plan for steel, (the Davignon plan), so we have ideas for an international bulletin.'

Brian visited the Southern Venezuelan city of Ciudad Guyana which is the biggest industrial complex in the country. It holds a steelmill employing 12,000 workers and producing 2.5m tonnes of steel per year.

The workers in this region have managed to construct a class struggle union in the face of massive repression. It was

the stewards who invited Brian.

'I want to explain our experience of bureaucracy and get from them some of their experience of building a democratic union as well as relate our experience of the strike', he says.

Other shop stewards set off for Sweden, Longwy in France, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

Other international link ups between rank and file workers have also taken place recently. Two weeks ago the second international meeting of rank and file Ford workers was held in Cologne. Representatives of Ford Cologne, Ford Copenhagen and Ford UK were present.

The meeting discussed responding to a redundancy threat at Copenhagen and made plans for a full international meeting to be held in June.

As the steel strike showed, international solidarity can develop in the heat of big struggles. This demonstrates above all that an alternative policy to that of bureaucrats like Bill Sirs, who see salvation through import controls, is a real possibility. Their solution is made at the expense of foreign workers.

But the reality of international links shows that practical internationalism is a growing trend inside the British workers' movement.



COLIN HERD

## 'I appeal to all workers to dig deep'

The IMG doesn't often blow its own trumpet. So I'm going to blow it a bit — not too much. The IMG is asking for £6,000 to be raised urgently. This is not a massive sum to ask for, especially if you compare it with what Thatcher has just paid for my new boss.

As a steelworker I appeal to all readers of *Socialist Challenge* to give generously. The IMG wants the money to help the working class. I know that in the steel strike, they stretched themselves to the limit to help us win the fight.

It was meeting IMG members up and down the country and reading *Socialist Challenge* that made socialists out of many sound trade unionists. Your money will go to continuing this work.

The new IMG pamphlet which gives our experience of the steel strike is the sort of thing that the IMG wants the money for. I appeal to all workers to dig deep.

Colin Herd is ISTC Convenor at the Warrington Works. He has just decided to join the IMG on the conclusion of a tour of European countries speaking to meetings sponsored by the Fourth International on the lessons of the British steel strike.

He is also a contributor to the IMG

## Lessons of the Steel Strike & the fight to kick out the Tories



With contributions from Bernard Connolly, Ray Davies, Colin Herd, Brian Molyneux and other strike leaders.

An IMG pamphlet

pamphlet: The Lessons of the Steel Strike and the Fight Against the Tories. This pamphlet is now available from: PO Box 50, London N1 2XP, from The Other Bookshop, or local IMG branches.



### Special introductory subscription offer

£1 for 5 issues sent to your door! Only for subscribers from this week's issue.

Name .....  
Address .....

I enclose a donation for the Fund Drive of .....

Make all cheques, postal orders payable to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

### INTERESTED IN THE IMG?

I am interested in the politics of the IMG .....

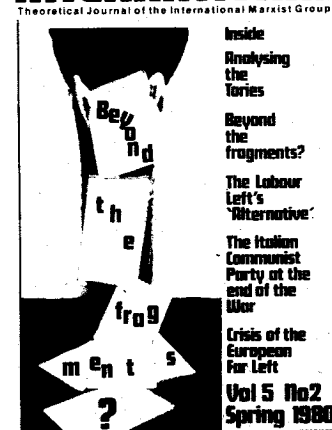
I am interested in local IMG activities .....

Name .....  
Address .....

I enclose a donation for the Fund Drive of .....

Make all cheques, postal orders payable to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

### INTERNATIONAL



OUT NOW! New issue of *International*, IMG theoretical journal. Contains major articles on the Labour left's 'Alternative Economic Strategy', 'Beyond the Fragments' and Italian Communist history. Also reviews and a reply to the SWP on the crisis of the European far left. Single issues: 85p. Subs: £3.50 for one year. From The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1.



WOMEN in Action has produced a new fundraising badge, in pink on purple, 20p plus 10p p&p. Box 2, Sisterwrite Books, 190 Upper St, London N1.



# How militant is the Militant?

**THE MILITANT** current inside the Labour Party, which was recently subjected to an unprecedented inquisition by the Labour right and its friends in the media, has emerged unscathed and even strengthened by the ordeal.

**DAVE HUDSON** takes a critical look at this self-styled Marxist wing of the Labour Party.

**THE media's failure to generate a witch-hunt against the Militant within the ranks of the labour movement has resulted in the report by Lord Underhill being dropped almost as rapidly as it had been seized on.**

Given that the move against the *Militant* was intended as part of an offensive to counter the gains made by the left within the Labour Party, the outcome can only be regarded as a victory for the left as a whole.

Better prepared than on the previous occasion, when the chief inquisitor was Shirley Williams, *Militant* was able to mobilise considerable sympathy. Unfortunately, as with the previous witch-hunt, *Militant* limited its defence to Marxist 'respectability'.

In 1977 Shirley Williams stated that the acceptance of the constitutional and democratic road to socialism was a condition of membership of the Labour Party.

## Answers

The response by Nick Bradley, a well known *Militant* supporter and the Labour Party Young Socialists' representative on the Labour Party executive, was to say: 'To her demand for unequivocal answers from us on whether socialist objectives can be achieved democratically, we reply, Yes!'

Bradley was referring to *Militant's* policy of calling for the nationalisation of the monopolies under workers' control, to be achieved by means of an Enabling Act put through when Labour is in government.

There is only one interpretation that can be placed on this policy: that *Militant* believes that socialism can be legislated through parliament. Its orientation is summarised in its main slogan, 'Labour to power on a

socialist programme'. The problem of the state is absent from this schema.

Years of burrowing away within the Labour Party has meant that *Militant* bases its activity on the internal rhythms and routines of the party, rather than on mass struggle. The result is that its fight for socialist policies is waged on terms which the labour bureaucracy can accept.

Constitutionalism rules. Instead of seeking to break reformists from subordinating workers' struggle to constitutional channels, *Militant's* concentration on the Labour Party programme leads its followers to engage in somewhat abstract debates on the nature of this programme.

Of course, it is correct to focus attention on questions of government. But in the tradition of British Labourism, *Militant* confines this to the Labour Party and Parliament, side-stepping in its propaganda the issue of the capitalist state, which in fact will seek to put paid to any socialist measures.

*Militant's* tendency is to adapt to the political framework of the reformists, as can be seen in its failure to pose the removal of the right-wing leaders of the labour movement.

## Removed

Thus on television recently Pat Wall, a leading *Militant* spokesperson, said that the post election divisions in the Labour Party were not about personalities — the removal of the Callaghan leadership — but about amendments and policies. He merely echoed Benn's own timid stance, in fighting for a change of policy, but failing to openly campaign for the leadership of the party.

Resolution mongering and abstract propagandism avoids the necessity of fighting for leadership, and lets the Labour leaders off the hook. Moreover it has become a



substitute for active involvement in real struggles.

*Militant* counterposes, in a sectarian way, the struggles that do break out — partial and for limited demands — with the historic tasks of winning socialism. This sectarian attitude is seen in their assessment of broad campaigns like the National Abortion Campaign, or anti-imperialist activity, like the Troops Out Movement. *Militant* has never participated in these movements because they were not initiated by the 'labour movement'. What they really mean is that they were not initiated by the labour bureaucracy. In effect this leads to tail-ending the reformists and abstaining from the struggle to win leadership.

Uniting in action around partial demands, like 'For a woman's right to choose', is somehow opportunist! So, like all sectarians, they stand on soap-boxes preaching from the sidelines, demanding that the masses fall behind them after some process of religious conversion.

Their sectarianism has an obverse side: economism. They adapt to what Lenin called 'trade union politics'.

The Labour Party Young Socialists, which *Militant* leads, has a worse record on the struggles of the oppressed than the Young Liberals! The 'problem' of women's emancipation is relegated to the future socialist society — *Militant* has denounced the women's movement as a force that is 'barren' and 'hostile to the labour movement'.

*Militant* has almost nothing to say about Britain's imperialist past, and the benefits that the British working class reaped from the rape of the colonies. It therefore fails to develop a critique of the chauvinism and patriotism that permeates the labour bureaucracy — they certainly neither say nor do much about it.

Women's or black self-organisation is simply seen as divisive to the working class, and in no sense an instrument in the struggle for socialism. Only the trade unions, the Labour Party, and *Militant* organised

exclusively inside the Labour Party, have this role to play.

Its economism is especially visible in its treatment of the Irish question. It behaves as though the Protestant and Catholic working class of Ireland is united, and argues for mutual struggle for higher wages, against unemployment and so on. It tries to avoid the real historical roots of sectarianism — partition, the status of the Catholic minority in the Six Counties, British imperialism — to argue that the struggle for a united Ireland is a diversion from the class struggle (i.e. the economic struggle).

*Militant* does not give unconditional support to the anti-imperialist struggle of the Irish people, nor to the republican movement; it tends to concentrate its fire against 'sectarians' and 'terrorists' rather than against British imperialism.

In Britain, in a situation where the Labour Party and trade union lefts have failed to produce policies that begin to organise the fightback, the far left remains very weak. In these conditions, where the working class has to force its leaders to actually take a lead, a great responsibility is placed on the door of currents like the *Militant*.

In order to build an alternative leadership to the right wing bureaucrats the far left has to concentrate on building a left opposition inside the unions.

This is not to say that trade union militants should, or can, be indifferent to developments inside the Labour Party. On the contrary, this class struggle opposition has to be built both in and outside the Labour Party. But the reformist leaders of the party have to be forced to break from their parliamentarianist perspective and put the emphasis on building mass action — starting with action against this government now!

The resolution mongering of the *Militant* tendency does not achieve decisive blows against the Tories now, nor will it achieve decisive blows against capitalism in the future. That is why we have to reject the methods of the *Militant*.

## Welsh TUC: no lead

By Celia Pugh

**UNEMPLOYMENT** dominated the discussion at the Welsh TUC at Llandudno last weekend. A recent report produced by Bangor University estimates that 173,000 people will be out of work in Wales by 1983 — that's an increase from 8.7 to 14 per cent.

Emlyn Williams, the South Wales NUM president, warned the conference that this could be 20 per cent in some mining communities following an NCB plan announced last week to call in 21 pits for investigation.

As a result the conference voted without dissent to give the 'strongest possible support to the day of action on 14 May and pledges itself to work within Wales for the success of this and any subsequent action which the TUC feels is necessary'.

After this decision the delegations from NALGO, NUPE, NUT, GMWU, TGWU, and UCATT sent a letter to local authorities informing them that their members would be requested to stay away from work on 14 May. The miners reported that they would be recommending strike action at a special conference next weekend.

## Action

Explaining the mood of the delegates, George Wright, General Secretary of the Wales TUC, demanded more action from the TUC.

But we have heard all this before from George Wright. In March this year, at his request, the General Council of the WTUC called off Welsh strike action planned for 10 March, leaving miners and steelworkers isolated in their jobs' fight.

Some delegates reminded the conference of this record. Colwyn Williams, a delegate from Swansea trades council, explained that 'calling actions on and off demoralises people. Paper speeches become paper resolutions reflecting a paper leadership.'

However, despite these contributions, the General Council and George Wright were left off the hook. With obvious reference to the 10 March sell-out, the NUM had tabled a resolution which deplored the fact that many unions hide behind British union constitutions to avoid implementing the decisions of the WTUC.

With accusations from George Wright that this resolution would disrupt the unity for 14 May, the NUM withdrew, leaving any challenge to his leadership without a focus.

So it was with some relief that Wright was able to sum up the conference with the observation: 'This has been a quieter conference than usual. Indeed there has been no real debate or dissent at all.'

Many crucial issues were left unresolved by the conference and a stronger lead will have to be found in the fight for jobs. The Welsh TUC did not provide that lead.

## SCEVENTS

**ABERDEEN:** SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info ring phone Colin, 574068.

**BATH:** SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.

**BIRMINGHAM:** SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643-0669.

**BRADFORD:** SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

**BRENT:** SC supporters sell every Sat Morning at the Brent Collective Bookstall in the Trades Hall, Willesden High Rd NW10.

**BRIGHTON:** For info phone Nick, 605052.  
**BRISTOL:** SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fulmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Montpellier, Bristol 6.  
**CAMDEN:** SC Filmshop of the feminist film, 'Song of the Shirt'. Sue Clayton, a director of the film, will lead a discussion afterwards. Thursday 22 May, 8pm. Venue: Film Co-op, 42 Gloucester Ave, NW1. £1.20 or 60p unwaged.

**CARDEFF:** SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30; Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

**COVENTRY:** SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.

**DUNDEE:** SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.

**ENFIELD:** SC available from Nelsons Newsagents, London Rd, Enfield Town.

**ENFIELD:** SC Public Meeting Thurs 22 May 8pm. "After 14 May, Where Next?" Speakers: Ray Varnes, chairperson, London Divisional Council (NUPE) and Dave Hacker, Deputy Convenor, Thorns ASTMS (Brimar). Venue: SCOPE Community Centre, 210 Hereford Rd, Ponders End, Enfield.

**HUDDERSFIELD:** SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

**LAMBETH:** SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube, Oval tube, Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.

**LAMBETH/SOUTHWARK:** SC Public Meeting "Fight to Kick out the Tories!" Friday, 16 May, 7.30pm. Speaker: Pat Kane. Venue: Lordship Lane Info Centre, 29-35 Lordship La, SE 24.  
**NEWHAM:** SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.  
**OLDHAM:** SC sold every Saturday outside

Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.

**OXFORD:** SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.

**SOUTHALL:** IMG Public Meeting Thursday 15 May 7.30pm in Southall Town Hall "How to Stop the Tories" with Martin Eady (Ealing Common NUR and President London Transport District Council), Enda Donnelly (Hounslow Labour Councillor), Carl Brecker (Chairperson of Ealing, Hammersmith & Hounslow Health Shop Stewards Committee), Andy Lilley (Assistant Secretary, Ealing Trades Council).

**STOCKPORT:** SC sold every Saturday 1pm Mersey Square. Tel. 061-236 4905 for more information.

**SWINDON:** SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).

**TESSIDE:** SC sales at Newsfane shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linsthorpe Rd, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Mkt, Stockton High St.

**TOWER HAMLETS:** SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm Watney Mkt, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube, Sunday 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.

## WHAT'S LEFT

**WOLVERHAMPTON:** SC Meeting on Monday 19 May, 8pm at Coach and Horses pub, Cannon Rd. "Law and Order is Good for You" — speaker Dave Stevens (anti-racist activist).

**WOLVERHAMPTON:** SC on sale Wolverhampton Railway station 4.30-6pm on Thursday & Friday; Polytechnic Students Union Friday 12-2pm and Mander Centre, near Beatties, Sat 11am-2pm.

**RATES for ads to appear in What's Left.** 5p per word or 24 per col. inch. Deadline: noon Sat. prior to publication. Payment in advance.

**REMEMBER BRISTOL!** T-shirts (S,M,L.) £2.95. Posters (20ins x 30ins) 75p. St Pauls, Bristol, 1980 plus photo. Discount for bulk orders. SAE for our current lists. Sleeping Partners (screenprinters), 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1. Tel. 051-708 7466.  
**CELEBRATE Zimbabwe liberation.** Sat 17 May, Trades Hall, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8. 2.30-5pm, film, meeting (free); 8pm Afrodisco, bar/food, £1.

**THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST — A TROTSKYIST VIEWPOINT.** A series of lectures in Britain by a member of the Revolutionary Communist League of Egypt.

The RCL — an illegal organisation under Sadat's regime — was prominent in the strike of 1977.

**Sheffield:** Thurs 15 May, 8pm University of Sheffield, Biology lecture theatre 2.  
**London:** Tues 20 May, 7.30pm Conway Hall (small hall), Red Lion Square, WCI.  
**Birmingham:** Thur 22 May, 7pm, Dr Johnson Hse, Bull St (Rm 46).

**CRAZED** Carter drives towards WWII. Trotskyists stand with the USSR. Spartacist League/Leninist Faction fusion meetings. Speaker: Mark Hyde, formerly WSL National Committee. **London:** Fri 16 May 7.30pm, LSE Rm S421. **Sheffield:** Thur 15 May 7.30pm, Station Hotel, Wicker Road. **Oxford:** Tues 20 May 7.30pm, OCCR, Princes St/Cowley Rd. **Birmingham:** Thur 22 May 7.30pm, Church Centre, Carr's Lane.

**COUNTERACT** socialist feminist theatre needs an administrator. Please write: 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AT.

**'FIGHT Racism! Fight Imperialism!'** No 4 out now. Contents include: St Paul's uprising, full report and analysis; major review of Harry Heywood's 'Black Bolshevik'; Earlinton Family Defence Committee, Anwar Ditta

## IMG NOTICES

Defence Committee and Oldham Defence Committee; and Armagh POWs struggle. Price 20p plus 15p p&p. From RCG Publications Ltd (SC), 49 Railton Road, London SE24 0LN.

**MANCHESTER** SC raffle winning numbers: radio alarm clock, 4840, B Morgan; cigarettes, 4562, Pete P; Oxford; book token, 3880, Dronfield, Stockport; whiskey, 2042, N Gool, M'cr; Martini, 4163, EB, M'cr. Winners please phone 061-236 4905 to arrange collection.

**IMG NOTICES**  
**ANTI-NUCLEAR** fraction. Sat 17 May 11am, national centre.  
**LEYLAND** national fraction. B'ham centre, 137 Digbeth, B'ham. Sun 8 June, noon to 4pm. TGWU national fraction. Centre, Sun 6 July.

**RAIL** national fraction. Sat 5 July national centre noon to 4pm. Sun 8 June.  
**NUT** national fraction. Sat 31 May.  
**NATIONAL GAY** fraction. Sun 1 June in London. Venue to be arranged. Agenda: theses on gay liberation printed in pre-conference DB; perspectives for gay movement; allocation of work within fraction. A document on perspectives will be available from mid-May. Anyone wanting to be sent a copy and not on mailing list contact national centre.



# Letter from Paris

From Charles Lister

**ON May Day in Paris, tens of thousands of workers take to the streets and display their strength in huge marches through the capital's wide and shady boulevards. Traditionally, May Day demonstrations are massive and united.**

This year, however, things were sadly different.

There has been an open and violent split between the two halves of the French working class movement — the Communist Party and its trade union federation, the CGT, on the one side, and the Socialist Party and the trade union federation it supports, CFDT, on the other.

## Split

Ever since the break-up of the CP-SP 'Union of the Left', on the eve of the elections in 1978, the split has become more acrimonious. The termination of the Left Union ruined the possibility of the left coming to power in the elections, and it was followed by a period of stunned shock during

which it was possible for the government to buy off major workers' struggles, such as that of the Lorraine steel workers.

Yet over the past few months there has been a big rise in the combativity of the workers.

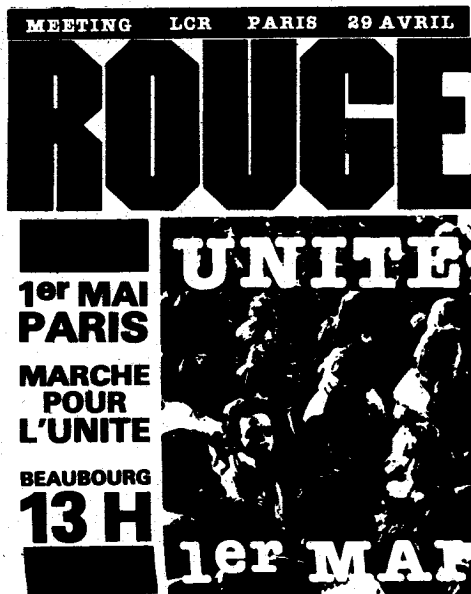
School teachers came out on massive demonstrations, calling for a general strike run by local committees. There has been a growing movement among health, rail and postal workers. In all these movements the French section of the Fourth International has been active.

## Immigrants

The struggle which won most sympathy, and had a profound effect on May Day, was the victorious strike by immigrant workers who sweep the Paris metro. Their demands were for £45 a week and the right to use the same showers as French workers. Even the bourgeois *Le Monde* said: 'How can one contest the legitimacy of such demands, which one is even ashamed to mention...'

Yet it required a bitter six week strike for the immigrant workers to win against the state owned RAPT transport company. Through this struggle immigrant workers began to discover their strength. A large part of May Day belonged to them.

May Day this year was paradoxical. The various union federations held their own mar-



ches, while the bureaucrats shed crocodile tears about the lack of unity. Amid this disgraceful division were large numbers of immigrant workers organised in their own contingents, making up half the CFDT ranks and a third of the 40,000-strong CGT march.

Another new factor in French politics is the momentous call at the base of all the

unions and workers' parties for 'Unity in Action'. Last December a number of 'personalities' within the major reformist camps began a unity offensive, appealing to the party and union rank and file to pressure their respective leaders for unity in struggle.

Since then the LCR — the French Section of the FI — has put all its weight into organising this campaign, collecting 80,000 signatures in support of it. The LCR, together with 40 union branches in Paris, organised a march for unity in the struggle which attracted 8,000 people on May Day.

Although hundreds of CP stewards prevented them linking up with the CGT march, it did link up with that of the CFDT around the slogans of unity.

## Meeting

For the LCR the fight for unity is the fight for unity in struggle, leading to a general strike. As Alain Krivine said at a 2,500-strong meeting on the eve of May Day: 'The call for a general strike is not a rabbit pulled out of the LCR's hat, nor is it wishful thinking on the part of the LCR central committee, but a real issue which has come direct from the unity mobilisations.'

In 1981 the presidential elections will be held — not in a situation of calm, but in the context of renewed combativity of the French working class.

# WEST BANK REBELS

By Tom Marlowe

**THE Israeli occupied West Bank is on the verge of open revolt.**

This follows a new wave of repression by the military authorities as the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank continue to struggle for self-determination.

Discontent came to a head on Thursday 1 May when an unarmed 17-year old Arab schoolboy was killed by an Israeli officer in the small town of Anabta. The next day the Palestinian Liberation Organisation launched an attack on an illegal Jewish settlement in the town of Hebron, killing five Israelis.

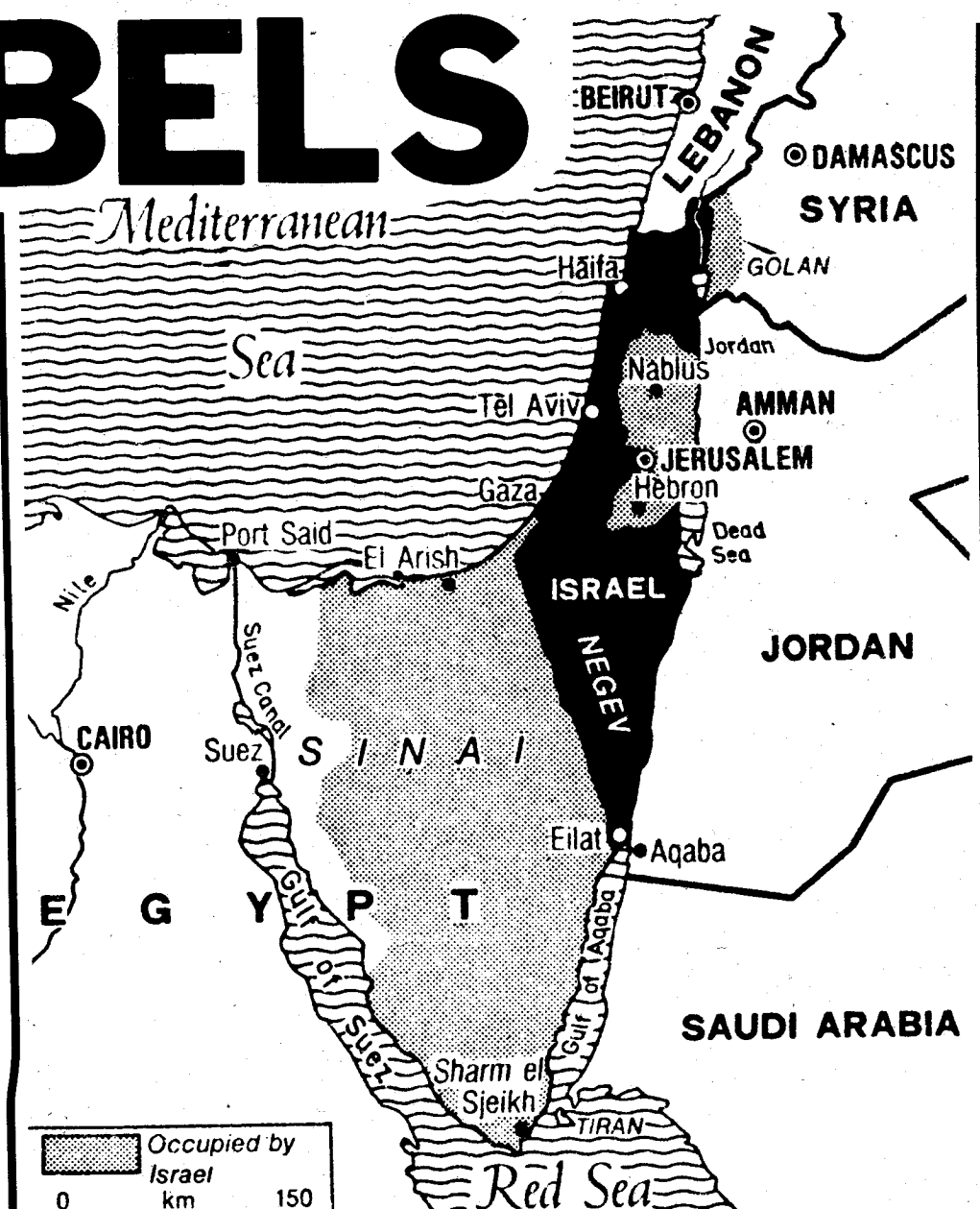
The Israeli military followed this by a series of draconian measures. Hebron was placed under curfew and mass house-to-house raids were launched. Faced with a general strike Israeli soldiers forced shops to stay open and dispersed demonstrations — including one of Arab schoolgirls — with gunfire.

## Hoods

On Saturday 3 May, three West Bank Arab leaders, including two mayors, were summarily deported. One of them, Mohammed Milhem, Mayor of Halhoul, has given an account of his treatment:

'There was a knock on my door at 1am and an Israeli officer told me the military government wanted to see me.

'He told me there was no need to take my car because I would be back home in 15 minutes. When we arrived at the barracks two other officers took hold of me and escorted me to a helicopter. I was cheatingly told that I was being taken to Tel Aviv to see the Minister of Defence. But then they put hoods over our heads and we flew for about three hours. All of a sudden, we landed in southern Lebanon and we were escorted to a military checkpoint.'



The three deportees had neither been accused or found guilty of any crime. It was their support for Palestinian self-determination which has caused the Israeli authorities to punish them.

Meanwhile Israeli settlers in the West Bank are allowed to exercise their own version of 'law and order' at will. They have set up retaliation squads and rampaged through Arab areas. Two weeks ago 130 Arab-owned cars in the towns of Ramallah and El Bireh were smashed as were windows in shops and houses.

The essential reason for the

conflict is the continued occupation of the West Bank by Israel, first seized in 1967. Even the Hebrew newspaper *Ha'aretz* recently admitted this:

'The excuse for the recent deterioration was the Jewish settlers riot in the streets of Ramallah. Its roots, to our deep regret, are much deeper...the fatal flaw of rule by military occupation where repression leads to terror and terror to greater repression.'

'The reality is that on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, one nation is trying to rule another against its will.'

Yet the Israeli occupying forces show no sign of successfully crushing the growing rebellion. As Rijab al-Tamini another of the Arab leaders deported said last Sunday:

'We will not kneel down, we will not give in. We are a proud people and we will continue to resist. What they have done in deporting us will only increase the struggle of our people until our country is free.'

'The Zionists have gone beyond the limits of oppression, but I say to them that their ways will only lead to a dead end.'

# Brazil: Army moves in, workers stay out

By Stuart Piper

**On 1 April, 300,000 engineering workers came out on strike in the industrial belt of greater Sao Paulo. They were demanding wage increases of 15 per cent above the cost of living index, recognition of their shop stewards and security of employment.**

Four weeks later their unions had been taken over by the military government, mass meetings had been banned, and 38 trade unionists and organisers of the strike fund had been arrested.

14 of these, including Luis Inacio da Silva, better known as 'Lula', the most famous of Brazil's new trade union leaders, were still being held incommunicado, facing possible prison sentences of up to 12 years for 'incitement to strike'.

## 'Illegal'

But the 'illegal' strike remained solid. Defying the government's ban, progressive clergy had opened the doors of their churches to a series of strike meetings which firmly decided to stay out until the demands were met.

Two years ago these same engineering workers had been the first to break the silence imposed on Brazil's labour movement by a decade of police repression and a 40-year-old union structure based on Mussolini's Carta di Lavoro.

Economic problems, Carter's new 'liberal' foreign policy, and squabbles among the ruling groups about how best to divide up the still-lucrative Brazilian cake had forced the military dictatorship into setting about institutionalising a more 'open', 'acceptable', and 'stable' face of exploitation.

## Mockery

The workers stepped into the breach. Previously wages, already pitiful, had tended to fall behind inflation, but major strikes at the plants of multinationals like Volkswagen, Ford, Chrysler, Perkins Diesel, and Massey Ferguson showed that it was possible to win increases even slightly above the inflation rate.

They also showed that it was possible to get rid of, or get round, the 'pelegos', the government stooges who, since the military coup in 1964, had run most of the unions as harmless welfare bodies. For the next 18 months an unprecedented wave of strikes swept through just about every sector of the economy and every part of the country.

The regime responded with the carrot and the stick: they implemented a series of clever and superficially liberal measures intended to divide the opposition and prevent the creation of a genuine workers' party. To take the steam out of the strike movement, they provided for automatic index-linked wage increases every six months.

But this was combined with indirect repression: strike leaders were sacked and intimidated, and companies made a mockery of wage increases by laying off large numbers of workers and re-hiring other workers — or even the same workers — to do the same jobs at lower grades and cheaper rates. That is why the crucial demands are no longer about wages but about job security and the recognition of stewards.

## Force

For a time it seemed as if the government's manoeuvres might be working but the engineers' strike and a resoundingly successful dock strike two weeks earlier showed the opposite.

Without social security or other funds to draw on, it will be impossible for the engineering workers to stay out much longer. But the political point has already been made.

On the one hand, the hardliners in the army, for long impatient with the government's sophisticated charade of 'democratisation', have been forced to play their hand in a not entirely convincing show of force.

## Solidarity

On the other hand, the huge wave of solidarity with the strikers and their imprisoned leaders that is spreading throughout Brazil and beyond is giving an important boost to the new Workers Party and has left the government's subtle labour strategy in ruins. The coming weeks will see who is best able to pick up the pieces.

In a future issue *Socialist Challenge* will be running an in-depth analysis of the current political situation and the state of the left in Brazil.



# LETTERS



An ad hoc group of women disrupted a Capital Radio programme in London on 4 May in solidarity with the Armagh prisoners.

## Armagh 11 woman jailed

ANNE Marie Loughran, a mother of four and a member of the 'Armagh 11', is in Armagh jail.

The reason, her refusal to pay a £10 fine for daring to protest peacefully outside Armagh jail on International Women's Day last year in support of female, republican prisoners.

Now Anne Marie herself is to be put into 'A Wing' where she will go on the dirt protest alongside the other Irish women prisoners.

Warrants have been issued for the arrest of three other Irish women who were fined at the same time.

The demands of the women inside Armagh are to be allowed to wear their own clothing, to have free association with other prisoners, to be allowed one food parcel, one letter and a visit each week, and educational and recreational activities.

The Armagh 11 are responsible for having brought to the attention of the British women's movement the plight of the women in Armagh who are being beaten and harassed for their refusal to accept criminalisation.

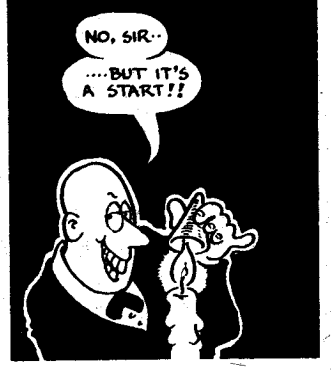
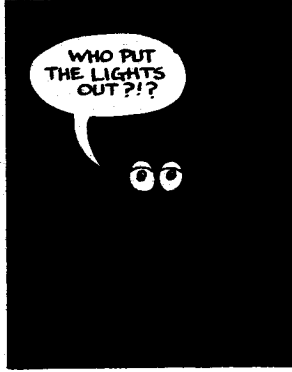
On 27 April Women in Entertainment organised a successful cabaret 'Breaking out', in East London, where £500 was raised in support of the Armagh women.

It was the first ever event that Women in Entertainment had organised on behalf of other women and it ended with a call from Marie Maholland, one of the Armagh 11 herself, to British women to act in defence of Irish women.

Her request was answered last Friday evening when Charter 80, a new grouping set up to campaign for human rights for all Irish political prisoners, called a picket of Downing Street to protest at the imprisonment of Ann Marie.

If your women's group or trade union could organise a similar protest go ahead. The women in Armagh need all the support they can get.

Send telegrams of protest to: Humphrey Atkins, Northern Ireland Office, Stormont Castle, Belfast.



## What about the defeats?

STEVE Potter's article 'Thatcher's Britain year one: win, lose or draw?' (1 May) raised some important points about the way forward. However I can't say I agree with all his conclusions.

Ever since I can remember, the IMG has preferred not to talk about defeats. Steve talks of a stalemate but what were the Edwardes Plan and the sacking of Derek Robinson? If these events weren't defeats what were they?

Another defeat in my opinion was the closure of Meccanos in Liverpool. The Militant group put forward the progressive demand of municipalisation but Tory and Liberal councillors got together to defeat the proposal.

Secondly, although I understand that it is impossible to give a quick summary of the state of the struggle in Ireland, it isn't good enough to talk of 'the undiminished resistance of the nationalist population' because the struggle to get the imperialists out of Ireland is inextricably linked to the struggle for socialism in Ireland, Britain, and for that matter the rest of Western Europe.

As for the general strike slogan, I think it is an understandable attempt to find a short cut to socialism. Apart from the fact that the balance of forces in

the wake of the steel strike isn't in our favour, the general strike call needs to be linked to an overall political strategy and this we haven't got.

The SWP attempts to bring socialism closer by a strategy of militant economism. The Labour left have the Alternative Economic Strategy which includes the reactionary demand of import controls.

In my opinion the left needs to develop an effective transitional politics based on putting forward socialist alternatives in struggle, including workers' plans. Such a strategy accepts that socialism isn't around the corner; it isn't a short or even medium term possibility. So somehow we need to develop a strategy that makes it a medium term possibility, that is in the foreseeable future.

STEVE ROSE, Preston

## Disarm the Pentagon ...and the Kremlin

OF COURSE Phil Hearse is quite right to point out (8 May) that the main demand of the anti-nuclear movement in this country must be for the withdrawal of Britain from NATO and against Cruise missiles, but he is surely wrong to argue that we should not condemn the nuclear war preparations of the Kremlin bureaucrats.

True, the main pressure for war comes from the expansionism of American imperialism and other imperialist power in Europe and Asia, and the pressure from the monopolies and multinationals, eager to conquer or retain markets, is not a factor within the Kremlin whose strategy is essentially conservative and defensive.

But the Moscow bureaucrats accept the existence of capitalism in the rest of the world and divide the world into spheres of interest with it.

In their own sphere they exact economic advantages for themselves as ruthlessly as any imperialist. And when any opportunity offers itself to further their own advantage by controlling trade routes or by military bases, as in the Horn of Africa, they do so.

Its nuclear preparations which mirror those of the Pentagon necessarily reflect this. To the Pentagon threat of instant elimination of the working class and entire people of the USSR, the Kremlin replies with threats of liquidation of the working class of North America and West Europe.

A grisly competition ensures the ability to destroy all human civilisation.

The alternative, to rely on the armed working class and working class solidarity internationally, is obviously not going to commend itself to the bureaucrats.

It is this symmetrical competition in mass destruction, between two equally unacceptable and anti-working class elites which threatens not only world peace but the very survival of humanity.

So surely EP Thompson is at least right to link the struggle against nuclear war preparations at home with the struggle of dissidents in Eastern Europe. For 'annihilation without representation' is the ultimate violation of democratic rights.

If Phil Hearse was a Russian soldier sitting in front of the control panel and was ordered to press the button that would wipe out the workers of Liverpool, Detroit and Frankfurt would he obey the order?

Surely internationalists would give the same answer to such infamy in any country?

STEVEN MARKS, London

## Labour Party Young Socialists in the '60s

ONCE again Socialist Challenge has misrepresented the history of *Keep Left* and the Socialist Labour League in the Young Socialists during the early '60s.

Vincent Moss, in your 1 May issue, claims that it was the 'success' of *Keep Left* in turning the YS 'outwards to working class youth by combining social activities with a socialist perspective', which provoked the witch-hunt by Transport House.

In fact the witch-hunt started at least two years before the adoption of the tactic he describes and was sparked off by the SLL's declaration of its existence as a group within the Labour Party, in 1959. It was simply carried over into the YS when that was started in 1960.

As for the 'success' of the tactic, the facts are more complex. I would not deny that we gained many valuable experiences in trying to take socialist politics to unemployed and other oppressed youth, but we did not succeed in building a stable youth movement and in many ways it diverted us from a political struggle in the Labour Party.

The youth recruited through social activity tended to pass in and out very quickly. I personally built at least six different YS branches in the same Glasgow housing scheme over a two and a half year period, all of which collapsed completely within six weeks to two months of their formation. The other *Keep Left* YS branches in Glasgow went through an essentially similar experience.

In any case the whole idea of 'turning out' to working class youth is based on a misconception; the early YS was overwhelmingly working class from the first.

These were the days before the student radicalisation and the bulk of the YS members were white collar or skilled workers. In fact the Glasgow YS cut its political teeth, and built at least one branch, during the 1960 engineering apprentices' strike. Do not assume that the YS was the same in social composition as the far left groups today.

The idea of using young workers who joined the YS out of a commitment to, or interest in, socialist politics to campaign amongst more oppressed but non-political youth was a serious one, and our attempts to implement it ought not to be despised.

But there is no denying the fact that it was very difficult to carry it out, and in the end we did not succeed. We failed either to build a youth movement or to fight the right-wing leadership of the Labour Party.

This was partly due to the factionalism and sectarianism of the SLL; I can remember our using a temporary majority based on non-political youth to gain control of the Glasgow Federation of the YS and to get an SLL member elected to the YS national committee, after some years in which supporters of *Young Guard* had been dominant in Glasgow.

Of course we succeeded only in deepening the divisions amongst the left in the YS. Moreover the tactic itself drew us

away from a fight within the Labour Party; our politically committed members were run off their feet trying to service football matches and discos, while the youth we recruited through such activities were uninterested in the situation in the Labour Party.

The decision to provoke the disaffiliation of our YS branches arose as much from our increasing self-isolation from the Labour Party as from any rational political calculation.

Once we were outside, the SLL launched a massive and expensive campaign to build a 'mass revolutionary youth movement' through the same tactics we had developed inside the Labour Party. It was a complete and utter failure.

On a different but related matter; the thrust of Vincent's article is to claim that youth within the Labour Party are subject to suppression by the 'bureaucracy', but that the Militant tendency have escaped this through their accommodation to that bureaucracy. There are some problems about this analysis.

Firstly the NEC of the Party, in turning down Underhill's proposed witch-hunt, were refusing not only to attack Militant but to move against the other far left 'entrists', including *Revolution* supporters.

In view of this it is difficult to sustain an analysis of the witch-hunt stemming from a 'bureaucracy' in the Labour Party. In fact it came from outside the Party, albeit from someone who was once head of the Party's apparatus.

In the early '60s it was easier to believe in the 'bureaucracy' argument, since the apparatus of the Party was heavily involved in the witch-hunt, but looking back I would doubt the sufficiency of the analysis even for that period.

I have recently rejoined the Labour Party in Glasgow after more than fifteen years. I find a very different atmosphere and an organisation transformed in a number of important ways.

In the early '60s the Party was dominated at every level by a generation of older members whose political formation was in the late '30s, '40s, and the early '50s. They were right-wing in politics, hostile to young people and bitterly opposed to the new generation of left-wing Party members who had come in from the mid-'50s.

Many of this older generation still remain, but they have been largely replaced by younger members whose ideas were formed in the '60s and '70s. Together with the changes in the political complexion of the leadership of the main trade unions, it is this change in the outlook of the Labour Party membership in general which has led to the apparatus of the Party not being available to the witch-hunters.

Of course the effect of changes in generations of the membership is not a complete explanation of the new situation, but it seems more substantial than the 'bureaucracy' argument.

Finally, to summarise: Vincent Moss may believe that *Revolution* is justified in working outside the Labour Party, but he should find some political arguments instead of deceiving himself about the actual experience of youth in the Labour Party.

BOB PURDIE, Glasgow

LETTERS exceeding 400 words will normally be cut to ensure that the maximum number of readers can express their views.

# SOCIALISM IN THE 80's WHICH WAY FORWARD?

National speaking tour organised by Socialist Challenge/IMG  
Speakers invited from the Socialist Workers Party, Communist Party and Labour Party

22 May  
**LEEDS**  
Tariq Ali (IMG)

23 May  
**BIRMINGHAM**  
Val Coultas (IMG)

**SHEFFIELD**  
Tariq Ali (IMG)

27 May  
**EDINBURGH**  
Steve Potter (IMG)  
**EAST LONDON**  
Phil Hearse (IMG)

28 May  
**GLASGOW**  
Steve Potter (IMG)

29 May  
**SWANSEA**  
Phil Hearse (IMG)

**LEICESTER**  
Steve Marks (IMG)

30 May  
**NOTTINGHAM**  
Phil Hearse (IMG)

2 June  
**PRESTON**  
Tariq Ali (IMG)

3 June  
**MANCHESTER**  
Steve Marks (IMG)  
**SOUTH LONDON**  
Val Coultas (IMG)

4 June  
**MIDDLESBORO**  
Val Coultas (IMG)  
**NORTH LONDON**  
Tariq Ali (IMG)

5 June  
**NEWCASTLE**  
Val Coultas (IMG)

**NEWPORT**  
Tariq Ali (IMG)  
**WEST LONDON**  
Steve Potter (IMG)

6 June  
**LIVERPOOL**  
Phil Hearse (IMG)

20 June  
**CARDIFF**  
Tariq Ali (IMG)





# Kramer vs. Kramer Making men feel good again

By Jude Woodward

THE durability of the family is beyond question. It is clichéd to point out that while the divorce rate goes up and up, the marriage rate goes up faster still.

The fact that one in four marriages ends in divorce (at a conservative estimate) has had an impact on the style and values of the family, but has hardly affected its essential nature.

This is the subject of the smash hit film, *Kramer vs Kramer*, where Dustin Hoffman, high powered advertising whizz kid, reveals that he can be a mother too, and families don't end with divorce.

THE film opens with Joanna Kramer, played by Meryl Streep, walking out on her husband and five year old son.

After the initial shock, Ted Kramer (Dustin Hoffman) gets on with bringing up his son, with enormous repercussions for his job and his emotional life. Then, after 18 months separation, and divorce, Joanna reappears to explain that she feels better now, has a job, and wants her son back.

The two parents go on trial — which one should have the child?

There's no doubt where the audience will line up in this court room drama. With all the feminist best intentions in the world, after being given a privileged insight into the close relationship that develops between father and son, it is Ted Kramer that has all (or nearly all) our sympathy.

It is precisely this which has allowed some reviewers to imply that the film has a 'progressive' content. It's not just another film about love, romance and marriage, but it suggests that men can play traditionally female roles without being peculiar. Or to put it another way — men aren't crazy to like kids.

In fact that just about sums up the element in the film which doesn't have you grinding your teeth (at least in retrospect —

it's a bit too weepy to think about at the time).

Among the more minor irritations is the utterly saccharine view of children that the film consistently portrays. Billy is always charming, blond, and moist eyed, even when he's being bad. How his mother could bear to leave him is a great puzzle of the film — and really the main reason that the audience takes against her.

## Courage

'How much courage does it take to walk out on your child?' asks Ted. Margaret, Joanna's friend, stops defending her and falls silent. But not because she's awed by this proof of her friend's extreme unhappiness, rather she admits Joanna's betrayal of her son.

No reasonable person ever leaves a child — the film never allows Joanna to explain herself. We intuit that she was lonely because we see how involved Ted is in his job. And we see his insensitivity when she leaves: 'She's ruined one of the five best days of my life', he wails.

We also guess she felt trapped in the house because once she gets past the door she can't bear to go back in — she'd rather leave her suitcase behind. And we know she gets a job and likes it.

As revolutionary activity is seen to be attending meetings almost nightly, plus demos, pickets, weekend conferences, and the like, I have found it increasingly difficult to argue with my children that revolutionary politics does not mean desertion and neglect; indeed I often have not had the time to argue anything with them!

When my 8-year-old daughter told me that she realised how inconvenient it was for me to have to stay in (because she was particularly upset that evening), that she knew my meeting was more important than her bad mood, she added: 'You should have had an abortion!' Anyone with, or caring for, children will know how chilling that was.

This has been a turning point for me. I felt that as the left cannot give me any support or answers I must concentrate my politics on the children to ensure that they become revolutionaries



Ted Kramer (Dustin Hoffman) and Billy (Justin Henry) share domestic bliss in their kitchen.

But we are not shown the dreary pattern of her days as a wife and mother, cooking, cleaning, looking after Billy, deprived of real communication with her husband, trapped in a small apartment. We are not encouraged to experience the frustration that women in that position must feel.

Her freedom after leaving Ted is trivialised both when she explains it to him, and when she is questioned in court. Therapy, California, boyfriends and a job. We feminists in the audience may read between the lines, but most people surely react by thinking her self-centred and shallow.

'Were you a failure at the single most important relationship in your life?' Joanna is in the dock. Her answer to the question may determine whether she is granted custody of her son, and the film has reached its emotional climax. Ted tearfully meets her eyes and shakes his head, but she tearfully meets the lawyer's eyes and admits her failure.

Those members of the audience who can still see through their tears make their final judgement — Joanna is a weak and selfish female, and shouldn't have her son.

If we needed any confirmation as to which side we should be on we get it when Ted is on the witness stand. The high point of the case against Ted is

and not reactionaries.

I'm now appealing to anybody with similar or foreseeable experiences to write to me and the paper, perhaps with more optimism than my contribution.

The complete lack of understanding and positive ideas of how to cope with being an activist and a mother other than 'can't your sister have them for the weekend' is dismaying, and leads to the question of how do we hope to recruit working class people with any sort of personal commitments?

Is it any surprise that most activists are either single and/or male?

KAY CARTER, Leicester

(Anyone wishing to write to Kay should send letters c/o Socialist Challenge and we will pass them on. Please make it clear when the letter is not for publication.)

not his total failure at important human relationships, but the fact that he felt guilty when Billy fell off a climbing frame and cut his face, and that he lost his job.

## Nurseries

We know that Billy's fall was an accident, and that he lost his job because he was spending too much time with his son. This hardly measures up against being 'a failure at the single most important relationship in your life'.

The film claims to be about custody and childcare but it is really about marriage and the family. It would be hopelessly idealistic to expect the film to present some solution to the problem of childcare that goes radically outside the framework of the family. It is a Hollywood film.

But it is nonetheless disappointing that nurseries don't even get a mention, and that expecting Billy to wait twenty minutes at a friend's house is a major indictment of Ted's ability as a mother.

The only solution to the whole dilemma is to get married and stay married. The film ends with Margaret, divorced with two children, trying again with her husband.

Joanna reenters the flat that she left so definitively at the beginning of the film, once more referring to it as home, and we are left with the possibility that Ted and Joanna may well try again too.

After all, the experience of being a mother has turned Ted into a nicer person, and they could both keep their jobs, and share child care and cooking, and have a modern, liberated kind of nuclear family instead.

## The Other Bookshop

Housing for people or for profits?

By John Cowley  
Stagel, £2.50

Southall 23 April 1979 — The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry National Council for Civil Liberties, £2.20

328 Upper Street, Islington, London N1. Tel: 01-226 0571

# Divorced from reality

THE film *Kramer vs Kramer* claims to be about 'real feelings' and 'real emotions'. They may be real, but the situation is highly unusual.

In the film Joanna Kramer walks out on her happy, well-oiled middle class home, and leaves poor over-worked hubby to take care of their child. In the real world it is more often men who leave home, abandoning wives with the children. One in nine families only have one parent, and seven out of eight of these parents are women.

Moreover, in the real world, most people are not middle class with plenty of money. Working class women struggle to bring up children in cramped conditions, on tiny sums of money. Jobs for mums are few and far between, school hours are not linked to normal working hours, and there are no 24-hour nurseries.

Very often women in this position are dependent on maintenance payments from their ex-husbands. The sums fixed by the courts are usually low — it's only Britt Ekland and Bianca Jagger who get millions for leaving their ex-husbands alone. Non-payment of maintenance is the norm, and, although the courts can impose stringent penalties, the procedures are long drawn out and alienating. And many women find the idea of pursuing their ex-husbands for money both distasteful and humiliating — and downright frightening if the marriage ended due to violence and battering.

And if you don't fight for the maintenance money then you can be refused social security payments!

In the *Kramers'* world the judge was biased in favour of the mother when the custody case came to court. But this is not reality. If men contest custody cases with any fervour they very often win — especially if they have remarried but their ex-wife has not.

If it can be shown that the mother's sexuality is not 'normal' (promiscuous, lesbian), or that her ideas are 'dangerous' (ultra-feminist, Marxist), or that she's not 'balanced' (takes the occasional valium), then the father has an open and shut case.

## Custody

Of course in general women do win custody of the kids when a marriage breaks down, and why not? Throughout women's lives they are told that having kids is the one thing that will make them feel really fulfilled, it's what women were made for and it's their one route to becoming real people.

Until women have a really equal role to play in society, and are not seen as primarily wives and mothers, then to change legal practice so that they can more easily be denied custody of their children is just to weight the scales even more heavily against women.

The implicit view peddled by the producers of *Kramer vs Kramer* is that the bias of legal practice in favour of the mother is unfair to men. It implies this through promoting a further assumption, that Joanna Kramer lost her right to be a mother because she chose not to be a mother for 18 months. In other words, women, stay at home with your boring husbands in your claustrophobic lives, because if you put yourself first, and cease to be a mother for a minute, you lose all right to be a mother at all.

## Letter: coping with politics and children

WE'VE all had the never-ending discussion and debate within and without our branches, the left, the women's movement, and so on. It's the hardest struggle to put real feminism into action, even harder to try to make 'socialist men' put it into action. But I've found in my four years of political activity a greater handicap — children!

Comments from the left have ranged from 'irresponsible' (of me), to 'aliens' (of them).

My children are older, one a teenager, so a babysitter is no longer appropriate; they are too old for that. But as any person would, they react strongly to being left on their own.



# Socialist Challenge

## ALL THE WAY WITH THE NGA



### STOP THE COVER UP

WEST London coroner John Burton is trying to get himself invited as the guest of honour the next time the SPG holds a policemen's ball.

Or at least so it appears from his running of the Blair Peach inquest in Hammersmith. Last Friday, in an outburst astonishing for the prejudice it showed, Burton interrupted a witness to tell the world that as far as he was concerned, the police had nothing to do with Blair's death.

He informed the jury that the 'police murder theory' was 'unacceptable'.

Burton further showed which side he was on when he added, 'what we have been searching for for a year is some less sensational explanation' — but just who the 'we' were and why they should be so 'searching' Burton didn't explain.

The same day the coroner made these remarks the court heard an allegation from Professor David Bown of Charing Cross Hospital that Blair's skull was 'unusually thin'.

Yet evidence already heard in the court suggests that Blair would have had little chance of survival however thick his skull was.

Dr Richard Bentall told the inquest on 28 April that when he operated on Blair in a vain attempt to save his life, 'in my limited experience I have not come across a fracture of this severity'. The skull, said Bentall, 'seemed that it was split in half'.

The coroner's court has also seen a farcical search for the murder weapon during the inquest. Professor Bowen said that none of the vast array of weapons found in the lockers of the SPG unit which attacked Blair could have been the weapon.

This is hardly a surprise, since even a member of the SPG would have enough sense to dispose of the murder weapon before any search was made.

It is obvious that the jury in the inquest is under enormous pressure to whitewash the SPG killers. Whether the jurors succumb to this pressure remains to be seen.

By Jeremy Gardner, NUJ deputy father of the chapel, 'The News', Portsmouth.

MASS pickets are planned to stop production of Portsmouth's evening paper, *The News*, while NGA, SLADE, and some NUJ members are locked-out.

The lock-out, initially over pay and conditions in the national dispute between the National Graphical Association and provincial newspaper proprietors, has become an attempt to break one of the strongest unions in the print industry.

It is one of only six provincial papers attempting to publish during the dispute — over the NGA's claim for an £80 minimum and a 37.5 hour week — and for several days it went as far as hiring a £150-an-hour helicopter to lift papers over the pickets in an effort to demoralise the NGA members.

Management hopes that after weakening the NGA it will be able to bring in new technology on its own terms, wiping out 80 to 90 NGA composing room jobs.

The company's managing director has said he looks at the *Nottingham Post*, where the print unions have been systematically prevented from

organising, as an 'ideal of stability'.

*The News* management wants to implement the Tories' Employment Bill before it becomes law, and has already told the NGA that it aims to end the closed shop.

It is insisting that staff will return on an individual basis; that NGA membership is not obligatory; that no action can be taken against the handful of NGA overseers who have continued to work during the strike; and that 'no strike' assurances are given.

SLADE members have been locked out after refusing to work with management on the scab paper, and journalists were threatened with the sack when a minority refused to co-operate on the paper.

Four of us were dismissed, although management later accepted that we were in dispute with the company. Two other NUJ members then joined us, but management has threatened that if any more journalists



PICKETS at the 'Wolverhampton Express and Star', where over 40 have been arrested

refuse to co-operate they will be sacked.

Portsmouth Trades Council is to organise the first mass pickets at *The News*, and has called for support for the

regular daily picket, which faces a large-scale police presence.

NGA militants expect that union members at some half dozen newspapers will remain

locked-out when the national dispute is settled — all of which emphasises the need to back the struggle now and to get rid of the newspaper proprietors' Tory protectors.

## Black leader under attack

By Dave Stevens, secretary, Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee

RACISM has a long history in Wolverhampton. In the winter of 1978 the town achieved national 'notoriety' when black youth took action against racist violence and police harassment.

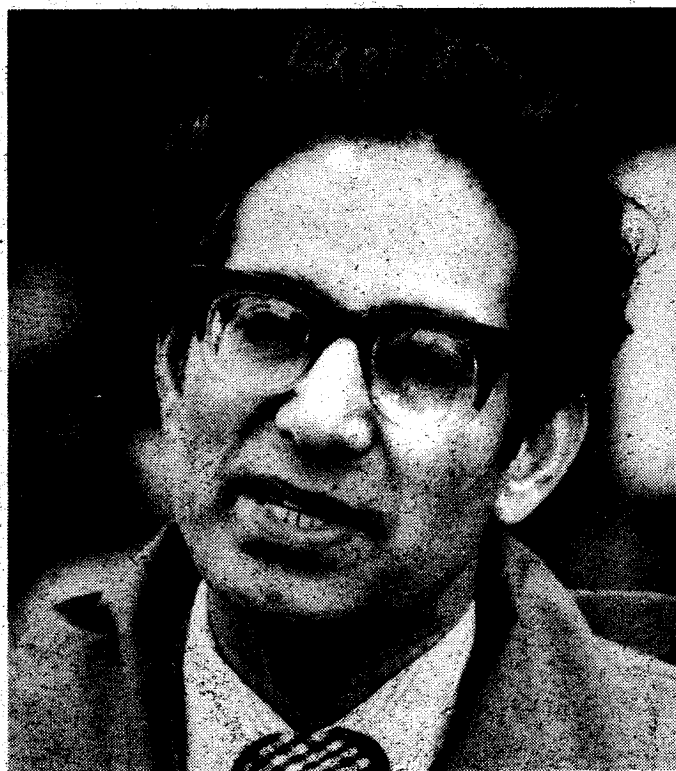
A leading figure in exposing the racism of the police was Narajan Singh Noor, president of Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee and national president of the Indian Workers Association.

An outspoken critic against all forms of racism, Noor now faces a libel action taken against him by a local headmaster for alleging that he is 'racist'. With legal fees alone likely to exceed £5,000, this could cripple both Noor and the IWA.

Moreover, if the courts and libel laws are used against anti-racists whenever they allege that someone is a racist, our ability to campaign against racism will be seriously restricted.

Racism in a town like Wolverhampton permeates trade unions, where people live, and in particular the schools.

From the refusal by the local Labour-controlled education authority to provide tuition in ethnic minority languages and Afro-Asian studies, it extends to overt attempts to suppress the cultural identity of the black community — such as the banning of Sikh bangles and the wearing of turbans in some schools.



NS NOOR — facing libel action

It is because of his attempts to defend the right of an 11-year-old Sikh, Kulbinder Singh Bhamra, to wear a turban at school that Noor now faces a libel action.

In April 1979 Kulbinder, a student at Grove Junior School, Wolverhampton, was sent home for wearing a turban. The headmaster, Rhoden, a local JP, insisted that he would not be allowed back until his parents agreed that Kulbinder would not wear a turban.

The local IWA and representatives from all the local temples and Sikh organisations set up a Turban Action Committee to fight this decision. The school was picketed. The *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, where over 40 pickets have been arrested in the current NGA dispute, ran editorials attacking Noor and the IWA as hooligans.

But with threats of a parents' strike and legal action from the Commission for Racial Equality, Rhoden was forced to re-admit Kulbinder and allow him to wear a turban. Now Rhoden is hitting back with the libel action against Noor, which is due to be heard at Birmingham Crown Court within a month.

The black community in Wolverhampton considers that it is not simply one of their leaders who is under attack, but their whole culture. The court hearings will be picketed.

Donations to: 'Turban Action Committee', c/o Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee, Students Union, Wulfruna St, Wolverhampton.

Photo: Andrew Wlard (Report)